

Our Homeschool Journey

by *Gerald and Christine Aalbers*

We have been blessed to homeschool our three children, age 16, 15, and 14, for the past six years. We began our home school journey in Saskatchewan, as part of a very strong home educating community. We had lived in Alberta and had witnessed home education through the lives of our friends. Looking back, one of the biggest gifts of our time in Saskatchewan was the lack of funding and its effect on us. We were planning to home school, but as we were relocated and taken out of the world of options (in Alberta) and moved to a world where one's home school support is through newly-acquired friends and acquaintances, we were exposed to a side of home schooling that we may have never ventured down ourselves.

Home education in Saskatchewan is most like traditional home schooling. So, when a mere two years after our life path took us to Saskatchewan and we returned to Alberta, we immediately sought out a home schooling board that accepted only traditional home education students. We found real lasting joy in following our hearts and choosing a curriculum that we were led to use. One of the greatest pleasures in our world is the fact that our children help to choose their educational path, and that we have freedom to choose and follow any interests and hobbies that they have. We love taking a more classical approach to learning, where we as a family are growing through the reading and studying of the Great Books (the classics). We have come to know so many different people who are journeying on many different paths in their homeschooling. The joys of being with our children and having the freedom to implement character development as a core area of study are evident daily. The ability to focus on faith in God and understanding his plan for our world is such an opportunity.

We are grateful that our choice of home education has given us freedom and opportunities. We have had opportunities to grow in our knowledge and strengths, as well as to develop, mature and see the truth of ourselves. We love traditional homeschooling, as we feel it allows us to be who we are - not just to meet some external set of criteria. We love creating our program plans and determining how we are going to educate our children, without severe rules and structure from others. We are pleased to have our facilitator's visits, as we share our accomplishments and struggles and grow to understand the direction and path each of our children will take within their education.

We have many friends who have chosen different paths. Yet we remain grateful for those who have sacrificed and fought for the freedoms that we have in home education - freedom as parents to choose what we feel might be best.

We believe that we have to be really careful, too, when money is involved. It is very tempting to choose more money, but then not see the sacrifice that might be required. One of the things that has helped open our eyes is the fact that, as a traditional homeschooling family, we are just that: a family that chooses and follows through with what we think is best for us. We are not tied down by expectations that are not our own and a false ideology that is seeping into online and blended programming. We are fully supportive and thrilled to be in Alberta with its homeschooling freedom.

Gerald and Christine have lived in many places across the western provinces and began their homeschooling journey six years ago. They have three children: two boys ages 16 and 15 and a daughter that is 14. The Aalbers moved to Lloydminster in 2003 and have enjoyed being supported in their home education choices. They are so grateful to be living in Alberta with the freedom to choose for themselves where to register and how to fulfill their children's educational objectives. They are very active members in their church and love to get to know new people and help to make them feel welcome.