

# Drew & Rachel and Bram

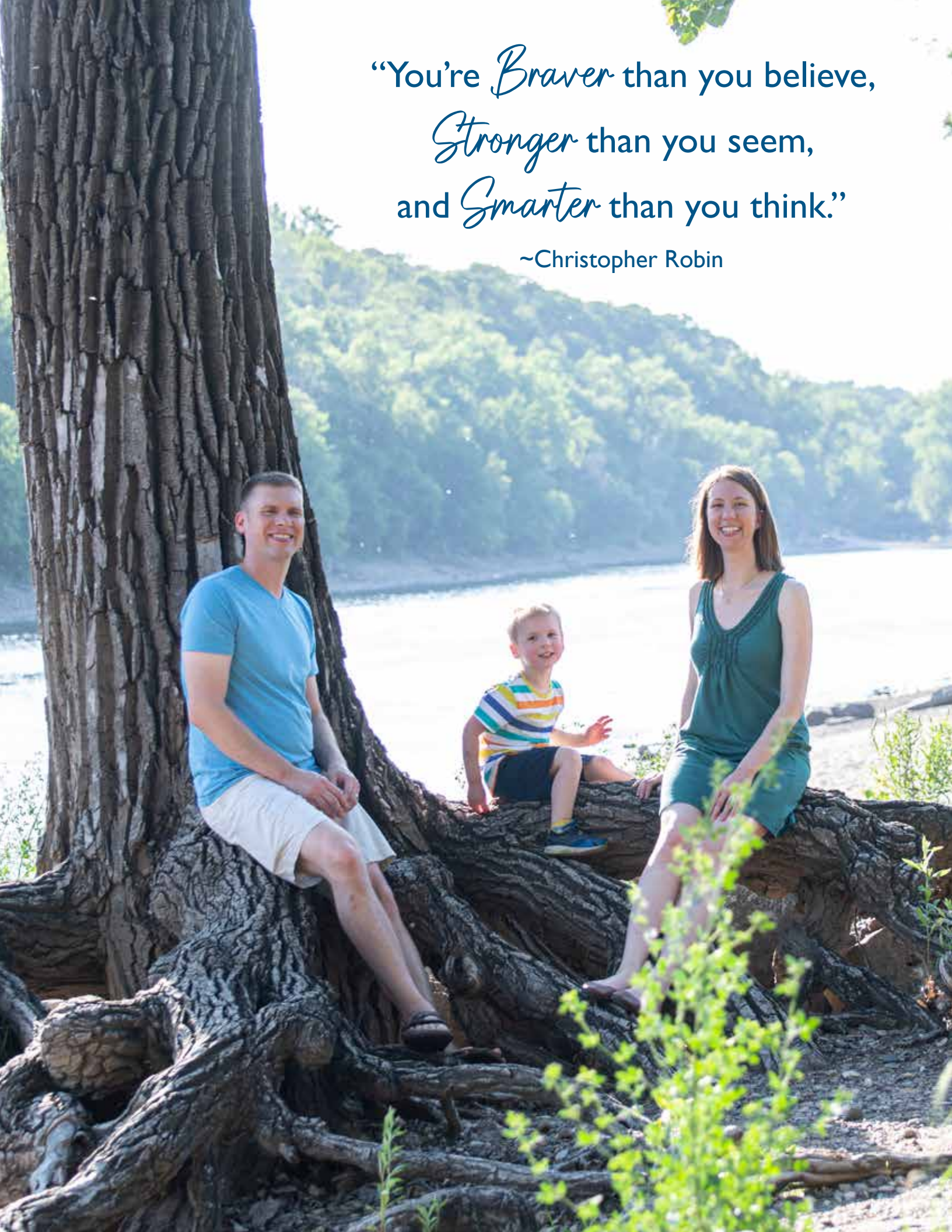






“You’re *Braver* than you believe,  
*Stronger* than you seem,  
and *Smarter* than you think.”


~Christopher Robin





Hello!





Hello from our family! We are Rachel, Drew, and Bram.

Thank you for taking the time to get to know our family. We know that pregnancy can be a stressful time, with many things to decide and consider. We also know that the journey to this point isn't often as we envisioned it. We hope you are finding the support and resources you need as you consider the options for your baby.

You are brave for considering all the possibilities in such an important decision. Even if our paths only cross for a few minutes as you read this, we wish you well in your journey. Please know that we are praying for you and that you are loved.

We hope that you enjoy learning about our family and we wish you the very best as you figure out your next best step.

*Drew & Rachel*





# We Met...

in Mexico while teaching at the same American school in Monterrey. Drew caught my eye one of the first weekends I was there, especially when a friend that I was sitting next to let me know that he was also a Christian.

On Monday nights a group of teachers, including Drew and I, met up to play ultimate frisbee. I'm not entirely sure that Drew noticed me at all that first year, until one of our teaching colleagues started pushing us towards each other.

By the second year of my time in Mexico, we started dating and going to salsa dancing lessons. Then, Drew decided to move back to Minnesota to be closer to his family, while I wanted to stay another year in Mexico. We ended up dating long distance for a year and then Drew proposed the day before Thanksgiving in Mexico City. The following July we got married and I moved to Minnesota as well.

Prior to our wedding we didn't tell anyone that Drew and his groomsmen were wearing kilts. It was great to hear the audible gasp from our family and friends when they started coming in that day!

To give our guests something unique and memorable to do while they waited for the reception to start, we asked the Traer Salt and Pepper Shaker museum (right across the street from the reception venue) to open between our ceremony and reception. Our guests had so much fun viewing the largest collection of salt and pepper shakers in the Midwest!







## Hi! I'm Drew

I was born and raised in the suburbs of a large city in Minnesota. My parents instilled a strong work ethic in me and encouraged my curiosity in learning about the wider world.

As a teen I was able to self-fund travel experiences with the Boy Scouts to scuba dive in Florida, with my church to canoe and camp in the wilderness, and with my school to practice Spanish in Costa Rica. These experiences were just the beginning of my adventures in traveling.

In college I explored some of my ancestral roots by spending a semester studying in Scotland. I trained to be a social studies teacher and learned that I could do my student-teaching semester overseas. I chose that option and ended up being placed at an international school in Hong Kong, China.

Living abroad was life-changing for me. I loved being able to live in a culture, not just travel through it. I was also able to worship beside a diversity of Christians in each place I lived or visited. I returned to Hong Kong to teach full-time for four years and then moved to Monterrey, Mexico for four more years where I met Rachel.

After so many years of living abroad I was ready to return to the United States and be closer to my family. When we got married, Rachel and I were able to settle close to our families and continue our professional lives as teachers.

## I ENJOY:

### Cooking and Baking

**Outdoor Activities** like camping, hiking, biking, playing ultimate frisbee, and tending a vegetable garden

**Reading** One of my favorite books is *Infinite Jest* by David Foster Wallace - it was a long and challenging book, but I read it and discussed it with teacher friends and some students.

### Playing Board Games

### Minnesota Sports Teams



# *I am so Grateful that Drew is my Partner.*

- He is willing to try new things, have fun, and laugh with us every day.
- Drew is calm and steady during stressful situations.
- He is thoughtful and patient when we need to make a big decision.
- Drew is a resourceful problem-solver!
- He is able to remain kind in his expectations of Bram.

**Finally, I just have to mention this because I've said it a million times since I married Drew; one of the bonuses of marrying him has been benefiting from his cooking and baking abilities. Drew is an amazing cook and I am incredibly fortunate to be able to be on the receiving end of his skills. Over the past year he has tried to perfect a recipe for chocolate chip cookies and I honestly think they might be some of the best cookies I've ever had. There are a number of foods that I would much rather have from Drew than from any restaurant or another person. Tacos, homemade bread, chocolate cake, wild rice soup, and more! Honestly, he's amazing.**

*~ Rachel*



# Rachel

I was born and raised on a farm in rural Iowa. The values and love that I had from my family, friends, and entire community have really shaped who I've become today. I was quite shy while I was growing up, but thrived in my small school. Also, because you can be involved in almost any activity you want in a small high school, I was! I took dance lessons from when I was three years old until I was 17, and acted in plays and musicals in high school. Those two things helped me to grow in my confidence.

I love learning either in school or out of school and one of my favorite ways to learn is by traveling. In college and right after college, I was able to travel to Australia, West Africa, Singapore, and then lived in Mexico for a few years. I'm so grateful for those experiences where I was able to meet so many people who are different from me and learn how other people view the world. Traveling has been one of the things that has truly changed my life and given me a whole different perspective after living in small town Iowa for most of my life. Meeting and interacting with people who are different from us is such a powerful experience.

One thing I cherish from my childhood in a small town are the memories of the way families relied on each other and how everyone would come together to help when there was an emergency. The ability to see a need and be willing to jump in and help is something that was cultivated in me during my years in that rural community and is a core part of who I am.



## I ENJOY:

### Road Trips!

**Doing things with my family** I'm not as into the outdoors as Drew and Bram are - but I enjoy hiking, camping, and biking with them!

**Reading** One of my favorite books is *All the Light We Cannot See* by Anthony Doerr. I enjoy historical fiction!

**Lightbulb Moments** for my students

**Finding deals** - especially on kids stuff at the local consignment sales events!





## All About Rachel ~ By Drew

When I noticed Rachel, one of the things that drew me to her was the way she cared for others and her compassion. Her dedication to Jesus serves as her inspiration and is a great model for anyone to follow.

Rachel cares deeply about her family, friends, and strangers. When a friend or neighbor is having a hard time, she often suggests ways to support them - bringing them a meal, meeting for coffee, or babysitting so they can have the time they need. The way Rachel serves others at our church, in community organizations, and her dedication to becoming a better person by always learning and growing is a beautiful part of her personality that adds incredibly to her physical beauty.

She is also very hard-working. She loves her job and is dedicated to the children she teaches and works with. Around the house she is always willing to help with the chores that need to be done and she manages the budget well.

Rachel is not afraid to try new things, and is willing to do things she might not enjoy as much as I do (like camping!) because she wants us to all have a chance to do things we enjoy and loves spending time with her family.

She's a voracious reader and is always reading for pleasure, to grow in her faith, to challenge herself, to learn more, and as an opportunity to better understand diverse perspectives.





Bram was born to us in 2017 and is a great kid who loves to be silly, write stories, play outside, and hang out with his cousins.

He attends preschool at a nearby nature center and has thrived in that environment, enjoying the farm animals there, play with other kids, and learn how to take care of the environment. He loves to make mom & dad laugh by coming home from school and telling us all about the animal poop he saw that day, not your average preschool experience, for sure!

### Bram's Favorites:

- Winter & playing in the snow!
- Any type of vehicle - cars, trucks, tractors, or trains!
- Reading. The most recent addition to his personal book shelf was the Mercy Watson series by Kate DiCamillo.
- Foods: pasta, pizza, and pancakes
- Colors: are blue and red (*like Lightning McQueen!*)

Bram is a great older cousin and loves helping with his younger cousins. Last summer we spent a week with family at a cabin and each morning Bram hurried to get ready so he could go help his aunt pick out clothes for his younger cousin. He loves to make him laugh, loves playing tag, and enjoys having other children to play with and can't wait to be a big brother!





*Learning Through Play and Exploration*





*More Love to Give...*





# Why Adoption?

Prior to having Bram, we had been interested in the idea of adoption, though we knew little about it. After having Bram, we experienced two years of infertility. Through this time, we began prayerfully considering adoption and have been pursuing it ever since.

We feel that now is a good time for us to adopt, because we've seen Bram play and interact with his younger cousins and believe that he would make an excellent older brother. We both have siblings and treasure those relationships so we want Bram to have that experience as well.

We have more love in our hearts to welcome another child into our family.





# Our Home

We love our home in the city. Our neighborhood is near the top of a bluff overlooking the Mississippi River with excellent trails and beautiful views of downtown. It offers everything we were looking for - trees, a great backyard, and awesome neighbors from a wide variety of backgrounds. We love the friendships we've formed here. We host block-parties in the summers, help each other snow-blow and shovel snow in the winter, and never know when we'll open the door to a neighbor with a plateful of goodies or a small gift for Bram.

Our house is an older home with a lot of character! We love it! It also has 3 bedrooms and 2 bathrooms, a living room that doubles as Bram's play area, a kitchen where Drew's creations shine, and an office area for Bram's art table.



# & Community

Living in the city lets us be close to all sorts of opportunities - Entertainment, restaurants, cultural events.... We love exploring our area and continually find new things to check out but we do have a few favorites:

- A local restaurant has amazing tacos and we always get a jamaica or horchata to drink.
- Rachel goes to the neighborhood coffee shop with her friends where she skips the coffee and gets a delicious apple cider in the fall or one of their fabulous smoothies the rest of the year.
- We love the local Children's Museum and enjoy taking the city bus to get there or heading over to an amazing indoor playground - something that comes in handy during Minnesota's cold winter days.

Rachel grew up on a farm near a small town in Iowa and while we don't wish to move to a rural location we really enjoy having the family farm close enough to be able to spend time there, appreciating the slower pace of that lifestyle and the wide open spaces. It is a good compliment to our city lifestyle. Bram especially loves helping his Papa out with all sorts of different farm chores!







# Structured Days

**During the school year  
our days are predictable.**

Rachel and Drew both get up early to start the day and Rachel leaves for work around 6:45 am.

Bram gets up by 8 am and then he and Drew have breakfast together and start their day.

In the mornings Drew and Bram will do a variety of things:

- Grocery shopping or other errands
- Play dates with friends or the grandparents
- Hang out at home

Lunch happens around noon and then Bram goes to preschool while Drew heads home to get some work done or take care of other errands.

At 3:30 pm, Rachel picks Bram up from preschool on her way home from work.

In the evenings Drew is often busy with work as an online tutor so it's the perfect time for Rachel and Bram to get some 1-on-1 time playing outside, reading books, or playing games.

We make it a point to have supper together most evenings around 5:30 pm, rotating between Drew and Rachel on who is doing the cooking, and then work together to clean up after supper.

Once Bram goes to bed, Drew will finish his work for the day and Rachel spends time taking care of things around the house, reading, or watching a favorite show (*Ted Lasso* and *Severance* are two of her favorites!).





## *A Stay-at-Home Dad...* (DREW'S PERSPECTIVE)

With the birth of Bram, our focus shifted towards parenting and when he was 1 1/2 years old we decided that I would become a stay-at-home Dad. I still use my social studies teaching skills to help students with online tutoring, but the focus of my day is family.

Bram and I enjoy spending time at home and exploring our community. It is rewarding to be a part of his day-to-day life and see him grow, develop, and mature.

### RACHEL'S PERSPECTIVE:

Drew is a hands-on Dad and feels comfortable with the role. He can change diapers, cut fingernails, play cars, find snacks, and calm Bram when he gets upset!



## *Becoming a Mother...* (RACHEL'S PERSPECTIVE)

Motherhood has been the best thing that has ever happened to me. It's challenged and changed me for the better. I approached motherhood the same way I do life, by learning all I can - reading books, joining discussion groups, asking advice, and praying for wisdom.

BONUS: I'm a kid at heart who LOVES doing all the fun kid things, and experiencing them for the first time again through Bram's eyes fills my heart with joy. I'm loving watching him grow and change as he learns about the world around him.

### DREW'S PERSPECTIVE:

Rachel is a patient, caring and fantastic mother! Her patience and rapport with Bram is a great model for me. Rachel teaches through doing, and so includes Bram in her chores around the house, even though that might make things take longer! She is a big reason that Bram is such a great helper.







# We Cherish Our Traditions

## The Meal Ritual

At supper, we have a ritual that we do together to guide our conversation and draw us closer together as a family and to God. We start by lighting a candle and then saying some words of gratitude. Next, we do the “Good Part/Bad Part”, where each person at the table shares a good part and/or a bad part from their day. Bram has also added “Funny Part” to the options because he loves being silly. Finally, we end with a prayer when the meal is over and blow out the candle. Though it is simple and quick, we have found it to be a powerful way to check in with one another and feel like part of the family.



## Camping

Rachel tolerates camping for Drew’s sake and it has become a summer tradition to tent camp once a year as a family. Our favorite spot in Minnesota is at Whitewater State Park, where the geology of the area has made it so there are NO mosquitos, a big win for Rachel and camping. We usually go for two nights and spend time going for hikes, swimming at the beach, and playing board games. It has been a highlight of the summer the past couple of years.

Drew also loves to take Bram camping as a father/son activity. They find a different camping spot each year and love swinging and reading in the hammock, swimming, going for fun hikes, and eating smores!





## Family Cabin Trip

Drew grew up visiting his grandparents' cabins in northern Minnesota, and so we have started that tradition back up with Drew's parents and his sister and her family. We all stay in one cabin together at Towering Pines Resort and spend a week swimming at the beach, playing mini-golf, going for hikes, racing turtles, and just enjoying each other's company. Bram loves the time spent with his younger cousin, playing, and hanging out together.

-----Turtle Racing!

## Visiting the Dells

On Rachel's side of the family, we have started the tradition of visiting the Wisconsin Dells with her parents, brothers, and their families. This area is known for the waterparks and other touristy attractions, mini golf, playgrounds, and more! Bram can't wait to go back this summer to play with his cousins.



## Sunday Family Walks

During Covid we started going for walks on Sunday mornings when the weather was nice enough. That tradition has stuck - even though we've started going to church on Sundays again! Each week one of us chooses where to go in our neighborhood. Drew and Rachel walk, while Bram will usually takes his trike or rides in the stroller. We enjoy getting outside in all seasons and love this time together.



# Holidays



## THANKSGIVING

Thanksgiving is a big celebration for Rachel's family. Since she was a little girl, she has been celebrating with all of her cousins at her grandma's house in Iowa. Last year there were 34 of us altogether!

We get together and eat all sorts of delicious food for the noon meal - turkey, ham, salads, stuffing, pie, all the things. Then, at least half of us, of all ages, go out for a football game outside, no matter the weather! Afterwards we go inside to watch football on TV. It's a great day and so much fun for everyone.

## EASTER

Easter is another holiday we enjoy celebrating with both sides of our family. The day follows a predictable pattern - We start with an Easter service at church and then an Easter egg hunt at the grandparents' and end the afternoon with a nice meal together.





## OTHER HOLIDAYS

One way we are trying to do things a little differently in our family is by learning about and celebrating holidays from other cultures, like Martin Luther King Day, Juneteenth, and Native American Heritage day. We know that we still have a lot to learn about others and we want Bram to grow up with a fuller understanding of American history. These types of holidays provide a great annual opportunity to do that. We are really grateful for our church and how they have put into practice celebrating Martin Luther King Jr. Day each year with a special service and music. Leading up to that service, we also get picture books about Dr. King from the library to read with Bram at home so he knows the importance of the day as well.

We're also in the process of trying to figure out ways to celebrate Juneteenth. Last year, the nature center where Bram goes to preschool held a celebration which we went to as a family. Finally, we'd like to extend the traditions we've been starting on Black Friday to include more about Native American history too, but we're still in the beginning phases of finding age-appropriate things to do for that holiday.



## OUR FAVORITE HOLIDAYS

Rachel has a hard time choosing between Thanksgiving and Christmas. She loves the food that both holidays have associated with them, but the thing that she loves the most is being able to spend time with our extended families and sharing our traditions with Bram.

Drew's favorite holiday is Thanksgiving because it's a day full of good food, and time well spent with family, and friends.





## Christmas is a big holiday around our house!

We kick off the holiday season by celebrating “Black Friday” but not by shopping! We like to spend the morning visiting our local Art Museum while Bram hangs out with the grandparents. Later in the day we participate in the “Opt Outside” movement by going to different parks in the area that have organized scavenger hunts for the kids and other activities. We simply enjoy spending the day together and enjoying the outdoors!

Since we got married, Drew and I have always scheduled a time for just us to have our own family Christmas. We are typically with one side of our extended family on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, so we just pick a different random day over Christmas break for the three of us to spend time celebrating with each other. Usually we have pancakes for breakfast after opening presents. Then we spend the day together playing with our new gifts, watching a Christmas movie, and eating delicious special foods together.

We also observe Advent, because we want to be sure that Bram understands the real meaning behind Christmas. Starting on the first day of Advent we pull out the box of Christmas books and we choose a few to read each night. We also have a book with a Bible story for each night of Advent that we read together.





## *Drew's family has some fun Christmas traditions.*

When we spend the holiday with Drew's side of the family our celebration starts on Christmas Eve when we attend the Christmas Eve service at church together. Then, we go back to Drew's parents' house and act out the Christmas story with dolls that Drew's mom made for Drew and his sister many years ago. After the Christmas story, we start opening gifts!

After gifts we have a meal and then the kids head to bed while the adults stay up to watch the British Arrow Awards, the best commercials that were aired in Britain over the last year. It's quirky, but fun!

We all stay overnight at Drew's parents' house and have a huge, wonderful Christmas Day brunch together. The rest of the day we lounge around, playing games, playing with our new toys, and watching a fun kids movie. If it's a nice day, we venture to the huge new playground that was recently built near Drew's parents' house to play for awhile. We finish the day with another big meal and then head home.





# We Love to Travel!

We cherish the memories of the extensive traveling we were both able to do while in college and right after college. The cross-cultural friendships that we made because of those experiences are an important part of who we are today. Part of our heart is still in Mexico where we both worked and lived prior to getting married. We would love to go back for an extended period of time when our kids are older.

As young adults, traveling internationally challenged us and helped us grow in ways we didn't know we needed to change. Going to places where we can stay for a longer period of time, getting to know the area and developing relationships are things that we still love to do, although in this season of life we usually do shorter trips, getting national and state park passes or going to places where we have friends we can visit. Exploring all of their favorite places with them.



FRIENDS FROM MEXICO

## Bringing the World Home...



Prior to having Bram we hosted Japanese college students in our home. Then, after he was born we continued to work with this program by helping to find host families for students, leading them through their daily class experiences at the local university and taking them on field trips.

Though the summer program will no longer happen anymore due to the pandemic, we were able to host a student again in March 2023 with the winter program!

We enjoy having these students in our home, learning about their culture, their family, and their traditions and are grateful that we can share these experiences with our children.



When we travel  
we enjoy visiting museums  
& historical places of interest.

We also love seeing places  
that are fun for kids.

It's so much fun to see how  
much Bram enjoys  
the activities and exhibits.



*Summer is for Adventure!*

**As soon as school lets out for the  
summer our adventures begin!**

Since we both work in education we have a lot of  
free time in the summer and take advantage of that to  
maximize our family time, working together to come  
up with a routine that lets us each take care of our  
responsibilities and have some free time too.

**We prioritize:**

Going to the pool  
Scheduling play dates with our friends  
Visits to interesting places  
Day trips & vacations

We also love doing things  
outdoors as much as possible.  
We enjoy being on the water,  
hiking, and bike riding.

One year we joined the huge  
RAGBRAI bike ride across Iowa  
and had a blast!

Some of our favorite vacations  
are those slower ones where  
we don't do much besides relax  
and read books.



# The Best Grandparents



**Drew's Parents**

We live near Drew's family, making it a bit easier to see them frequently. Drew and Bram try to spend a morning with them about once a week. We all gather together for a family dinner with Drew's parents and his sister's family about once a month. We're also able to get together for local social events, birthday parties, trivia nights, and sometimes vacation together too!



**Rachel's Parents**

Though they live in another state, we have been very intentional about spending time with Rachel's family throughout our marriage. We usually visit at least every other month and we do our summer vacation together too! We are thankful for the flexibility our teacher's schedule gives us to let us travel. Bram loves being on the farm, visiting his cousins, and playing with them.





# Our Values



**LOVE:** First and foremost, we desire for our children to be filled to overflowing with love. The church we attend often talks about the four loves: loving God, loving others, loving ourselves, and loving creation. This is what we are trying to establish in our family.

**DIVERSITY:** We are working hard to help our children (and ourselves) learn what it means and put into action loving others, especially those who don't look like us. Our international travels along with events in our country over the past few years have brought a heightened awareness to us of the need to be conscious of the biases that we grew up with. This means we are actively working to educate ourselves, and intentionally surrounding ourselves with people from a wide range of ethnicities and cultures. We are working to develop a lifestyle that is different from what we grew up with, including diversity in our community and what media we consume. We love developing friendships with all sorts of people and want our children to see that our differences make us stronger and are cause for celebration.

**EDUCATION:** We believe in the power of education and hope to instill a love of learning in our children. Our lives have been enriched so much by the thirst for more understanding. We hope to help our kids find their passions and develop them into something that they can enjoy doing for many years.

**FAITH:** Belief in God is important to our family. We believe that faith is "caught, not taught" and so we try to make God real to Bram through conversation, stories, and different small traditions throughout the year. Faith in God is more about the relationship with Jesus and others rather than what we do or don't do. Throughout the last few years of the pandemic and infertility, we have had a lot of doubts about God and His goodness, but we believe He's big enough for all of our questions, all of our pain, and all of our anger.









# Our Promise To You

Thank you for taking the time to learn about our family. Hopefully you were able to see our hearts, and get a peek into our life. We are honored that you would consider us and if you feel that we are a family you are ready to intertwine your life with, we promise you that:

- ☐ Your child will be loved, and will have opportunities to learn how to love others, love themselves, love creation, and love God.
- ☐ Your child will have our full support as they learn, grow, and explore the world and try the things they are interested in.
- ☐ Your child will go on all sorts of adventures!
- ☐ Your child will receive hugs, kisses, love, apologies, and forgiveness.
- ☐ We promise to honor you and your family in our home, making sure that this child knows that you have always and will always love them.

We pray that God would guide you and give you wisdom as you make this difficult decision. May you have peace, be surrounded by love, and take comfort in the fact that YOU know what is best for you and your child.

*Drew & Rachel*



