

Emmanuel Home profiles

GRACE DYKSTRA

Grace Dykstra's connection with Emmanuel Home goes back a long way, not that she imagined living there when she and her husband Gerben saw construction start back in the 1970s. It was an exciting time of growth in Edmonton's northeast, as Trinity Christian Reformed Church's building was also taking shape.

Once Emmanuel's first two phases were built, Grace and Gerben put their names on the waiting list with their eager eyes trained on a corner suite. "We would have moved here in our late 60s. We always liked the atmosphere here," Grace recalls.

In fact, the couple as active members of Trinity CRC led a Bible study group at Emmanuel for many years. Gerben served his congregation as an elder for seniors, many of whom lived right on the church's doorstep. So that brought the couple into Emmanuel in a regular basis.

Once their six children were adults, the Dykstras moved from their home in the Rosslyn neighbourhood to a condo, where they lived for nine years. Unfortunately, Gerben's health and mobility issues prevented them from moving into Emmanuel as they had planned.

After his death at age 73, Grace had to wait for two years before she was able to acquire her Emmanuel apartment. A ground-floor suite with a bay-window view of the courtyard and busy bird feeders, Grace can't say enough about how happy she is to be living at Emmanuel.

"It's been a tremendous blessing," she says of her home for almost 10 years. "I've never felt as free and so protected as I do here."

Grace loves going for walks in the neighbourhood and appreciates the chance to exercise with the fitness classes. Her independence is also tied to her ability to hop into her car whenever she wants to go shopping or visiting.

"I have to accept that I am 85 now, but living here gives me the right balance between independence and comfort," says the outgoing senior, who loves a good chitchat as much as a good book. "It's a wonderful feeling."

Grace welcomes opportunities to encourage others in her Christian community to consider Emmanuel for their senior years and sign up on the waiting list. "People wait too long to move here. I moved here in my 70s and I never felt I was too young to live here."