



By Jan Rahn
Managing Editor

Reverends Rich and Joy Savage have recently moved to the community to serve the Grant and Big Springs United Methodist Churches.

Rev. Rich delivered his first sermon in Grant on Sunday, July 5, as did his wife after commuting 40 minutes to her new assignment.

Up until April 27, the ministers had thought they'd be staying near Central City where they'd become accustomed to living in the country in the parsonage of Rev. Rich's assignment to rural churches Fairview and Archer Zion and where Rev. Joy was enjoying retirement.

Although their move west was sudden and unexpected, the pair is not unfamiliar with the territory, Rev. Rich having served in Big Springs from 1993-2000, his first appointment, while his wife served the Oshkosh and Lewellen United Methodist Churches during the same time period.

They are both second career pastors. Rev. Rich was a physician in Chadron for 17 years before attending seminar at Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Ky., along with his wife, who had been an elementary teacher in Chadron for 10 years.

Rev. Rich said his call to serve God came when he was a boy attending church camp the summer of his seventh grade year.

"I was so very shy and would not even consider getting up in front of anyone to talk!" he said. "So instead of answering God's call, I followed my strong interests in school and became a doctor."

Prior to practicing in Chadron, he graduated from the University of Nebraska Medical School, did an internship and residency in Ogden, Utah, then returned to UNMC to finish his residency.

It was while practicing in Chadron that God renewed His call, and in 1990 Dr. Savage was on his way to seminary.

Encouraged to do the same by people in the United Methodist Church in Chadron where she was very active, Joy at first struggled with the whole idea of women in ministry, but the desire grew stronger while the opportunity blossomed and she is now very convinced that she is doing what God wants her to do.

"After a year in retirement, I'm so excited about my new appointment in Big Springs," said Rev. Joy. "It's an easy transition for me and the congregation since Rich had previously been their pastor. It feels a lot like 'going home' to work alongside old friends."

Believing that nothing is impossible with God and with the desire to have people come to know Jesus, the couple will continue to broaden their ministry and outreach. They have taken several

mission trips together, and Rev. Rich has been on others without his wife.

“I believe that missions are critically important to any church,” he said, whether it be local, state, national or international. “Being in mission means being involved with people’s lives personally at all levels, meeting physical, emotional and spiritual needs.”

They have been to Pine Ridge Reservation twice, McCurdy School in Santa Cruz, N.M., five trips to Four Corners Native American Ministries in Shiprock, N.M., Midwest Distribution Center in Chatham, Ill., and confirmation trips to Denver and Omaha. Rev. Rich has also been to Uruguay and twice to an orphanage in Nigeria, Africa.

The orphanage in Jalingo, Nigeria which Rev. Rich has helped get started is the one most on his heart, “Because the children are totally dependent upon the United Methodists in Nebraska for their lives.”

Built and supported by the Nebraska Conference of the United Methodist Church, there are 48 orphans receiving total care from 17 staff—food, room, adult nurturing, health care, schooling and Christian formation.

Rev. Rich considers himself a rock hound, loving to search the back country in the desert Southwest and other places for petrified wood and agate.

“I have been known to bring home hundreds of pounds of rocks. Joy thinks the world will get out of balance if I keep it up!” he said. Realizing his other favorite activities are a little strange, he said he thoroughly enjoys mowing the lawn and shoveling snow.

Between them, Revs. Rich and Joy have six grown children. He said she provided the four girls and he provided the two boys—two of the sisters were adopted at a very young age from Korea.

Their children include: Teri Lohmeier and husband Rod of Hobart, Ind., where he works in management in a railroad-related train maintenance business and Teri is currently working with special needs adults. Her daughter, Jessica, is married to Justin Brown and lives in Chadron.

Their second daughter is Becky Lawson who lives in Bellingham, Wash. She has always worked in restaurant-related jobs, owning a restaurant for several years.

Their third daughter is Angie, married to Tim Dillow. They have two children, Hannah in sixth grade and Thad, four years old. Angie is a stay-at-home mom and has designed the three houses they have built—with plans to move into the third one within a month.

Oldest son Jeff and wife Karen live in Pullman, Wash., where they both teach piano at Washington State University. They both received masters and doctorates in piano performance and accompanying from the Julliard School of Music.

Their fourth daughter is Nikki, married to Kevin Kucera, an electrician. She is currently looking for a new job. She has a son, Cody, who will be a high school junior.

Their youngest is Tim and wife, Denise, who have a daughter, Natalie, almost two, and a baby on the way. Tim works for UNL in computers related to keeping track of professors’ grants.

Rev. Rich and Rev. Joy are excited about living in Grant and serving the Grant community as well as the parishioners of Big Springs.

They feel very warmly welcomed and look forward to getting to know people.

“We feel very blessed to be here and to have been chosen to serve the churches we will be serving,” said Rev. Joy, echoing the thoughts of Rev Rich who said, “We already love the community and the church. We look forward to our years serving the Lord together with you here.”