

Mapas lead different Lutheran congregations

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
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Recent installations at Zion Lutheran, American Lutheran churches.

A chance meeting at a Minnesota retreat center 35 years ago eventually led to marriage for Jon and Carol Mapa.

Fortunately for the Gothenburg community, they are both ministers and were hired to fill the pulpit at American Lutheran and Zion Lutheran churches.

Both were installed at their respective churches on Jan. 26.

“Nebraska wasn’t on our list,” Carol said when the couple filed mobility papers for new calls. “We were looking at places closer to our elderly parents in California and Minnesota.”

Most recently, Jon served at Atonement Lutheran Church in Rapid City, SD.

For six years, he and Carol both did campus ministry at South Dakota School of Mines and Technology in Rapid City.

“It was a wonderful place to do ministry and the people were wonderful,” Jon said about serving in Rapid City.

In fact, the congregation had just finished building a new church and the Mapas helped a Native American church—Woyatan Lutheran—relocate into the one vacated by Atonement

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Yet, 24 years is a long time to do a call, Jon said.

And both he and Carol wanted new challenges and opportunities for ministry.

When a Lutheran official from Nebraska called and asked the couple to consider coming to the state, they did.

“We interviewed in Gothenburg and received a warm welcome and Zion and American Lutheran decided to extend a call,” Carol said. “We feel it was a God thing, the work of the spirit was part of the whole process.

A farm girl from southern Minnesota, Carol graduated from Augustana College and moved to Wisconsin to work at a Lutheran camp and retreat center.

There she met Jon who was conducting national workshops on youth leadership.

For eight years, their relationship was long distance until they married in 1987.

Carol received a master of arts degree in pastoral care at Wartburg Theological Seminary that year and later a master of divinity degree from Luther Seminary.

She began ordained call in 2006 at Piedmont Valley Lutheran Church in Piedmont, SD, which is about 13 miles away from Rapid City.

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A California native and graduate of Sacramento State University, Jon went on to graduate from Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary in Berkeley, CA, in 1984.

His first call was in Oberlin, KS. Five years later, he and Carol moved to Rapid City.

Asked to describe their ministry, Carol said she brings certain gifts to each setting.

“My pastoral image is walking beside congregational members and those in need of spiritual companionship,” she said. “It’s also not about us but about God’s ministry and mission in the world.”

Jon said he likes the idea of collaborative ministry.

“The congregation and I discern what new thing God is calling us to do and reach out to the community with the gospel of Jesus Christ,” he said. “My focus emphasizes God’s grace and forgiveness for all people.”

The Mapas have a 24-year-old daughter, Catherine Mapa, who lives in Rapid City.

For hobbies, Carol enjoys reading, watching movies, hiking, quilting and dabbling in pottery.

Jon also loves doing pottery (he has a potter’s wheel) and walking and camping.

“I hope to find other artists,” he said.

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