

Zion Lutheran Member “Spotlight” – Fred & Dixie Ray

By Ken Picking



The first Sunday of every month, Fred and Dixie Ray are Greeters welcoming parishioners and visitors to the 10:45 a.m. Service at Zion Lutheran.

The Rays are unmistakable – dapperly dressed and glowing as they greet.

Rays of Sunshine, so to speak.

“That’s how you get to know the new members,” says Fred, also a regular usher who proudly owns over 200 silk neckties hanging on a closet spin-rack.

Fred’s favorite? A handmade floral bought on a trip to Italy. “For special occasions,” he says with a twinkle.

Fred’s mother Leta Mae always insisted her sons dress sharply at all ages when growing up in Orrville’s Augsburg Lutheran Church, where Fred remains a member of 70 years.

Dixie Sue, a farm girl who graduated from Northwestern High School, always looks business stylish coming from a corporate culture at Buehler’s Fresh Foods. Daughter of Paul and Audrey Hines, Dixie experienced the transition from hand-written accounts receivable to computer data.

An Orrville native, Fred retired after 50 years in the automotive business, working his way up from “go-fer,” then mechanic/technician, and into management. He started at Snyder Ford in Orrville, then to Dale Becker Ford, later to become Pallotta Ford.

“Customer Satisfaction was the key for people to spend a lot of money on vehicles over the years,” says Fred.

Becker Ford is where Fred and Dixie met. Fred worked in the shop and Dixie in the office with her sister. “I left when I could tell things were getting serious,” Dixie says giggling.

It was a whirlwind courtship. They were married in 1974, only months after being introduced by Dixie’s sister.

The Rays moved to Wooster and, 30 years ago, settled into their home on Blachleyville Road. Not surprisingly, the property is as impeccably presented as the Rays are at church. The finely mowed lawn, shrubs and flowers, landscaping and house are picture-perfect.

“It takes a lot of work,” says Dixie, “but we love it.”

The “Ruler” of the Residence, says Dixie, is 16-year-old Maine Coon cat Makala Louise.

The Rays enjoy dining out and attending car shows. They plan to travel more.

Pastor Nathan made Fred and Dixie feel welcome when they started attending Zion in 2004.

“He was a go-getter,” says Dixie. “He put the ‘fear of God’ in you, at least he did me. Pastor Nathan made sure you got involved, attending events like a chicken barbeque.”

Fred sees the same leadership in Pastor Marty.

“There was a time when people were leaving the church,” says Fred. “That’s changing. Pastor Marty is bringing people back and adding new people, too. It’s a good time to be at Zion.”

And it can all start with the first hand you shake.

Often, that hand extended comes from Fred or Dixie Ray.