“This was my first call into the church,” said Kurt Hatteberg when discussing his new position as pastor at St. Paul’s Lutheran Church in Amherst and Venango, Neb. Having been in Amherst for only a couple weeks, Hatteberg already feels very close to the congregation and the community.

Before he and his wife Suzan came to Amherst, Hatteberg spent most of his life living in Minnesota. There he was a farmer in a town not much bigger than Amherst. So moving to rural Colorado, he said, was no shock for him.

After spending his life in one place as a farmer, his new career and location seem curious. Hatteberg gladly shared his story.

In his former church they went without a permanent pastor for three years. Although they got by, the experience opened Hatteberg’s eyes to a need for pastors, especially in small towns.

Missions work was the first thought Hatteberg had, but after discussions with his wife and others, he made the decision to attend seminary and become a pastor.

Leaving Minnesota, Hatteberg gave up the comfort of his home and church and close proximity to his children and grandchildren to pursue a new path he was called to. While the transition had the potential to be difficult, he said the incredible amount of support and encouragement along the way made it possible.

“It’s hard to leave one place, but they’ve been so receiving here,” he said. “It feels like I’m coming home; this is home.”

Hatteberg attended Riverland Community College for his undergraduate studies starting in 2001. Following his completion there, he went to Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Ind. Admittedly, it was tough to get back in the swing of things, but going back to school was very rewarding.

Relationships were built at seminary that have been very helpful as the graduates go out and begin their lives as pastors.

Speaking on the church family, Hatteberg commended the sense of community between the Holyoke, Amherst and Venango Lutheran churches. It’s like an extended family, he said, that reaches even past these communities.

In the future, Hatteberg believes there will be growth in the church because there is a good faith in the community, and they have a good outlook and attitude.

The congregation has been welcoming and helpful as their new pastor adjusts. They will undoubtably be essential to the growth that Hatteberg hopes for.

Between getting settled in and working at the church, Hatteberg and his wife have been getting to know the area. They’ve enjoyed trying new restaurants, meeting new people and traveling around nearby towns.