The legacy of South Dakota’s Reinhold family, outside of good horses, Hereford cattle, family and faith, may be their ability to find the rainbow after the storm — even in drought-stricken country.

A weathered outfit
Located near Sturgis, S.D., the Reinholds’ Lonetree Ranch was settled in the 1900s by Larry Reinhold’s grandparents, Emmanuel and Hazel. Emmanuel, a proud Swede, came from the old country of Minnesota, where, as Reinhold jokingly impersonates, he put “yam and yelly” on his toast. When the initial 160 acres was homesteaded, the land was still open range. Hazel used to say with a number of large cattlemen in the area vying for land, established ranchers were eager to “hang a hon yocker from the nearest tree.” Fittingly, the family settled on Lonetree Creek and began what is now a 100-year tradition of raising cattle in the shadow of a cottonwood tree along the creek.
After a short go with Shorthorn cattle, the family transitioned to a Hereford outfit. They maintained a registered operation from the 1960s into the ‘90s, and some registered individuals remain in what is now a commercial herd. Reinhold has purchased bulls and heifers from the Feddes family in Manhattan, Mont., and bulls from the Bakers in Rapid City, S.D. and the Fawcett family in Ree Heights, S.D., to add to the herd.

Calving, once done in the fall, now happens in the springtime. Calves used to be retained for at least a year but are now marketed and sold earlier through local sale barns, namely based on the drought which has “kicked them in the teeth.”

Reinhold says they are currently down to 150 cows. “It’s a drought thing, but it kind of looks like we’ll be able to hold on to them. Keep praying.”

“(South Dakota) is such a land of extremes,” Robin, Reinhold’s wife, says. Robin hails from the southern Black Hills and a cattle operation, where Reinhold’s late father, Tige, sold bulls to Robin’s father in the 1970s. After attending college in California, Robin returned to South Dakota and has since been ranching at Reinhold’s side. “It goes from 30 below in the winter to 100 plus in the summer with storms and droughts. But honestly, it’s all we’ve ever known.”

Managing a cow herd in drought years has been as much of an exercise in faith as it has been in feeding and finances. The Reinholds’ eldest child, Rachel, says cattle were fed hay at the onset of August until they were moved to grass in late May. Availability of hay has been slim pickings, so they had to truck it in from nearly 250 miles away.

In an effort to minimize hay usage, the family began using supplement blocks, resulting in about a 30% reduction in hay consumption.

“We’re trusting that God will provide the rain and it’s going to be a better year than last year,” Rachel says.

**Ranching religiously**

Their strong faith provides more than hope at Lonetree Ranch. Each summer, the family’s working ranch is home to hundreds of kids participating in the Rainbow Bible Ranch youth ministry camp.

Rainbow Bible Ranch and Lonetree Ranch are intertwined so campers can see a working ranch

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in action. Even in a state known for its ranching heritage and future, nearly all of the campers are generations removed from such a lifestyle. Many are the children or grandchildren of people who appreciate the ranching way of life and want their children to experience it as well.

In 1979 the first camp saw the ranch throw open its gates with 27 kids in attendance, ready to learn about ranching and agriculture firsthand. This year, the camps will see 500 participants aged 6-18 from all over the country, with nine sessions taking place over 10 weeks.

“It’s been a blessing,” Reinhold says. “We’ve met lots and lots of people. We feel it’s a great place to use the horses and the family ranch and agriculture. It’s a great place to share Biblical principle and lessons in real life. And it’s a good opportunity to share being an advocate for agriculture.”

The camp leaders, in addition to the Reinhold children, all come from past camps. “Legacy 2 kids” return as role models for younger campers, exemplifying the power of the camp experience and the sense of ownership and belonging that comes with it.

“People often ask if these are troubled kids and I say we try to get them before they get in trouble,” Reinhold quips.

Teaching kids to have a heart for agriculture often begins with their stomachs. All of the beef served during the camp comes from Lonetree Ranch cattle, an avenue through which the family can both assure the wholesomeness of the meals and illustrate the end product of the ranch.

Moving and working cattle is part of the camp, and Reinhold credits the gentle nature of the Hereford breed to allow inexperienced kids the opportunity to gain confidence and an appreciation for good cattle. The breed also demonstrated its value during Storm Atlas. While tens of thousands of cattle died in the storm, the Reinholds lost only a handful of Herefords, which they attribute to the breed’s hardiness, hides and disposition.

Many life lessons present themselves naturally like the birth and, sometimes, the death of a ranch animal. Reinhold recalls one instance when a saddle horse ridden by one of the camp wranglers died of a heart attack in the middle of a ride.

“We had a bunch of kids around and here they see something just die,” he says. “That’s life. When Storm Atlas hit us a few years ago, we lost nearly 100 head of horses, most of our good camp horses. That hit kids because they knew those horses.

“As painful as it was, we saw how God worked it and people saw the brevity of life,” he adds. “It showed us not to take for granted what God has allowed us to enjoy.”

God’s plan
The concept behind Rainbow Bible Ranch came from Reinhold’s brother, Lyle. Reinhold and his parents, Tige and Vicky, committed to support Lyle with the camp after much consideration and prayer.

“I guess God had different plans for us, though,” Reinhold says. “On Memorial Day of 1979, I lost my brothers in a drowning. It was after that dad, mom, my sister, and I said if it was God’s will to pursue something like a ministry camp, we needed to think about it and we decided to go for it.”

The Hereford breed has served the Reinhold family well through tough winters and drought years.
Both of Reinhold’s brothers, Lyle, 19, and Lee, 17, died in the incident their parents witnessed. The camp’s success has been a positive experience for the family, especially in light of losing Lyle, who was unable to see his idea for the camp come to fruition.

“To God be the glory; it’s neat how you can take something that the world looks at as a tragedy and allow it to become something that is a victory,” Reinhold says.

A family effort
Besides the camp sessions, Reinhold and Robin host a number of dinners and fellowship gatherings including a reunion service during the Black Hills Stock Show. Men’s Day brings nearly 200 men to the ranch for a meal, fellowship and other various activities. Other events include a Valentine’s banquet; a Christmas event, Birthday at the Barn, with a live Nativity scene; and RBR at RBR, which highlights beef at the aptly named Ribs Brisket Roundup at Rainbow Bible Ranch. Giving back to the community is a priority for the family. In their part of the country, community spans many more miles than in some other places, making it all the more important.

Reinhold claims the strength of the family and the business relies heavily on commitment to the family. “People in agriculture are fairly strong willed,” he says. “That crosses the generations, too. I can honestly look back with my dad and it’s not that we always agreed but we did agree on one thing, that we would love each other no matter what.”

Keeping the next generation on the ranch is vital to its success. “We have the best opportunity to keep the next generation involved in agriculture as farmers and ranchers,” the proud father explains. “You can’t do that with the average business in town. We can pass on more legacy and more heritage here on the farm and ranch than any other business. That has to be priority. Make sure the kids want to come back.”

The Reinhold family, itself, is one more generation in the making of that legacy. The couple’s six children have all found their role within the various facets of the operation. Rachel, the eldest, has returned as a manager, and Reinhold admits she knows the cow herd better than he does. She also serves as a wrangler during the summer camps. Molly, next in line, returned to the ranch after attending Bible college in Oregon and serving on a mission trip to Haiti. High school senior Danny, 18, is the resident farmer and mechanic on the operation. Caleb, 15, has proven to be a hand with the horses, and Julia, 12, finds herself in charge of the variety of small animals at the ranch. Kiersten, the youngest, has an appreciation for livestock and people, alike.

The positive influence of the camp helps ease the strain of blizzards, dry years and low cattle prices. “I look at how my parents allowed it not to be an end, but rather a beginning to something that is, by far, bigger than us,” Reinhold reflects. “We like our horses and we like our cattle, but I can honestly say that the camp and the people aspect is the rewarding part.”

Just as the rainbow was a sign to Noah of the end of the incessant floods — a biblical token of God’s promise of mercy and love — so does the rainbow provide hope to all who enter the gates of Rainbow Bible Ranch. \[HW\]