

Good afternoon. Welcome to Calvary as we gather to honor Ed and to surround Dottie and their families with our love. It was my privilege last fall to receive Dottie and Ed into this parish family, although Ed's presence here was scarce, and it is my privilege now to preside at the burial office for Ed.

You all know, I think, that Ed was a retired Episcopal priest. As part of his seminary training before ordination, Ed took CPE (Clinical Pastoral Education), which involves working as a hospital chaplain, while also reflecting on one's experiences as a chaplain with a structured group in order to learn about oneself and how better to offer pastoral care. Dottie shared with me a story from Ed's CPE course that I'm sure moved Ed to the head of the class. In the hospital where he was working, members of rival motor cycle gangs had been admitted for injuries, apparently as the result of some sort of rumble between them. Members of both gangs had gathered at the hospital, not in a spirit of reconciliation but as an extension of the conflict, each blaming the other for injuries to their member. Instead of calling security, as one might expect, the hospital's practice in such cases was to call the chaplain to try to stem the escalation of conflict.

Ed was the lucky student chaplain on call, so (to borrow a biblical phrase) he girded his loins and entered the situation. Walking into a room of large, angry, armed, and aggressive men, Ed knew better than to lecture these bikers on the error of their ways or to invite them to sing a verse of Kum Ba Ya. Instead, Ed perched on a counter and engaged both sides in conversation. With sterling pastoral instinct, he found a point of shared passion by asking them about their motorcycles. They responded like all enthusiasts, with detailed and proud descriptions of their wheels. When one of them mentioned a weapon, Ed asked if they were armed. Learning that they were, he invited them to show them his weapons, not so that they could be confiscated but so that Ed could admire and appreciate them. I don't know whether Ed ever got around to praying with them for their injured friends, but the tension in the room dissolved. Perhaps it was because Ed had honored them by showing interest in who they were and what they loved, not just in their potential for causing trouble. And I think he had carved out a moment of truce by reminding them that they shared more than enmity, the way that fans of rival football teams can drink together as friends after both teams have been knocked out of the playoffs.

By the time I learned this story, I had talked with Ed enough to picture him sitting on that counter, legs swinging, looking into the eyes of those men. I knew that Ed had made them feel seen because I had felt that way with Ed, even when he was dying and talking to me from a hospital bed in his living room, even when the purpose of my visit was to discuss his wishes for his funeral. As someone who had spent years as a hospice chaplain, Ed understood well the hard work of dying that lay ahead of him, but he was still gracious, still curious about the world of the living. Even then, I felt the hospitality and acceptance of Ed's gaze. Even then, I felt the generosity of his heart, his willingness to receive the other and give them his full attention, trusting they had gifts to offer in return. Ed had the heart of a pastor, and they don't hand those out in seminary.

First as a youth minister and then as a missionary in Scotland, Ed ministered to others long before the sacrifices he made to go to seminary. I didn't know Ed for very long or well enough to trace all the influences in his life that led to his decisions to serve others in his various fields of mission. But surely Ed's heart was formed most of all by his encounter with the risen Christ. Just as I can picture Ed perched on that hospital counter, I can picture him standing like Martha in John's gospel, face to face with Jesus, full of questions but also willing to trust in Jesus even when there were no answers other than faith. Secure in the truth of Jesus as God's son and in the promise of resurrection into the eternal life of the Trinity, certain that after the pleasures and suffering and indignities of this life of the flesh, he would behold God on his side, Ed had nothing to fear. Beloved of God, he could love others with God's heart. Embraced by Christ, Ed was free to be gracious to strangers--to hostile bikers in a hospital waiting room, to the dying in hospice care, even to the unfamiliar woman and priest who came to his home to share the sacraments of Eucharist and Unction and to speak of last things.

Because Ed shared God's heart so freely in his ministry, in his relationships, in the songs that he wrote, Ed died beloved, not only of God, but of Dottie, their families, former parishioners, fellow clergy, fellow musicians, some of whom are with us today to celebrate his life, and many, many friends. Together we offer to God both our grief and our thanksgiving for Ed's life and witness, confident that Ed will stand before the throne of God, no longer suffering, but refreshed by the springs of water of God's eternal life. Amen.