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DOUG OLSON / 1932-2009

## Innovative isle pastor dies

[By Mary Adamski](#)

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The Rev. Doug Olson retired in 2002 after 33 years as pastor of Calvary-by-the-Sea Lutheran Church, but his work as minister and mentor never ended.

He continued as chaplain for the FBI Honolulu district and taught classes at the FBI Academy in Quantico, Va., each year. He was also counselor to Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous groups and to the staff of the Winners Camp youth leadership program.

Thousands of couples were married by Olson through the past 40 years, and he continued to perform weddings until last month, when he was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer.

Olson, 77, died Wednesday at his Honolulu home.

An innovative pastor, he brought modern music and performing arts into the mainline Protestant church he served decades before it became the norm in the new wave of evangelical megachurches. During his tenure, the Aina Haina church was reconfigured from traditional sanctuary to glass-walled amphitheater overlooking the shoreline.

With that photogenic backdrop and his ability to speak Japanese, Olson became one of the first pastors to do Japanese weddings, a work he continued after retirement.

"He was training for the Honolulu Marathon when he got sick, his 42nd marathon," said son Rick Olson. He said his father, knowing he had a short time to live, "got all of the family to be here for Christmas. There was as much laughter as tears in this household," with four generations of the family gathered. "We laugh in the face of adversity in our family. What else was Clown Sunday all about?"

The pastor would don the costume and makeup of a clown in services to dramatize his message.

"Doug's belief was that when people learn about Christ, it was a transformational experience," said



**Doug Olson:**  
*The pastor of Calvary-by-the-Sea utilized music and clowns*

John Travis. "The major clowns were people in the congregation ... who had gone through some tragedy, like alcoholism or losing somebody, and through Jesus were healed and transformed. He taught something experientially; you got it in your bones. He counseled a lot of men, and he counseled a lot of alcoholics."

Olson backed his late wife Ivy's creation of the Angel Network, a 1980s outreach to needy families. At its peak, several churches joined in providing homes for homeless families. Since her death in 2002, it operates a food pantry that provides food for 1,500 people a month.

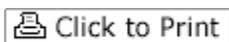
"When he ran the marathon, Doug would use it to raise funds for Angel Network, asking people to pledge money for his run," said Nyki Silberstein. "Service was such a big part of who he was." She said the church choir, hula dancers and musicians went to Olson's home to bring Christmas music to him and the family Dec. 23.

As chaplain since 1994, "He was a friend and ally to the FBI and victims of crime, a counselor and mentor," said agent Tom Glorioso, speaking on behalf of Special Agent-in-Charge Charlene Thornton.

Olson was born in Haynesville, Minn., and graduated from St. Olaf College and Lutheran Northwest Seminary in St. Paul, Minn. After being pastor of a Fort Worth, Texas, church, he spent four years as chaplain to federal workers on Wake Island. He is survived by sons Daniel, Olaf and Rick; daughters Sara Petruna and Dawn Olson; stepsons Kevin and Andrew Armstrong; brother David Olson; sister Carolyn Canfield; 13 grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren.

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