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## Doug Olson led life of 'service to people'

*By Curtis Lum  
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The Rev. Doug Olson dedicated his life to serving others, whether he was helping to shelter the homeless, counseling troubled adults and youth, or fighting for the rights of minorities.

Olson served as pastor for the Calvary-by-the-Sea Lutheran Church in 'Āina Haina for 33 years before retiring in 2002. During his tenure, the congregation grew tenfold and the church got involved in many programs and projects to help those in need.

Olson, who continued to work after his retirement by performing weddings and serving as chaplain to many agencies and organizations, died Dec. 30 in Honolulu. He was 77.

"He structured his life on being of service to people," said daughter, Sara Petruna. "He counseled people. He had that gift of seeing through what is reality and what you really needed to take care of in your life."

His message was that of sharing, giving and caring for others, she said.

And if there was anyone who truly practiced what he preached, it was Olson.

He was active in the civil rights movement in the early 1960s in Texas when activism wasn't the "in" thing to do. He participated in a Civil Rights Leadership Conference that was convened by President John F. Kennedy and his brother, Attorney General Robert Kennedy.

Olson served as the chaplain for many agencies, including Alcoholics Anonymous, the Hawai'i prison system and the FBI.

He also opened his home to foster children and families in need.

"I had many calabash kids in our home growing up. Everyone was welcomed," Petruna said. "We had an open-door policy. People would just come in so they wouldn't be alone. I grew up that way and that's what he taught me."

Olson was the longtime chaplain for the FBI in Honolulu and would often volunteer at the agency's facility in Quantico, Va.

"He was one of the original FBI chaplains and he took that position very seriously," said Charlene Thornton, FBI special agent in charge in Honolulu. "He regularly visited our office and really was part of the FBI family. He was here for the celebrations and he was always here during difficult times to minister to our employees and help them through the difficult times."

### **sermon with guitar**

Petruna said her father preached "God with a sense of humor" and Olson would sometimes show up unshaven in jeans and play his guitar while giving a sermon.

It was this ability to place people at ease that drew many to his church.

Jon Osorio, an entertainer and professor at the University of Hawai'i Kamakakuokalani Center for Hawaiian Studies, began attending services at the church in the 1980s and became a regular parishioner in 1992. Osorio, who is active in the Native Hawaiian rights movement, said at first it was a challenge for him to embrace any Christian church because he was so "deeply suspicious of missionaries and the church in Hawai'i."

But over time, Osorio said he was struck by Olson's compassion and view of society that was "so different from any other Christian pastor I've ever heard."

"It was always about God's love for all people, regardless of who they were or where they came from," Osorio said. "He never deviated from that."

## helping homeless

Osorio cited the Angel Network Charities organization that Olson's wife, Ivy, created with her husband's help in 1989 as an example of the charitable work of the Olsons. The Angel Network serves homeless people, helping thousands find homes, and feeding even more over the years.

Ivy Olson died in April 2002, but the organization continues to serve the community.

Olson didn't shy away from controversy. He was one of the first to perform weddings for Japanese visitors and also performed marriage ceremonies for gay couples.

"He didn't judge people by their choices. It's who they are," Petruna said. "His belief was that it wasn't something that people would come to be counseled and that they could be 'cured.' This is not something you cure, it is just who you are and you either learn to accept that or you choose to cut that self off from yourself."

Olson is survived by children, Rick, Olaf, Dawn and Daniel, and Sara Petruna; stepchildren, Andy Armstrong and Kevin Armstrong; sister, Carolyn Canfield; and brother, David.

Memorial services are set for Jan. 29 at 2:30 p.m. at Calvary-by-the-Sea Lutheran Church.

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