

Historians have noted the rapidly dwindling size of that Greatest Generation, veterans of the Second World War who survived depression and conflict to become part of the most successful movement of citizens this nation has ever known. Park Road Baptist Church is on the cusp of a similar transition, as we have already begun saying goodbye to the men and women who built our unusually independent, yet very Baptist community called Park Road Baptist Church. As we bury them with tears and gratitude, we will return them to the earth of our humble beginnings - and for these who gave their lives to this church, it is an appropriate, symbolic rest - for they have been our foundation, and they will remain so, forever.

Dot Austin was one of the solid stones of our foundation. Her life revolved around a little church on the corner of Ashcraft and Park, and that church grew in strength and integrity in no small part because of the quiet strength and the unwavering integrity she lived in this place for more than a half-century.

Dot was many things... daughter, wife, teacher, cook, friend, class member, neighbor... and her children speak of her mothering in idyllic terms, which are surely not be far from the truth. Yesterday Martha shared with us an anonymous reflection on motherhood - it is a reflection which she and Kevin will certainly experience for years to come:

“Your mother is always with you. She’s the whisper of the leaves as you walk down the street. She’s the smell of certain foods you remember, flowers you pick, the fragrance of life itself. She’s the cool hand on your brow when you’re not feeling well. She’s your breath in the air on a cold winter’s day. She’s the sound of the rain that lulls you to sleep, the colors of the rainbow; she’s Christmas morning. Your mother lives inside your laughter. She’s the place you came from, your first home, and she’s the map you follow with every step you take. She’s your first love, your first friend, even your first enemy, but nothing on earth can separate you, not time, not space... not even death.”

We come this day to celebrate, because not even death can separate us from the good, good life, of Dot Austin. And we come to give thanks to God, who was the source of her mothering love. Let us worship God together.

Family Reflection:

I called a good friend Saturday to tell him the news of my mother passing. He commented that he was once told, losing your mother was like losing your best friend.

I've thought a lot about that since Saturday and have come to realize just how true that statement is. Who else but my mother would tell me they loved me every time I was blessed to be in her presence? Take the time to teach me when I needed to be taught? Hold me when I needed to be held? Encourage me when I had no courage? Who else would pick me up when I had fallen? Forgive me when I did not deserve forgiveness? Give me a direction when I was lost? Share the pain when I was hurting? Tend to me when I was sick? Was there every single time I needed her [and she did not respond to my need?] [And was there ever a time she] expected anything in return?

Who else but my mother and best friend?

I can close my eyes and hear her laugh. I can think of her smile and brighten my day. I can shed a tear, and she'll wipe it off. I can feel her presence, and she'll touch my heart. These are gifts she left with me I'll always cherish. I'll never take them for granted.

The only way I can think of to pay tribute to her is to love my own children as she loved me. I know deep in my heart she would be proud she was able to pass this on.

I'm satisfied that when God gave us mothers, this was his plan. I'll always be grateful for the one

he gave me. After putting [these thoughts] into words, however, I realize what my friend told me was only partly true. I haven't lost my best friend, for she is part of me. She's the gift God gave me that he would never take away.

I Love You Mom, Kevin

Written by Kevin Austin