

The things we do

By [Diane Roth](#)

July 2, 2014

One recent morning I got up early and put on my suit and my clerical collar. Even though it was a hot and muggy day, I was dressed up to go out to our city's National Cemetery for a graveside service for one of our congregation's World War II veterans. A genuine war hero he was, as well as a beloved father, grandfather, and friend.

First I had stopped into the office to check in on our Senior Matins group, who were having coffee and fellowship. I also saw a number of the Vacation Bible School children arriving for a day of fun activities. I had time for a couple of brief thoughts about Sunday's sermon. "Discipleship," I wrote down on the cover of a manilla folder. Not much to go on, but better than nothing.

The day before I had spent part of the afternoon drawing eyes with the children. We were instructed each to take a small mirror provided for us, and to look carefully at one of our eyes. Then we drew large, dark outlines of our eyes on large pieces of paper. The inside of each eye would be a collage of colors we found in magazines. We were encouraged to see all the different colors inside our eyes. They aren't just "blue" or "green" or "brown" or even "hazel." Take a look, and you will see.

The next morning, after writing "Discipleship" on the manilla folder, I got in my car and headed out to the cemetery for the graveside service. The honor guard fired their guns, the lone bugle played "Taps," the family received their flag. Ashes to ashes, dust to dust. In sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life, still we wept.

Later that day, I went over to the apartment of one of our elderly members who is making the transition from his home to a nursing home. He wanted us to look at some of his books, to see if the church might want any. Some belonged to him, some of his wife, some were from his father. Another member of the church had brought him back over to his home so he could be there while I went through his bookshelves, paging through the books, admiring them, choosing just a few. Ashes

to ashes, dust to dust.

Still later, I stopped in to see someone who is homebound while recovering from a fall. We shared communion and prayed. She said she is a terrible invalid; she is not good at being idle. We talked about the rain; I saw old silhouettes of her children when they were small, and portraits painted by a friend. "Not very good," she said, but I could see the resemblance.

While I did all this, I knew that the next day I would return my office, and see the word "discipleship" written on the manilla folder. I would have meetings where we would try to look into the future like the children studying the colors of their own eyes. I would play with the children, and pray with those who are lonely, and see what I could see.

Flecks of dust, shards of a life, beautiful fragments of colors—a collage of lives. Sometimes that is what I think ministry is like: it is living with this collage of lives, and somehow seeing, in the midst of it all, God's dream.

*Originally posted at [Faith in Community](#)*