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Some weeks later, I was attending an early meeting at the hospital. A fellow chaplain met me at the doorway of the conference room as the meeting ended. “Doug is back in the hospital.” Her face held the message I never wanted to hear. “Is he still alive?” I asked.

The tears filling her eyes answered my question. Doug had died on the ambulance ride to the hospital.

When I arrived at the bedside, his friends had left. I sat there, holding his hand and praying. He had come to be my friend and I could not leave him alone, especially knowing that one more procedure remained; the surgical team would need to remove the LVAD for study. Prior to their arrival, various hospital staff who had cared for him and had come to know his pure goodness visited at the bedside with me. Doug had touched so many lives. He cared about others. His genuineness was real.

The surgical team arrived and took him away – but not before I gave him one final blessing.

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