

Eulogy for
THE REV. DR. ROBERT HUGH CRAIG
Pastor Emeritus of St. Andrew Presbyterian Church
October 2, 1946 – October 19, 2019

From the Memorial Service
at St. Andrew Presbyterian Church, Albuquerque
Sunday, November 3, 2:00 p.m.
Pastor Roger Scott Powers, presiding

Robert Craig was born on October 2, 1946, in Wooster, OH, to William Charles Craig and Evelyn Pauline Camp. He was the second of two children. His brother, Scott, was born 12 years earlier. Their mother was a homemaker. Their father was a professor of speech and theater at the College of Wooster. Rob had a good childhood. He got involved in scouting and achieved the highest rank attainable – that of Eagle Scout.

He went to Ohio Wesleyan University where he majored in English literature. It was there, during his sophomore year, that he met Sharon. They dated through college and married in 1968.

Rob and Sharon then moved to Chicago, where Rob began his studies at McCormick Theological Seminary, and Sharon began her career as a special education teacher. While in seminary, Rob did his Clinical Pastoral Education at the University of Chicago Hospitals where he was one of Dr. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross's student researchers in her studies on death and dying. Rob was elected president of the student body at McCormick, and he earned both a Master of Divinity degree and a Master of the Science of Theology degree there.

Rob's first call out of seminary was to serve as the associate pastor of Second Presbyterian Church in St. Louis, Missouri. He also taught courses on death and dying as an adjunct faculty member at Eden Theological Seminary and at the St. Louis University School of Medicine. Years later, the Rev. Bill Hedrick became head of staff of the congregation, which led to a long and abiding friendship between Bill and Rob.

The Craig's daughter, Callie, was born in 1972, followed by their son, Will, born in 1974. And then in 1977, at the young age of 30, with a five-year-old daughter and a three-year old son at home, Rob received his first diagnosis of cancer. It was a difficult time for Rob and Sharon. They faced an uncertain future. Fortunately, Rob responded well to treatment and his prognosis was good, so he decided it might be OK to seek his next call.

When this congregation, St. Andrew, expressed interest in him, Rob was up front about his cancer diagnosis and treatment. St. Andrew called him, nevertheless, to be the church's third installed pastor. Rob was grateful that the congregation was willing to take a chance on him. In addition to his bout with cancer, it was his first call as a solo pastor. The six years that he was here, from 1979 to 1985, were years of significant growth for the congregation. During his tenure, the church launched a capital campaign, built this new sanctuary in which we are gathered, installed a new organ, and began sharing its facilities five days a week with the adult day care program Share Your Care. Sharon got very involved in the life of the congregation as well and became

an ordained deacon while at St. Andrew. Rob also hosted a weekly radio call-in program, "Religion on the Line," on ABC, which was broadcast in eighteen western states and parts of Canada and Mexico. He served on the Board of Directors of the New Mexico Conference of Churches. And he did further graduate study for a Doctor of Ministry degree, his third from McCormick. Reflecting on his time at St. Andrew, he once said: "Being pastor for the people of St. Andrew was one of the great joys of my life."

Rob went on to serve as associate professor and associate dean of McCormick Theological Seminary from 1985 to 1990. He also served six terms on the seminary's Board of Trustees. And he co-authored, with Robert Worley, the book *Dry Bones Live*, published by Westminster John Knox Press.

During the decade of the 1990s, Rob was pastor and head of staff of The New York Avenue Presbyterian Church in downtown Washington, D.C. While there he served on a White House Commission appointed by President Clinton to make recommendations about the future of the District of Columbia.

Rob and Sharon returned to New Mexico in 2000 when a call came in for Rob to become executive director of Ghost Ranch Education and Retreat Center. At that time, Ghost Ranch had two sites, its present site near Abiquiu and another in Santa Fe. Among Rob's many accomplishments at the Ranch were the merging of the Abiquiu and Santa Fe staffs and programs, shepherding the ranch through the elimination of approximately \$1 million annually in national church subsidies, and successfully completing the capital campaign that resulted in the construction of new guest accommodations, the Family Center, and the Agape Worship Center. He also was a member of the strategic planning committee for Rio Arriba County.

Rob's last pastorate was at the First Presbyterian Church of Columbus, Indiana, which was a wonderful context in which to complete his active ministry.

When Rob retired in 2013, he and Sharon returned to Albuquerque and made St. Andrew their church home. Rob helped bring into being St. Andrew's planned giving program with the creation of the Montgomery Circle and the Endowment Fund. He served on Santa Fe Presbytery's Commission on Ministry, was moderator of Laguna United Presbyterian Church, and participated in a board committee of the National Ghost Ranch Foundation. In addition, he volunteered as a chaplain with the Albuquerque Police Department. Sharon also did a lot of volunteering with local community organizations, and she continues to do so. Earlier this year, Albuquerque Mayor Tim Keller recognized Sharon as the city's "Senior Volunteer of the Year." And Rob was named the Albuquerque Police Department's "Chaplain of the Year," which meant a lot to him.

One of Rob's favorite leisure activities was playing golf. Soon after he became executive director of Ghost Ranch, Rob started a seminar entitled "High Desert Golf: The Hole in One and the Holy One." [Yes, he did have a punny sense of humor!] Over the course of a week, seminar participants received group lessons each morning led by golf pros Guy and Herb Wimberly and then played a round of golf together at a different course each afternoon. I attended several of those High Desert Golf seminars over the years. That's how I first got to know Rob and Sharon.

Rob and his brother, Scott, went on an annual golf outing together every fall in Michigan. They did so for 32 years. Fortunately, Rob felt well enough to join Scott for one last golf outing just weeks ago.

All Saints' Day is a time to celebrate the lives of ordinary people who have done extraordinary things in service to God and God's people, people who have made a difference in the church and in the world. Rob Craig was one of those people.

He was a man of good character and integrity. He was a gentle soul – humble and modest. He was calm, centered, even-tempered – a soft-spoken, non-anxious presence in stressful situations. He was open, welcoming, accepting of people from all walks of life. He had a generous spirit, always looking for ways to be of service to others.

When death came, Rob was ready. After a few days of laborious breathing he said, in typically thoughtful Rob Craig fashion, "At this point death is a friend." He believed and trusted that God, in Jesus Christ, has something good in store for us after death. He was resting peacefully at the time of his death, with Sharon, Callie, and Will at his bedside.

When anyone asked Rob how he was doing, he would always answer, "I'm grateful!" His gratitude came from his own keen understanding of just how precious is the gift of life.

In the notes Rob left concerning his memorial service, he wrote: "Please don't forget . . . I got a bad health deal as a young man, and I'm sad, and a little angry, about that. And it has had later health ramifications. But since then, I have been gifted with many surprising years of feeling good, sharing love, having fabulous experiences and friendships, the production of countless high quality puns, and two holes in one. While I don't really believe in making deals with God, I made one in 1977. I declared that if God would let me see Callie and Will graduate from high school, I'd take the deal. So, a day never goes by that I don't relish the amazing chance to love four grandchildren and the terrific spouses who married my offspring. I also have a loving extended family who I know have loved me. And wonderful Sharon has always made me better. Every day has been a gift and I have considered each moment precious. I have also had time to try to serve my God and to support my communities. I am grateful for all of that and have no regrets. It has been a wonderful life and I exit a happy man."

We give thanks and praise to God for Rob Craig and for his faithful life and ministry that touched so many people through the years. Thanks be to God. Amen.