

Creating Hope: Heidi Bogle

On a dark Friday night in January, my Mom got a call. “Eddie is dead.” The first responders didn’t want us to see his body, since he had been dead for at least 4 days.

Rollback 48 years, Eddie was a kind, sensitive and bright boy enjoying a healthy childhood. In the warm seasons, he would play wiffleball, football or basketball, keeping track of the scores for both teams, showing his brain power at a young age. In the summer, he vacationed at Shagg Pond, swimming, fishing, boating, building forts, having jumping contests with frogs, making card houses, playing board games and coming home to zucchinis the size of baseball bats. In the cold seasons, Eddie would shovel the court at Bacon Street playground to keep playing basketball.

Eddie was also an avid reader and used his imagination acting out historical battles in the backyard, while his sisters played under the bushes with their pet bunnies. Eddie continued to excel in both academics and athletics through High School and graduated from Bowdoin College in 1997. But after college he moved back into our parents’ basement, suffering from bipolar disorder. His behavior became irrational, paranoid and crazy and he went to jail for the first time in his early 20’s. For over 25 years he was in and out of Jails, ERs and treatment centers in both Massachusetts and NH. Eddie endured many traumas and setbacks related to mental illness and drug addiction, and there were many lows for me, my parents, and sisters as we tried to get him help over the years.

Enter the Community Church of Durham. We started coming to the church about 15 years ago and I feel so blessed by Pastor Dave’s support. He is fearless about leaning into the stormy issues and raw emotions that unfold. In my personal case it was having a brother with mental illness and addiction. He helped me cope with being Eddie’s sister during his tumultuous life and sudden death, facilitated a powerful family conversation with my Mom and 2 sisters in the wake of Eddie’s death—helping us unpack decades of complicated emotions with insightful compassion, and carried off a truly memorable celebration of life for a large gathering of friends and extended family from near and far, even while hobbling around with a torn Achilles!

Along with Pastor Dave’s leadership, so many members reached out and rallied during that time. I personally find it hard to know what to say when someone dies, but everyone found such heartfelt, meaningful words of comfort and sprang into action to handle all the logistics, so we could focus on being together.

My story is just one of many, shining light on the spirit of this church. We know roses have thorns and we embrace both the joy and pain life can bring. In these chaotic times, this church gives me hope that if we continue to share our stories and show up for each other, peace is possible.