

Holland remembered as a prankster who loved his community

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ANDERSON — Madison County Council President and Anderson firefighter Brent Holland, 47, was a prankster who substituted vinegar for water and led his co-workers to believe they had won the lottery.

"He was a spirit-filled, fun-loving, mischievous man," Pastor Tim Bailey said Saturday during Holland's funeral at Bethany Christian Church.

Attended by about 300 people, the funeral was steeped in firefighter traditions, including a firefighters' prayer by Bailey, a bell ceremony by Anderson Fire Department Chief Dave Cravens and retired chief Phil Rogers, a final radio call by Madison County Dispatch and a bagpipe tribute by Denise Mills.

"Brent believed in the traditions of the fire department. He loved those traditions and celebrated those traditions," Bailey said.

Everyone wants affirmation that they made a difference, but Holland, an Eagle Scout who earned the highest honor, the Order of the Arrow, did just that, Bailey said.

"He gave more than he took from life," he said. "He sincerely wanted to make his community a better place. You can clearly see Brent didn't just see his service as just a job."

Describing himself as one of Holland's "victims," Matt Brown said pranks were a way he showed love to his fellow firefighters and how he coped with the tragedy and heartache of being a firefighter.

"Brent's shenanigans only drew us closer to him," he said.

Brown called on the mourners to continue Holland's pranks of his brother-in-law, Tony Savia.

"Brent would have wanted it this way," he quipped.

On a more serious note, however, Brown said Holland wanted to make Anderson great again.

"He knew love was the only way to make change, so he loved with everything he had. He was the definition of love."

Todd Culp tearfully shared how he became friends with Holland as a 13-year-old.

"What I want to tell you about Brent is he was steadfast. He was there in the good times; he was there in the bad," he said. "I wasn't ready to lose Brent, but I am so thankful for the time I had with Brent."

Local singer Martha Green, who performed an arrangement of The Beatles' "In My Life" and the traditional "Amazing Grace," asked the mourners to give Holland a standing ovation, something he likely never experienced.

"This man is a rock star, and this is a celebration of his life," she said.

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