Bill Wendt, After St. Stephen’s

When St. Stephen’s parishioner Jenny Moore was dying from cancer in 1973, she asked Bill Wendt not to pray for her but to rub her feet. He realized that despite all his training he did not feel prepared to minister to those facing death and those left to grieve the loss. Two years later, Wendt founded the St. Francis Burial Society, to help people prepare for death.

In 1977, Bill Wendt resigned as rector of St. Stephen and the Incarnation to focus on death and dying. Wendt was a pioneer in yet another field, talking about death and dying long before it was acceptable, urging the community to take care of the grieving. Among the many people he worked with was Elisabeth Kübler-Ross (“On Death and Dying”).

In 1999, Wendt was nominated as Sufragans Bishop of Washington. He received a fair number of votes, but Ronald Haines received more. Haines became the Seventh Bishop of Washington in 1990 when the Rt. Rev. John Walker died.

Bill Wendt died on Sunday, July 8, 2001, during the morning service at St. Margaret’s Episcopal Church. He was 81. His ashes are interred in the church yard, on the east side of the church.