Unlike most of you here, I have only known Glen since I first met him last April at one of the receptions the search committee sponsored at the time I was selected to be the new Senior Minister. But even in that brief amount of time, I came to know him well enough to wish that I had known him for many years. My very first impression of him was of a man of a an extraordinarily sweet and humble spirit. That impression only became more deeply confirmed through this past year.

Glen was a man of great learning, who wore that learning lightly. There was no arrogance about impressing others with his knowledge. He enjoyed intellectual conversation, and his conversation was rich because he was a man of many books. Not only did he live among books and ideas his whole life, but even up until just before he died, one of the volunteer tasks he was still performing faithfully was collecting, sorting, organizing, and (probably reading!) the books that are donated for our Church fair. Just two weeks ago, he explained that the reason he came so early one Sunday morning was to have some time before church to go over and sort books for the fair.

Glen had a deep commitment to his faith—not showy piety but real, deep-down conviction about what his life was to be about, and he took his cues from his commitment to following the way of Christ, which for him, meant a continual engagement with the world around him, and particularly with a focus on addressing what was broken. Simply reading the list in his obituary of the various community organizations of which he was a part testified to his understanding that his faith needed to have hands and legs and feet in the real world in which he lived. Newsletter articles which he occasionally wrote always focused on the relationship between his faith as a Christian and his concern for the great issues of social justice. His was not a private spirituality removed from the world, but an engaged commitment to the needs of the poor, the homeless, the disadvantaged. Peacemaking was a frequent theme of his. One newsletter article in particular was a meditation on Jesus’ words, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God.” For Glen, there could be no higher aspiration than to be called “God’s child.”

One of the reasons the reading from St. Paul’s letter to the Corinthians came to my mind as an appropriate reading for this occasion, was because it seemed to me to capture his essence as a person who knew what genuine hope was about. That was confirmed for me when I spent an afternoon with him at his home a couple months ago. Many people, when they begin to deal with the afflictions of old age, can become despondent or grumpy and complaining. It’s understandable. Physical limitations can rob us of the ability to do the things that give life its zest. But instead of those hours being spent with me listening to Glen’s talk of his infirmities, instead, I listened to him tell stories about the important people and issues in his life; he told me about Beverly and what a team they made; he told me about his family and his pride in their accomplishments. He was very interested in discussing the latest political and social issues that he had strong feelings about, and of how he felt the church should be addressing them. In other words, instead of being in a retiring, winding down mode, Glen was fully in the moment, engaged as always. And that, I suggest, is because he was, in St. Paul’s words, always looking to future, not at the “momentary afflictions” of the present, but toward “the unseen—the eternal weight of glory,” God’s future toward which we strive in faith and hope.

So, though we will greatly miss his gentle, encouraging, and engaged presence among us, I believe Glen would wish that all of us could lift our eyes beyond “the momentary afflictions,” to catch a glimpse of that unseen future that is only visible through faith and hope. And in the strength of that glimpse to commit ourselves more fully to the task of engaged action that bears witness to the reality of that hope. Farewell, and onward, Glen, child of God.

The Rev. Larry R. Kalajainen  
Scarsdale Congregational Church  
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