

Charlotte Swatkins:  
Thanksgiving for a Life 9/12/15  
The Rev. Dee Anne Dodd  
St. Paul's, Wallingford CT

*In the name of God who is love.*

Here's how I first met Charlotte Swatkins.  
Six years ago I was the new rector making the rounds  
introducing myself to our folks at Masonic.  
En route to meet Charlotte I was cut off at the pass  
by the familiar, grinning face of her sister Gloria Hocking.  
(In fact, we see that same grin right now when we look at Shawn...)

As a faithful 8:00er who already knew me,  
Gloria took it upon herself to escort and introduce me to her sister Charlotte.  
Very thoughtful.  
That was the beginning of me learning the intricacies of  
the extended Swatkins' clan (and we've all learned even more  
here today from Pam's lovely remembrance.)

So I'm confident that what I'm about to say will be taken the right way:  
*Charlotte Swatkins is exactly where she wants to be today.*

As much as she loved each of you, and didn't want to cause heartache.  
As much as you miss her ...  
Charlotte was ready for the next glorious stage of life's journey.  
To use a phrase, she was ready to move upon a new dance floor.  
And she made that very clear to me, our lay Eucharistic visitors  
and some of you.

May I suggest that, among other things, this is a product of a life well-lived?  
May I suggest that this is a sign of boldness (as we heard in Pam's remarks)  
and deep faith?

How fitting, then, are the readings chosen for this occasion.

That first reading from the Hebrew book of Ecclesiastes  
describes life's changing seasons.  
That second reading from St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians  
describes love beyond the boundaries of this life and the next.

And the gospel reading from St. John offers the words of Jesus himself promising a place for Charlotte (and for each of us) prepared before the beginning of time.

A few days ago I asked Robin what she would most like us to celebrate about her mother.

Without hesitation, she said,

“the gift of hospitality – especially at Christmas.”

And then proceeded to share a cascade of memories ...

including the “world’s most delicious turkey”.

Makes me hungry just thinking about it!

But we know that beyond food, however important, what really creates those precious, lingering memories is companionship.

That sense of feeling welcome and being at home wherever you are.

The knowledge that someone *not only loves being with you*,

but *loves you* for who you are.

That’s what the Christmas hospitality of Charlotte Swatkins sounds like to me.

That’s surely a glimpse – magnified a thousand-fold –

of the love and welcome she’s received from her Savior Jesus.

And you know what else?

Because of the way she lived,

because of the way she danced through life,

it was a welcome that she was ready – even hungry – to receive.

So thanks be to God for that,

and now go out and live your lives likewise.

*Amen.*

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