

ALPINE ECHOES

The Living Legacy of Alpine Camp and Conference Center



A Note from Transitional Executive Director - Melody Johnson

As we are wrapping up 2021 there are a few things I wanted to share with you. As you know the delegates of the PSWC made the difficult decision and voted in April of 2021 to list the Alpine property for sale. The property closed escrow at the end of October. The property was sold to Mile High Pines (MHP), another Christian Camp not too far away. They plan to re-open the Alpine property with much of the same ministry that Alpine is known for.

To clarify any confusion - MHP is calling the property "Alpine Retreat Camp", and can be reached at camp@milehighpines.com or (909) 794-2824. The PSWC Alpine Camp and Conference Center non-profit will remain viable for several years and can continue to be reached at melody@alpine-cc.org or (909) 337-2687. Our new mailing address is 2470 Stearns St. #411, Simi Valley, CA 93063.

It was wonderful to see some of Alpine's supporters at our Living Legacy Gathering in September. Although I know that many of you were not able



The Redwood Lodge has undergone several renovations in the last 64 years, but has continued to be a place that offers a welcome rest for weary souls.

One of the endearing qualities of Alpine is the snow. As fickle as it can be, when it comes there is nothing better for recreation time than playing in it.



to attend, you were missed and your dedication over the years has been a tremendous blessing. The legacy of Alpine would not continue on without the prayers, volunteer hours, and financial sacrifices made by hundreds of individuals and churches over the last 64 years. Through your efforts I can testify that lives have been changed, and the Kingdom has grown. I have written a longer reflection piece that is at the end of this Echoes that I hope reflects my thoughts of the living legacy and love for Alpine that is shared by all of us.

As this is the last time you will officially be hearing from me, I just want to say one last time - "Thank You" for all the support, encouragement, and prayers over the last two years. As bittersweet as ending anything is, it has been an honor to serve Christ and all of you in this capacity. Please feel free to continue to reach out if you have questions, or stories to share. Connecting with so many of you has been such a blessing during this process.

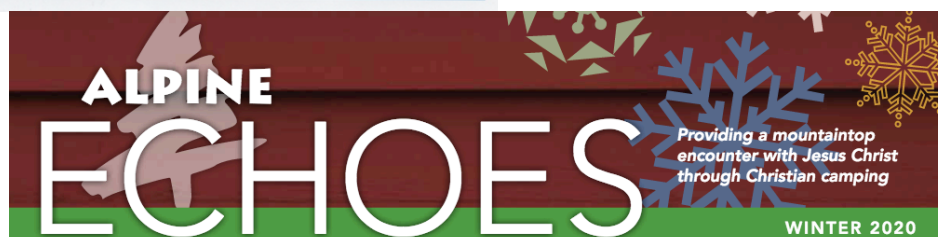
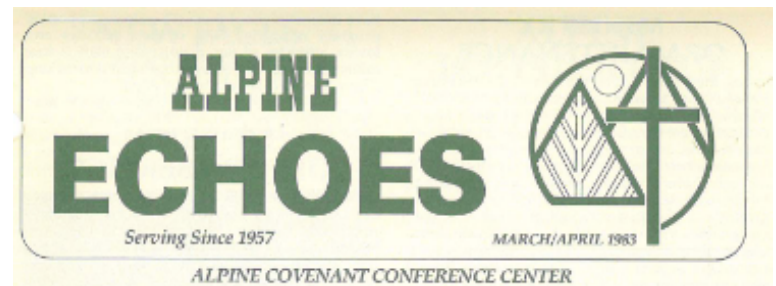
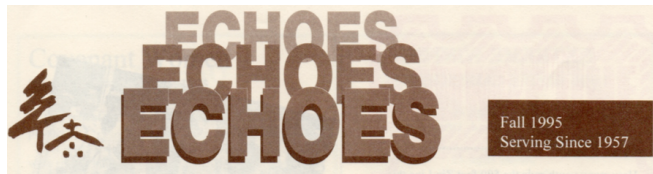
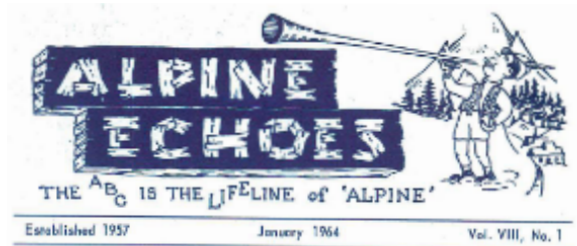
Peace and love, Melody



Just for fun - I wanted to take this opportunity to briefly reflect on what the last 60 years of ministry has looked like at Alpine. For starters here are some of the Echoes graphics. I am also in process of loading some Alpine archives and photos onto our website www.alpine-cc.org if you would like to take a walk down memory lane.



ALPINE ATTIC FIRST ANNIVERSARY EDITION - August, 1982



As I sit down on the eve of Alpine Camp and Conference Center's close of escrow I hope to give testimony to how God has worked not only in the last few years, but also of the 64 years that ministry has taken place on this piece of holy ground. I know that tears will soon begin to flow as I put words to the work God has done in my own life as a result of this special ministry. I also have the honor of speaking on behalf of countless others that have spent time at this special place; some who I have had the privilege to know, but many more that will remain unknown to me this side of eternity. The countless stories of how God has worked through Alpine, seem as numerous as the pinecones that drop from the trees every year.

I first stepped foot on the property of Alpine Camp in Blue Jay, CA in 1983 as a high school student. I had recently started attending Simi Covenant Church. I had been to church camps before, and I can't say that there is anything special from that first winter retreat that has stuck with me over the years. Yet God knew that first encounter at Alpine would change the trajectory of my life, and the camp would play an ever increasing role.

After attending a few winter retreats in high school, I had the opportunity one summer during college to work on the staff as a counselor. That summer was amazing for all the ways one can imagine: making new friends, living in Christian community, and sharing about Jesus with hundreds of kids. But that summer I also learned about grace and got to experience it first hand. I will not go into details here, but that summer I made one of the stupidest decisions of my young adult life. I was shown grace and compassion and that God is a God of second chances. That experience has stayed with me throughout my adult life. It definitely helped develop and build my Christian witness and character. I know that many of the ways I live and minister go back to that experience, and the lessons that God taught me in the summer of '87.

That summer God also introduced me to my future husband. A boyfriend was the last thing I was looking for that summer, and God did not give me a boyfriend but a person that would become my best friend and later my spouse. As part of this relationship, God also gave me a far deeper connection to Alpine than I could ever have imagined. My husband Steve had started coming to Alpine in his mother's womb, and his Grandfather was one of the founding board members that helped to purchase the property for the Covenant back in 1957.

There was a group of Southern California Covenant Churches that wanted their own camp to bring their youth together. It was not that they didn't love Mission Springs, it was just too far to travel to very often (and I can't even fathom driving through central CA during summer with no A/C or power steering), and finding spots to rent in Southern California was becoming increasingly difficult. Through a series of events that must have been God ordained, they ended up purchasing a small recently closed down resort for the Hollywood elite called the Arrowhead Alpine Club. Over the years the camp grew in acreage and buildings. A chapel, garage, dorms, houses, and various out buildings have been added. Most of the original buildings still stand and have been remodeled making sure to keep the charm of their 1930s construction.

From the humble beginnings of the camp, lives have continued to be changed through the ministry of Alpine. Thousands of children, youth, and adults have heard the call of God on their lives here. My personal faith journey is so intertwined with Alpine that I know with great certainty that many of my values and much of how I view and practice ministry are because of the time I have spent in this special place. I have witnessed and heard story after story of individuals that met God and heard his call upon their lives while at Alpine. Volumes could be written about what God has done in the lives of campers, volunteers, and staffers. It might have been a moment in the chapel, during a quiet walk in the woods, or even while running around playing games on the field, that the voice of God was heard and a heart was opened in a new way toward the resurrection power of the cross.

Over the years I have come to know Alpine as a “Thin Place”. Thin places according to Celtic Christian tradition are places where the separation between heaven and earth is narrowed. Maybe it’s the gentle breeze that continually blows through the giant pines, the distinct smell of freshness, or the sounds of the birds and wildlife that we don’t generally hear at home. Whatever it is, there is an immediate sense that the Holy Spirit is very close when you open your car door upon arriving at 415 Club House Dr. Times have changed since the camps’ beginning. You definitely hear more cars and now there are planes flying overhead from time-to-time, but the overwhelming sense that God dwells in this place brings almost instant peace and refreshment to all who come stay at Alpine.

Growing up and living my entire life in Southern California, I don’t know much about seasons. There is a saying that in SoCal we have spring, summer and fire season. Since working and living at the camp for nearly two years, I have witnessed the changing of the seasons that happens in the mountains. Summer is hot and dry and wildfires are a real threat that keeps everyone on high alert all the time. The coyotes are seen during the day, looking for water and the dust covers your car so quickly, you give up washing it. The tension of summer slowly fades as the acorns start falling from the trees and the squirrels can be seen preparing for the cold. The days are still warm, but the nights are filled with a cool dampness that lets us know winter is just around the corner. With winter comes the snow and ice. Shoveling snow until our arms feel like they may fall off and planning trips to the grocery store around the next storm become the routine. The storms come less often and less intense, snow melting off before it needs to be shoveled ushers in spring. The daffodils begin blooming and the dogwood trees come to life. I have had a front row seat to witness how God created everything to have a season.

After several years of seeking God and prayerfully discerning what was next for the camp the Alpine and PSWC boards came to the painful decision that it was time to bring forth a motion to sell the property to the delegates of the Pacific Southwest Conference. In late 2019 they had hoped to re-vision and re-launch, even against all the obstacles, but when Covid-19 hit camps in an especially hard way, the board decided it was God’s timing for Alpine to enter a new season. This decision was not made quickly or lightly and with no idea of what a sale might look like. As much as we all hoped and prayed another camp would buy the property, and reopen it as a Christian ministry, we were unsure if there would be any buyers at all. Having served on the board, and then as the Transitional Director during this process, I can say this was not an easy decision for anyone.

During the process of putting the property on the market I knew I needed closure and talked with others that needed that as well. We needed a space to lament, cry, pray, and reminisce about all that God had done in our lives. That is why we decided to have a Living Legacy Gathering.

So what do we mean by a “Living Legacy”? We often talk about legacy only after a death, and the legacy is what continues to live on. I know my husband’s Grandfather Paul (the one who helped purchase Alpine) left a legacy, by teaching my husband how to work on cars, and fix just about anything around the house. I hope that some of that gets passed on to our daughter and her future children. Although our memories begin to fade and life keeps moving on a legacy will continue to live on. In the case of Alpine, the legacy lives on in each person that was transformed by this “thin place”, where God met them in a deep way. The legacy will live on in the ways they deal with co-workers, their spouses and children, and even how they treat the clerk at their favorite coffee spot.

As I write this reflection and have been able to hold onto this idea of living legacy, God also opened a door for the camp to be purchased by another camp: Mile High Pines. The property will be re-opened and continue to operate as a Christian camp. This was not a given when the delegates made the hard decision to sell. I came about through lots of prayer and hard work by some very passionate people. When it comes down to it, God is still the owner, but it will now be under new management. I think we can all celebrate and pray for the new caretakers of this place. I think this process has taught us that we must not take for granted that our special places will always be around. This is a time we need to reflect and be reminded that if something is important to us, then we must support it with our time, talents, and treasures. We should not just live in the glow of our cherished memories and assume someone else will do the work to keep any ministry alive. We all have a role to play in keeping anything we hold dear alive, and not just alive but thriving.

The season of Alpine camp under Covenant stewardship has passed and although there have been so many wonderful things happen that we need to celebrate, we do a disservice to ignore all of the painful mistakes that have been made over the years as well. Unfortunately, in the messiness of life and ministry, people make mistakes and hurt others, most often unintentionally, but at times through our own selfish desires and ambitions. I pray that we can repent of our sins in this last season, ask forgiveness of those we need to make amends, and move forward with the grace that God provides and that Jesus teaches so much about. Once we can do that I think we can move on to celebrate the new season before us. Things will look and feel different in this new season. The legacy might look different from what we had once hoped and desired, but seasons change for a reason and we can take comfort in the fact that God is still there. He is in the cool fall evenings and the glorious white stuff that falls from the sky. He is in the spring flowers and the dry summer heat. God does not change and we can celebrate that his plan was to keep this sacred piece of land a “thin place” for the next generation.

I have a photo on the bulletin board next to my desk of my husband’s grandfather and his three brothers out in front of the Alpine lodge. I’m not sure what year it was taken, but my guess it was before my husband was even born. I often gaze at this picture and I must admit I even talked to the “brothers” during the lonely winter months. They have all now passed on along with most of the camp founding mothers and fathers. I try to imagine how they would feel about the property being sold and a new chapter being written. I hope they know that their sacrifices were not in vain. That their hard work and perseverance made an impact both here on earth and in the Kingdom of Heaven. I hope they know that the legacy they built is living and it will continue to live on for generations to come. I hope they know how grateful I am that they created a place where I got to know God more deeply, and meet a Jesus that loves me for the mess that I am. And I think I can safely say I speak for thousands of others as well.