

Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church  
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Omaha, NE 68105-2380  
402-341-7730

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#### SEPTEMBER SUNDAY EVENTS

9:30 a.m. Worship Service at  
St. Luke's, 2315 I Street

Pastor - Rev. Dr. Damon D. Laaker  
Editor/Church Secretary - Brenda Spahr  
Organist - Colleen Jeffrey  
Sexton - Alma Lopez

Delivered to the Post Office August 26



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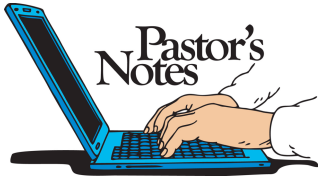
# THE GRACE MESSENGER

1889 - 2022



Inspired By Christ, it is our mission  
to share God's Word and Love in  
care and service to all.

**Connect with us on the web: [graceluth.com](http://graceluth.com)**



I have been thinking recently about faith and its capacity to help us engage in this Christian endeavor. What strengthens faith? What role does doubt play? Is doubt a positive, a negative or both?

In that regard, I have been reading a book by Brian McLaren titled "Faith After Doubt." He presents a four-stage process of thinking about faith development. The four stages are 1) Simplicity; 2) Complexity; 3) Perplexity; 4) Harmony.

The first stage is the one we are raised into. When we are born in infancy, our parents raise us in simplicity. As a child, we don't know what edible or inedible, safe or dangerous. We need to learn what is necessary for survival. We depend on our parents to teach us. The answers they often give are simplistic. This is right or this is wrong. Our survival is dependent on learning who is on our side and who is not. I find belonging as part of an in-group. McLaren suggests that many religions are super comfortable in a stage one framework.

The second stage is complexity. Certain things drive us out of simplicity. All of them are wrapped up with doubt. It is a very dynamic stage. I become more pragmatic than dualistic. I don't lose my dualism but now I want to learn how to negotiate a more complex world. I have to become independent to do this. I am oriented to coaches who teach me how to negotiate this. All is doable. There has to be a way to solve this. I need to develop skill or mastery. Within religious life, there is often messages that suggest three steps to do this or five steps to do that. People are voracious learners in this stage. People find meaning in individual and group-learning. This works well until it doesn't. Doubt steps in and we question and long for something more. McLaren suggests that a number of religions are comfortable in a stage two framework.

The third stage is perplexity. When the easy steps quit working, how do I deal with my skepticism? If stage one is dependent and stage two is independent, this stage is counter-dependent. I look back at

*Continued.....*

everything. Questions and suspicion are part and parcel of this stage of life. Everything is now subjective and deconstruct able. Maybe life is a protest or life is a quest. This creates significant pain and trauma because stage one and stage two are quick to point out the ways this doesn't work. This stage may be the deepest period of doubt. Many leave faith traditions in this stage. Others learn the lessons of this stage and after they have found meaning, seek honesty and justice then move to stage four.

The fourth stage is harmony. This is a stage of integral and non-dual thinking. We see things whole and we begin to feel interdependent. Heroes become sages or prophets who see something beyond. This is a place of contemplative engagement. I can live with the unknowable. Life is a gift and love is the point. I find meaning in universal love. I understand that God loves everyone and I join God in God's love for everyone.

Ultimately, McLaren suggests seeing these stages as rings on a tree. Each including the ring before, building on it, including it and transcending it into new capacities.

After each portion in the book, he provides questions to stimulate your thinking and observations. Where do you think you are in these descriptions? Where does doubt push you? I welcome your thinking and your exploration.

Pastor Laaker

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You are invited to participate in a short four session Bible Study entitles "Faith Working Through Love." We will be meeting online on Tuesday, Sept 6, 20, 27 and October 4. We will start at 7 pm and end at 8 pm. We will review four Bible passages with Dr. N. T. Wright; Titus 3: 1-11; Philippians 1:27-30, 2:14-18, 3:20-4:1, 4:4-9; Romans 12 and 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13. Please send me an email, if you'd like to participate. This way I can send you a Google Meet invite so that we can connect online.





## 2022 Council Members

Ron Adrian	Andrew Edwards	Sarah Emery
Ralph Fitle	Greg Hula	Janet Hula
Eva Martin	Brenda Spahr	Amanda Vazquez
Pastor Laaker		

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Officers Serving the Congregation:

Financial Secretary: Janet Hula      Treasurer: Ralph Fitle

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The regular meeting of the Council was held on August 9th. Council members shared prayer concerns for the situation in Ukraine, flood victims, students and teachers as they start back to school, the Steckelberg family, Spahr family friend Mike Hundahl who's battling cancer, and the ELCA churchwide assembly as it considers potential reconstitution.

Devotions: Devotions were led by Pastor Laaker, reading the selected verses in the "Daily Texts" from Psalm 119:63 and Acts 8:30-31. The first says God is a companion to those who fear you. The second reminds us that we often need a guide to better understand things as opposed to just figuring it out for ourselves.

Visions for Ministry: The author shares his closing thoughts about the future of the post-pandemic church, and encourages us to consider new possibilities rather than simply revert back to what it looked like before the pandemic.

Committee Reports: Reports were received from the Financial Secretary and the Treasurer. Please continue to give generously.

Christian Education: Vacation Bible School - Thanks to all who offered their time and support volunteering! We had about 9 kids, plus a couple teenagers. It was a fun afternoon packed full of activities.

Evangelism/Outreach: Grace Reads - Volunteers needed.  
Crossroads Prison Ministry - Sunday, September 18th at 6:00pm

Finance: Immanuel Vision Foundation - grant requests due October 31st

Property: Cox, Century Link (Quantum)

Service/Social Ministry: Restorative Justice Class 8/25 - court system class offering will be held here once a month.  
God's Work, Our Hands, Faith and Blue

Support/Stewardship: Make It Simple - Fall Emphasis

Worship: None

Unfinished Business: None

New Business: Joint Council Meeting - August 24th at 5:00 at Grace

Announcements: Greg will prepare a prayer for next month.

Adjournment: The Council meeting closed in prayer and adjourned at 8:49pm.

Respectfully Submitted, Amanda Vazquez, Secretary

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Grace Lutheran Church has some additional ways that you could contribute without spending any out of pocket funds.



Take a few moments of your time to download the app for TAGG - Together A Greater Good; they partner with several community business. Take a snapshot of your receipt so that some businesses will donate 5% to a charity of your choice (Grace Lutheran).

**While shopping online at smile.amazon.com you can designate Grace Lutheran Church as your charity of choice and Amazon will donate a percentage of your purchase to Grace.**

Register your Bakers Plus card with Kroger and choose Grace Lutheran as your charitable choice!

Saving your Family Fare, Bag & Save, No Frills, Fresh Market and SunMart receipts will benefit Project Hope. For every \$150,000 in receipts collected, Project Hope receives \$1,000 to use for dairy products. Receipts will be mailed to Project Hope monthly.

*Continued...*



And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.

*Ephesians 6:18*

**Please keep in your prayers the individuals listed below who have health issues and concerns:**

Vicki Cox  
June Hilmer  
Carolyn Matson  
Sue Mize  
Pam Reents  
Urbano Vasquez



Andrew Edwards  
Samuel Mantzaris  
Susan Miller  
David Nange  
Marilyn Van Ormer



**Pray for wisdom for your Church Council here at Grace Lutheran.**

Pray for the Council Members. Ask God to bless their ministry among us.  
Pray for strength and spiritual wisdom for the leaders in the local church and the Nebraska Synod:

Pastor Damon Laaker, Grace Lutheran Church  
Bishop-elect Scott Johnson, Nebraska Synod  
Bishop Brian Maas, Nebraska Synod  
Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, ELCA Bishop

Pray for the Sudanese community in general. David Nange and Charles Tuw are the elders for the Sudanese Worshiping Community.

*Let's encourage each other as we see God's hand in answering our prayers.*

**Pray for our Shut-ins and Nursing Home residents:**

Vicki Cox - Home  
Barbara Nelson - Life Care Center, Elkhorn  
Rev. Terry Nielsen - Echo Hills  
Marilyn Van Ormer - Home



All of our homebound enjoy receiving mail, if you would like to brighten their day, please call the church office for any addresses you need. Blessings!

## Stewardship

The day dawned cloudy with rain falling. The volunteers had gathered for the distribution of food at the Loaves and Fishes Pantry. Lots of good things to eat had been received from the donations by Trader Joes and Whole Foods. Additional donations came from a member of the congregation that learned of fresh sweet corn available at a very reduced price.

When 10 o'clock arrived, it was time to begin welcoming the guests. The cars had lined up on Poppleton Street awaiting the signal to enter the alley. The signal was given and the cars began pouring into the alley. It was noted that there were fewer cars in line this week.

Surprisingly, several of the guests expressed surprise that the Pantry was open due to the rain. They were glad they came. All the guests received many good fresh items to sustain them throughout the week.

The volunteers express heartfelt joy that they are able to gift the guests with wholesome food each week. We thank God for the generosity of the stores and the many others who help provide fresh food for people in need.

Generosity is a mark of God's goodness at Loaves and Fishes Pantry.

Pr. Laaker



Pastor Laaker will begin online Confirmation class on Wednesday, September 7, 8 pm. If you have a young person in grade 7, 8, or 9 that has participated last year, please drop Pastor Laaker a note to indicate continued participation. He will send a Google Meet link at the first of that week. If you have a young person who has not participated but would like to participate, drop him a note so that materials can be shared before the first class.





For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Ephesians 2:10

- ✝ Thank you Mary and Amanda for your weekly dedication running the recording equipment every Sunday during worship service.
- ✝ Thank you Ron, Donna and Brenda for taking care of the altar, and preparing communion.
- ✝ Thank you Mary, Janet, Donna, Ron, and Eva, for your faithful dedication in helping assemble the monthly Grace Messenger!
- ✝ Thank you Alma for keeping both Grace and St. Luke's clean and looking so welcoming to everyone who enters.
- ✝ Thank you to all Loaves and Fishes Pantry Volunteers; for delivering food items on Sunday mornings, unloading and putting foods items away until Monday mornings, getting everything ready for Mondays and in greeting and serving all with smiles, care and love!

Lutheran Women of Omaha  
Tuesday, September 13, 2022  
12:00 Noon

Join us at Bethel Lutheran Church, 1312 S. 45th Street.

Cost: \$7.00

Program will be "Table Talk" "Growing to know ourselves and our community better through small group discussion."  
Free Will Offering will support Project Hope Pantry.

Call Mardelle Gocek at 402-292-1328 by Sunday, September 11th to reserve your seat.



Happy Birthday in faith and blessings be upon you! On your birthday, remember that you were wonderfully made by God and rejoice in his love. You are so blessed to be you and to share the amazing love of Jesus on your birthday! May God bless this day with more love than your heart can hold.

**1 - Terry Nielsen**  
**3 - Munna Lewa**  
**5 - Lealen Costanzo**  
**7 - Ronald Andersen**  
**13 - Loren Moyer**  
**23 - Katelyn Bauer**  
**28 - Damien Rodriguez**

### Let's Eat! Cereal-ously ~ It's time for God's Work, Our Hands

We are all a bunch of Flakes! Friendly, Loving, Awesome, Kind, Energetic!

Grace and St. Luke's members are our Lucky Charms!

If we combed the world we would not find better church members!

Sunday, September 11, 2022

St. Luke's and Grace will collect boxes of cereal which will be donated to the Loaves and Fishes Pantry at Grace.

Our goal is to collect 75 boxes of cereal.

If you prefer to make a monetary donation, a member of the "Our Hands"/Social Ministry Team will shop for you. Please mail your donation to the church office and state that it is for the Cereal-ously Project or see Cindy Fleming.

Please bring your cereal donation to church on September 4 and 11.



God's Work Our Hands Sunday is an opportunity to celebrate who we are as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America - one church, freed in Christ to serve and love our neighbors.



Dear friends of Grace Lutheran Church,

My name is Ashley, and I'm the Associate Director of [MICA House](#). Over the last couple of years, MICA House has continued to provide shelter and support to families and women experiencing homelessness in our community. Although we had to reduce the number of volunteers and supplemental programming, we never stopped serving through our mission.

Slowly but surely, we are introducing programs and classes for our clients. To do this, we could use your help. If you have space in your Sunday bulletin or newsletter – we would appreciate the opportunity to share some information about volunteer opportunities.

Specifically, we are in need of volunteers for our [BUDDY Program](#) – a play program that allows kids to be kids while their parents attend classes in the evenings. BUDDY Program is hosted on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday night from 6-8 PM. Individuals interested in supporting the youngest clients at MICA House can apply via this form: <https://bit.ly/3C8HmpU>

We are also in need of food and supplies like pasta, canned vegetables and fruit, and diapers (size 5-6). We have online wish lists through [Amazon](#) and [Target](#) that can directly ship to us. Groups or individuals are also welcome to host a collection drive for items, and we would be happy to talk more with anyone who is interested in hosting a drive.

I really appreciate you taking the time to learn more about the volunteer opportunities at MICA House. If you need or want any additional information, please don't hesitate to reach out. I look forward to hearing from you!

Thanks,

Ashley Flater  
Associate Director/Interim Executive Director  
MICA House  
1415 Ave J, Council Bluffs, IA 51501  
712-323-4416 x. 2105  
[aflater@themicahhouse.org](mailto:aflater@themicahhouse.org)



Gracias Christmas Cantata  
Orpheum Theater, 409 South 16th Street  
Friday, September 23, 2022, 7:00 p.m.

Free Admission

The Gracias Christmas Cantata, featuring the world renowned Gracias Choir, is composed of the Nativity told in the Oratorio "Messiah".

Award-winning Gracias Choir has advanced the choral music landscape for the past 20 years. With their First Prize win at the most prestigious choir music competition in the world, Gracias Choir has been officially recognized as the best choral music group in the world.

Gracias Choir music is inspired by the love and thankfulness toward God that each member embraces. Gracias has the unique ability to touch the hearts of its audiences and change lives in the process.

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"988" The Nation's New Mental Health  
Hotline



July 16th was the first day "988" was activated as the new three-digit mental health program hotline. In 2020 the Federal Communication Commission designated "988" as the new help number and Congress funded it. Anyone who needs help with their mental health, particularly people in crisis or those struggling with mental health issues, should call this number. Operators speak both English and Spanish and have access to interpreters with over 150 languages.

When people call, text, or chat 988, they will be connected to trained counselors that are part of the existing National Suicide Prevention Lifeline network. These trained counselors will listen, understand how their problems are affecting them, provide support, and connect them to resources if necessary.

The current Lifeline phone number (1-800-273-8255) will always remain available to people in emotional distress or suicidal crisis, even after 988 is launched nationally.

Website: [suicidepreventionlifeline.org](https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org) and [988lifeline.org](https://988lifeline.org)



**Sunday, September 11, 2022, 3:00 PM – 6:00 PM**  
**Tri-Faith Commons**  
**(13136 Faith Plaza, Omaha, NE 68144)**

Celebrate Omaha's Diverse Community!

From the ashes of the conflict and tragedy of 9/11, **United We Walk** brings the entire Omaha community together to celebrate our racial, religious, and cultural diversity.

Come walk the Walk and help us build a community where EVERYONE belongs!

#### **GRAND MARSHALS:**

Marisa Hattab, DEI Officer for Douglas County  
Roger Garcia, Douglas County Commissioner  
Farhan & Fatima Khan, CEO, Heritage Communities  
Nebraska Senator John & Deb McCollister  
Rabbi Aryah Azriel, Rabbi Emeritus, Temple Israel  
Preston Love, 4Urban Institute for Urban Development

#### **FEATURING:**

1.14 Mile Journey on the Tri-Faith Commons  
Food Trucks  
Live Performances  
Family-Friendly Exhibits  
Open Houses of the **Tri-Faith Center, Temple Israel, Countryside Community Church and American Muslim Institute.**

Please register online at [trifaith.org/walk](http://trifaith.org/walk) to make sure enough food and food trucks are in place!  
Invite family, friends and neighbors!

*Our Partners: Dr. CC and Mabel L. Criss Memorial Foundation, Bansai Family Charitable Fund, Awakin@Lincoln OutNebraska, Business Ethics Alliance, Centris Federal Credit Union, Michael & Laura Alley, Todd and Betiana Simon, Institute for Urban Development, Anonymous, Temple Israel, Countryside Community Church, and American Muslim Institute.*



#### **Usable Glasses Give New Life**

Refractive errors can be easily corrected with eyeglasses, yet millions living in low and middle income countries lack access to basic eye care services. Lions Club have recognized the urgent need for corrective lenses and collect usable glasses in their communities to support the Lions Recycle For Sight Program.

If you have a set or two of previous wearable glasses no longer in need, please bring them to the church office and help individuals to see their world a little more clearly. A box is located in the back of the sanctuary to place them.

Have You Included  
Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church  
Endowment Fund  
in Your Will?



A current, "Remember the Church in Your Will", brochures are currently available upon request. Please pick up a free copy during your next worship time and consider Grace Lutheran a place for remembrance.



**KAIROS PALESTINE** - a plea for help from the homeland of Jesus! Join us in September for a series of chats about what's happening there now. After worship, we'll meet for coffee, worship, and very good bakery in the fireplace room at St. Lukes. To save your spot, please contact Rose Marie at 402-733-5881 or text/call Sara at: 402-686-1693. (12 max at one time)

September Worship services will be  
at 9:30 am., at St. Luke's Lutheran,  
2315 I Street  
All are welcome!

**WORSHIP**  
*with us*



## Your gifts are comforting families with shelter, essential items and medical supplies

Your generosity is embracing families in Ukraine with the critical support they need right now. Specifically for those families staying at the sanatoriums, you are providing:

Housing for more than 15,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) forced to flee heavy fighting in the eastern and southern parts of the country with no other means of support.

Food, supplies and equipment. Many Ukrainians arrive at the sanatoriums with only the clothing on their backs. Your gifts are providing essentials including food, folding beds, pillows, heaters, laundry detergent, toilet paper and personal hygiene items. And since kids do not stop being kids during war, there are toys to bring smiles and the gift of play.

Quilts and Kits. Because of your generosity, we are channeling quilts and kits to these facilities, bringing some much-needed comfort to families.

You are also providing critically needed supplies and equipment to two hospitals in Ukraine. This includes medical supplies such as stethoscopes, thermometers, and needles, trauma supplies such as surgical and wound care kits, defibrillators and stretchers as well as medicines like insulin and morphine to help with chronic illnesses.

Thank you for caring for our Ukrainian neighbors. Your love and support are making our entire response possible. With your continued support, we will expand our response to reach more Ukrainians.

We are grateful for the thousands of Lutherans across the United States whose care and generosity have made it possible for us to respond immediately. Because of you, our teams on the ground are meeting these immediate needs while also planning longer-term responses as families rebuild their lives around the world. But we can't do it without you.



## Loaves and Fishes Pantry

Grace Lutheran Church  
1326 South 26th Street  
402-341-7730

Pantry is Open 10:00 - 11:00 am  
Every Monday



Variety of fresh foods donated by  
Trader Joe's and Whole Foods.

*All are served with love and care.*

Staying within the CDC guidelines the Pantry continues to reach out to those in need on a weekly basis. During this time of reduced gatherings, clients of the Loaves and Fishes Pantry have been driving through the alley and picking up prepared sacks and bags of much needed food items. Thanks to your generosity the Pantry has a very huge stock of bags and egg cartons! Currently there is no need for these items. Please continue to keep the Pantry and all the work that is done in your prayers.



Do you know of a family or individual in need of food assistance? Please share the Pantry information with them.



face masks  
are encouraged

Protect the  
volunteers,  
yourself and  
your family!

**Lutheran South Pantry**  
**4401 South 23rd Street**  
**402-502-7070**



Items that clients cannot purchase with their food stamps are always appreciated: Dish Soap, Kleenex, Bar Soap, Deodorant, Toothbrush and toothpaste, Feminine hygiene products, Hair products (combs, brushes, picks), Bathroom tissue, Shampoo, Dry Laundry Soap, Hand Sanitizer, Sunscreen, Bug Repellent, Band-aids Diaper wipers, and Diapers, especially sizes 6 and pull-ups.

**We always need paper or plastic bags.**



## God is a God of laughter

Methodist Pastor Karl R. Kraft of Dover, DE, found this passage in Catherine Marshall's book, *A Man Called Peter*, a biography of her husband, the great Presbyterian preacher Peter Marshall, Chaplain of the U.S. Senate, from one of his sermons:

*"God is a God of laughter, as well as prayer, a God of singing, as well as tears God is at home in the play of His children. God loves to hear us laugh. We do not honor God by our long faces, our austerity. We must try to make the distinction between worship and work and play less sharp. If you can't take God into your recreation, there is something wrong with the way you play. If God, for you, does not smile there is something wrong with your idea of God."*

Catherine Marshall added this comment: "Jesus Himself demonstrated to us, at times like the wedding feast in Cana, that Christianity can be fun, that fun can be Christian, and that it is the King's joy to share our good times."

*Jokes reprinted with permission from JoyfulNoiseletter.com*

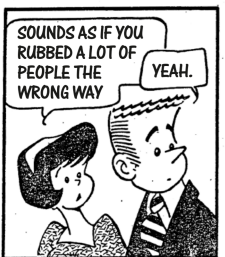
### THE FAMILY CIRCUS By Bil and Jeff Keane



"We like the sermon part best. That's when Daddy gets to take PJ outside and Mommy gives us mints."

from JoyfulNoiseletter.com  
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### PHILLIP'S FLOCK



### By Doc Goodwin



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# GRANDPARENTS DAY!!!!

M A U N O I T I D A R T D Q P W L S B N H C H A  
U S Q H S S A L P Q K M B Z S S Y Y E E G S A P  
Z L L S E I R O T S D V L W S A I V R Y G H D D  
P L Y D P A C N S V W Z T Z D R I I B Y Z D V N  
W E R L V V P Z J M A T J I X T T D G G T B L A  
O K O I D P S P B R Q B L O A A D O Y I Z X T R  
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B D H D V M G G Y J C R I M H D R A B Y D A A M  
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Y Y G A T R X E X M J M A Z N Y N F E O M V E H  
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L F L G K E L G E F L L Y I E X E R D T H D S O  
D U J J I S U D U A Z R M K K H N J V Q M P T P  
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V Y Q V A V S P M O F T L A U G H W K I Q K I Q  
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V D R S G T R A I E T W Z J H M C A P A P C G C  
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L V R U L H G U F U D E G O T L V I E Q A V B P  
T G F S K Y B G G K G O G T H P J S P W N U V S

Appreciate  
Family  
Grandpa  
Hug  
Memories  
Read  
Tradition

Baking  
Fun  
Heritage  
I LOVE YOU  
Mimi  
Recognize  
Visit

Caring  
Gift  
Holidays  
Joy  
Papa  
Relative  
Walk

Celebrate  
Grandchild  
Honor  
Laugh  
Paternal  
Respect

Cookies  
Grandma  
House  
Maternal  
Play  
Stories

*Found on Goggle Images.*

