



FIRST and ForMOST

May 2010

FROM YOUR PASTOR

“And I heard a loud voice from the throne of heaven saying.... ‘He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away....Behold, I am making all things new...’” (From Rev. 21: 3-5)

How is God “making all things new” here at First Presbyterian Church?

First of all, more and more people are coming to our three worship services every Sunday. In four years, the average attendance at the 10:00 AM Traditional English Service has increased by 50%, up from 50 to 75-80 people! The average attendance at the 12:30 Korean Traditional Service has also grown from around 50 to 75-80! And, the 12:30 English Worship Service held in the Activities Building has grown from an average of 10-15 young people to 25-30 young people **and** young adults!

Secondly, God has blessed us with a new heating system, roof, and soon-to-be beautifully refurbished and redecorated main sanctuary.

Thirdly, we now have two Contemporary Worship Bands/Teams practicing weekly (and leading worship occasionally) to increase the variety of Christian music our church has to offer, especially the youth, younger adults, and young families.

Fourthly, FPC is now doing annual summer youth and young adult mission trips. We are sending one of our Youth to the PCUSA Triennium (Sarah Javed). We have started a new church development in Ecuador and are constructing a Hydroelectric System in Lubondai, Congo. We have become more and more mission-minded and welcome anyone who wishes to serve the greater church locally, regionally, and internationally.

Fifth, we have officially begun a new church development right here on Newcastle Drive. The Urdu-Hindi Christian Fellowship is worshipping Jesus Christ joyfully in the Urdu language every Sunday.

Sixth, after being blessed with Dr. Larry Young’s wonderful musical leadership for 11 years, we have welcomed Ms. Margaret Whitfield as our Director of Music and Organist. Her enthusiasm and expertise have already yielded magnificent results, including having only six short weeks to prepare us for the Easter Sunday Service. She not only prepared us for a joyous and wonderful service, she encouraged us to have brass accompaniments for the hymns and multicultural instrumentation (the Japanese Koto and Pakistani Tabla) for two of the anthems! We are so blessed to have Margaret!

These are just a few of the wonderful “**new**” things that God is doing here at FPC.

In the next few months, our church will be experiencing many changes in the most central and important “room” of our church, God’s sanctuary. There is going to be dust, dirt, carpet being ripped up, and bare cement floors. Our pews will be sent away to be refinished and re-upholstered and we will have to sit in metal chairs for a while. Holes will be drilled in the walls and wires will have to be strung. And all of it will be done to make God’s blessed sanctuary a more inviting, functional, and flexible place in which to worship the God who has give us all that we have and made us all that we will ever be.

In addition, your elected representatives on the Decorating Committee and Buildings and Grounds Commission will be working hard to pick out new carpeting, tile, and wood flooring that will be beautiful and welcoming. The color schemes will change (I think it is safe to say that anything green will not be considered!). The design of the chancel will change to accommodate different kinds of worship styles, dramatic presentations, musicals and plays, etc. And, much brighter lighting will be installed.

Yes, the Lord **IS** doing something very, very new here at First Presbyterian Church! And, it would not be possible without **YOUR** faithfulness, prayers, financial support, and commitment to the God who has given you everything you possess and has made you everything that you are.

As I have described, the next few months are going to be filled with change. And, as far as I can see, all of those changes are going to be very, very good. However, as these changes take place, I would humbly ask that you be patient with all those faithful Active Members who are serving on the Decorating Committee, the Buildings and Grounds Commission, the Session, and the Staff. We all are doing the best that we can.

Please pray for those of us whom you have elected to leadership roles in our blessed church. And, feel free to let us know if there is anything that we can do for you (or the church) to glorify the Lord. Thank you.

Your Friend and Pastor, **Chris**



John Fennig - 05/01
Elizabeth Rockett - 05/02
Alissa Anderson - 05/03
Debbie Bademian - 05/04
Judi Reitman - 05/06
Dan Parker - 05/09
Bud Simon - 05/09
Nadine Dingess - 05/10

Phil Rodrigues - 05/11
Marianne Artherholt - 05/15
Larry Dronfield - 05/16
Candy Parker - 05/17
Joyce Simmons - 05/18
Christopher Fuller - 05/19
Genny Looker - 05/23
Calvin Reitman - 05/23

PREACHING SCHEDULE for MAY, 2010

May 2, 2010: PCUSA Wills Emphasis Sunday

Scripture Lesson: John 13: 31-35

Sermon: "THE SOURCE OF ALL LOVE"

Dr. Chris Looker, Preaching

May 9, 2010: Special Mother's Day Joint Worship Service

FPCA and FKPCV will worship together at 11:00 AM

With special Mother's Day Picnic to follow

Scripture Lesson: John 14: 23-29

Sermon: "TO LOVE, HONOR, AND OBEY?"

Dr. Chris Looker, Preaching

May 16, 2010: PCUSA Multicultural Church Sunday

The Rev. Tariq Javed, Preaching

May 23, 2010: Pentecost Sunday

Scripture Lesson: Revelation 22: 8-13 and 16-21

Sermon: "THE ALPHA AND OMEGA"

Dr. Chris Looker, Preaching

May 30, 2010: Memorial Day Weekend

Scripture Lesson: Romans 5:1-5

Sermon: "FAITH IS ENOUGH!"

Candidate for Ministry Susan Ennis, Preaching

ACOLYTE SCHEDULE

May 9	Sam Looker
May 16	Garrett Youmans
May 23	Sarah Metzger
May 30	Elisha Musih

ATTENTION!

Deadline for the June issue of FIRST and ForMOST is May21, 2010. Please e-mail your announcements and reports to the Editor, Marta Strada, LUXI7777@aol.com, or put them in the FIRST and ForMOST drawer in the church office. Thank you.

PENTECOST

Ancient Hungarian Customs

Freely translated from Hungarian and edited by Marta Strada

This year on Sunday, the 23rd of May, all over the world Christians celebrate the Holy Spirit and the foundation of our church, the day of Pentecost. The name of this holiday comes from the Greek word for “fifty,” because it is the 50th day after Easter. Consequently, it always falls between May 10 and June 13. Pentecost is also celebrated as the Church’s birthday; a two day holiday in Europe.

Pentecost has been greeted with flowers for some thousand years. In today’s Hungary Pentecost Monday is once more a red letter day on the calendar. It is a time to celebrate. Many of the customs have been forgotten, but some are still being practiced. On the day of Pentecost everything is waking up – it is the time of new beginning – man and beast look for a mate – nature has come to life again.

Long ago, Hungarians thought that Pentecost is the time to pause for a moment. They knew that before summer’s agricultural work begins, new life has to be welcomed. They prayed for a good harvest, they prayed to be blessed with new offspring. The church celebrated this day by replacing the biblical flames with red roses, and the Holy Ghost was remembered by releasing a white dove. Girls and women dressed in red, men wore their best outfits. It is time to have fun!

In some villages some of the traditions are still being practiced.

One custom is the “Walk of the Queen of Pentecost”: The prettiest girl is chosen to be the queen – a great honor. After worship the girls of the village walk from house to house, wishing the people well, reciting poems, singing, scattering flowers. The girls are asked to show them their queen, and let them know whether she was “sweet” or “sour.” They tickle the queen under her chin: If she smiles without showing her teeth, everybody is happy, because harvest will be good. And the girls receive gifts of apples, eggs, sausages, and money.

Another custom is to choose a King of Pentecost. Young men show their skills in horse racing or jumping across burning logs. The guy who is the best, is allowed to drink in their pub free of charge for a whole year, and has to participate in all future parties. Pentecost is also the time of dating, of proposing.

This Holy Day brings a joyful new beginning. It announces the love of man and nature. After Pentecost Sunday and Pentecost Monday, people are ready to face Tuesdays and Wednesdays with courage and trust.

**Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove,
With all Thy quickening powers;
Kindle a flame of sacred love
In these cold hearts of ours.**

Isaac Watts, 1707

ACCA FOOD PANTRY NEEDS CONTRIBUTIONS!

***We continue to need dried black/red beans
and bags of rice.***

All paper products and bars of soap are also needed.

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN'S BIRTHDAY OFFERING

Each year members of FPCA faithfully support the Presbyterian Women's Birthday Offering. This year the money raised will be given as two grants: Peace Presbyterian Church's R.I.S.E Project in Louisville's diverse Newburg community and the Kindergarten and Child Care Center in Kirkuk, Iraq.

The Peace Presbyterian Church's R.I.S.E. (Reach-Improve-Strengthen-Empower) Project, provides services to children, youth, adults and families at risk or in need of support during a transitional period. Programs include a *Kids Café* which provides healthy food, nurturing and educational support after school; *Project Hope* providing food for homeless and counseling services for Alcohol and Narcotics Anonymous; *Family to Family Visitation* sponsoring supervised visits between children in foster care and their biological parents; *Families in Transition* providing counseling for families dealing with problems resulting from divorce.

The Kindergarten and Child Care Center in Kirkuk operates under Christian principles of love, peace, tolerance and nonviolence, providing high quality education to children. It has reached its capacity and hopes to expand. This grant will help fund the purchase of the current building and a neighboring building which would house a primary school.

By supporting these two organizations we can help children and adults in this country and overseas and show them that we in the church do care about them. All contributions help, large or small. Envelopes will be in the bulletins on May 16th and May 23rd. Thank you for your support!

Betty Beal

MEDITERRANEAN CRUISE

May 2, 2010, 6:00 PM

Come, cruise the Mediterranean on the first Sunday in May! We will start our cruise at 6:00 pm with a delicious potluck dinner, and watch the slide show around 7:00 pm in Istanbul. We will cruise all around the Mediterranean and end our tour in Barcelona. Let us have fun together!

Your tour guide and photographer. Marta Sttada

HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY!

Mother's Day Facts

- * The earliest Mother's Day celebration dates back to ancient Greece. They celebrated this day by honoring Rhea 'mother of the gods' with honey-cake, flowers and drinks at dawn.
- * Ancient Egyptians celebrated this day by honoring the goddess Isis, who was known as 'mother of pharaohs.'
- * It is a tradition in China that family names often begin with a sign that means "mother." It is a nice way of honoring their moms long past.
- * In United Kingdom and Ireland, Mother's Day is called Mothering Sunday. It is celebrated on the fourth Sunday of Lent, or three weeks before Easter Sunday.
- * In the Bible, Eve is credited with being the "Mother of All the Living."
- * Originally, Mother's Day was a day of silent prayers and remembrance. But with time, the day became over-commercialized. Anna filed a lawsuit in an effort to stop the over-commercialization of Mother's Day; however, she failed. Today, cards, gifts and dinners are an integral part of Mother's Day celebration.
- * Buddha honored mothers when he said, "As a mother, even at the risk of her own life, loves and protects her child, so let a man cultivate love without measure toward the whole world."
- * The wife of Russian Fedor Vassilyev is credited by the 1997 *Guinness Book of Records* as having given birth to most children. She delivered 69 children, which included 16 pairs of twins, seven sets of triplets, and four sets of quadruplets.
- * 500 years ago, Mother Shipton who was a Prophetess in Britain predicted that another Queen Elizabeth would sit on England's Throne (QE II).
- * Carnations are the flowers associated with Mother's Day. White carnations are worn in the memory of deceased mothers. Whereas, red carnations are for those mothers who are alive.
- * World's youngest mother is Lina Medina, who delivered a 6½-pound boy in Lima, Peru in 1939, at an age of 5 years and 7 months.

[copied from the Internet]

SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

March 17, 2010

Elder Susan Ennis opened the meeting with a devotion based on Kneeling in Jerusalem, by Ann Weems, pointing towards our resurrection into the Kingdom of God.

Clerk of Session Marta Strada reported that the church received a lovely note from Lois Little thanking for the contributions to the memorial fund at FPCA in remembrance of Smitty Little, whose memorial service was held on January 23, 2010.

Dr. Looker added that “Smitty” Little, who died December 25, 2009, will be buried at Arlington National Cemetery on April 19, 2010.

Deacon Randy Meli reported that Miriam Houseworth has been with the Helping Hands group for quite some time, and the deacons are trying to find a new person to replace her. Helping Hands are working with congregations planning for funerals, reception, dinners, etc.

Planning for the refurbishing of the Sanctuary is in progress. As it will be very expensive to have the sealing of the organ done as planned to protect it from dust, it will be less expensive to rent scaffolding and have church members involved in transporting it and setting it up. Two sub-contracts, the electrical system and the sound system, have been signed. Bids for lighting are still being examined. Final details have to be worked out ASAP, as the contract has to be approved by the Session and signed at the next meeting on April 14, 2010.

Elder Paul Malone, Chair of the Personnel Committee, reported that the Personnel Committee had made the motion to extend the Letter of Agreement for Margaret Whitfield, Music Director/Organist until Dec. 31, 2010. The Session approved the motion, agreeing that Margaret Whitfield is a very good organist, pianist and choir director, and it is very good for FPCA to have her on the staff.

Reporting for the **Missions Commission**, Elder Susan Ennis shared with the Session several plans the Commission is working on: a mission trip to Ecuador during the last 2 weeks in July and encouraging our youth to take part in the Montreat Youth Conference. She also reported with gratitude that our congregation has donated \$ 950 to help Haiti suffering from the earthquake.

Reporting for the **Worship Commission**, Elder Sandy Mori told the Session that the Commission was looking for members of the congregation interested in learning how to operate the sound system during worship service. Teams will rotate, so no one has to do it every Sunday. Some people have already signed up, but more are needed. Hopefully, the new system will be working after Easter.

Reporting for the **Christian Education Commission**, Elder Marta Strada emphasized that the Commission strongly recommends that FPCA, in partnership with FKPCV, hire a Youth Minister. The Session liked the idea, but decided that the churches could only afford a seminary student preparing for ministry, or a layman skilled in working with young people.

Reporting for the **New Member and Congregational Life Commission**, Elder Cara Laufer shared the following plans of the Commission with the Session:

- * there will be a breakfast after the Sunrise Service on Easter Sunday
- * the Soup Group get together has been moved to April 8, 2010
- * a Spring/Summer picnic is planned, perhaps on Youth Sunday (June 13, 2010)
- * regarding greeting visitors, the Commission thinks about simple things they can do and make available to first time visitors, instead of the large visitors’ package that had been handed out in the past.
- * regarding membership classes, the Commission wants to take over the arrangement of new member classes, so that Dr. Looker would only have to lead the discussion.

Dr. Looker suggested planning for a congregation retreat, focusing on spiritual renewal.

Before the meeting closed, Elder Thomas Martin made the motion that the pre-school be authorized to plant a sunflower garden. The Session approved the motion.

Marta Strada, Clerk of Session

INTERESTED IN OUR CHURCH?

FPCA is planning a SPECIAL INQUIRER'S CLASS for those visitors and regular attendees who are interested in learning more about our wonderful church. It will be held on May 16 following worship. Those choosing to join the church will do so on Pentecost Sunday, May 23.

Watch for more details in the Sunday bulletins, or call the church office.

MY LAST DAYS IN IRAQ **AND IMPRESSIONS THAT LINGER**

by Hugh Iwanicki

It was mid-September, and we all celebrated autumn's approach with our first high temperature of under 100 degrees: a chilly 99. With my government contract coming to a close, the end was in sight and I couldn't wait to return home.

One evening, after work, I made my way from the Chancery office for the 10 minute walk to the DFAC for dinner. On my way I passed the now green common area. It's amazing what you can get for \$2.5 million dollars in landscaping.

The two-acre common area was initially planted with grass seed and watered from sprinklers drawing from a well. The only problem with this plan was Baghdad's huge pigeon population, which immediately descended on the two-acre field and devoured all the grass seed as quickly as it was planted. Also, the well turned out to be contaminated with salt so that, after a month, the common area looked more like Lot's wife than a green oasis.

Finally, the landscapers came to their senses and shipped in turf from Kuwait, which was nourished with decent fertilizer and water. Low and behold, that little patch of desert turned green! Standing around and watching the grass grow turned out to be a surprisingly powerful morale booster for everybody.

My walk continued past the common area and toward the recreation building, where the gym, basketball courts, swimming pool, Pizza Hut, and Subway shop were located. I then made a right turn past one of the resident apartments, and then a left toward the DFAC, noticing the "city" of containerized housing units on my right. This complex, called a Chuville, looked like a real city because the units were stacked on top of each other and surrounded by T-walls. This is where the military folks who worked at the Embassy lived.

In the DFAC, I sat down with my roast beef dinner and relaxed. A recent visit by Vice President Biden had ended without incident and the final word on my permission to return home was in.

Apparently the terrorists hadn't gotten the message that Biden was gone, because I barely had time to bite into my roast beef when there was an incredible BOOM! that shook the whole DFAC building.

I thought, "Oh no! Here we go again!" But this time, these weren't rockets exploding in the distance. This felt like it was next door.

Fifteen seconds later, there was another BOOM! -- even louder than the first, after which the duck and cover alarm sounded. My appetite disappeared, and I really started to worry about my safety as I didn't know how many more rockets were on the way.

We hung there in suspended animation for a couple minutes, waiting to see if things were going to get better or a whole lot worse, when there were two more massive explosions.

"This is not good," I thought, and I could tell that even some of the "tougher" folks were starting to look concerned.

While seven is considered a special number for completeness in the Bible, it's apparently four for the terrorists, because that was all of the fireworks for that night. The all-clear was given and everyone took their trays to the Bangladeshi dishwashers, scooped up some ice cream and left to go back to work or their apartments. Business as usual.

Within the confines of the Green Zone, where we lived the phrase, "long hours of boredom punctuated by moments of sheer terror," I had plenty of time to read in the evening and contemplate my conversations and observations from the day.

One of the things I had done before going to Iraq was purchase an Arabic/English translation of the Koran, and it became a standard part of my evening ritual. While my main goal was to understand Iraq's culture, I also wanted to find out who was right about the Koran -- the terrorists who claimed it as their guide, my Muslim friends who call the terrorists "extremists," or other so-called "experts." As questions arose, I also looked up Islamic commentaries on the Koran, as well as the Hadiths (eye-witness accounts of what Muhammad and his followers did and said), all readily available on the Internet.

This is what I found after a year of reading and research:

- Despite the Koran's own claim to be clear and easy, it is very murky and difficult. It reads like a collection of scraps that were pasted together almost at random. This is because that's exactly what it is, having been assembled years after Muhammad's death by followers who interviewed his scribes and collected scraps of verses from them.
- The Koran's chapters are not chronological, not even within the chapters themselves. They are also self-contradictory, preaching peace in some places and bloodshed in others, but always sounding like eternal maxims because they speak directly to the reader with little or no historical context.
- Islamic scholars deal with these contradictions by saying that early verses are abrogated (made obsolete) by later verses. However, because the Koran isn't chronological, it is impossible to know which verses are active unless you consult an Islamic scholar or become one yourself.
- While there are passages of the Koran that are fair-minded and even beautiful, there are also passages that are self-serving for Muhammad, plainly malicious toward his rivals, and that command Muslims to engage non-Muslims in warfare.

As I read the Koran over and over, trying to make sense of its scrambled puzzle of words, I got to the point where I could hold most of it in my head. At this point, I finally "got" the Koran. It was as if the pieces fell into place and an image appeared that could have been seen in a single reading if the Koran had been written chronologically and with context. What appeared was a manual for conquest and control, whose real purpose was concealed by the manner in which the Koran was assembled, complete with peaceful sounding words that could be held up to non-Muslims but were ignored by knowledgeable scholars.

As the Koran's puzzle came together, so did the puzzle of my experiences in the Islamic world. When I was done putting together the pieces, what I saw was a hostile house of mirrors where nothing was what it seemed, but which could be understood by drawing parallels to the conflicts Muhammad had with rival tribes during his rise.

This helped me understand why Islamic hostility and warfare, both in the Islamic world and beyond, is so multilayered and never-ending, and why, instead of achieving the rapid peace and stability we first expected, our military, peacekeeping, and humanitarian presence simply enmeshed us in Iraq's longstanding hostilities.

I am no longer blissfully ignorant about Islam. However, I also feel informed, empowered, and encouraged by what I have learned, because it has confirmed my faith in Christ as my savior. I have learned so much from reading the Koran and Hadiths that serve as the basis for the Muslim faith. And, I encourage everyone to read the Koran and Hadiths for yourselves so that you will more completely and truthfully understand the Muslim faith for what it really is.

On September 21st, my friends at the Embassy, hailing from Italy, Madagascar, Russia, Malaysia, and the United States, including my buddy who won an award for being the #1 plumber in the state of Texas, hosted a wonderful farewell dinner at the DFAC. My friend from Italy had decided to put this together and asked what I would like. I had jokingly told her, "How about a candlelight dinner?" Well, she went ahead and did it, although the presence of the plumber, the other guests, and the 200 other diners in the background created an overall effect of a candle-lit table at a busy truck stop. All the same, it was a wonderful evening and I will never forget the friends and fellow travelers that the Embassy brought into my life.

The next day, I was off to the Sully Chuville hotel near the airport, then to Jordan, and finally to Washington, D.C., where my lovely wife was waiting. My year in Iraq -- the longest year of my life -- finally came to an end.

Thank you for joining me on this adventure. I deeply appreciate the support, prayers, and rekindled friendships that came back from readers and lifted my spirits throughout the year. In the not too distant future, I plan to set up a website with photos to accompany these journal entries, and will broadcast a link when it becomes available.

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MELODIES

PERFORMED BY ANNANDALE HIGH SCHOOL VOCALISTS

AHS Choral Department staged three performances of Broadway Desserts in January 2010 at George Mason Center for the Arts building in which Danny DeVera was the student director. Chris Fuller and Carrie Rodrigues performed. Carleen Dixon-Webb started the Broadway Desserts program in 1999 in the cafeteria. At the beginning of auditions, there were about 80 numbers, which included solos, duets, and ensemble pieces. There were forty well-rehearsed and choreographed numbers performed from a variety of Broadway musicals. This year Danny and Chris sang two duets together and performed with the Annandale Singers and Men's Chorale ensemble. Danny, a melodic tenor and President of the Men's Chorale, performed 8 songs and his solo was "Monticello" from Edges. Chris, with his rich bass voice, performed in several numbers and his solo was "If Ever I Would Leave You" from Camelot. Carrie sang with the Women's Ensemble and performed in a smaller ensemble "Oh My God" from Legally Blonde. The harmony and intricate choreography during the a cappella performance of "Sherry" from Jersey Boys wowed the crowd. Danny sang the lead and choreographed this song. Each chorus group, Annandale Singers, Men's Chorale, Women's Ensemble, and the Girl's Chamber Ensemble participated in the event. "It's actually a really fun way to raise money because you get to perform and do songs you normally wouldn't be able to do in chorus class," said senior Danny DeVera.

Furthermore, two groups from both Poe and Holmes Middle Schools sang during one of the three shows. The entire cast and crew began each show with “Everything’s Comin’ Up Roses” from Gypsy and ended with a finale of “Lullaby of Broadway” from 42nd Street. The performers served hundreds of delectable desserts and beverages so you had a chance to meet them up close and personal. All of the performers brought tremendous energy to each performance and left the crowd wanting more.

Good News!

Chris Fuller was selected to perform with the Virginia All-State Chorus on May 1st in the Tysons Corner area. Danny DeVera was selected as an alternate for the Virginia All-State Chorus.

UPCOMING EVENTS

The AHS Men's Chorale has been invited to perform again at the Washington National Cathedral:

The Kirkin’ o’ the Tartan, Saturday, May 1, 2010 4 PM

The pageantry of the Highlands returns to Washington on Saturday, May 1, as the Saint Andrew’s Society of Washington, DC, marches into Washington National Cathedral for the 70th Annual Kirkin’ o’ the Tartan. Accompanied by its Pipes and Drums and Colour Guard, close to 100 society members will pay tribute to their Scottish ancestors who struggled to preserve their liberties and religious freedoms. The public is invited to join in free of charge with no reservations required.

The Saint Andrew’s Society of Washington, DC, is the originator of the North American tradition of “kirkin” (or blessing) the tartan, which has now spread throughout the U.S. and Canada. The original Kirkin’ was held in Washington, DC, on April 27, 1941, to raise funds for British war relief. The event now supports scholarships awarded by the Society’s Charity and Education Fund.

Close to 100 Society members, led by bagpipers and drummers, proceed into the Cathedral. A ceremony to bless the tartans and the families represented by the cloth follows a brief homily. After the recessional to the south side of the Cathedral, all are welcome to enjoy entertainment by Saint Andrew’s Society Pipes and Drums and Highland dancers.

For more information about the Saint Andrew’s Society of Washington, D.C., visit

www.saintandrewsociety.org

Nancy P. DeVera
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