

TABLETALK is a publication of The Rocky Mountain Conference Office of Communications
Information and Concerns of RMC Leadership, for RMC Leadership

Send information to Ben Roe, ben@rmcumc.com Fax:303-733-1730 Voice: 303-325-7046

Mail: 6110 Greenwood Plaza Blvd., Greenwood Village, CO 80111

Web address: <http://rmcumc.org/News/table/>

Conference News and Resources

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Because of budget constraints, we ask that you please give us your e-mail address. If we have your e-mail address we cannot afford to send you TableTalk by US Postal Service. Please help us keep costs down. All issues may be printed out in the convenience of your home or office here: <http://rmcumc.org/News/table/>.

Communications Committee Expands Emphasis

At its recent meeting, the Conference Communications Committee decided to expand the emphasis of some of the Conference Communications channels to include more items telling the story of all the ministry that is happening in our Conference. The New Vision has had this as a part of its purpose, but now more of the News postings will contain stories of ministry of our churches and people. If you have something that is newsworthy for the people of this Conference, please send it to Ben@rmcumc.com. If you have photos, please send them by e-mail also if possible (our server limits e-mails to about 1.5 megabytes in size).

Plan to Attend 2006 Lay Ministry Convocation

"Sharing the Story" is theme

Two valuable seminars by outstanding presenters!

- "Sharing God's Story in the People's Song" - Dean B. McIntyre, Director of Music Resources, General Board of Discipleship, Nashville, Tennessee
- "Turning Your Church's Vision into Reality" - Rev. Kenneth (Ken) Brown, Pastor, Broomfield United Methodist Church, Broomfield, Colorado

Saturday, September 30, 2006, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. at St. Andrew United Methodist Church, 3350 White Bay Drive, Highlands Ranch, CO 80126 (9300 Block of S. University Blvd, south of C-470)

Seminar Fee: \$25.00 Includes continental breakfast, two seminars, refreshments, luncheon, take home materials. Brochures and registration info available on the Board of Lay Ministry website, www.rmcbolm.org.

"High Country Speaker"

Pikes Peak Sub-District Lay Speaker Training

The Pikes Peak Sub-District will offer the first Korean Basic Course for the Fall Training Session in Pikes Peak. A new program has been implemented by the Upper Room Discipleship Resources: Basic (Korean Language) Course will be offered. Program is offered to members of Mile High Sub-District, Pikes Peak Sub-District and Sunshine District.

Basic Course: Mrs. Yon Cha Shah, Instructor, Friday and Saturday, September 8 and 9, 2006, 6:00 - 9:00 p.m. Friday and 8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Saturday. The Cost is \$30.00. Checks payable to the Rocky Mountain Conference. Korean-American UMC, 4550 N. Carefree Cir., Colorado Springs, CO 80917

General Church News and Resources

Global AIDS Conference Deadline Approaches

Each day 8,000 people die of AIDSthe church cannot remain silent about this pandemic. You can make a difference! We hope your annual conference will participate in the September 8-9, 2006 UMC AIDS

Conference at the Doubletree Hotel, Washington, DC, in Washington, DC, Sponsored by the UMC Global AIDS Fund Committee. Registration fee: \$60 - includes two meals and conference resources. Deadline for registration: August 15, 2006 More: www.umc-gbcs.org/aidsconference or Donna Brandyberry, 202-488-5641 or dbrandyberry@umc-gbcs.org.

Purpose of Conference: To equip clergy and lay leaders to address the AIDS pandemic locally and globally. Participants will receive education and skill-building along with networking opportunities through workshops and interactive plenary sessions. Attendees will learn about the new UMC Global AIDS Fund and ways to mobilize resources to support it. Each annual conference is charged by General Conference legislation to have an AIDS Committee that oversees the distribution of funding from the UMC Global AIDS Fund.

General Conference created the fund in 2004 to mobilize resources to support existing and new AIDS-related projects. The fund is an Advance Special (#982345) and is governed by a committee. Of the total money raised in each annual conference, 25% will be retained by the annual conference and 75% will be sent to the Advance.

United Methodist News Service Annual Conferences Summary

At regional gatherings this year, United Methodists celebrated the 50th anniversary of clergywomen receiving full clergy rights and affirmed their commitment to helping the U.S. Gulf Coast recover from last fall's hurricanes.

While those topics dominated the United Methodist Church's annual sessions in May and June, church members also tackled a wide range of other concerns, including social issues such as immigration and gay marriage, the strengthening of ministries around the globe and the possible mergers of some annual (regional) conferences.

Clergywomen

Fifty years ago, following action by the denomination's General Conference, 27 women took the initial steps toward full clergy rights. Today, nearly 12,000 clergywomen worldwide serve the denomination. At its meeting two years ago, the General Conference mandated 2006 as a yearlong denominational celebration.

Bishop J. Lawrence McCleskey highlighted the 50th anniversary in his state of the Western North Carolina Conference address. "We have passed the time for any church ... to object to a pastoral appointment because the appointee is female." He told the conference that 50 years "is long enough. Be ready. It's that simple."

Members of the Yellowstone Conference were told by Minnesota Bishop Sally Dyck that "even full clergy rights, however, is not full acceptance. ... We are becoming the church our grandmothers envisioned us to be, thanks be to God. And thanks to the men of the church who opened the way. Now it is up to all of us to 'pay it forward' and keep the light alive for women everywhere.

Hurricane response

Along the Gulf Coast, conference members expressed thanks for the outpouring of support they have received since Hurricane Katrina, which made landfall Aug. 29, and Hurricane Rita, which followed a month later. Ed Blakeslee, Mississippi United Methodist Katrina Response coordinator, emphasized the connectional system as vital to recovery efforts. "We still need prayers, and we still need help," he said.

The Mississippi Conference gave thanks for the \$4.9 million received as of May 31 through the United Methodist Committee on Relief and other appeals for Katrina relief and rebuilding.

The Rev. Paul Dirdak, director of UMCOR, praised storm recovery efforts throughout the Louisiana Conference. Nearly a million volunteer hours have been recorded in the state through the efforts of mission teams that have come from all over the United States and as far away as Mexico and South Africa to provide assistance.

United Methodists in East Texas contributed more than \$2.2 million to hurricane relief efforts. Area churches spent an additional \$2.6 million ministering to evacuees in their communities - providing shelter, food, transportation and other support. The Texas Conference's Southeast District, where all 52 United Methodist churches and more than 94,000 homes were damaged by Hurricane Rita, has been assisted by 203 teams of 2,150 volunteers since October. Those work teams have volunteered more than 53,000 hours, which if billed at the national average construction salary of \$18, would have cost more than \$1 million, a conference official said.

In an effort to provide long-term recovery and relief assistance, Northwest Texas adopted a giving goal of \$10 a month for all conference clergy and lay members for the church recovery efforts related to the Gulf Coast hurricanes. The New Mexico Conference also encouraged giving \$10 a month until the next conference session to Louisiana pastors and churches, as a way to build connectedness. The Virginia Conference dedicated health and recovery and relief kits, and four tractor-trailers were needed to transport the items. In addition, the conference collected \$54,387 in monetary donations.

Mergers

Several annual conferences reorganized to serve local congregations more effectively. Some redrew district lines and some considered merging. Eight annual conferences voted to create new conferences or to begin merger process plans and discussions.

In his opening address, Bishop Robert Schnase called on the Missouri Conference to face the reality that during the past 40 years, the population of Missouri had increased 29 percent while membership in the United Methodist Church had dropped 32 percent. A task force was commissioned to evaluate every aspect of ministry in the annual conference in the coming year with an eye to aligning mission, ministry and money. The goal is to boost worship attendance in the conference by 5,000 within six years.

Immigration

The immigration issue played a role in U.S. annual conference proceedings as it has done in border states in the country. Six annual conferences urged churches to take action and called on elected officials to support fair and just immigration laws.

Wisconsin passed a resolution on U.S. immigration policy that calls upon elected officials to enact dignity and humanitarian policies to ensure the safety and basic human rights of immigrants and refugees. The New England Conference voted to commit to study and prayer on local and global issues of migration, to oppose any further militarization of the Mexico-U.S. border, and to support comprehensive immigration reform.

Rio Grande called on its 95 congregations to become sanctuary churches, recognizing that reaching out to immigrants is part of an evangelical call. "We are called to extend 'radical hospitality' to all, regardless of origins or status," the conference members said in a resolution on immigration reform. The conference also called on elected officials to allow undocumented immigrants, who are contributing to U.S. society, to remain in the states and become permanent residents and eventually citizens; increase visa numbers to eliminate long waiting periods for families; and provide for guest workers to receive fair wages, fair treatment, protection under the law and status as permanent residents.

Torture

Media throughout the world have highlighted instances of torture and abuse of prisoners and detainees by the U.S. military and government agencies. Both Detroit and Northern Illinois declared opposition to the use of torture by the government. Northern Illinois approved a resolution stating that the use of torture by the U.S. government is "both widespread and systematic." It condemned "any and all" use of torture against U.S. detainees "for any purpose" and demanded legislation be written to "cease and desist from these un-Christian practices."

Iran

At least six annual conferences declared opposition to war against Iran and support for peace in the Middle East. Central Texas postponed indefinitely affirming the Council of Bishops' Resolution on the War in Iraq.

The Pacific Northwest Conference urged attention to all human rights abuses in the Middle East and to work for implementation of an international bill of human rights.

The South German Conference also issued a resolution expressing concern about the current political conflict involving the European Union, the United States and Iran. The conference opposes all military options and supports stronger diplomatic efforts.

Northern Illinois acted on breaking down the walls of hostility between Palestinians and Israelis, North and South Koreans, and Christians and Muslims. North Central New York approved a process of dialogue, shareholder action, and as a last resort, divestment from companies "that are supporting in a significant way the occupation of Palestine by Israel." The preamble to the resolution noted the success of divestments in changing the policy of apartheid in South Africa.

The New York Conference passed a petition calling for the impeachment of President George Bush. The petition laments the president's actions regarding Iraq and Iraqi detainees, wiretapping, the response to Hurricane Katrina, and the treatment of prisoners at Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib. "THEREFORE, the New York Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church considers these to be high crimes and misdemeanors and urges the impeachment of George W. Bush," the conference said.

Marriage and homosexuality

As U.S. courts hear judicial requests to define marriage as the union between man and woman, at least eight annual conferences took action on the issue.

Wisconsin reaffirmed a 2005 motion opposing the proposed state constitutional marriage amendment and supporting an informed, respectful dialogue with people of all opinions. The Dakotas Conference adopted a resolution affirming laws defending marriage and adopted a resolution rejecting a South Dakota ballot measure against same-sex unions. The adopted resolution cites potential discrimination of elderly people living in same-sex households in rural areas, saying: "The full repercussions of the law are not known."

The Holston Conference passed a resolution "affirming laws defending marriage." The resolution states, "...Be it resolved that we continue to affirm the United Methodist stance on marriage and support laws in our state that protect the definition of marriage as the union of one man and one woman."

Petitions passed by the Minnesota Annual Conference recommend changes to the Book of Discipline that would make the church's ministries, including membership, ordination and marriage, open to all people, regardless of sexual orientation and other factors.

The California-Nevada Conference sought to "liberalize" sections of the Book of Discipline, passing resolutions dealing with marriage, human sexuality and sexual orientation, and would remove restrictions on ordaining gay clergy, celebrating homosexual unions and funding gay caucuses. The conference also voted to prohibit discrimination in receiving members into United Methodist congregations, and voted to oppose controversial Judicial Council Decision 1032.

Numerous conferences considered resolutions about the decision, which sparked churchwide debate when it was issued by the church's top court last fall. That decision and a related judgment, Decision 1031, dealt with the case of the Rev. Ed Johnson, pastor of South Hill (Va.) United Methodist Church, who blocked a practicing homosexual from joining the congregation.

Johnson was placed on involuntary leave by his clergy peers last June, but the Judicial Council ruled in his favor in October, and he was returned to his pulpit. The council reaffirmed its decision in May. While the denomination's Book of Discipline holds gay people to be people of sacred worth, it also officially states that the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching.

At least 16 annual conferences stated that homosexuality is not a barrier to membership; four said it is a barrier to membership; and two said it is not a barrier for ordination.

The Rocky Mountain Conference invited pastors to "voluntarily relinquish the authority granted them by the Judicial Council Decision 1032" and receive those willing, after suitable instruction, to affirm the membership vows.

Florida delegates called for the annual conference to issue a statement of support for a pastoral letter written by the denomination's Council of Bishops in response to Decision 1032. The letter affirmed inclusiveness in church membership, stating "homosexuality is not a barrier."

A second resolution, titled "Integrity," expressed gratitude to the Judicial Council for "affirming the crucial role of pastors in the reception of new members, advocating a lifestyle that is compatible with Christian teaching and maintaining the integrity of membership vows."

A third resolution asked for a petition from the Florida Conference to the General Conference to amend Paragraph 214 of the Book of Discipline to include a sentence that prohibits the exclusion of individuals from membership based on their sexual orientation or "gender identity."

Health care

In early June, a United Methodist physician described United Methodist clergy as being among the least-healthy professional groups in the United States. Numerous conferences addressed funding health care plans for clergy - both active and retired - and lay employees. In the Mississippi Conference, more than 100 runners and walkers participated in the second annual 5K run/walk, a new wellness event. A bike ride called Circuit Ride preceded the annual conference gathering.

The Arkansas Conference added a new strategic initiative to its vision statement, emphasizing the importance of self-care for clergy, staff and laity and to facilitate health ministries for body, mind and spirit through its churches. The conference also introduced "Holy Healthy United Methodist Church," a three-year, faith-based health and wellness program for the conference. In endorsing the program, Bishop Charles N. Crutchfield pledged that he and the nine district superintendents would attempt to lose a combined 100 pounds by the next annual conference session.

Wisconsin affirmed a Wellness Covenant to increase attention on both spiritual and physical health. The Peninsula-Delaware Conference's board of pension sponsored a health fair during its annual gathering, where it introduced a new wellness program for staff as well as anyone interested in a healthier lifestyle. Bishop Marcus Matthews led a health walk around the University of Maryland-Eastern Shore campus.

Global connections

In the spirit of Methodism founder John Wesley, who said the "world is my parish," 10 annual conferences established relationships with areas and churches inside and outside the United States. The Desert Southwest Conference voted to partner with the United Methodist Mission Church of Honduras, and the Alaska Missionary Conference will deepen its ministry with the native people of Alaska as well as strengthen its growing connection with the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference. Oregon-Idaho signed a new partnership agreement with the Liberia Annual Conference.

Many conferences voted to give their annual gift from the United Methodist Publishing House - money given to support clergy pensions - to the Central Conference Pension Initiative. The initiative is raising money and developing systems to provide pensions for retired pastors and their survivors in Africa, parts of Europe and Asia.

HIV/AIDS has become a pandemic in countries across the world, and 11 conferences collected offerings for the Global AIDS Fund. Yellowstone encouraged all conference churches to observe Global AIDS Sunday annually on Valentine's Day or the first Sunday after Feb. 14. It was suggested that observances have a central theme of "Have a Heart" with "Honor Those You Love: Give to Fight Global AIDS" and "Make a Difference in the Lives of Others" as sub-themes. Seventy-five percent of the special offering will go to the appropriate UMCOR Advance, and 25 percent will be retained to support AIDS ministries within the conference.

The importance of native languages and its use in the churches of the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference was the basis for an approved resolution calling for the organization of a native language contest to be held at the annual conference session. The contest is aimed at promoting the use and teaching of indigenous languages.

In addition, wording was added to the resolution stating that: "THEREFORE, we recognize in spite of America's efforts to limit the official language to English only, that we have a right to speak the language of this land, and that using our languages is an important expression of our original sovereignty."

New and discontinued churches

Five conferences celebrated 21 new church starts or new congregations, and five conferences discontinued 14 congregations. South Georgia affirmed the ministry of congregational development, and eight new church starts, nine revitalized congregations and 19 Hispanic congregations are now under the congregational development umbrella. Alabama celebrated efforts to start 10 new congregations in the next year.

Southwest Texas adopted a bishop's initiative on new church development, designed to reverse three straight years of membership losses in a region with major population growth. The plan includes authorization for a capital fund-raising campaign for starting new congregations and ministries and revitalizing existing congregations.

Missions News

Volunteers in Mission Opportunities:

- Red Bird Mission Team, October 7-14, 2006. Join a group from Trinity United Methodist Church, Denver, on a mission trip to Red Bird in Appalachian Kentucky. Past projects have included painting houses, building rooms, and helping in the local school and community store. Time will be available to meet other people, learn about culture and explore the beautiful mountain fall colors. Registration deadline August 15. For more information, contact Miriam Slejko, 303-839-1493, mslejko@trinityumc.org.
- Personal Energy Transportation (PET) Facility, Luling, Texas. PETs are bicycle-like personal transportation devices for disabled people. The facility manufactures the PETs, paints them in bright colors and sends them to Mexico and Central America. Middle school through adult volunteers are welcome for manufacturing, painting and packing. No skills required. Great opportunity to visit San Antonio sites. Contact: Jake Royall, jtroyall@sbcglobal.net, www.pettexas-luling.org.
- Sunrise UMC, Pueblo, CO. The church is relocating to a new building in Pueblo West. Volunteers are needed to do interior painting at the new building to help defray construction costs. Timeframe: February or March 2007. Contact: Pastor Dave York, 719-545-0557.

Other Volunteers in Mission News:

- Would you like to learn more about UMCOR and Disaster Recovery? Socialize with others passionate about missions? Relax in the wilderness? If so, you are still invited to the annual Western Jurisdiction UMWIM Rally, Lazy F United Methodist Camp, Ellensburg, Washington. For more: www.umvimwj.com.
- Open Hands, Open Hearts - Mission Opportunities in the Rocky Mountain Conference - there are still 18 of these wonderful notebooks left. They were published by the Conference Board of Global Ministries in 2004, with an update for 2006. If you would like one, contact Betsy Keyack, bkeyack@att.net.
- We are looking to find more mission opportunities in Wyoming. If you know of a project at your church or a ministry in your community that could use volunteers, please contact Betsy Keyack, bkeyack@att.net.

The Conference Community

Elaine Robinson To Be Wed

Elaine Robinson, RMC clergy and Associate Professor of Theology and Methodist Studies at Brite Divinity School at TCU, has announced her engagement to Shawn Link. They are planning to wed on September 29th at Lake Texoma (north of Dallas-Fort Worth). Congratulations may be sent to her at E.Robinson@tcu.edu, or at Brite Divinity School, TCU Box 298130, Fort Worth, TX 76129.

Pam Everhart Receives Iliff Scholarship

Pamela Everhart, RMC candidate for ministry serving Evans UMC and student at Iliff School of Theology, has been awarded the Georgia Harkness Scholarship from the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry.

Ten scholars awarded the 2006-07 Georgia Harkness Scholarships represent the spirit of social justice, intellect, and spirituality of the teacher and theologian for whom the awards are named, said the Rev. HiRho Park, the director of Continuing Formation for Ministry at the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry. Since 1983, the awards have been given in memory of the life and service of Harkness, who died in 1974. Harkness was instrumental in the 1956 decision giving women full clergy membership in The Methodist Church. Recipients must demonstrate leadership traits that she embodied: scholarship, spiritual leadership, and social justice leadership.

Congratulations may be sent to Pam at pamtoddjake@mac.com or care of Evans United Methodist Church, 602 39th St., Evans, CO, 80620-2744. Pam's spouse is Todd Everhart, pastor of Rinn UMC in Frederick, CO. Her son Jake was "Noah" at the Annual Conference session several years ago.

Prayer Concerns and Caring For The Conference Community

Prayer Concerns are offered for the Clergy and Lay Members and leadership of the Annual Conference and their immediate families, as a way to nurture the community of the Annual Conference. Prayer concerns are sent to those on the Conference Bulletin Board e-mail list as "Prayers." Please keep these in your prayers:

- **Members of the Sunshine District**, whose Quiet Disciple Betty Lou Pearson died June 26 after a courageous battle with cancer. Please also keep her husband John and their family in prayer.
- **Fanny Geymonat de Pantelis**, spouse of Jorge Pantelis, pastor of Merritt Memorial UMC, Denver, sends a note of gratitude to all the people who had sent best wishes and prayers for her breast cancer surgery July 6. Her treatment is continuing. Expressions of care may be sent to jorgefanny@netzero.com, or c/o Merritt Memorial UMC, 2246 Irving St., Denver, CO 80211-5049.
- **Laura Whitmore**, associate pastor, St. Paul's United Methodist Church, Colorado Springs, on the death of her mother Alta Whitmore, 95, on Saturday, June 24th. Expressions of care: lwhitmore@adelphia.net
- **Jared Hankins**, 31, son of Jim Hankins, and stepson of Margaret Hankins, retired RMC clergy. Jared is recovering from a stroke and seizures. Expressions of care may be sent to Rvhankins@aol.com. The family gives thanks for your concern and prayers.
- **Aaron Black**, pastor of Scott UMC, Denver, and his spouse Janet ask your prayers for their family. Aaron's mother, Lorine Hicks, died July 12, 2006. Expressions of care may be sent to Aaron and Janet at 21208 E. 50th Ave., Denver, CO 80249, or to ablacksr@aol.com.
- **Tim Cook**, lay member from St. Paul's in Boulder, whose father, Bill Cook, of Coffeyville, Kansas, has been diagnosed with inoperable lung cancer. Tim and his family are praying that the cancer has not spread, and that the best course of treatment may be discerned. Expressions of care may be sent to Tim at tmnsan@sprynet.com or at 1009 Bross St, Longmont, CO 80501.
- Applewood Valley congregation and **Carol Johnson**, spouse of Rod Johnson, long time lay delegate to Annual Conference, and leader of the Applewood Valley UMC. Rod died after suffering a severe stroke on Saturday 7/9. Expressions of care may be sent to pabavumc@msn.com.
- retired clergy **Bob Link** and his spouse **Virginia** in prayer as they mourn the death of their son Dan. Dan died on Thursday after a severe attack of ALS (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis or "Lou Gehrig's disease"). Expressions of care may be sent to 1029 Sitka Ct. Loveland, Colo. 80538, BNG.Link@worldnet.att.net.
- Kathy Haley, RMC Clergy, who will have surgery Friday, July 28th at the Veteran's Administration Medical Center in Aurora. Expressions of care may be sent to Rev. Kathy Haley, c/o Park Hill UMC, 5209 Montview Blvd., Denver, CO 80207-3848.
- **Wes Kendall**, retired RMC clergy, who is recovering from a medical procedure on July 26th. Please keep him and his wife **Betty** in your prayers. Expressions of care may be sent to wesbetty@comcast.net or 5219 Territorial St, Parker, CO 80134.
- **Peggy Sewell**, Assistant General Secretary of GCFA's Episcopal Services Department and long-time leader in the RMC, who had a stay in the hospital during Annual Conference. Her spouse Bob, retired RMC clergy, reports she is back at work and that they "are here and trying to get unpacked and settled in" to 1413 Cedarway Lane, Nashville, TN 37211, pisewell@comcast.net, and rrsewell@comcast.net.



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Conference**

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6110 Greenwood Plaza Blvd.
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Clergy Transitions

The complete appointment list with current e-mails is available on the RMCUMC web site:
<http://rmcumc.org/CHI/DistrictSites/allappts.phtml>. This list is updated each month September - May (irregularly June-August).

- Mark Heiss is appointed to Lyons UMC beginning July 15th, 2006.
- Jodi Harless will be supplied to Peetz Community Church, 529 Logan, Peetz, Colorado starting August 1, 2006.
- Ed Bollack will begin his appointment at Yuma UMC, Yuma, Colorado on September 1.
- Marcia Shafer will start an appointment at Sundance UMC in Sundance, Wyoming on September 1.
- Chris Carr will be appointed to the Gillette UMC in Wyoming starting September 1.

TableTalk Publication and Subscription Information

TableTalk is a selection or summary of the most important e-mailed information sent to the Rocky Mountain Conference e-lists since the last issue. If you wish to receive all information sent by e-mail to the Conference, please send us your e-mail address and say what kinds of information you wish to receive. If official Conference News is the only information you wish to receive, you can sign up yourself at <http://rmcumc.org/subscribe>.

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