



President Paul Sieveking

From now on, things are going to be different

Have you ever said those words? Maybe you issued an ultimatum or a threat, or maybe you offered an apology or maybe you made a promise, “From now on, things are going to be different.”

St. Paul wrote nearly 2,000 years ago, “The time is short ... from now on things are going to be different” (1 Cor. 7:29 NIV), and then he listed some specific ways our lives as Christians are different. Now that we have celebrated Christmas, as we enter a new year, things are different for us.

Jesus began His ministry with the announcement, “The time has come. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the Good News.” This call to repentance is, in essence, the same message Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “From now on things are going to be different ... turn from your sin and believe God’s promises.”

How will things be different? St. Mark recorded for us the call of the first disciples. Simon and Andrew were casting their nets when Jesus called them, “Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men” (Matt. 4:19 NIV). At once they left their nets and followed Him. He called James and John, and they left their father Zebedee

and followed Him, too. How different their lives became from then on! They would still have chances to go fishing once in a while, but it would never be the same. Fishing for fish was no longer their business. Things that had caused joy or sorrow were replaced by new, far reaching eternal concerns. Even family ties were no longer the same. From then on they were going fishing for people. Following Jesus meant things would be very different for them.

And from now on, things are different for us, too. As Jesus said, “The time has come.” Paul reminds us, “The world in its present form is passing away” (1 Cor. 7:31 NIV). He advises us not to be so attached to the things of this world that is passing away that we lose sight of the world that is to come.

Our marriages and families are different. Paul wrote, “From now on ... those who have wives should live as if they had none” (1 Cor. 7:29 NIV) Gentlemen, Paul isn’t suggesting we ignore our wives. He is not commanding married people to divorce. In fact, he spends a great deal of this chapter affirming that marriage is a gift of God. He is addressing what you might call a “Hollywood” image of marriage, like the old movies where Doris Day snags Rock Hudson, leads him to the altar and they all live happily ever after—as if that’s life’s ultimate goal.

From now on—because Jesus has come—marriage is not an end in itself but a means to an end. The kingdom of God is near! Your marriage and your family are different. Your home is the place to exercise your faith. The goal is a Christian marriage in which husband and wife love each other, forgive each other, build each other up in the faith and, as Christian parents, raise their children in faith in Jesus. That’s

God’s goal for you. From now on, things are going to be different in your Christian home.

Other things touch us deeply in this world. Some things bring us sorrow; others fill our hearts with joy. Paul said, “those who mourn should live as if they did not; those who are happy, as if they were not” (1 Cor. 7:30 NIV). That’s not to say we need to bottle up inside all our feelings. This is the same lesson Jesus tried to impress on His disciples when He promised them, “I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy. Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy” (John 16: 20, 22 NIV).

Things are different now that Jesus has come into your life. Things that bring you joy—like a clean bill of health, your team winning the game, a great meal or a windfall in the stock market—are all gifts of God, but they are not the end in themselves. You don’t live in God’s Kingdom just to be happy from day to day. Ultimately, you have the joy that no one can take from you because you will see Jesus and be with Him forever in His glory.

Likewise, things that make you sad—illness, tragedy, losses and even sorrow at the death of a loved one—cannot crush you. From now on, things are different, as Paul wrote to the Romans, “Nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. In all this we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us” (Rom. 8:37 NIV).

Things are going to be different in the way we do business, make a

(Continued on Page H.)

EDUCATION



The Rev.
Bob
Riggert
Executive
Assistant

The LIGHT to children

In April 1997, I began my journey as an executive assistant in Iowa District West. I came into the position with experiences on the District Family Life Committee, Christian Education Committee and as a previous member of the board of directors. I had some understanding of the structure and expectations of “district.” I had served in Lutheran schools and had attended district youth gatherings. I had some appreciation of the dynamics of those ministries. Even with that background I wondered, what can be my contribution to the congregations of Iowa District West? Why has God called me to this position at this time?

Later in 1997, I was invited by Dr. Judy Christian and the LCMS Child and Family Ministry office to be part of a dialog on ministry to and with children. It was an “epiphany” time that touched my heart and shaped my ministry. My personal mission statement developed: “I am an advocate for Christ, for children and the changing power of the Gospel.”

I have been privileged to work with amazing lay and volunteer teachers, directors of Christian education, youth leaders and pastors who have shared in my vision to connect children with Christ. Thousands of children have heard about Jesus and sung about Jesus as the district’s camp vacation

Bible school curriculum was developed and shared for 15 years. I have seen the joy of the 3-year-old hearing about Jesus in a preschool; the curiosity of a 10-year-old exploring the stories of Jesus in a Lutheran school; the struggles of a teenager applying God’s Word to real-life situations; and the joy of the 22-year-old responding to God’s calling to full-time ministry.

I have become a student of ministry to and with children. My library has dozens of books on family ministry, faith nurture, curriculum resources, program models, etc. I have been privileged to share some of my learning with many congregations and at regional and national conferences. I am thankful to those who have mentored me, encouraged my learning and listened to my explorations.

Several realities continue to challenge me (and you). The research of George Barna suggests that if a child does not come to faith in Christ by the age of 13, the likelihood of them ever coming to their Savior quickly diminishes. The research of Ken Ham indicates that almost two-thirds of the children learning in our Christian classrooms will disappear from our churches by their young-adult years. The statistics of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod indicate that only one-fourth of the children we baptize stay connected to our congregations past high-school graduation. The work has only begun.

This article is my final article as your executive assistant. I will be transitioning from the Iowa District West staff on Jan. 31. Thanks for reading through the years. Thanks for your prayers and support. My request of you is this: be an advocate for the children in

your family, in your congregation and in your community. While we always seek their safety and security in earthly settings, our primary goal is to bring them to Jesus so that He might hold them now and eternally.

I believe that the congregation that has a heart for children will be a healthy and happy place for children and everyone else. The attitudes and actions that go with welcoming and nurturing children apply to all other areas of ministry. There is no greater privilege than being the arms of Jesus to little children. Jesus compliments those who have child-like faith.

I sense that God isn’t finished shaping me for ministry with His children and His Church. I’m excited about sharing the faith and sharing God’s blessings with my grandchildren.

May we all be His lights to the His children.

Rev. Bob Riggert



"Thanks, Rev. Bob!"

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The Rev. Mark Gerken
Executive Assistant

+ Grounded + Growing + Reaching +

Even though the combines were put away and the corn and beans were already in the bin or delivered to the elevator, growth and a harvest yet to come were on the minds of over 240 Iowans on a windy November day at St. John Lutheran Church, Storm Lake during the Grounded + Growing + Reaching + Outreach Resource and Training Event.

The participants spent Saturday, Nov. 5 being grounded in the foundations for outreach from God’s Word, growing in their knowledge and understanding of the task, and preparing to reach out with the message of Jesus where they live and work.

Dr. Robert Newton, president of the California-Nevada-Hawaii District, a former foreign missionary and seminary professor, provided the keynote presentations for the day, describing the map of our culture today and how that informs our approach to outreach.

Twelve experts from within Iowa District West provided breakout sessions on more specific outreach-related topics, including a hands-on love-in-action session where participants went into the neighborhood surrounding St. John to perform an outreach-oriented act of service for the community.

The family-friendly event included specialized outreach-focused activities for younger participants as well. Lutheran Hour Ministries led their

five14 outreach training for teens, an outreach-focused vacation-Bible-school-like activity was provided for elementary-aged children, and child care was available for younger children. In addition, a Mission Fair of *Ablaze!* grant recipients and other outreach efforts in the district provided an occasion for pastors and lay members to interact and discuss the different types of outreach efforts throughout the district.

The event was sponsored by LCEF and Thrivent, and made possible by numerous volunteers from St. John and throughout the district. The Personal Missions Committee wishes to thank the sponsors, the members and staff of St. John, and all of the leaders involved for making the day a success and the first of its kind in several years for the district. We hope to be able to offer similar opportunities in the years to come.

Smith appointed head of Rural/Small Town Ministry

The Rev. Ray Smith, pastor of First Lutheran, Missouri Valley, was appointed as part-time executive assistant for Rural/Small



Town Ministry in Iowa District West. His appointment follows the retirement of the Rev. Gene Ernst, former chairman of the Rural/Small Town Ministry Committee.

“When Rev. Ernst retired, the Missions Committee recommended

we expand the role in light of the fact that 80 percent of our congregations are classified as rural/small town by Synod,” commented the Rev. Mark Gerken, executive assistant for Missions and Human Care. “By establishing a part-time executive assistant position rather than a committee chair, it raises the visibility and focus for that area.”

“Rev. Smith brings a real passion and love for rural/small town ministry and experience, from his prior service with OGE Energy Services, in addressing change—which is certainly occurring in the rural and small town areas of Iowa West,” continued Gerken.

In his position, Smith will primarily work with the church workers and members of the congregations and circuits of Iowa District West to equip and enable rural/small town congregations to recognize, embrace and engage the mission field of their local community.

“It’s imperative that our congregations think about what’s best for extending the Kingdom and not just the local congregation,” shared Smith. He continued, “I believe that our rural and small town areas in Iowa West are a viable and rich mission field, and I look forward to partnering with the members of our congregations in identifying how best to serve in that mission field!”

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YOUTH



The Rev.
Steve
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Made sacred through Christ Jesus

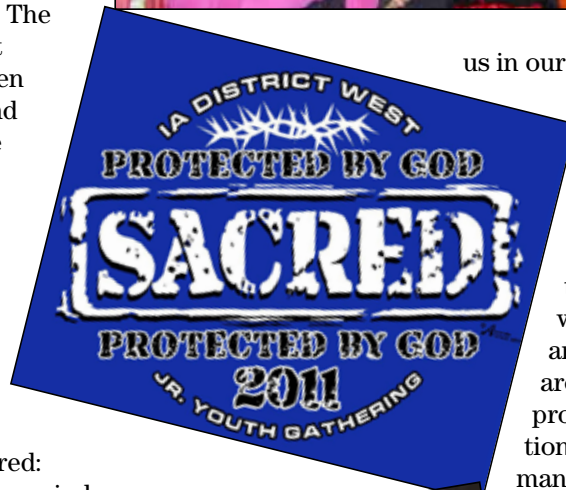
I recently finished painting the rooms on the main floor of my home. The rooms needed to be updated (a word I have learned to dread). The nail holes have been filled and smoothed. The ladders and rollers have been cleaned and put away. The drop cloths and paint cans have been stored. The furniture has been moved back and new window coverings installed. All in all, the rooms have been transformed into something new for us again. Yet, even after all that work and time, I only was able to transform the appearance of the rooms. Nothing I did really changed the structure of the rooms.

In October, 6th-, 7th- and 8th-grade students from around the district went to Des Moines to hear the message that our God transforms us, not just our appearances, but our entire lives by His love and grace. At "Sacred: Protected By God," middle-school youth were reminded that God has transformed them, not just updated them on the outside, but made them sacred and holy through the life, death and resurrection of His Son Jesus Christ.

With water and the Word in their Baptism, God has brought them into a sacred relationship with Himself and He promises that He will always be with them. Listening to Pastor Luke Timm, attending smaller sectionals, through devotion and worship the youth celebrated God's relationship with them in Christ.

Now, I know that my new living room, dining room and kitchen will not stay this way forever. Sooner or later, someone will open a door too far and the doorknob will bounce against the wall. Or perhaps someone will slide back from the table and the chair will scrape the wall behind them. And then I

suppose that new family pictures will need to be put up at some point and holes from nails will once again reappear in the walls.



God knows that having been made sacred, we too need to be protected from the everyday trials and problems of life. So, He gives us the Ten Commandments to guide us and protect

us in our lives. Learning

how God made them sacred in His eyes, the youth were able to learn how to remain sacred in their relationships with parents, peers and the world around them as God provides divine direction in the Ten Commandments.

"For the Lord loves the just and will not forsake His faithful ones. They will be protected forever"
(Ps. 37:28).

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Gary Thies

Peru missionary

What a blessing to welcome Missionary Anthony DiLiberto on Nov. 2, 2011, to have him report on his work in the Andes Mountains of Peru. His work and his contacts have led to the establishment of the first Lutheran Church of the LCMS in Peru. This young man has worked with some of the poorest people, and shows them the love of the Lord Jesus, and how *He* died for them.

This young missionary worked in Peru as a volunteer for three years. He has now been called by the LCMS as a career missionary and has returned to the United States to try to raise 100 percent of his funding. His plans are to return to help start the second Lutheran Church there.

Please pray for Anthony and that God will raise up others to help support this young man of God.

We welcomed a wonderful crowd of people to our fellow-

ship hall at 7 p.m., and everyone enjoyed the mission report and discussion of the new work in Peru. The entire group went to the barn for the commissioning of Anthony and a group of Hispanic missionaries from Denison, Iowa, were able to be part of the program. What a joy to welcome the Rev. Merle Mahnken and his youth from Immanuel Lutheran in Schleswig, and Rev. Dan Vogel and the members of his Hispanic congregation from Denison, Iowa.

New volunteers

When old Missionary Gary spoke at Algona, Iowa, on Oct. 16, 2011, he didn't realize that God had some very "not normal" people waiting for him to meet! Yes, the Lord sends people at "just the right time" to help with *His* work at Mission Central.

The volunteer seamstress from Grand Island, Neb., who made our special Mission Central shirts had been called to our real home in heaven. These shirts were starting to wear out when special missionary friends Wilbert and Evelyn Ruhnke, said, "Oh, Gary, we have someone in our congregation who has a sewing machine and they might be able to help." That's when Rick and Barb Bitterman were called to help. They were so eager to provide their special sewing services! They were able to sew six new emblems of Mission Central and our names on the shirts for our volunteer secretaries. Rick and Barb are special people who are

willing to help. In addition to this, they also helped with special photograph-

ic work. At the same

service in Algona, Gary Reynolds, an usher, said he was most



interested in helping with some manual labor at Mission Central, as a special "handyman volunteer." Old Missionary Gary had several odd jobs to do; so, what a *joy* to have the Lord send Missionary Reynolds at just the right time to organize a group that could come and help.

Those words, "Ask and it shall be given to you, seek and ye shall find" seem to have special meaning at Mission Central. We thank God for our staff of more than 60 volunteers who help with all kinds of work that assists in telling more and more people about Jesus our Savior.

Pictured above are the Bittermans and Reynolds in front of our altar in the barn at Mission Central.

Special guests



The Rev. Dr. Lee Hagan, interim director of Rural and Small Town Missions

(an agency of the LCMS Office of National Mission), came to visit Mission Central. Accompanying Hagan was Dr. Ralph Geisler, long-time director and now special assistant. The men came to confirm the

(Continued on Page H.)



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Ellie
Menz

Mission outreaches

Pastor Glenn Hansen of Trinity Lutheran in Odebolt and I recently had the privilege of attending the first International Disaster Response training for LCMS in St. Louis. It was amazing to be in the same room with people from 12 countries who are leaders in responding to the horrible disasters throughout the world. We visited with leaders from Haiti; Australia; Joplin, Mo.; Japan; Minot, N.D.; New Orleans; India; New Zealand; Indonesia; Texas; and others.

Pastor Glenn Merritt, director of Disaster Response, Office of International Missions, and the LCMS team are dedicated in their response to the many disasters around the world. LCMS is in the forefront of offering help and hope to hurting people. They are working to have the best system of support available for people throughout the world to help one another when disaster strikes.

LERT

Iowa District West is taking the lead in LERT training. Mark your calendar for the next training. The disaster training is for anyone in Iowa District West! Plan to attend on March 10 at Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Lake View.

Following is information on the first LERT trailer in Iowa District West and how you can help and be

ready to respond when the next disaster happens.

Jackie Wallace, part of the amazing Sac City Circuit LERT team shares, "Chances are, you or someone you know were affected by one of the hail or ice storms, tornadoes or floods that struck throughout Iowa this past year. Disaster strikes with little or no warning. People unexpectedly find themselves in need. As we head into 2012 and the tornado season, the Lutheran Early Response Team in Sac City Circuit is preparing to help. Our focus is to reach out and share the comfort of the Gospel and, at the same time, help with cleanup and prepare meals. Our goal: 'to be Christ's hands and feet in times of need.'"

"Our Circuit LERT team has been blessed with generous contributions enabling the purchase of a trailer and grill, and with donations of equipment, including hand tools, a generator and safety supplies. You may ask, 'How can I help?' Our response, 'In many ways!'"

- Prayers
- Volunteer to be a LERT team member
- Cash contributions
- Donate needed tools, food and supplies

To volunteer, ask questions or donate, contact Jackie Wallace, Sac City Circuit LERT Treasurer, at 712-665-2027 or ccwjaw@gmail.com.

Alta youth make health kits

Everyone can help supply the LERT trailer. The Rev. Craig Cummins, St. Paul, Alta shares, "The junior-high youth group from St. Paul Lutheran Church in Alta and their friends participated in a service project during a lock-in on Oct. 28. Twenty-five 5th- through 8th-graders participated in an all night lock-in with Pastor Cummins at the church

after roller skating at the nearby roller rink in Storm Lake. After learning about the new disaster-relief trailer and being informed about the health kits that were needed, we decided to help. The church members, as well as the high-school youth group and the ladies aid, donated various items and money preceding the lock-in."

"Evelyn Meyer sewed 35 of the towels and, on the night of the lock-in, the youth assembled, tied and stacked them to be delivered at a later date. The students were told of the great sadness and stress that the recipients would probably be in if they would be receiving one of these kits some day, due to losing their house through a flood, tornado or fire. They made inspirational cards complete with drawings and pictures with magic markers, crayons and stickers. Each kit has a card included. We hope to make health kits in the future, as we have some supplies and money left over. The students remarked how fun it was to make these and really enjoyed helping those who need it."



Junior youth gathering

The junior youth gathering was a great success! The focus of the gathering was the Ten Commandments with keynote speaker, Pastor Luke Timm. The

(Continued on Page H.)

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Carole
White

Looking back on 2011

We look back over highlights of a year blessed by God! We thank our committed investors and faithful borrowers for making possible not only the following pictured events but also being able to provide loans, demographic information, Consecrated Stewards and Joyful Response – electronic tuition/

offering service that makes it easier for church members to submit their tithes and for parents to pay tuition.

Mount Olive Lutheran Church and School, Des Moines was blessed with the gift from God of new classrooms, elevator access and offices.

Holy Cross, Carlisle, located just outside Des Moines, built a two-story, 4,400-square-foot addition. The new space includes a larger narthex, new classrooms, more accessible restrooms and an elevator.

Financial secretaries and clergy from Iowa District West will attend the Congregation Treasurers Workshop in January hosted by Lutheran Church Extension Fund. The 2012 workshop will be offered at two locations: Jan. 14 at St. Paul, Sac City, and Jan. 21 at Faith, Adel.



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Parish Nurse

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

One must be prepared when traveling during winter months. FEMA and CDC have suggestions for staying safe while traveling by car.

Avoid traveling when the weather service has issued advisories in the areas of expected travel. If you must travel, inform a friend or relative of your proposed route and expected time of arrival.

- Prepare your car for winter travel.
- Service the radiator and maintain antifreeze level.
- Check tire tread or, if necessary, replace tires with all weather or snow tires.
- Keep gas tank level full to avoid ice in the tank or fuel lines.
- Use a wintertime formula in your windshield washer.
- Have a cell phone with full battery with you.
- Keep a winter emergency kit in your car in case you become stranded:
 - Blankets, flashlights, battery-powered radio, extra batteries
 - Food (energy bars) and water
 - Booster cables, flares or emergency light sticks, tire pump
 - Bag of sand or cat litter for traction
 - First-aid kit, plastic bags

Learn safety rules to follow in case you become stranded in your car:

1. Stay with your car unless safety is no more than 100 yards away (about one block).
2. If walking to safety, keep your arms and legs moving.
3. Stay visible in your car by tying a bright cloth on the antenna, turning on the inside overhead light (when engine is running) and raising the hood when snow stops falling.
4. Run the engine and heater only 10 minutes every hour.
5. Keep a downwind window open at least one inch when the engine is running.
6. Make sure the tail pipe is not blocked.

May God keep us safe as we travel not only through the winter months but through the rest of the year.

*In His Service,
Darlene Rueter, RN,
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CELEBRATIONS

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

(Continued from Page A.)

living and view our possessions. Paul wrote, "From now on ... those who buy something should live as if it were not theirs to keep; and those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them" (1 Cor. 7:30-31 NIV). For many people, the goal in life is getting rich and being successful.

Jesus illustrated the futility of this kind of life in His parable of the rich man who surveyed his bumper crop and said to himself, "You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy, eat, drink, and be merry.' But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded of you'" (Luke 12:19-20 NIV). Wealth can't be the goal of life. Jesus introduced that parable saying, "Watch out! A man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions" (Luke 12:15 NIV).

The fishermen by the Sea of Galilee left everything when Jesus called

them to take a higher view of life. One of them, John, wrote, "Do not love the world or anything in the world—for everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever" (1 John 2:15-17).

Because Jesus came—His saving work of living, dying on the cross and rising again for us—things are different. That's not an ultimatum or a threat or an apology; it's a promise. Everything is different! We, who have heard our Savior's gracious call and who have been given the grace to repent and believe the Good News, now have a new goal in life—the full life to which Jesus leads us and the eternal life that He has promised us.

From now on, by the grace of God, things really are going to be different.

IOWA

(Continued from Page F.)

500-plus participants enjoyed the informative sectionals and the great music with Swen and Dean. They donated 351

toys for children in the inner city of Los Angeles and made cloth bandages for use in medical clinics worldwide.

MISSION CENTRAL

(Continued from Page E.)

partnership that this organization has with Mission Central and to discuss future planning and how we can work together. Hagan indicated that Geisler would be out "telling the story" and he would continue to be a special part of this most urgent ministry.

The huge amount of small congregations in "rural" settings in the LCMS indicates that a great need exists for training and equipping the small rural congregations

to reach out to the entire membership in their communities, where more than 50 percent of people in these areas do not have a church affiliation. There is such *urgency* to reach the lost in this country, and this special ministry is designed to meet that need.

It was a special day and we were so happy to have this contact here at Mission Central. Pictured on Page E are Hagan and Geisler with their Boss in the background.

We congratulate

(January 2012)

Birthdays

- Jan. 1—Evelyn McMinemee, 90, Zion Lutheran Church, Denison.
- Jan. 15—Dorothy Bielfeldt, 90, Zion Lutheran Church, Denison.
- Jan. 17—Helen Neumann, 90, Zion Lutheran Church, Denison.
- Jan. 29—Art Boettger, 90, Zion Lutheran Church, Denison.
- Jan. 12—Frances Rameden, 80, St. Paul, Sioux City.
- Jan. 26—Adeline Vogtlin, 95, Memorial, Ames.

Anniversaries

- Jan. 1—Lester and Frances Boettger, 55, Zion, Denison.
- Jan. 4—Virgil and Irene Moeller, 70, Trinity, Boone.
- Jan. 15—Orlin and Ellen Pratt, 60, Christ, Remsen.
- Jan. 20—Irwin and Mary Lou Denker, 60, Zion, Denison.
- Jan. 26—Ralph and Sally Radke, 65, St. John, Galva.
- Jan. 31—Mr. and Mrs. Ray Larsen, 60, Emmanuel, Lake View.

Deadline for the March issue: Jan. 15

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