



Sunday
30th

Pentecost 6B

Swing wide the hem of your garment

Breaking Open the Word

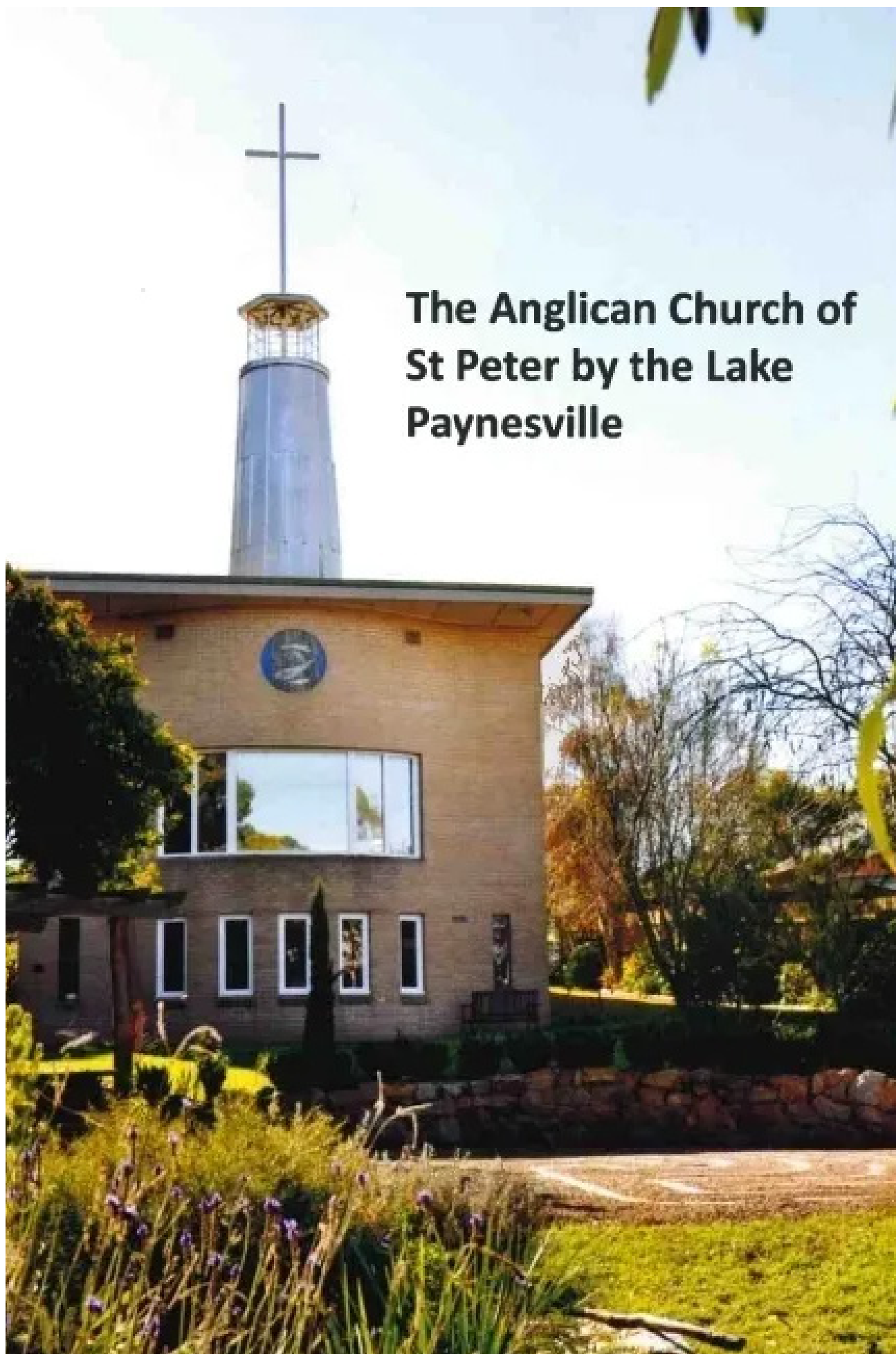
**Pentecost 6
Liturgical Year B**



Prepared by
Dennis Webster

St Peter's by the Lake

Paynesville, Victoria Australia
Anglican Diocese of Gippsland



The Anglican Church of St Peter by the Lake Paynesville

A tawny frogmouth on the exterior, St Stephen's,
Richmond, Victoria

READINGS

2 Samuel 1.1, 17-27
Psalm 130
2 Corinthians 8.7-15
Mark 5.21-43



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**KEEP THE FIRE
BURNING!
BLAK, LOUD
AND PROUD**
7-14 JULY 2024

Summary



Lake Victoria

“

And they laughed at him...

Mark 5.40

”

This week, the Parish is celebrating the Feast of Saint Peter (not Paul!).

Being our patronal festival, here by the edge of the lake, we are marking the weekend in style with Festive Evensong and Eucharist.

Our guest preacher, who will use the St Peter's Day readings, is Dr Cath Connelly, the director of The Abbey, Raymond Island. We are thrilled to have this renowned spiritual director and Celtic harpist share the word with us.

What follows are my thoughts about reading the gospel.

I have but one fundamental question:

As we reflect on the gospel reading, let us hold onto the hope that if people were to reach out to the hem of the garment that is our church, they would indeed find healing and peace, comforting and reassuring us all.

INTRODUCTION

In his sermon, “Swing wide the hem of your garment,” Dennis discusses the significant role of community restoration and faith’s healing power. He uses an anecdote about a sponge cake workshop to symbolise fellowship and sharing and introduces the concept of Open Space Technology, a method that promotes peaceful conflict resolution. Dennis references the gospel and Fr Michael Woods’ text “Practicing Peace - Theology, Contemplation and Action,” emphasising that peace emerges wherever space is opened.

Deepening his sermon, Dennis narrates the gospel stories of Jairus, his daughter, and the woman with the haemorrhage, describing them as a ‘synoptic sponge’ or ‘sandwich’. He explains that Jesus’ mission restores all twelve tribes of Israel, symbolised by Jairus’ twelve-year-old daughter nearing womanhood. The story shifts to the woman with a haemorrhage, symbolising her desperate quest for societal restoration. Dennis likens her condition possibly to extreme endometriosis, bringing attention to her suffering.

Despite negative perceptions of others, Jesus, acknowledging her faith, heals her and inclusively addresses her as a ‘daughter.’ In the climax, Jesus, unswayed by scepticism, brings Jairus’ deceased daughter back to life.

Dennis identifies this scenario and the preceding healing as symbolic representations of God’s path to redemption and restoration, irrespective of marginalisation. Concluding his sermon, the Pastor asks his congregation if individuals seeking restoration would find peace and healing in the Church. He sincerely hopes the Church will be a healing sanctuary and peace for everyone.

Dennis highlights the themes of healing, restoration, forgiveness, and inclusivity throughout his sermon, emphasising their importance in the Christ mission. This summary offers a detailed understanding of the sermon, making it accessible to religious and non-religious audiences.



Keywords

twelve
crowd

laugh
faith



Contemplation

reach out
touch

acceptance
wholeness



Integration

openness
peace

restoration
hope



God of Creation, breathe into us, made of clay,
your gift of life so that we, made in your image
may be your eyes, ears, hands and voice.



Over the past week, a workshop focused on making the perfect sponge cake. To be presented with a slice of ginger cake, perfectly made, was well received! From all accounts, the making of the sponge was well received, and all present had a wonderful time of sharing and fellowship.

It is these precious moments in the life of a Parish that emphasise the family of the Body of Christ. The previous week, as the Clergy of the Diocese of Gippsland gathered on Raymond Island at The Abbey, one of our facilitators, Fr Michael Woods, led us through the process of Open Space Technology, a different way of holding meetings, facilitating consensus, and encouraging a peaceful approach to issues that may well, sadly, illicit conflict and disharmony. Based on the idea that the best things to happen at conferences are usually during the coffee breaks, listening and allowing each other to participate in the conversation without fear or prejudice is productive, respectful and meaningful.

Michael led us based on his text "Practicing Peace- Theology, Contemplation and Action" (Wipe and Stock, Oregon, 2022). On the plate opposite the table of contents is the following quote:

"Wherever space is opened, peace breaks out." (Harrison Owen, author and photographer). Peace is one of the gifts granted in the Gospel for today, and it comes not in an open space but rather in a rather crowded and cynical environment.

Starting with the sponge reference, the gospel passage for today is effectively a 'synoptic sponge' or 'sandwich'. A more proper and elitist term would be a chiasm! This is where the story starts with the top slice, has a delicious middle filling, and returns to the first story as a conclusion. The scene is set and concludes with Jairus and his daughter. In the middle of the slices of cake, we have the woman with a

haemorrhage who had suffered from this complaint for over twelve years.

Let's start with the top layer of the sponge, the bit where our teeth typically sink in first. Jairus is a synagogue leader in an area which is mainly gentile. Already, Jesus has been followed by large crowds, even crossing the Sea of Galilee at night to rest, only to be combatively challenged by a storm and some somewhat fearful disciples. The crowd make their way around and presses in all around him. Jairus approaches Jesus and informs him that his twelve-year-old daughter is very ill and near death. He urges Jesus to come to his house immediately.

Is the number twelve significant? There are twelve tribes of Israel. The incarnation or Good News of Jesus is to bring restoration to the twelve tribes and then to the entire world. Is there an analogy suggesting that the girl's age represents the tribes? Maybe, maybe not. Then there is the problem of gender. Not being male, the young girl is not as important as a son would be. Sad but true, the patriarchal society strongly favours the inferior male species. Despite this, Jairus is willing to step out against Jerusalem's prevailing teaching and advice and seek help from Jesus. The final thought about the girl's age is that she is on the verge of becoming a woman. Whilst bat mitzvah was not a thing at the time of Jesus' ministry, a progressive Jewish family would be looking forward to celebrating the coming of age of the young girl soon.

Now to the cream.

A woman seeks out Jesus as her last option for community restoration. To haemorrhage is to render the woman unclean. If Jewish, she would not be allowed to attend the synagogue, and all must shun her until she was clean. The implication is that she is having a continual issue as a result of menstruation, a sign that she is indeed



a woman. The length of time becomes significant when we hear the length of time she has faced the issue. As a woman, she has been unable to be fully part of the community, marry or contribute for twelve years. Seeking healing from the physicians, she has exhausted 'all she has'. There is nothing even for a dowry. Hearing of Jesus' ministry, she begins to journey in faith to encounter him. She hopes and believes that even if she could touch the hem of his garment, she would be healed.

So, an unclean woman, assuming that having arrived at twelve or so, like the young girl, is excluded through no fault of her own. Some more learned people than I have suggested that the constant haemorrhage is akin to a form of endometriosis in an extreme form. If that is the case, then together with the discharge, the sheer pain and discomfort that the woman suffered is, from an ignorant male's point of view, unfathomable. I have seen it in my family and comprehend the difficulty, but to say I am an expert or have experience is not putting too fine a point on it, out of my knowledge or comprehension, other than to have compassion.

Again, is this number twelve significant? Could it be stretched to think that maybe the twelve tribes of Israel are themselves

unclean? Have they excluded themselves from the promised kingdom by their issues? More straws, more theories, more speculation.

Like Jairus, this unnamed woman starts with faith, hope and love. "If only..." is an exciting place to start. The crowd are pressing in on Jesus when she manages to reach through and touch the hem of his garment. Immediately, she realises that she has been made well. The pain has stopped. The bleeding has stopped. Her life immediately feels different. Even though the crowd is large and pressing in, Jesus notices. He feels the touch of faith flowing from him. When he asks immediately, "Who touched me?" he is met with cynicism. In seeking out the person who touched, the woman threw herself at the feet of Jesus and confessed all.

Then, the words of Jesus bring us to the bottom of this layer of filling and link us back to the rest of the sponge. "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease." (Mark 5.40)

Two things are said here. "Daughter, your faith has made you well." Some versions use the word "whole". This is very much in the keeping of the closer word "hugiés", which, depending on the usage, means whole, healthy or sound. It is a more complete gift



beyond 'healing'. The woman is not only made free from her affliction; she is now made complete. From now on, she will be free from the bleeding and can take her place back in the community. No longer will she be subject to the laws about cleanliness leading to exclusion. And by addressing her as 'daughter', the inclusion in the kingdom of God as an inheritor is strongly attested.

The link with the daughter takes us back to Jairus and his concerns. Word is passed to him, telling him not to bother the teacher or master. Whilst the term "rabbi" was emerging around this time, the title is explicitly 'teacher'. What follows is more cynicism when Jesus indicates that the girl is not dead but sleeping. In Mark 5.40, they laugh at him. Encountering the professional and family mourners, he clears them away from the house, and taking only Peter, James and John, together with the father and mother, they enter the space where the daughter lay. He bids her to 'little girl' or 'maiden' arise. It is here that the number twelve again appears. She was of age.

Why Peter, James, and John? They are indeed key witnesses to Jesus's life, made even more evident in the Transfiguration and post-resurrection leadership of the Church.

So, from twelve through to twelve, two daughters of the kingdom are restored. One is promised to heal and then raised from the dead. Another is brought from being dead to the community to the

fullness of life. Both of them are recipients of God's healing and peace. If this is an analogy of the plight of God's chosen, the pain to be overcome, and the restoration of the twelve, then the analogy is intense. And to happen to those the community would not see as valuable is even more remarkable.

As the body of Christ, this raises a question that I shared with one of my fellow clergy members I coach/supervise every month. "If people in the community reach out to us, the Church, touching as it would, the hem of our garment, would they find healing and peace?"

Restoration, wholeness, healing and forgiveness are at the heart of the Messianic mission. The Messianic secret is at work in this story. "Don't tell anyone" is given as the instruction, yet what has happened is in plain view. In the subsequent time of Peter, James and John's leadership, all of this is relayed to the community. No doubt, the analogy implied was further explored.

But I go back to the question I cannot answer, and I only pray and hope it will be accurate. If people, no matter what marginalises them, reach out to our community, may they find healing and peace.

Icebreaker!



If you could switch lives with any fictional character for a day, who would it be and why?



GROUP DISCUSSION

Question 1

How do the stories of Jairus' daughter and the woman with a haemorrhage demonstrate the healing power of faith?

Context

Restoration and healing that took place in these two stories from the Gospel.

Application

Can you think of a time when your faith led to healing or restoration?

Question 2

Do you think twelve is significant in these stories, and what does it represent?

Context

There were twelve tribes of Israel, and Jesus' mission was to restore them and the world.

Application

How can the theme of restoration be seen in your faith community?

Context

Jesus restores her health and welcomes her into the kingdom of God, addressing her as 'daughter'.

Application

How can you work to be more inclusive and welcoming to others in your community?

Question 3

What does Jesus' response to the woman with a haemorrhage teach us about how we should treat those who are marginalised?

Question 4

How does Open Space Technology relate to the concept of peace and restoration within a community?

Context

Embodying the mission of Christ to provide a healing and peaceful environment.

Application

What steps can your faith community take to become a source of healing and peace for others?

Context

Open Space Technology is a peaceful and inclusive approach to addressing conflict and facilitating consensus.



Application

Are there instances in your community where Open Space Technology could be implemented to foster peace and restoration? How would that look?

Question 5

Based on this sermon, how can the Church create a welcoming and healing space for those seeking restoration?

End notes and further reading

Michael John Wood, *Practicing Peace: Theology, Contemplation and Action*, Wipf & Stock, 2022.

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- Ask God for the strength to step out in faith, just as Jairus did.
- Pray for those who feel excluded or unclean to find community and healing.
- Seek God's guidance in becoming a source of healing and peace for others.



Brabarlung Totem
This is produced on
Gunaikurnai Land, and our
respects are paid to the First
Nations people everywhere.



Five Days of Prayer

This five-day devotional will deepen the sermon from this weekend. Throughout this week, we will explore themes of faith, hope, and the miraculous power of Jesus, as revealed through key scriptural passages. Join us as we reflect on Jesus' healing touch and the restoration it brings to our lives.

Day 1 Mark 5:34

On the first day of our devotional, we focus on the moment Jesus heals the woman with a haemorrhage. Despite her suffering and societal exclusion for twelve long years, this woman reaches out in faith to touch the hem of Jesus' garment. Her faith is simple yet profound, and Jesus acknowledges her by calling her "Daughter" and affirming that her faith has made her well. This not only heals her physical ailment but restores her to the community.

This story reminds us of the power of faith and the wholeness Jesus offers. When we reach out to Him, acknowledging our brokenness and believing in His power, we, too, can experience restoration and peace. Jesus sees beyond our ailments and offers us complete healing and inclusion in His kingdom.

What areas of your life do you need healing or restoration?
How can you show simple yet profound faith in your everyday struggles?
In what ways can you reach out to Jesus today?
Pray for the faith to reach out to Jesus in times of need.
Reflect on the restoration Jesus offers and thank Him for it.

Day 2 Mark 5:39

Today, it focuses on Jairus and his faith journey as he approaches Jesus to heal his dying daughter. Despite societal norms and potential ridicule, Jairus, a synagogue leader, publicly seeks Jesus' help. His faith is met with cynicism as people laugh at Jesus' assertion that the girl is not dead but asleep. However, Jesus' words and actions remind us that faith often contradicts human understanding.

Jairus' story encourages us to approach Jesus with our deepest fears and hopes, even when it seems irrational to others. It's an invitation to trust that Jesus can bring life and hope into our seemingly dead situations. His words to the mourners challenge us to look beyond the immediate and trust in His power and timing.

What fears or doubts are you holding that need to be brought to Jesus?
How do societal norms or opinions impact your faith journey?
In what situations is Jesus inviting you to trust His timing and power?
Pray for the courage to bring your deepest fears and hopes to Jesus.
Reflect on areas where you need to trust Jesus despite societal opinions.

Day 3 Mark 5:41-42

The third day takes us into the intimate moment when Jesus raises Jairus' daughter. With just a few close disciples and the girl's parents, Jesus speaks life into her, telling her to "arise." The girl, who had been on the cusp of womanhood, is brought back to life, symbolising not just physical healing but spiritual renewal and breaking societal and religious boundaries.

This miracle illustrates the inclusiveness of Jesus' ministry. He acknowledges the marginalised and restores them fully. It serves as a reminder that in Christ, everyone is valuable and worthy of His miraculous touch. Moreover, the involvement of Peter, James, and John signifies the continuity of this healing power within the community of believers.

Are there areas of your life that feel 'dead' and need Jesus' life-giving word?
Who are the marginalised in your community that need inclusion and restoration?
How can you embody Jesus' inclusiveness in your daily life?
Pray for Jesus to speak life into areas of your life that feel 'dead'.
Reflect on how you can show the inclusiveness of Jesus to those around you.

Day 4 Mark 5:36

Today's reflection is on the unwavering faith that Jesus calls us to have. When Jairus receives news of his daughter's death, Jesus immediately tells him, "Do not be afraid; only believe." This encouragement comes at a profound crisis, inviting Jairus—and us—to shift our focus from the circumstance to the One who has power over life and death.

Faith isn't always easy, especially in the face of despair. Yet, Jesus' words challenge us to believe beyond what we see or understand. This kind of faith involves surrender, trust, and the assurance that Jesus is in control. It calls us to rely on His promise and power rather than our understanding of the visible situation.

What situations in your life require a shift from fear to faith?
How can you practice believing and not being afraid daily?
Who around you needs encouragement to have faith in difficult times?
Pray for the strength to shift from fear to faith in challenging situations.
Reflect on the areas where you need to trust Jesus more.

Day 5 Mark 5:43

On the final day, we focus on the aftermath of the miracles. Jesus instructs those present to give the girl something to eat, symbolising the return to everyday life and the complete restoration of health. It's a reminder that Jesus' miracles aren't just for show; they have practical implications that transform lives and communities.

This simple act of feeding the girl is a profound reminder of the completeness of Jesus' healing. It's not just about spiritual or physical restoration but also about integrating back into everyday life. When we experience Jesus' touch, it impacts every aspect of our existence, calling us to live out our healed and restored state in practical, everyday ways.

How does experiencing Jesus' healing change your everyday life?
What practical steps can you take to live out your restored state?
How can you support others in living out the wholeness that Jesus offers?
Pray for practical ways to integrate Jesus' healing into your daily life.
I'd like you to reflect on how you can support others in experiencing and living out Jesus' restoration.

Prepared by Rev'd Dennis Webster, Rector of the Anglican Parish of Paynesville, Diocese of Gippsland for personal or small group use.

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