



connect

A Newsletter for High School Religion Teachers, Campus Ministers, and Principals
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featuring

The Harvest Is Abundant: Reflections on a Spirituality of Service

Pamela Reidy

Service is a golden word these days. Everybody's doing it: governmental bodies, schools, churches, even neighborhoods and families. Court sentencing frequently includes community service, the federal government holds service up as a value in programs such as Americorps, and state governments are increasingly legislating service requirements for all who graduate from their public schools.

As community-service requirements are being added to science classes and confirmation programs, it is essential for religious educators to articulate the difference between merely doing good and being a disciple, between completing a school requirement and a confirmation requirement, between simply doing something nice and coming from a spirituality of service.

Luke: A Primer on Discipleship

Luke's Gospel devotes the entire tenth chapter to discipleship. In calling for a spirituality of service, it shares wisdom on everything from missioning for service to the hazards, pitfalls, warnings—and inherent privileges—associated with the work. Taking care to instruct us with special emphasis on the focus of ministry, which is to love God and our neighbor, Luke shows that discipleship involves more than good action. He uses the classic good Samaritan tale as his climax, and he finishes with the scene of Martha's and Mary's hospitality to Jesus, offering two complementary examples of servant relationship.

Luke, chapter ten, can easily be used as a primer for moving from community service to true discipleship. Like the seventy-two in the scene that opens chapter ten of Luke, we, too, are missioned for discipleship, and we are to minister as followers of One who is Perfect Love. What an awesome challenge!

(see *The Harvest Is Abundant*, page 2)

this issue

- **featuring**
The Harvest Is Abundant 1
- **in touch** 1
- **resource reviews** 5
- **from the classroom**
*A One-Day Retreat on Service
in the Inner City* 6
- **from the press** 7

in touch

Dear Readers,

As you receive this issue, Lent is approaching its climax in Holy Week and the Triduum. Once again we will stand in awe of Jesus' great gift of himself to us—in the Eucharist, in his death on the cross, and in his risen glory.

How can our students understand that mystery? Experience it, you say, and that is true. Most of us know the meaning of the paschal mystery because we have witnessed its power—the pouring out of life in love, the dying to the familiar so that new life can be raised up. Perhaps the most important thing we will ever do for our students is to introduce them to that holy mystery and to help them see it happening in their own life.

This issue of *Connect* focuses on service, one of the three essential dimensions (along with theology and spirituality) of faith community in our high schools. Service offers

(see *in touch*, page 2)



Pamela Reidy

The Harvest Is Abundant

(continued from page 1)

The Experience of the Seventy-Two

I often think about the seventy-two, for these original ministers offer hope and a model of spirituality for service work. I find myself wondering if the original seventy-two felt overwhelmed by the challenges, or exhilarated by the prospects, of being so few in number and of being “lambs among wolves.”

Further, I wonder if the prospect of being poor, without money or food or shoes, with a directive to offer no greeting along the way, inspired them or depressed them. The excitement of the new and different, the possibility of travel (even with its inherent risks), the meeting of and getting to know new people can overshadow the tremendous responsibilities associated with answering the call. Working with the poor can so easily be romanticized when one is weak on experience. In short, I wonder if they knew just what they were getting into.

The way of life that the seventy-two lived offers us real insight into Jesus' expectations of a disciple. They were expected to travel in poverty and to remain untouched by the business of other travelers. They were expected to enter houses and determine whether peace resided there or not; to eat and drink only what was offered; to return to that same house and ask for more; to do the strenuous work of curing and healing, preaching and teaching the Reign of God; and to kick off the dust, leaving the unconcerned behind. At the same time, they needed to keep their own heart alive. A tall order to say the least!

Perhaps, though, in their acceptance and willingness to agree to such terms, we can find a spirituality that will help us to see the difference between discipleship and community service. A closer look at

the situation of the seventy-two reveals some specific virtues and qualities helpful in distinguishing between simply doing good things and performing holy acts of discipleship: *simplicity, wisdom, intuition, resilience, and compassion*. The particular edicts of Jesus to the seventy-two demanded such qualities.

Simplicity

The seventy-two were required to live a simple life—there is no getting around it. The extras had to go; there simply was no room for them. Simplicity helped them to focus on the mission. The talk around the fire wasn't about how to obtain the best quality sandal for the cheapest price or how to spend their money in the city, nor was it an issue of how heavy one's knapsack was. There was to be “no money bag, no sack, no sandals.” These things did not get in the way because they did not exist.

Today's young disciples need to be countercultural. While the world vies for their economic and material attention, being a young disciple requires the capacity to do without material goods. In traveling to Haiti to do missionary work with high schoolers, I stand in awe of their ability to leave behind the world of Eddie Bauer and L.L. Bean.

Teens who are willing and able to travel lightly, without all the trappings the media insist they need, are testament to the call and power of discipleship. In preparing for Haiti, each new group of travelers eventually shortens their list of personal possessions in favor of traveling with articles for the poor. Arms empty of personal property are now filled with “good things” for the poor. Not only do these teens discover the freedom of personal simplicity, but they make a real material difference to the poor.

Jesus' admonishment to “greet no one along the way” is an inter-

in touch

(continued from page 1)

our students “real-time” experience of the paschal mystery—if they are mentored along the way, helped to see with spiritual eyes what they are doing and what God is doing through them. Our feature article by Pam Reidy is a meditation on service as discipleship—a way to open up our spiritual eyes in the midst of the service programs most of our students get involved in.

Our “from the classroom” article by Suzie Knapp describes a one-day retreat that introduces students to a world of service in their own community and also connects with what they are learning in theology class. Now *that's* integration!

May your Holy Week and Easter be filled with a sense of the mystery of it all!

Warmly,

Barbara

Barbara Allaire
Editor for High School
Curriculum Materials



esting component of discipleship. Jesus suggests that walking in contemplative silence from place to place will better prepare one to minister. Not only does contemplation produce a spirituality of simplicity, it also creates spiritual energy and support and trust among the ministers. Unable to converse at the superficial level that travelers usually do, disciples prepare their heart for meeting the challenges that lie ahead.

Perhaps Jesus didn't want the seventy-two to talk to others along the way so that they would build community among themselves; maybe it was simply to keep their focus on their mission; or, indeed, maybe it was to protect them from the “danger stranger.” Whatever the specific reason, we disciples are

(see *The Harvest Is Abundant*, page 3)

The Harvest Is Abundant

(continued from page 2)

definitely to remain in focus, on task, and communally together. A discipleship of service rooted in the contemplative seeks the presence of God among others and finds spiritual energy unique to Christian service.

Wisdom

In sending forth the seventy-two, Jesus didn't tell them very much. He wasn't specific about where to go, whom to look for, where to start. He was sending them as precursors to his own arrival, announcing the Reign of God, but with little in the way of specific direction. He expected them to discern things and make decisions on their own; in this we see that wisdom is intrinsic to discipleship.

Wisdom reflects a knowledge from within that "God's ways are not our ways." It is both known and felt—a feminine, warm movement of the Spirit that takes us deep beneath the surface to the heart of a matter. The complexities that underlie the social ills of today's world must not make us underestimate the importance of "heart knowledge." Young people possess this kind of wisdom, as they are often deeply affected by new experiences and the eyes of their heart are anxious to see new things. The young person's way of knowing is pure of heart. This is why Jesus calls us to "'become like little children'" (Matthew 18:3). When we lose vision, we lose heart; conversely, having heart sharpens our vision.

While attending a party that several of my students had given for a group of Special Olympians, I clearly saw that wisdom is a necessary gift in order for us to love what we do not understand. Some students were better than others at knowing exactly how to help these severely disabled youngsters achieve specific tasks. As my stu-

dents helped the Special Olympians make Mother's Day cards, it was obvious that a connection of the heart, not a skill in technique, made the difference between those who could effectively offer help and those who could not. Moreover, those who loved encountered the truth that "God's ways are not our ways," and they were not afraid of that truth. Love and wisdom opened new doors. Discipleship is first and foremost a matter of the heart.



Intuition

In sending the disciples on their mission, Jesus told them to enter a house and give it a greeting of peace. Further, he stated, "'If a peaceful person lives there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you.'" How would these disciples know? What skill or gift would help them to identify peace that was present and peace that returned to them unaccepted?

Jesus' command to the disciples calls for a special kind of perceptiveness—the gift of intuition, which is one more way of knowing. Intuition serves the task at hand by bringing to consciousness the experience one holds inside. Learning to use intuition gets us in touch with our inner self; it brings to the surface what we know from past experiences yet have not necessarily processed or put into words or

action. Intuition helps us to be creative in solving problems or in working with complex situations.

Interpersonal relationships in discipleship also require intuition. The seventy-two certainly needed it in order to make necessary judgments about who had peace and who didn't. Because we can be frightened by experiences that are new and different, we need to learn to rely on our gut feelings and our experiences. We need intuition for service because the Spirit moves intuitively, within creative inspiration.

Practicing and relying on our intuitive sense can help us to meet with grace those awkward moments for which we are not prepared. Several years ago, seniors in my Peace Through Justice course were required to develop a project to fill a need in the local area, secure the project's funding, and provide for its continuance after their graduation. These astute seniors discovered that no Alcoholics Anonymous meetings were available for women with children, and so they decided to offer child care to women who wanted to attend an AA meeting. They did amazing research and outstanding work on child care. Collaborating with an area agency that served young people, they carefully planned out the details, not missing a where or a how or a who. They received two thousand dollars from a local foundation, and they used local resources, both people and material resources, to the utmost.

Finally opening night arrived. With all things ready, my exclusively white, middle- and upper-middle-class female students waited at the doors for women to arrive for the AA meeting with their children. As women of color began walking in, one of my students came to me with a panicked look on her face and said, "Ms. Reidy, how do you talk to a black person?" Never had

(see *The Harvest Is Abundant*, page 4)

The Harvest Is Abundant

(continued from page 3)

it occurred to me to include such a matter in the educational framework of their project. Never had it occurred to them that women of color might be there.

I told this young girl to be herself, to reach into her own heart and speak as she would to anyone, to reach into past experiences of meeting new and different people, and most important, not to worry about the words. She struggled, as did her counterpart, for it took intuition, heart, wisdom, and love to come to realize that there isn't a difference in the way you speak to a person whose skin isn't the same color as yours. Her gut needed to affirm that we are all people and we speak the same language—the language of the heart.

Intuition is a gift I saw many times during the course of those Thursday night gatherings as my young students learned to care for young babies, guide young children, and relate to women of color who were alcoholic.

Resilience

Being a lamb among wolves requires some skill, some patience, and some knowledge and fear of things stronger than you. The disciple needs a resilience that transcends assumed limitations. Such a transcendence sharpens the vision, enlightens the heart, and moves one closer to understanding the mysterious ways of God. Resilience practiced also helps to discipline the service giver.

When students in our school enter their junior year, they choose a Love-in-Action. This is their entrance into discipleship. It represents minimally a two-hour-a-week service contract at the same site for a two-year period, resulting in at least 120 hours devoted to the same site prior to graduation. In the early days of their service, I so often

think of my young students as lambs among wolves. Resilience is the virtue I pray they will have.

The needed pliability and flexibility for standing at the copy machine or doing the countless other mundane tasks of the new recruit is the first test of their resilience. Many young people spend plenty of hours “being shown” rather than having a chance “to do,” as their impatient heart longs for the freedom of being treated like an adult. While “the harvest is abundant but the laborers are few,” the young disciple can be “low on the totem pole” for too long a time!

The hardest test of the students' resilience is to hang in there for the long haul doing what they committed to do: visiting the elderly, recycling cans, playing in preschool settings with cranky children just up from their nap, tutoring elementary students who are falling behind, or teaching religious education at their local parish. After a while they may experience service as just one more humdrum thing to do in their busy life.

Resilience will rekindle discipleship, providing both the flexibility and the endurance that Jesus knew the original seventy-two needed in order to proclaim the coming Reign of God. The disciple must become pliable, supple, and buoyant. These qualities help to develop a spirituality that can move with the Spirit, marking a unique difference between one involved in simply doing good and one encountering God in the process.

Compassion

The queen of virtues for discipleship is compassion. Taken from the Latin word meaning “to suffer with,” compassion is represented in its purest form on the Cross of Christ. For any disciple who follows where Jesus leads, suffering will

ultimately become a reality. Discipleship will take us out of our comfort zone and into the sufferings of others.

Jesus' presence among the *anawim*—poor and outcast people—when he walked this earth shows us that we are not to serve only among those who are comfortable materially. Sooner or later, if we want to give service directly to Christ, we will give service to the *anawim*, adopting as our own Jesus' preferential option for the poor.

Luke 13:10–17 relates an incident that we can learn from: One Sabbath day when Jesus was teaching in the synagogue, a woman was there, “crippled by a spirit,” fully bent over, with no ability at all to stand erect. She had been that way for eighteen years. Jesus called out to her, saying, “Woman, you are set free of your infirmity.” When Jesus laid his hand on her, she at once stood up straight and glorified God.

When we reflect on discipleship among the poor, the bent woman provides a good image for us. It can be difficult to straighten ourselves up and to pick up our head to meet Jesus in the poor. Sometimes, like another woman in the Gospel (Luke 8:40–56), we are able only to touch the hem of his garment, for the rate at which the lifeblood of our culture hemorrhages through us prevents even the simple gesture of standing erect to face him. It is so difficult to touch him, to get to him, to be with Jesus in the poor. The dirt, the disgust, the poverty, the pain, the ridiculousness of it all is such a distraction. We are bent, humbled, and limited. At best we touch only the edge of Jesus in the poor before we can even stand again.

How great the divide between the rich and the poor, the “haves” and the “have nots,” the “I cans”

The Harvest Is Abundant

(continued from page 4)

and the "I cannots." But we trust, because like the bent woman, we do not have to look directly into Jesus' eyes to receive his grace; by merely touching his hem, we will meet him eye to eye.

My experiences with today's young people confirm that many of them are being called to work directly with people who are materially poor. As the divide between rich people and poor people becomes greater as the world gets smaller technologically, religious educators have a special duty to accept the call to a discipleship that stands erect, face-to-face with Jesus in the poor. Only then can we help to prepare the next generation to bring justice, not just charity, to the world.

Luke is kind enough to include the return of the seventy-two in his account of discipleship. He tells us that the seventy-two returned "re-joining." They were happy that even demons were subject to them; they felt success, and they loved it. Jesus told them, "'Do not rejoice because the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice because your names are written in heaven.'" The true joy of the disciple is in the oneness shared with God—this gift of presence, this participation in the life and love of God beyond the task of the day. It is the disciple's daily bread.

Community service—even without the dimension of discipleship—is good. We can in no way diminish the good brought about by many

who are not baptized Christians or who do not identify themselves as disciples but who serve generously nonetheless. We who are Christians, however, do clearly possess a treasure—a gift that is Jesus the Christ. Enlightened and enriched by the Lukan account of discipleship, we rejoice in the call to bring our young people into this beautiful mystery. "The harvest is abundant."

Pamela Reidy teaches religion at Notre Dame Academy in Worcester, Massachusetts. Until recently she coordinated the service projects and requirements there. Now she is coordinating efforts of her school and two other schools to begin a service program in Kenya, Africa.

resource reviews

Getting to know the late Mother Teresa of Calcutta by video is a way for students to see the connections between service and spirituality embodied in a person. The following videos about her life and work are available. Because they all have the same title (though not the same subtitle), you may need to be specific in ordering them:

Mother Teresa: In the Name of God's Poor (Hallmark, 1997); 93 minutes; purchase price, \$19.95. This is a dramatized version, starring Geraldine Chaplin, of Mother Teresa's early years in Calcutta, when she decided to leave her cloistered convent and minister to the dying in the streets.

Mother Teresa: A Life of Devotion (A&E, 1997); 50 minutes; purchase price, \$19.95. This documentary of Mother Teresa's life was originally done for the BBC. Besides wonderful footage of Mother Teresa, it features interesting comments by those who knew her, about

some of the controversies surrounding this extraordinary woman. I believe this video gets at the essence of Mother Teresa far more effectively than the dramatized Hallmark video. However, for some students a documentary will have less appeal than a drama.

Both of the preceding videos can be purchased from Vision Video, 2030 Wentz Church Road, Worcester, PA 19490; phone 800-523-0226; fax 800-584-4610.

Mother Teresa (Ann and Jeanette Petrie, 1994), 83 minutes; purchase price, \$19.95. This documentary is an excellent presentation of Mother Teresa's work and spirituality of service. Containing graphic scenes of poverty and starvation, the video allows the extraordinary life of Mother Teresa to speak for itself. It is available from Alverno Religious Art and Books; phone 800-333-3446.

Community Service and Social Responsibility in Youth, by James Youniss and Miranda Yates (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); 176 pages; list price, \$12.95.

This book is the result of scholarly research into a community

service program at a Washington, D.C., Catholic high school (the majority of students are middle-class African Americans), given here the pseudonym of Saint Francis High School. The highly readable account of the program, which consists of a social justice course taught in conjunction with regular service at an inner-city soup kitchen, offers tremendous insight into how such a program can affect the character development of youth. It has been lauded as a landmark piece of research that will reshape the study of youth social development for years to come.

You will find this book fascinating reading. The comments of the students as they reflect on their service experiences in light of what they are learning in their social justice course are particularly interesting. The book provides a coherent theoretical framework for understanding how such programs affect youth, and it offers solid justification for schools to invest heavily in community service as service learning. A must-have resource for every school.

from the classroom

A One-Day Retreat on Service in the Inner City

Suzanne Knapp

Our sophomore class day retreat focuses on finding spirituality in the inner city. It is a kind of “urban plunge” experience within a spiritual framework, and students go on this retreat during the same semester that they take a social ethics (Christian justice) course. In the class the students have time to prepare for the experience before the retreat day and to process it for a class session or two afterward, connecting it with content in the course.

We have a wonderful facility for the homeless in San Diego—Saint Vincent de Paul Village. This residential village serves as a model for other cities by providing three hundred to four hundred formerly homeless people with all kinds of services—educational, work readiness, medical, child care—to help them get on their feet and move on to living independently after a year or two. A night shelter and a soup kitchen that serves hundreds of people every day are located across the street. We have worked closely with the volunteer coordinator to make the visit a worthwhile experience for our students. That is key to doing this kind of project—finding someone at the agency or place of service who really believes that this can be a meaningful experience for the kids—not just another field trip—and who will help to facilitate that. Of course we can’t guarantee that the students will have a good experience—we can’t control all the interactions they will have and who they will meet—but we try to *create an opportunity* for significant things to happen.

The day begins at school with a commissioning or anointing service. We share music and a Scripture passage (Luke 4:16–21).

Everyone is assigned to a small group with a peer leader. Those leaders bless perfumed oil and take it to their small-group members, and everyone’s hands are blessed; then there’s more song.

Things are well organized when we get to the Village. In their small groups, the students rotate through various experiences:

- They hear speakers, who are residents of the Village, talk about how they became homeless and how the Village has turned their life in a new direction. They reflect a lot on substance abuse and sobriety, the effects of unemployment, learning job skills, attempts to get custody of children, and so on. Also, several of the staff of the Village talk about why they decided to go into this kind of work and how they keep going in it—what sustains them. So the students hear a great deal about people’s journeys, and they ask lots of questions. It’s quite an eye-opener for many of them.
- They take a tour of the facility, which covers two square blocks, and they see the night shelter, the soup kitchen, dorm rooms in the residence, the medical center, the child care facility, the chapel, and so on.
- For a couple of hours, the small group does a service project. Once we helped with construction; often we’ll sort clothes, work in the soup kitchen, or paint. It may not be the “ultimate” service experience, but it’s whatever needs doing at the Village that day. The students eat lunch with the residents in their dining room, play with children in the playground, and receive information about long-term volunteering.

We emphasize to students that the purpose of the day is not for the shelter to cater to our needs and create the perfect experience for us. We’re there to enter into the rhythm of the Village, even if that means simply eating with a resident in the dining hall. The meaning of this day is not that a group of “haves” helps or saves a group of “have nots”—which we certainly don’t do. Rather, we enter into the daily life of the Village, accompanying the people there on their journeys, creating a place where the seeds of ongoing community involvement can be planted or can continue to grow.

At the end of the day, we go back to the school for shared reflection on the experience, in small groups led by the peer leaders. One question we ask in order to focus the students’ reflection is, “If you could bring back one snapshot from today, what image from all the experiences you have had would it be?” In the chapel we have a closing prayer service. One of the peer leaders gives a mini-sermon, connecting with the Beatitudes or Matthew, chapter 25, and incorporating an image she or he has in mind from the day. The students receive Jerusalem cross pins from their peer leaders as a remembrance of the day.

Examples of contemporary music that we have used, along with liturgical music, in our opening and closing prayer services for the day are “Why Walk When You Can Fly?” by Mary Chapin Carpenter; “Hammer and a Nail,” by the Indigo Girls; and “Heaven’s Here on Earth,” by Tracy Chapman.

We also follow up the reflection in their social ethics classes for the

(see *classroom*, page 7)

from the press

The new high school course offering this spring from Saint Mary's Press is ***World Religions: A Voyage of Discovery***, student text by Jeffrey Brodd, and teaching manual by Jeffrey Brodd and Michael Wilt.



The all-new, full-color text gives a rich overview of the major religions of the world, exploring their doctrines, sacred stories, and rituals in fourteen chapters. An introduction

explains Catholic teaching on world religions in relationship to Christianity and the church. The book is generously illustrated with photos, art, and maps, and a special feature is the interviews with and personal accounts by practitioners of the religions.

The teaching manual gives supplemental materials for each chapter, learning activities, handouts, an annotated bibliography, audiovisual recommendations, and articles on comparative approaches to the religions and competing modern worldviews. A bank of test questions in the manual is also available on a free diskette for easy adaptation by teachers.

The text is priced at \$15.60 each for orders over \$200, and the teaching manual sells for \$24.95. We will be glad to send a complimentary review copy to classroom teachers. Just call 800-533-8095; fax 800-344-9225; e-mail

press@smp.org, or write the Orders Department, Saint Mary's Press, 702 Terrace Heights, Winona, MN 55987-1320.

Finding Hope, the third in our series of Stories by Teenagers, edited by Carl Koch, will be out by fall semester 1998. Once again young people are telling their truth, writing in this volume about where they find hope and inspiration. The stories make for uplifting reading and serve as excellent discussion starters and stimulants for young people to tell or write their own stories. The cost is \$6.95, and you can order it from Saint Mary's Press at the address listed above.

classroom (continued from page 6)

next couple of days, tying it to the course content. We never know what is really going to stick in a student's mind. Often we hear of students who are deeply affected by the day. Some of them end up volunteering at the Village.

I can't emphasize enough how important it is, if you want to do any type of "plunge" experience, to find an agency or staff person who really believes in this kind of project, who doesn't view the students as a bother but sees the potential of this retreat day to move hearts. That staff person has to do a lot of organizing at the site to make this come off well, and a good working relationship with her or him is critical. Of course the situation is not perfect, and we continually have to try to work out the bugs.

Suzie Knapp is a campus minister and religion teacher at the Academy of Our Lady of Peace in San Diego, California. Her e-mail address is suzknapp@sprintmail.com.



Mother Teresa: Only One Person at a Time

I never look at the masses as my responsibility.

I look at the individual. I can love only one person at a time. I can feed only one person at a time.

Just one, one, one.

You get closer to Christ by coming closer to each other. As Jesus said, "Whatever you do to the least of my brethren, you do to me."

So you begin. . . . I begin.

I picked up one person—
maybe if I didn't pick up that one person I wouldn't have picked up 42,000.

The whole work is only a drop in the ocean. But if I didn't put the drop in, the ocean would be one drop less.

Same thing for you

same thing in your family

same thing in the church where you go

just begin . . . one, one, one.

(Frank J. Cunningham, ed.,

Words to Love by . . . Mother Teresa, p. 79)

Faith Community Workshop 1998

Faith Community Workshops for high school religion teachers, campus ministers, and principals will be offered in three regions of the United States this summer:

9–12 July Saint Mary's University, Winona, Minnesota
 18–21 July Serra Retreat, Malibu, California
 13–16 August Loyola Retreat House, Morristown, New Jersey

The cost is \$300 for the Winona workshop and \$350 for the other two workshops; scholarships are available based on need. There may still be room! For information, contact Shirley Kelter at Saint Mary's Press by mail, phone, or e-mail at skelter@smp.org.

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To join our free **Listserv for Religion Teachers and Campus Ministers**, which is a way to communicate with many others by e-mail about topics of concern, send an e-mail message to CHSRTCM@press.smp.org and write "subscribe" in the subject line. For more information, visit our web site at <http://www.smp.org>.

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