

**September 15, 2020**

## **St. John's Community Covenant**

Welcome

Dear St. John's community,

Welcome back! The *Community Covenant* is being presented to help us, the St. John's community, adjust to our re-opening procedures and processes. The safety, health, and care of all our parishioners remains in the forefront of our planning. We will revise and review these procedures in an ongoing manner to ensure the continuation of our pledge to you – to offer safe and healthy ways for us to express and witness our communal lives in Christ.

Part I of *Community Covenant* provides an overview and highlights of changes and new procedures as we return to the use of our St. John's Church buildings. This is

followed by Part II with policies and procedures that have been developed and must be followed. Part III, Diagrams, concludes the manual.

It is important for you to know that health (CDC, NJ State, local) standards are being observed; governmental (state and local) guidelines are being followed; and diocesan criteria are maintained.

*The Community Covenant will be updated and enhanced as more information is available and as our times change. The date on this document reflects the most recent update.*

Prior to opening, a plan had to be developed and approved by the Diocese of New Jersey. We cannot open without diocesan approval.

Diocesan guidelines here: <https://dioceseofnj.org/covid-19-guidance/>

CDC guidelines here: <https://www.cdc.gov/>

## **Welcome**

### A Word From The Rector

*“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another”*

(John 13:35).

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The many and varied people who make up our beloved community continue to show forth God’s extraordinary and abundant love in numerous ways in the wake of the coronavirus. We have every reason to rejoice and to give God thanks for the numerous ways we are showing forth our love for one another in our beloved community of faith even in the most difficult of circumstances. Thank you for your warm thoughts, prayers and concerns during this most difficult time being apart from one another. We look forward to when we are all together again.

I am deeply grateful to the St. John’s Task Force: Pat Melcer, Ron Melcer, Karen Whitmore, Bob Fox, Neva Rae Fox, and Deacon Keith McCoy. Please know that we will continue to be here to help, listen and learn as we take healthy steps forward. Feel free to contact any one of us if you have thoughts or concerns. I commend this Community Covenant to you and to all who make up our community of faith.

### Community Covenant

A covenant describes a relationship of mutual trust and self-giving. During this time of continued pandemic we pray that in addition to a commitment to our Baptismal Covenant (found

on pages 304-305 of the BCP 1979), we ask all members of the parish community to also consider these specific aspects of mutual respect and love, by the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

We are of the conviction that we cannot authentically gather as the Body of Christ if we are unconcerned about one another's well-being. The safety and wellness of every member of the community is of primary concern. We could not worship joyfully if we did not hold that concern paramount.

We have confidence and trust in God not only to care for us, but to hear our prayers and to lift our hearts toward heaven and toward one another as we pray, no matter how great the distance between us may be.

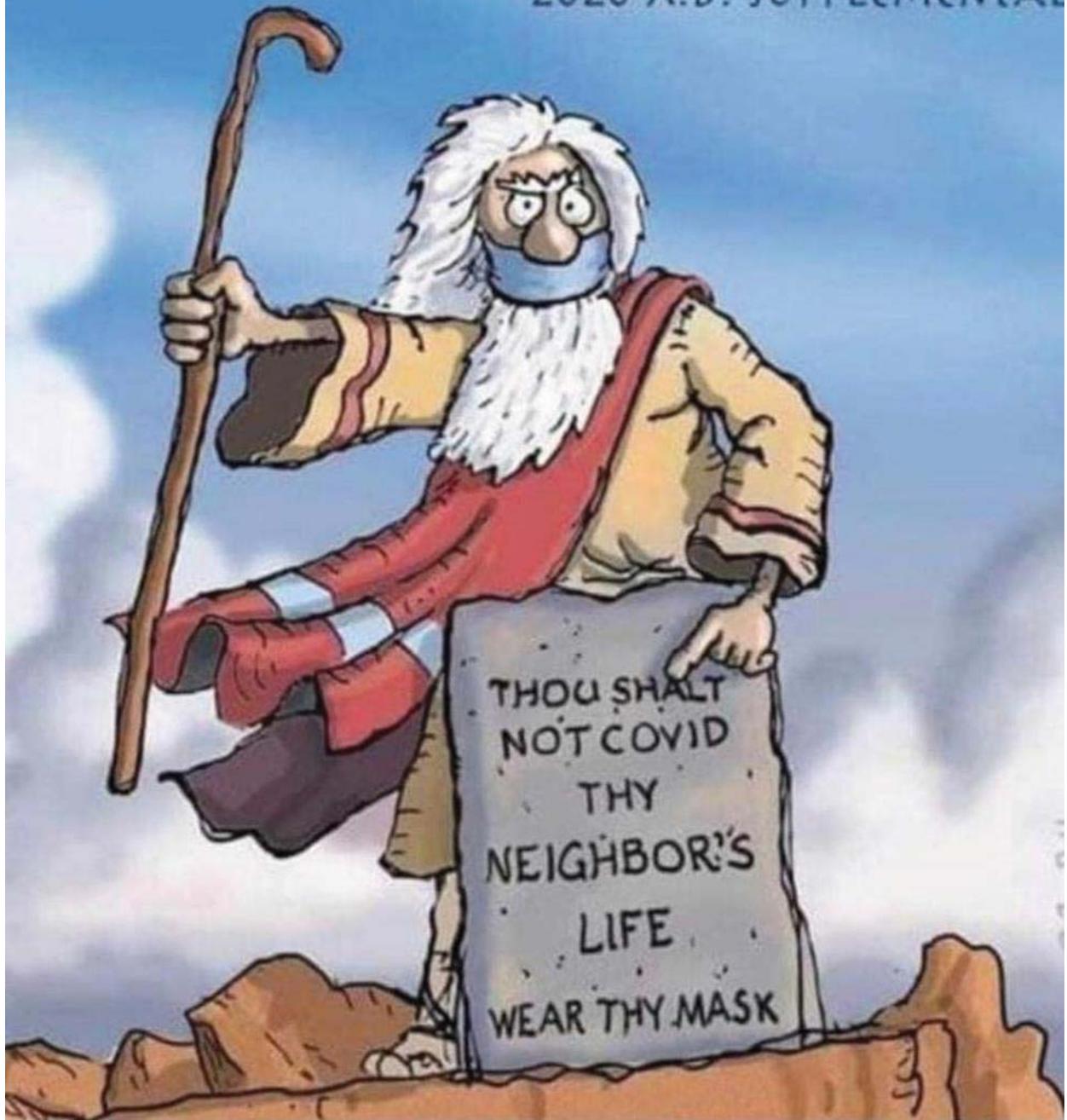
We have faith that God nourishes our souls with the Presence of His Son our Lord and the power of His Spirit even when we cannot physically receive the Blessed Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood.

We endeavor to make decisions on the basis of this conviction, this confidence, this faith.

Faithfully yours in Christ,

The Rev. Canon Ronald N. Pollock

THE 11TH COMMANDMENT  
2020 A.D. SUPPLEMENTAL



In this time of the pandemic we are being asked to love our neighbors by making St. John's as safe a place as possible. While you might not be personally worried about the coronavirus, please know there will be people here who are, and there are people among us with underlying health concerns. There will also be people who will not feel like they can attend St. John's if we are being cavalier. So please love all your brothers and sisters in this community of faith. Please stay home if you are not feeling well for any reason.

*Online services will continue to be available.*

You are important to us! If you prefer to watch online because that suits you best, then please do! We want everyone to feel comfortable. Do not worry, we will continue putting great effort into making the online services available on our St. John's Facebook page and on YouTube.

*Masks*

Masks are required to be worn at all times while on the St. John's campus and when in any area of the building. Obviously, you may take it off when receiving Communion, but then please put it back on. Please bring your mask to St. John's. Masks will be available for those who arrive without a mask.

*Contact Tracing*

We will be keeping a record of who attends each service at St. John's. If we do not already know your contact information, we will collect that from you before you enter the building. If someone who attends that service is later diagnosed with Covid-19 or is exposed to it, everyone who attended will be notified. If you have a diagnosis or an exposure to Covid-19, please call the church office immediately.

*Cleaning*

The St. John's church, parish hall, rest rooms, and all commons areas will be thoroughly cleaned after every service and/or gathering. All health, safety and cleaning guidelines are being followed. A special cleaning system designed to combat the coronavirus has been purchased and put into operation. The HVAC system has been thoroughly cleaned according to CDC standards.

After each service all chairs, pews, light switches, door handles, etc. will be cleaned with our new Bioblast machine and/or with disinfecting wipes.

Hand sanitizer stations and antibacterial wipes are located in key places in the church and the parish hall. Please use them.



**We bless you and we praise you,  
Lord Christ, for commanding us  
to love one another. Let this mask  
be a sign of your love, and let my  
behavior be filled with love for  
my neighbor. Amen.**

**Part I: What to expect upon returning**

- There will be one service on Sundays at 9:30 am.
- There are no prayer books, hymnals, announcements, paper bulletins, or newsletters. The Order of Service will be included in the weekly “Good News” emailed to all parishioners on Friday and it will also be located on the website. The congregation is welcomed to bring their own prayer books or a smartphone, tablet, or laptop to access the Order of Worship, but kindly do not share with others.

- On the altar will be Fr. Ron, Deacon Keith, Organist Jeffrey, and the reader. No one else should be on, near, or enter the altar.
- Fr. Ron, Deacon Keith, Organist Jeffrey, and the reader will wear additional protective wear.
- The pulpit and the lectern will be encased in plexiglass.
- Able-bodied parishioners are requested to use the front door on West High St. The ramp door should be used only for those with mobility issues.
- When arriving, you will be met at the door at a table that will be setup outside the church building. Kindly provide your name to the ushers; this will assist us if contact tracing is required.
- Kindly follow the directions of the people wearing the *Usher* nametags. They will direct you, answer your questions, and assist you.
- Seating in the church will be assigned as you enter. Seating will be determined by the size of the family/group, and available seats based on socially distant procedures.
- The St. John's Looping system will be active; please let the ushers know if you need to be seated in the Looping area.
- Please remember that seating in the church is limited, based on health, CDC and diocesan standards.
- The church will be marked according to safe and socially distant methods:
  - No seating will be indicated by red tape
  - Markers on the rug indicate where to stand

*Diagrams indicating these areas are included in this manual.*
- There will be no physical contact during the Peace. We will still exchange the peace, but with a nod, a bow, a peace sign, a smile, waving, etc.
- Avoid direct physical contact and make every effort to maintain social distancing from anyone not in your household.
- Fans are positioned in a way, according to health recommendations. Please do not touch, move, or adjust them.
- Once you are seated, please stay seated. If you leave the church, there will be no returning.

- Thank you for maintaining your pledge and for your donations. Alms basins will not be passed from person to person during the Offertory. Instead, there will be two alms basins, one located in the Narthex and the other one in the acolyte robing room leading to the Parish Hall where people can leave their offering.

### *Communion*

- Ushers will assist people when it is time for them to come forward to Receive Communion. There are signs and tape indicating proper spacing between persons.
- We will only be administering the Bread. The Bread will not have been touched before the priest hands it to you, and only after the priest has sanitized their hands. The priest (as well as the deacon, the lector, and the organist/musician) will be wearing a face shield as an additional protective measure. This face shield is worn in addition to a face mask, including for the distribution of Communion.
- If the priest senses that his fingers have made direct contact with the communicant's hands, the priest will pause, place the paten or ciborium on a corporal, and use hand sanitizer. A small table will be placed near the communion station for this purpose. The priest may repeat this process as often as necessary during the distribution of Holy Communion.
- The priest will not lay hands on the heads of children or adults who are not receiving Communion but will receive a "blessing" by not touching the person.
- At the conclusion of the distribution of Holy Communion, the priest will return any remaining hosts to the tabernacle or consume them, and then use hand sanitizer another time.
- No other person will be involved in the washing of holy vessels except the priest.
- There will be no kneeling at the communion rail.

### *Please note*

- There will be no nursery services.
- In-person church school has been suspended.
- Acolyte duties have been suspended.

- Our choir and congregational singing will return at a later date.
- The greeters program has been suspended.
- Holy water and baptismal fonts have been emptied.
- Water fountains will be covered and will not be in use.
- Kindly use the rest rooms only in an emergency. If you do use the rest room, be sure to log in your name and time. Cleaning products will be located in the rest rooms; it is important that you clean the rest rooms after your use.
- The Guild Room can be used only with the permission of Fr. Ron.
- Both the large and small kitchens cannot be used at this time.
- For the current time, the lower level of the church will not be accessed. This includes the chapel, Fr. Ron's office, nursery room, Choir room, large commons area, Clothes Closet, rest rooms, ECW room.

*After the service*

- We all like to socialize. However, for the time being, kindly exit the church and go directly home or to your next location.
- Coffee hour has been suspended.
- Whatever you bring to church, please take it home with you. Do not leave anything behind on the pews, in the church, on the floor, etc. Any items left in the church will be immediately discarded.
- Appointments are necessary for visits to St. John's and to Fr. Ron. Call or email in advance.
- Outside groups will not be permitted to meet in the St. John's buildings without the permission and oversight by Fr. Ron.
- Any and all St. John's meetings that can be conducted by zoom should be. Contact Fr Ron for zoom info.
- Private visits to the columbarium can be arranged through Fr. Ron.
- There will be no flowers, candles, or votive candles. In lieu of flowers, candles, and votive candles, offerings can be made to the St. John's Recovery Fund. Donors for the memorials or honors will be listed in the Friday Good News from St. John's.
- Altar Guild will be following new procedures that insure health and safety.

- All outside groups, including AA and Ship's Galley, have made previous arrangements with Fr. Ron and are adhering to new guidelines.
- Hospital and nursing visits will be conducted by Fr. Ron and Deacon Keith only in extreme cases and with prior arrangements.
- Laundry Love has been temporarily suspended.
- The Clothes Closet has been temporarily suspended.
- Please see Fr. Ron for special services, such as Baptisms, Weddings, Funerals, Renewal of Vows, and Confirmation.

# The COVID-19 Commandments

I. Thou shalt review  
Diocesan and Parish guidelines  
before attending worship.

II. Thou shalt wear a mask  
at all times while  
in church buildings.

III. Thou shalt use  
hand sanitizer  
upon entering and exiting  
the church.

IV. Thou shalt maintain  
a safe distance (6 feet)  
from other worshippers.

V. Thou shalt refrain  
from all physical contact  
with other worshippers.

VI. Thou shalt register  
your attendance  
with the ushers to enable  
contact tracing.

VII. Thou shalt follow parish  
protocols to reserve your place  
to attend worship.

VIII. Thou shalt stay at home  
if you have a fever or are ill.

IX. Thou shalt notify  
the Rectors and Wardens  
immediately  
if you become become ill  
or test positive for COVID-19.

X. Thou shalt be safe, kind, and  
understanding because...  
This is how we love one another.

## **Part II: Policies and Procedures**

### Public Health Safeguard:

Face masks are required to be worn at all times when in the buildings of St. John's Episcopal Church. Face masks are also required outdoors when individuals are unable to maintain a six-foot physical distance from others not residing in their household.

### Precautions:

The face mask is a protective covering worn over the nose and mouth to trap droplets that are released when the wearer talks, sings, coughs or sneezes.

Masks must cover both nose and mouth, and fit snugly to the sides of the face.

Individuals required to wear masks include clergy, lectors, ushers, greeters, acolytes, musicians, and congregation members. Masks are required when in the building.

Anyone involved in preparing the altar prior to service must wear a face mask.

Persons exempt from wearing face masks include:

- infants and children under 2 years of age
- people who are incapacitated, having trouble breathing, or are not able to remove their own mask without assistance.

Disposable masks will be available at entrances to church buildings.

Clergy, lectors, acolytes and musicians who have been granted permission to sit or stand in the Choir Stall or Sanctuary during the worship service are asked to wear a face shield as an additional protective measure. This face shield is worn in addition to a face mask.

Individuals refusing to wear a face mask will be denied entrance to the buildings.

### References:

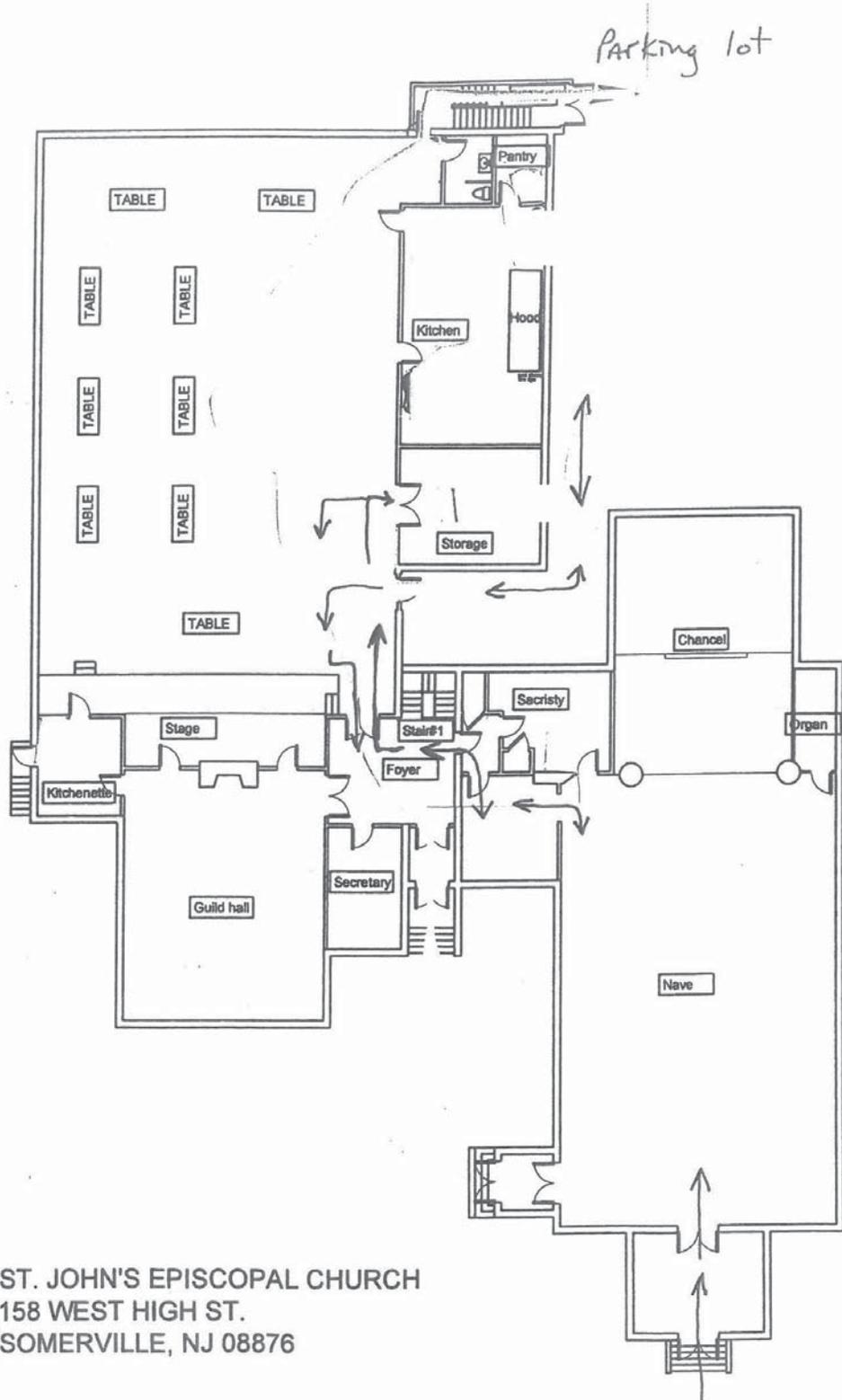
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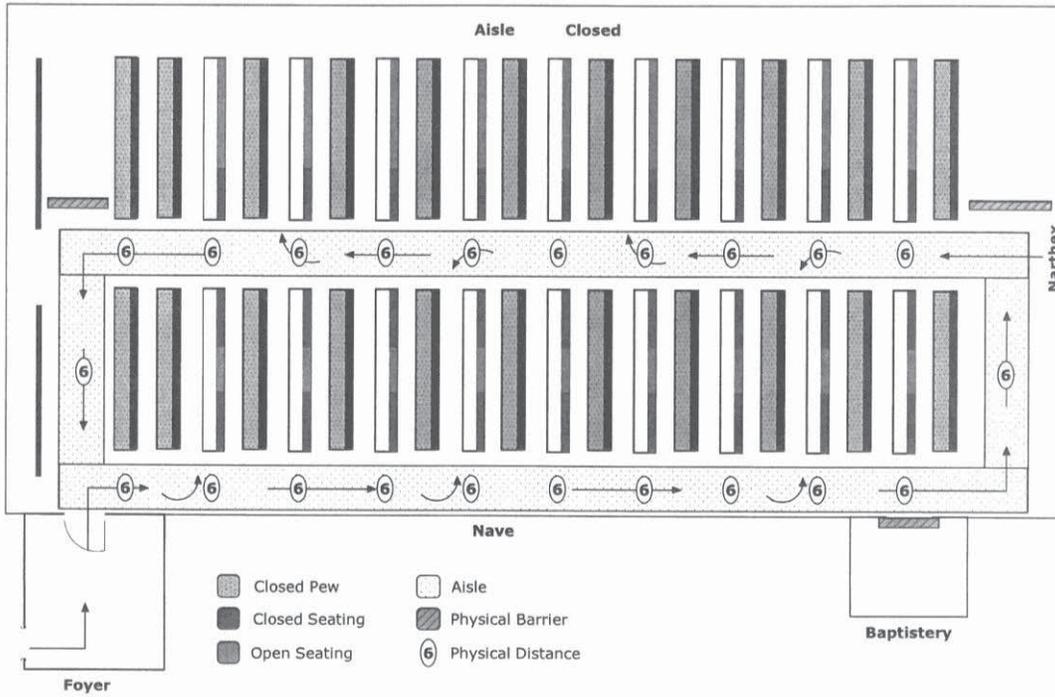
Murphy, P. (2020, July 8). *Executive Order 163*. The Official Web Site for The State of New Jersey. <https://www.nj.gov/infobank/eo/056murphy/pdf/EO-163.pdf>

### Part III: Diagrams



ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
158 WEST HIGH ST.  
SOMERVILLE, NJ 08876

**St. John's Episcopal Church  
Somerville, N.J.  
Entry Flow for Services**



**St. John's Episcopal Church  
Somerville, N.J.  
Exit Flow for Services**

