

August 22, 2021
Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost



ST. STEPHEN
Evangelical Lutheran Church

*Congregation is invited to stand as able
Please be aware that video cameras are in use during our hybrid (combined) Worship Service and that images are being shared with the online participants.

In today's gospel many people take offense at Jesus' invitation to eat his flesh and drink his blood; even many of Jesus' disciples peel off. This is the backdrop in John's gospel for Peter's confession of faith. "To whom can we go?" asks Peter, in words we sometimes sing just before the gospel is read. "You have the words of eternal life." In order to take such a stand, as Peter and Joshua did, Paul tells us to arm ourselves with the word of God. We pray in the Spirit that we might be bold ambassadors of the gospel.

Our Mission

We respond to Christ's love by feeding those who hunger in body, mind, and spirit.

Prelude

"Christ be the Leader"

setting by Benjamin M. Culling

Gathering

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

***Confession and Forgiveness**

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God, the God of manna, the God of miracles, the God of mercy. **Amen.**

Drawn to Christ and seeking God's abundance, let us confess our sin.

Silence is kept for reflection.

God, our provider,

help us. It is hard to believe there is enough to share. We question your ways when they differ from the ways of the world in which we live. We turn to our own understanding rather than trusting in you. We take offense at your teachings and your ways. Turn us again to you. Where else can we turn?

Share with us the words of eternal life and feed us for life in the world. Amen.

Beloved people of God: in Jesus, the manna from heaven, you are fed and nourished. By Jesus, the worker of miracles, there is always more than enough. Through Jesus, † the bread of life, you are shown God's mercy: you are forgiven and loved into abundant life. **Amen.**

***Gathering Hymn**

"You are the Way"

Hymn#758 vs. 1-3

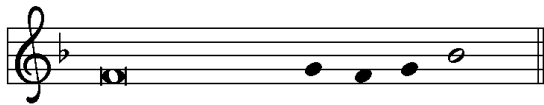
- 1 You are the way; to you alone
from sin and death we flee;
all those who search for God, you find
and by your grace set free.
- 2 You are the truth; your word alone
true wisdom can impart;
you only can inform the mind
and purify the heart.
- 3 You are the life; the rending tomb
proclaims your conqu'ring arm;
and those who put their trust in you
not death nor hell shall harm.

Text: George W. Doane, 1799-1859, alt.

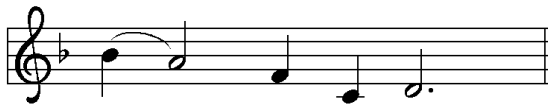
***Apostolic Greeting**

The boundless grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the wisdom of God, and the light of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

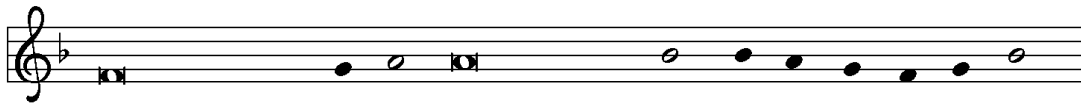
***Kyrie**



In peace, let us pray to the Lord.



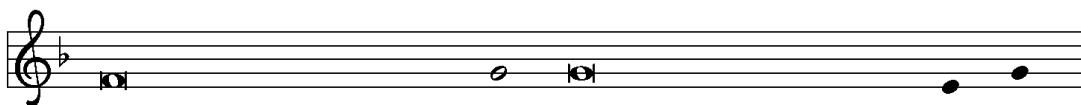
Lord, have mer - cy.



For the peace from a - bove, and for our sal-vation, let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.



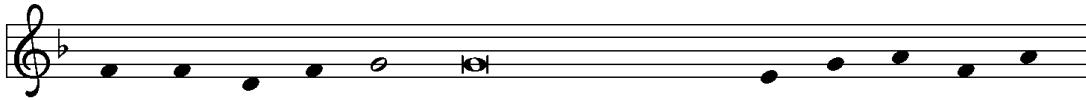
For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the church of



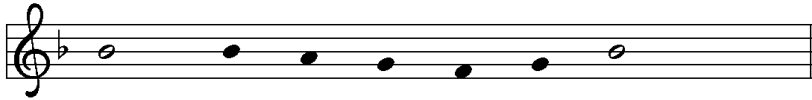
God, and for the uni - ty of all, let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.



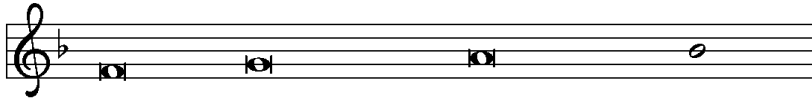
For this ho - ly house, and for all who offer here their wor-ship and



praise, let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.



Help, save, comfort, and de - fend us, gracious Lord.



A - men.

***Canticle of Praise**

Refrain



Glo-ry to God in the high - est, and peace



to God's peo-ple on earth. Glo-ry to God in the



high - est, and peace to God's peo-ple on earth.



1 Lord God, heav-en-ly King, al - might-y God and Fa-ther,



we wor-ship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glo - ry.

Refrain



Glo-ry to God in the high - est, and peace



to God's peo-ple on earth. Glo-ry to God in the



high - est, and peace to God's peo-ple on earth.



2 Lord Je - sus Christ, on - ly Son of the Fa - ther, Lord God,



Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world:



have mer - cy on us; you are seat - ed at the right



hand of the Fa - ther: re - ceive our prayer.

Refrain



Glo-ry to God in the high - est, and peace



to God's peo-ple on earth. Glo-ry to God in the

high - est, and peace to God's peo-ple on earth.

3 For you a - lone are the Ho - ly One, you a - lone are the Lord, you a - lone are the Most High, Je - sus Christ, with the Ho - ly Spir - it, in the glo - ry of God the Fa - ther.

Final refrain
Glo - ry to God in the high - est.

A - men, a - men.

***Prayer of the Day**

Let us pray.

Holy God, your word feeds your people with life that is eternal. Direct our choices and preserve us in your truth, that, renouncing what is false and evil, we may live in you, through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

Word

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

The First Lesson

1 Kings 8:1, 6, 10-11, 22-30, 41-43

Solomon built the temple in Jerusalem and put the ark of the covenant there. This passage includes part of the prayer Solomon prays at the dedication of the temple. He prays for the fulfillment of God's promises to David and for God to hear the prayers of all the faithful.

A reading from the first book of the Kings, the 8th chapter.

¹Solomon assembled the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes, the leaders of the ancestral houses of the Israelites, before King Solomon in Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of the city of David, which is Zion. ⁶Then the priests brought the ark of

the covenant of the LORD to its place, in the inner sanctuary of the house, in the most holy place, underneath the wings of the cherubim. ¹⁰And when the priests came out of the holy place, a cloud filled the house of the LORD, ¹¹so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD.

²²Then Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the assembly of Israel, and spread out his hands to heaven. ²³He said, "O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth beneath, keeping covenant and steadfast love for your servants who walk before you with all their heart, ²⁴the covenant that you kept for your servant my father David as you declared to him; you promised with your mouth and have this day fulfilled with your hand. ²⁵Therefore, O LORD, God of Israel, keep for your servant my father David that which you promised him, saying, 'There shall never fail you a successor before me to sit on the throne of Israel, if only your children look to their way, to walk before me as you have walked before me.' ²⁶Therefore, O God of Israel, let your word be confirmed, which you promised to your servant my father David.

²⁷"But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Even heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you, much less this house that I have built! ²⁸Regard your servant's prayer and his plea, O LORD my God, heeding the cry and the prayer that your servant prays to you today; ²⁹that your eyes may be open night and day toward this house, the place of which you said, 'My name shall be there,' that you may heed the prayer that your servant prays toward this place. ³⁰Hear the plea of your servant and of your people Israel when they pray toward this place; O hear in heaven your dwelling place; heed and forgive.

⁴¹"Likewise when a foreigner, who is not of your people Israel, comes from a distant land because of your name ⁴²—for they shall hear of your great name, your mighty hand, and your outstretched arm—when a foreigner comes and prays toward this house, ⁴³then hear in heaven your dwelling place, and do according to all that the foreigner calls to you, so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your people Israel, and so that they may know that your name has been invoked on this house that I have built."

Word of God. Word of Life. **Thanks be to God.**

Psalm

Psalm 84

¹How dear to me ¹ is your dwelling,
O ¹ LORD of hosts!

²**My soul has a desire and longing for the courts ¹ of the LORD;
my heart and my flesh rejoice in the ¹ living God.**

³Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest where she may ¹ lay her young,
by the side of your altars, O LORD of hosts, my king ¹ and my God.

⁴**Happy are they who dwell ¹ in your house!
They will always be ¹ praising you.**

⁵Happy are the people whose strength ¹ is in you,
whose hearts are set on the ¹ pilgrims' way.

⁶**Those who go through the balsam valley will find it a ¹ place of springs,
for the early rains have covered it with ¹ pools of water.**

⁷They will climb from ¹ height to height,
and the God of gods will be ¹ seen in Zion.

⁸**LORD God of hosts, ¹ hear my prayer;
give ear, O ¹ God of Jacob.**

⁹Behold our defend- ¹ er, O God;

and look upon the face of | your anointed.

¹⁰**For one day in your courts is better than a | thousand elsewhere.**

I would rather stand at the threshold of the house of my God than dwell in the tents | of the wicked.

¹¹For the LORD God is both sun and shield, bestowing | grace and glory;
no good thing will the LORD withhold from those who walk | with integrity.

¹²**O | LORD of hosts,
happy are they who put their | trust in you!**

The Second Lesson

Ephesians 6:10-20

Like a general giving a rousing speech to troops before battle, this letter closes by calling on Christians to be equipped for spiritual warfare against evil. The full armor of God includes truth, righteousness, peace, faith, the gift of salvation, and the word of God inspired by the Spirit.

A reading from St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians, the 6th chapter.

¹⁰Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. ¹¹Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ¹²For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

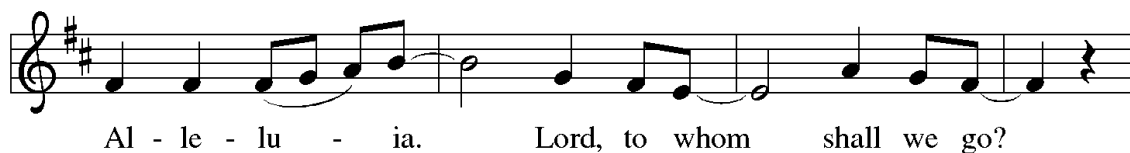
¹³Therefore take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. ¹⁴Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. ¹⁵As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. ¹⁶With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

¹⁷Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

¹⁸Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints. ¹⁹Pray also for me, so that when I speak, a message may be given to me to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it boldly, as I must speak.

Word of God. Word of Life. **Thanks be to God.**

Gospel Acclamation



Gospel Reading

John 6:56-69

The "hard saying" that offends Jesus' disciples is his claim that his followers must eat his flesh and drink his blood. The followers who return to their old lives know something about how odd

this sounds. Simon Peter, on the other hand, knows something about the scarcity of living, gracious words. He asks the most important question: "To whom shall we go?"

A reading from the Gospel according to St. John, the 6th chapter. **Glory to You O Lord.**

[Jesus said,] ⁵⁶"Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. ⁵⁷Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. ⁵⁸This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live forever." ⁵⁹He said these things while he was teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum.

⁶⁰When many of his disciples heard it, they said, "This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?" ⁶¹But Jesus, being aware that his disciples were complaining about it, said to them, "Does this offend you? ⁶²Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? ⁶³It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. ⁶⁴But among you there are some who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the first who were the ones that did not believe, and who was the one that would betray him. ⁶⁵And he said, "For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted by the Father."

⁶⁶Because of this many of his disciples turned back and no longer went about with him. ⁶⁷So Jesus asked the twelve, "Do you also wish to go away?" ⁶⁸Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. ⁶⁹We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to You O Christ.**

Sermon

The Reverend Matthew Best

*Hymn of the Day

"Eat This Bread, Drink This Cup"

Hymn#492 vs. 1,2,4

Refrain

Eat this bread, drink this cup.
Taste and see the goodness of God.
Bread of life, cup of love,
we rejoice in your presence.

- 1 I will bless the Lord at all times,
praise with heart and voice;
in my God I glory forever:
listen and rejoice! *Refrain*
- 2 Look upon the Lord, be radiant,
never turn away.
God will save in ev'ry affliction,
hear us when we pray. *Refrain*
- 4 Saints of God, bow down and worship,
bless the holy name.
Rise to tell God's greatness forever,
wondrous deeds proclaim! *Refrain*

Text: Jeremy Young, b. 1948, refrain; *With One Voice*, stanzas, based on Ps. 34

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***Apostles Creed**

AM: Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us profess our faith, using the words of the Apostles Creed.

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.***

**On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

***The Blessing of the Backpacks**

Congregational response after each petition:

AM: ...Lord, in Your mercy, **C: hear our prayer.**

Made children and heirs of God's promise, we lift up the following prayers of blessing.

A brief silence.

God who leads and teaches, we lift up prayers for students of all ages as they begin this new school year. Be with them to keep them safe. Give them encouragement when they struggle. Give them a thirst and excitement or learning new ideas that will impact their lives, their families, their communities and the world. Give them determination. And give them an open mind to explore and be open to being challenged. Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

God our teacher, we lift up all teachers. Teaching is a difficult profession and calling. We pray that you give strength to teachers, compassion, understanding, and a listening ear. Help them as they prepare lesson plans, activities, and educational adventures. Give them wisdom so that they may grow wisdom within their students. Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

God our parent, we lift up parents, families, and those that support students and teachers. Learning isn't just the transfer of knowledge from one person to another. It takes many people who invest a great deal of time into the lives of those who are learning. Be with

supporters of those who learn and those who teach. Let them be an encouragement in times of struggle. Let them be a listening ear when that is needed. Let them be a support in ways that touch the lives of students and teachers. Lord, In your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

God who sustains creation, we lift up administrators who run our schools. Often it can be a thankless job, hearing complaints about how things should be different. We thank you for these talented individuals who have invested their lives into creating environments where students can learn and teachers can teach in spite of the obstacles imposed on them. Give them wisdom and the leadership they need to create those environments where students can thrive and grow and teachers can answer their call to shape the next generation. Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

God who created helpers, we lift up support staff who work in our schools in a variety of ways. Some are in the classrooms offering direct support to students and teachers, some work in offices supporting administrators, some keep the buildings clean and functioning. In all cases, the support they provide is essential for making education work. Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

God who creates and blesses community, we lift up each community that makes education possible. Communities participate in the educational process through financial support, service opportunities, fan support for student athletes, and leadership examples. Bless our communities and the many people who work to make education so valuable. Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

P: Today we offer a blessing of the backpacks. But it's not just the materials that we are blessing. We just prayed prayers lifting up a variety of people in all walks of life who make education possible. We are grateful to God for all these people.

Education is a gift from God. Education is what helps shape people, to learn about new ideas and new ways of doing things, to learn about God, to improve and be better people, better communities, better churches, and a better humanity.

Education though is not limited to just that time in the first third of our lives in which we go to a school. Living things are always learning. And so today I invite folks to share in the blessing of the backpacks.

For our students – I invite you to hold out the instruments and tools that you will use throughout this school year to help you learn, your backpacks that will carry so very much, your books which are full of knowledge, your electronic devices that will assist you in completing assignments, your pens and pencils, paper, and anything else that you will use to help you learn.

For our teachers – I invite you to hold out the tools that you will use to form the next generation, markers and chalk, paper and books, calendars and lesson plans, electronic devices, and more.

For those who work – you are still learning and so I invite you to hold out the tools that assist you in your work and help you to continue to grow and learn – your tools, your pens, paper, electronic devices, boots, briefcases, and more.

And for those who are retired – You aren't done learning either. Often times living in retirement is learning let go of your work identity to find out who you really are. And so I invite you to hold out the tools that help you to keep learning – your books and golf clubs, your pictures of grandchildren, your electronic devices (even the ones that may challenge you), and anything that represents the wisdom you have gained over the years.

I Invite you all to lift up and hold out those items that represent your ongoing education.

Let us pray: **God of wonder, we call on you to come in this place and blessing all of these tools that the congregation uses to grow in knowledge and wisdom and understanding. They are not just items and tools, they represent so much more. They assist us in moving towards what you call us to be – fully who you made us to be. They assist us in the work you call all of to – participating in the unfolding of the kingdom of God. We ask that you bless these items and the people holding them. Give them wisdom. And let them use that wisdom as we live into the mission you have for us in this time and place. We pray this in Jesus name. Amen.**

***Peace**

P: The Peace of Christ be with you always.

C: And also with you.

P: Let us show a sign of that peace!

Offering

The offering, whether in person or through digital means, is an act of worship. Worship, at its core, is a reverent love and devotion accorded to God. We give because God loves us first, and we are called to love God and neighbor as a result. The offering is one way we show our love of God.

To assist you in this act of worship, there are several ways to make your offering: Go to www.StStephenLC.org and scroll to the bottom of the page, and click **DONATE**.

Text your offering dollar amount to 717-685-6947. Text "help" for options.

Use Engage from your smart phone or Internet connected device at <https://engage.suran.com/sslc/> or QR code below:



Set up regular electronic offerings by contacting Kevin, our office manager, at 717-766- 2168, Monday through Thursday from 9am – 2pm, or by email at office@StStephenLC.org to get set up.

Mail in your check, made payable to St. Stephen Lutheran Church. Our address is
30 W. Main St., PO Box 266, New Kingstown, PA 17072.

The offerings are used to carry out the ministry of the church, to share the Good News, to provide pastoral care, to worship as a community, and to create an environment where Jesus

encounters people and their lives are transformed. All of these things continue to take place. Thank you for your generosity.

***Offertory Prayer**

Let us pray. Jesus, Bread of life, you have set this table with your very self, and called us to the feast of plenty. Gather what has been sown among us, and strengthen us in this meal. Make us to be what we receive here, your body for the life of the world.

Amen

Meal

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

***The Great Thanksgiving**

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God. You reveal your glory as the glory of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit: equal in majesty, undivided in splendor, one Lord, one God, ever to be adored in your eternal glory. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, Lord God of pow - er and might,
heav - en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho -
san - na in the high - est. Bless - ed is he who
comes in the name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

Holy, mighty, and merciful Lord, heaven and earth are full of your glory. In great love you sent to us Jesus, your Son, who reached out to heal the sick and suffering, who preached good news to the poor, and who, on the cross, opened his arms to all.

In the night in which he was handed over, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Remembering, therefore, his death, resurrection, and ascension, we await his coming in glory. Pour out upon us the Spirit of your love, O Lord, and unite the wills of all who share this heavenly food, the body and blood of Jesus Christ, our Lord; to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be all honor and glory, now and forever.

Amen.

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

***Invitation to Communion**

Christ has set the table with more than enough for all.

Come!

Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have mer-cy on
us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the
world; have mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the
sin of the world; grant us peace, grant us peace.

Music: *Bread of Life*, Jeremy Young, b. 1948
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***Post Communion Prayer**

Let us pray. Jesus, Bread of life,
we have received from your table more than we could ever ask. As you have nourished us in
this meal, now strengthen us to love the world with your own life. In your name we pray.

Amen.

Sending

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

***Blessing**

The blessing of God, who provides for us, feeds us, and journeys with us, ☩ be upon you now
and forever.

Amen.

***Sending Hymn**

“How Sweet the Sound of Jesus Sounds “

Hymn#620 vs. 5-7

5 O Jesus, shepherd, guardian, friend,
my prophet, priest, and king,
my Lord, my life, my way, my end,
accept the praise I bring.

6 How weak the effort of my heart,
how cold my warmest thought;
but when I see thee as thou art,
I'll praise thee as I ought.

7 Till then I would thy love proclaim
with every fleeting breath;
and may the music of thy name
refresh my soul in death!

Text: John Newton, 1725-1807, alt.

***Dismissal**

Go in peace. You are the body of Christ.

Thanks be to God.

Postlude

“Toccata Jubiloso”

by Lani Smith

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