

## AFTER THE UNITED STATES SUPREME COURT'S DECISION

According to the Christian Year, today, as your editor writes this, is the Fifth Sunday after Pentecost. Today is also June 28, 2015. According to American history, today is the first Sunday after Obergefell et al. v. Director, Ohio Department of Health et al. (on same-sex marriage) was decided and announced.

The U.S. Supreme Court's decision was not surprising, but it was disappointing. It was not surprising because of the apparent societal acceptance of same-sex marriage — which was largely a product of journalistic promotion, political pressure, and judicial activism. It was disappointing because of the power of the decision: in one decision, the highest court in the land imposed a redefinition of marriage on the American people.

How are we, in the Lifewatch community, to understand the Obergefell decision? Both as American citizens and as United Methodist Christians.

As American citizens, we might see in this decision a breakdown of the American system of government. Back in November of 1996, the journal of religion and public life, First Things, asked and answered the controversial question, "The End of Democracy? The Judicial Usurpation of Politics." That question and answer seem, at first glance, to be overheated, exaggerated, and even apocalyptic. However, after Obergefell, this brief question and its accompanying answer are more reasonable than ever. The point of the First Things question and answer is this: since the judicial branch of the federal government is overreaching, by making decisions that deny the American people their voice in making laws through their elected legislators and legislatures, democracy in America is ending or has ended. Yes, this is a very sobering, even disturbing possibility. And it is shared, more or less, by the four (4) Supreme Court justices who offered powerful dissenting opinions. Read those opinions, which are rigorous in reasoning and at times blistering in tone, and you will sense the deep concern of the dissenting justices. This American citizen, along with many others, is rightfully concerned that democracy, as we have known it and as we have practiced it, is no longer ruled by law, but by the courts (or by the U.S. Supreme Court). Obergefell is the latest demonstration of this trend.

As United Methodists, we understand the content of this

Supreme Court decision as an exercise in hubris. Marriage is marriage. Marriage is the union of a man and a woman. That truth comes from natural reason and from Biblical revelation. The United States Supreme Court's attempt to redefine marriage does not change the definition of marriage that is written into creation and nature. The Supreme Court's redefinition of marriage simply demonstrates the Supreme Court's decision is wrong. Certainly, we United Methodists can and should respect the five justices who concurred with the redefinition. But we are not bound to respect their decision. As we are not bound to respect the United States Supreme Court's Dred Scott decision of generations ago. United Methodists in America are not servants of the courts or the government. We are citizens with rights given by God to worship, to speak, to assemble, and to act in ways that resist governmental decisions that are morally and legally wrong. Obergefell is one of those decisions.

American citizens and United Methodist Christians have been here before. Remember abortion. Remember Roe v. Wade and Doe v. Bolton in 1973. Back then, with the highest intention of "settling" the cultural controversy over abortion in American society, the United States Supreme Court handed down Roe and Doe, and knocked down abortion law in all the states. Since then, the matter has hardly been settled. Life and abortion are of more concern, to more Americans, than ever before — for good reason. Since 1973, some 55,000,000 abortions have occurred. The wound, inflicted by the Supreme Court on American society, has been deep and has not healed. The Supreme Court's "settlement" regarding abortion is a settlement the American people will not allow to stand. Likewise, Obergefell. These great changes will not happen anytime soon. But by God's grace in providence, they will happen.

There is a silver lining in the United States Supreme Court's attempt to redefine marriage. It provides a challenge and an opportunity for the State to reign in the judicial branch of government's current overreach. It also provides a challenge and an opportunity for the Church to teach and to practice the true meaning of marriage — and to do so in a way that is loving and winsome, and that leads to the true flourishing of truly married men and women. So, the Lifewatch community calls for the democratic State to be the democratic State (and nothing more), and for the Church to be the Church (and nothing less).

God have mercy on all of us. (Paul T. Stallsworth) ♥

## **BRIEF SPEECHES ON ABORTION AND SEXUALITY**

*In preparation for the 2015 Session of the North Carolina Annual Conference, which took place in Wilmington on June 10-13, this United Methodist pastor prepared three (3) speeches on life, abortion, and human sexuality. The fullest versions of those speeches follow. (PTS)*

### **FOR AMENDING PARAGRAPH 161J ON ABORTION**

Over many years, the Whiteville (NC) United Methodist Church has developed a reputation in our county for outreach to those in acute need. Like many of your churches, the Whiteville Church has a Pastor's Discretionary Fund, that we have tied to volunteer work, to help those in emergency situations.

One of the joys of ministry at the Whiteville Church is speaking with people who are inquiring about assistance. Most, but not all, are African-American women who are single mothers. With very little prompting, they often tell me about their lives and their children. When I commend them for protecting and welcoming their children into this world, they are mightily encouraged. Tears of thankfulness — for their children and for the encouragement — often roll down their cheeks.

I believe these African-American mothers stand out. Why? Because they have moral clarity, and they act on their moral clarity. They lovingly sacrifice, every day, for the good of their children. They are doing the right thing. They are also doing the challenging thing; according to the Alan Guttmacher Institute, African-American women are five (5) times as likely to have an abortion as Caucasian women.

I hope that one day The United Methodist Church will become more like these African-American women. I hope that our church will gain more moral clarity on life and abortion.

Presently, Paragraph 161J of our Social Principles largely protects the "unborn child" (that is a phrase from 161J) and his/her mother from the violence of abortion. However, this Social Principle contains just enough pro-choice language to muddy the moral waters. Right now, because of the moral ambiguity of Paragraph 161J, The United Methodist Church lacks a clear word about protecting unborn children and their mothers. Our church's lack of moral clarity on abortion violence has devastating consequences for real people — in our churches, in our communities, and in our general society.

Paragraph 161J's lack of moral clarity allows the General Board of Church and Society and the United Methodist Women to affiliate with the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC). RCRC is a pro-choice — no, it is a pro-abortion — lobby. RCRC lobbies to legalize (and keep legal) all abortion procedures, to be used against all unborn children, whatever their ages, whatever their circumstances. Not surprisingly, RCRC completely

disregards the humanity of the unborn child.

By editing Paragraph 161J, the resolution before us would increase the moral clarity of The United Methodist Church on life and abortion. This resolution strives to make our church more protective of children, more like many of the African-American mothers in Columbus County.

Remember: we serve the Lord of Life and the Gospel of Life. Please vote for this resolution.

Thank you for your attention.

### **AGAINST AMENDING PARAGRAPH 161F ON HUMAN SEXUALITY**

1. Thanks to those who wrote and submitted this resolution, so that this matter might be debated.

This resolution "implore(s) General Conference" to delete the "incompatibility" sentence from Paragraph 161F) Human Sexuality of The Social Principles. That sentence, the resolution claims, is "discriminatory language," so it must go. However, the resolution does not provide new language to replace the language it intends to delete. It hopes for a replacement "language," presumably from General Conference, "that is positive, welcoming, and non-judgmental." That seems like a curious way to write a resolution: to propose the deletion of current language, but not to propose replacement language. The resolution before us seems not quite complete.

2. Paragraph 161F on Human Sexuality. Welcome to United Methodism's battleground for 40+ years.

We are living after the Sexual Revolution in American society. The Sexual Revolution won. The consequences have been enormous and devastating — abortion, divorce, hook-up culture on campus, pornography everywhere, children without fathers. Just when our church and our society need clear, consistent Christian teaching on human sexuality, we United Methodists are arguing to the point of paralysis about what that teaching should be.

Paragraph 161F is not perfect or elegant teaching on human sexuality. What do you expect when a Committee of One Thousand — called General Conference — writes the teaching? However, Paragraph 161F does hold to the universal Church's most basic rule on human sexuality: "sexual relations are affirmed only [within] the covenant of monogamous, heterosexual marriage." This is not a footnote to Church doctrine. This is basic Christian teaching on human sexuality. It is strongly presented in Genesis 1-2, by Jesus in Matthew 19, and by Paul in Ephesians 5. Sexual expression, in marriage, has three (3) purposes: procreative, according to Genesis; unitive, according to Jesus; and sacramental, according to Paul. Far be it from The United Methodist Church to tamper with this canonical, traditioned, ecumenical Christian teaching.

Because Paragraph 161F maintains sexual expression only in the marital context does not mean the rest of the paragraph is without flaw. In fact, I believe the paragraph should be rewritten. A new paragraph on human sexuality might indeed want to do away with the "incompatibility" language. However, a new paragraph must clearly state that not only homosexual sex, but also premarital sex,

***Please remember to pray and fast for the ministry  
of Lifewatch on the first Tuesday of every month.***

extramarital sex, and all other sexual acts outside marriage, are understood as sins. Forgivable sins, due to the death and resurrection of our Lord. But sins.

3. The society, in which the Church is situated, often challenges the Church to change its teaching, to "update" its teaching. This happened in Germany during the 1930s. The leading Germans of that time — in the higher culture, in the universities, in politics — wanted the Church to change its understanding of the Jews. The sad fact is that most Christians yielded to those pressures. But some did not. We remember their names. Barth. Bonhoeffer. Hildebrand. Niemoller.

Society's challenge to the Church always sounds the same: "Church, you are behind the times. The world is changing. You must get on the right side of history. The change, that the Church must make, will not make that much difference."

To this challenge, The Barmen Declaration of 1934 responded: "Jesus Christ, as he is attested for us in Holy Scripture, is the one Word of God which we have to hear and which we have to trust and obey in life and in death..."

"We reject the false doctrine, as though the Church were permitted to abandon the form of its message and order to its own pleasure or to changes in prevailing ideological and political convictions." (1. and 3.)

By God's grace, we the North Carolina Conference, will not change our understanding of human sexuality. By God's grace, we the North Carolina Conference will, therefore, stand with Barmen.

Out of faithfulness to Christ and His Church, vote against this resolution.

Thank you for your attention.

## **HOPES AND FEARS REGARDING THE UNITED METHODIST DEBATE ON HUMAN SEXUALITY**

1. Thanks to all of you for your participation in this Breakout Session at Annual Conference. Whether we like it or not, whether we want to admit it or not, human sexuality is now The Issue — with accompanying moral, theological, doctrinal, and Biblical concerns — facing the North Carolina Conference and The United Methodist Church. Thank you for being of sufficient Christian character and courage to sign up for this seminar, this Christian conferencing, for this "work for unity."

2. The first question is: With regard to The United Methodist Church and homosexuality, what are your hopes?

In the midst of our church's ongoing struggle over human sexuality, I will to hope two (2) things: first, that our denomination might be renewed in the Gospel; and second, that our denomination might become more faithfully the Church (that is, more unified, more holy, more apostolic, and more catholic). These two hopes go together: genuine renewal in the Gospel leads to renewal of the Church, and deep renewal of the Church fosters renewal in the Gospel.

Because of the hope that God gives, we Christians can understand every challenge as an opportunity. Therefore, as our denomination continues to struggle with human sexuality, we United Methodists now have the opportunity

to be renewed in the Gospel and as the Church.

The Gospel — based on the birth, life, ministry, death, resurrection, ascension, rule, and promised return of Jesus Christ — is God's redemption of the world, for the good of the world. The struggle in our denomination, over human sexuality, demands that we return to the Biblical and doctrinal sources of the Gospel. As we return to those sources, we will find that the Gospel is not meant only for those who happen to desire homosexual relations. We discover that the Gospel is for all of us sinners. All of us, each and every one of us, are not only created in the image of God but also very messed up by original sin. And yet: "Christ died for us while we were yet sinners; that proves God's love toward us. In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven!" declare the United Methodist liturgy (The United Methodist Hymnal, p. 8) and Romans 5:8. That is Good News for all of us: for the prideful, for the slothful, for those who desire fame or power or comfort or pleasure above all else, for those who see themselves as racially supreme or intellectually superior or politically advanced, for the strong who degrade the weak (the poor, the chronically ill, the dying, the unborn). Those who repent of their sins and trust in Jesus Christ crucified and risen, for their salvation, are blessed by the God of the Gospel with the forgiveness of sins and with a new life filled with the true freedom that serves.

My hope is for renewal in the Gospel.

My hope is also for renewal of the Church.

The Church is the community created by God and the Gospel. Confident in the Gospel, the Church can faithfully live its life and proclaim its message and serve the world — even when the world stands against the Church. Confident in the Gospel, bishops — including the Council of Bishops, the active bishops, and the retired bishops — can stand up, teach, and preach the Gospel in a hostile environment. Confident in the Gospel, pastors, in their congregations, can offer Word-and-Sacrament ministry even in a secularizing society. Confident in the Gospel, laypersons can fulfill their vocations in the world in loving and truthful service that points beyond the demands and fashions of the day. Confident in the Gospel, clergy and laity can rely on the Church's Scripture and doctrine, and thoughtfully engage those in dissent. Confident in the Gospel, the Church can truly be the pilgrim Church that knows that its home is not in this world, that its destination is a Kingdom to come.

So, my twin hopes are that The United Methodist Church be renewed in the Gospel and as the Church.

3. The second question is: What are your fears?

As our denomination's protracted struggle over human sexuality continues, I fear — or better, am concerned — that our denomination might cave in to the tremendous pressures now exerted by the world.

The world is perfectly contented with itself, as it is; and it marginalizes its challengers. According to the world, God is a helpful myth for those who need religion. Jesus Christ an historical construction. The Holy Spirit a delusion. According to the world, no Savior is needed. No redemption is required. No Kingdom is coming. The world has its own answers, its own explanations, its own remedies. It offers an

individualism without responsibility. Science without boundaries. Therapy without morality. Management without authority. Politics without principle. Citizenship without duty. Social justice without foundation. Choice without wisdom. That is what the world prefers and offers.

The world's story is this: There is no story, except the one each person makes up. This story-less world challenges the Gospel and the Church.

At different times and places, in different ways, the story-less world turns against the Church and its Gospel story, its Story of the World. In our time and place, with each passing year, the world's Sexual Revolution (which asserts that each of us makes up morals) gains in strength and power, and fundamentally challenges the Church and the Gospel. In the last several decades, the world's challenge has caused The United Methodist Church to surrender its teaching on divorce and then on abortion. My concern is that we are now poised to compromise the Church's historic, ecumenical teaching on human sexuality. My concern is that our denomination will further lose the Gospel and its way, and that people — real people! — will be harmed. (Paul T. Stallsworth) ♥

## LETTERS TO LIFEWATCH

June 15, 2015

Dear Rev. Stallsworth:

While reading the articles in Lifewatch, I sometimes find mention of the Wesleyan quadrilateral. In those mentions, it seems that John Wesley's emphasis on Scripture is often missing. Reason, experience, and tradition seem to be treated as equal with Scripture. Since a quadrilateral could be a square, a diamond, a rectangle, or any other four-sided geometric figure, I would like to suggest that the esteemed Dr. Albert Outler [who formulated, named, and described the Wesleyan quadrilateral, and who now rests in peace] would have been happier today if he would have dubbed his Wesleyan model for theological reflection a trapezoid. (Picture a two-dimensional pyramid with the top lopped off, and you get the idea.) The longest side is the base, which would represent Scripture as primary, foundational, and authoritative. The three other sides would be of lesser length, which would denote their subservience to Scripture, as Wesley intended. Reason would be seen as a God-given responsibility rather than a license to succumb to modern secularism. Experience would be seen as the witness of the Holy Spirit in the Christian and in the church, rather than an anything-goes devolution into situational ethics. Tradition would be scrutinized the same way Jesus scrutinized the oral tradition of the rabbis of his day. Jesus ruffled a lot of "denominational" feathers in his time, for good reason. He stood for truth at all costs. So the written Scripture was primary for Jesus, and centuries later John Wesley followed suit. It would be well if we too walked in the way of the Master (Jeremiah 6:16a).

Yet even this revised model is sorely lacking if we do not have God's heart of compassion. Do we see the unborn and vulnerable (of all ages) through the Father's eyes of love? Can we envision transformed individuals who have been delivered from the results of twisted ideas of life and sexuality? If not, then even this proposal is for naught.

Your theological friend,  
B. Phillip Hanson  
Waterloo, IA

June 21, 2015

Dear Mr. Hanson:

*Thank you for your thoughtful letter.*

*The Book of Discipline (2012) states and deepens your description of the Wesleyan quadrilateral. In summary, the Discipline's Paragraph 105 on "Our Theological Task" notes: "Wesley believes that the living core of the Christian faith was revealed in Scripture, illumined by tradition, vivified in personal experience, and confirmed by reason." (p. 105) On the next page, it continues: "United Methodists share with other Christians the conviction that Scripture is the primary source and criterion for Christian doctrine." Then "Our Theological Task" goes on to indicate more fully how tradition, experience, and reason help United Methodists to best understand Scripture.*

*But much more foundationally, The United Methodist Church's doctrine contains strong claims about Scripture. Article V—Of the Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation (from The Articles of Religion) states: "The Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation." (p. 64) And Article IV—The Holy Bible (from The Confession of Faith) claims: "We believe the Holy Bible, Old and New Testaments, reveals the Word of God so far as it is necessary for our salvation. It is to be received through the Holy Spirit as the true rule and guide for faith and practice. Whatever is not revealed in or established by the Holy Scriptures is not to be made an article of faith nor is it to be taught as essential to salvation." (p. 71)*

*Of course, practically anything can allegedly be taught "from the Bible" these days. There are many enterprising so-called scholars out there doing overly creative things. However, church doctrine and the wise use of tradition, experience, and reason are excellent assists in helping The United Methodist Church to read and hear, preach and teach, trust and obey, Scripture faithfully. Your note on the importance of Christian love, in understanding and receiving Scripture, is spot on.*

*Again, thank you for your letter.*

*In Christ,  
Paul T. Stallsworth ♥*

## YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT

- Lifewatch receives not one penny from The United Methodist Church. Therefore, we are especially thankful to you for remembering Lifewatch with your prayers and your gifts. A gift to Lifewatch can be given in two ways. First, you can send a check to Lifewatch/P.O. Box 306/Cottleville, MO 63338. And second, you can give stocks by first contacting Mrs. Cindy Evans in the Lifewatch office. Lifewatch is most grateful for your prayers and your financial support.

- "You people, who are pro-life and for the traditional understanding of marriage, are just a bunch Republicans and/or conservatives. You are just bringing your political views into The United Methodist Church and wrapping them in religious lingo." Well, no. The Church, through the ages, has stood for protection of the unborn child and mother from abortion and for the Biblical understanding of marriage long before there was a Republican Party or a conservative movement in the United States of America. Protecting the unborn and mother and understanding marriage in a traditional way were historic teachings from the Church's faith long before they became contemporary issues for partisan politics.

- Needing a challenge these days? Here is one: read [Abolishing Abortion: How You Can Play a Part in Ending the Greatest Evil of Our Day](#) (Nelson Books, 2015) by Father Frank Pavone. Fr. Pavone, you will remember, is the president of the National Pro-Life Religious Council, to which Lifewatch belongs, and the national director of Priests for Life. [Abolishing Abortion](#) will definitely help you to get over the doldrums of a hot (and perhaps humid, and maybe storm-infested) summer. This is the paragraph on [Abolishing Abortion](#) that your editor submitted in early June to the book's publisher: "The United States Supreme Court's [Roe v. Wade](#) decision, the resulting 55 million abortions, and the strenuous efforts to protect the continuing availability of abortion have, to a great extent, deformed American public life. In this book, Father Frank Pavone, today's most articulate American witness for the dignity of the human person, exposes the faulty reasoning and habits of mind of that deformation, and it challenges the institutions that sustain that deformation. He does this so that one day abortion in America will be abolished — as slavery in America was once abolished. Fr. Pavone's book educates, motivates, and activates the reader to be an authentic agent for love, for life."

- "Sing a Little Louder" — so that the congregation, in a worship service, cannot hear the screams of European Jews on cattle cars rumbling past a church, on a Sunday morning in the 1940s, on the way toward a death camp. This 12-minute movie is a powerful educational tool, with regard to abortion and the dignity of the human person, for a church-school class or a Sunday evening gathering. You can buy a "limited edition DVD" at <http://store.singloudermovie.com> for \$20 plus shipping. Consider it.

- The Center for Medical Progress and Mr. David Daleiden went undercover to engage Planned Parenthood (PP) executives in conversations about PP presumably selling, to paying customers, the body parts of unborn children who had been aborted at PP facilities. You must see the videos, either in their edited forms or in their entirety. These videos are a bold example of the powerful truly exploiting the weak: the powerful are represented by well educated women enjoying high-end lunches; they speak about the weak, unborn children who have been aborted and whose body parts are distributed to paying businesses. The barbarism of this business is off the charts. Aborting such children in ways that will protect potentially marketable organs, and "harvesting" the tiny organs of tiny aborted children. It does not get morally worse than that. Those defending PP were likely to object to the lack of journalistic transparency: Mr. Daleiden falsely posed as a buyer of body parts from aborted unborn children, and the meal-time conversations between Mr. Daleiden and the PP executives were secretly filmed. However, to be more concerned about the ethics of the journalistic methods of the Center for Medical Progress than the barbarity of unborn-children's-body-parts sales by Planned Parenthood is morally misguided. Should people have complained if an investigative journalist, during World War II, had falsely posed as an historian sympathetic to the Nazis while interviewing the commander of Auschwitz to obtain information about what was actually happening inside the death camp's barbed-wire fences? Technically, yes. But the barbarism of Auschwitz's mass murder is a much greater evil than the manipulation of journalistic appearance and purpose. Have any United Methodists — laity, clergy, seminary professors, or bishops — spoken in defense of Planned Parenthood's practices? Let us pray not.

- On the website of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC), on July 17 under "Recent News," this headline and teaser ran: "Minister aims to increase clergy voice in favor of abortion rights - July 2, 2015...Bishop Gregory Palmer to serve as executive director of the Ohio Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice. The coalition, which had gone about..." However, the full article, from [The Columbus Dispatch](#) (<http://www.dispatch.com/content/stories/local/2015/07/02/clergy-for-abortion-rights.html>, accessed on 07/17/15), states: "This year, [The Rev. Laura] Young, a United Methodist minister in the West Ohio Conference, was assigned by Bishop Gregory Palmer [bishop of the Ohio West Area] to serve as executive director of the Ohio Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice. The coalition, which had gone about two years without a director, had fallen largely quiet. Young aims to change that." Thanks be to God that, contrary to the RCRC headline, a United Methodist bishop is not heading up Ohio RCRC. A United Methodist pastor is unfortunate enough. This editor wonders if RCRC ever corrected this error on its website.

- Dr. Susan Henry-Crowe, the General Secretary at the General Board of Church and Society (GBCS), recently wrote: "The General Board of Church & Society affirms and



**Lifewatch**  
Taskforce of  
United Methodists on  
Abortion and Sexuality

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09/01/15

\* Bishop Timothy W. Whitaker:  
Rethinking the church  
\* After the Supreme Court's  
same-sex marriage decision

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upholds in prayer the work of The United Methodist Church as it continues to discern its understanding of marriage." (emphasis added, <http://umc-gbcs.org/faith-in-action/equal-rights-regardless-of-sexual-orientation>, accessed 06/29/15) This sentence suggests that our denomination is, just now, dedicated to discerning its marital understanding. The same sentence obscures the fact that our church currently has teaching and practice on marriage, as stated in The Book of Discipline (2012), that is consistent with nearly 2,000 years of historic and ecumenical Christianity. While The United Methodist Church has this marital doctrine and discipline "on the book" (or in the Discipline), at the same time many of us United Methodists are engaged in the process of discerning a possible revision of our current understanding. (The United Methodist Church and The Book of Discipline should always be reforming — we trust, under the Holy Spirit's guidance.) But the process of discernment does not neutralize or invalidate or erase the standing doctrine and discipline of the church. If it does, that creates chaos in the denomination,

as we have observed.

On June 29, when your editor printed the aforementioned statement from the GBCS website, a paragraph describing GBCS's ministry was printed below Dr. Henry-Crowe's statement. The paragraph includes this sentence: "Prime responsibility of the board [GBCS] is to seek implementation of the Social Principles and other policy statements on Christian social concerns of the General Conference." If GBCS is true to its responsibility, why is GBCS not now advancing a traditional understanding of marriage, as currently contained in the Social Principles? Indeed, why is GBCS doing just the opposite? That is, why is GBCS doing what it can — such as posting the article cited above — to promote a revision of what the Social Principles currently teach about marriage?

● *Magna est veritas, et prevalebit.*  
"Truth is most powerful, and will ultimately prevail." ♥

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