



# *Love of Christ Lutheran Church*



*"Christ living and loving through us"*



*Love of Christ Lutheran Church*  
*Love Notes*



20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition

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**Dear Members, Associate Members, and Friends of Love of Christ Lutheran Church,**

**April is upon us and we are in the midst of another wonderful spring in the Rio Grande Valley.**

**This year, April also brings the glorious celebration of the “Resurrection of our Lord”, Jesus Christ. The disciples’ joyous Easter greeting, on the very first Easter, has echoed through the centuries of time and now is repeated by us, “Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!”**

**The Holy Spirit takes this joy of Easter and daily strengthens our faith, empowering us to share this good news of Jesus Christ with family, friends, neighbors, and the world.**

**“We invite you to come and join us in worship at Love of Christ each Sunday. Rejoice with us in this Easter Season as we celebrate the good news by singing, praying and giving thanks to the God of love who has made all things possible for us to be God’s people.”**

**“The Lord be with you...”**

*Pastor Bob* 

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**COUNCIL MEMBERS 2017**

**Vicki Bergstrom, President; Jerry Gieseke, Vice-President; Jo Coyle, Secretary; Lauren Coyle, Treasurer; Chuck Sornson, Music/Worship/Discipleship/Prayer; Shirley Nelson, Social Ministry/Outreach; C. B. Shields, Finance/Property/Stewardship; Paul Anderson, Associate Member**

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# Love of Christ Lutheran Church – History

## 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, 2017

Someone once said that history is simply God's story – His Story – History. That is certainly true for Love of Christ Lutheran Church. Just a thumbnail sketch of its beginning and dates that we remember are fascinating!

On June 22, 1997 a small group of 24 Lutherans held the first worship service in the mobile home of Robina Johnson at Siesta Village, Weslaco, Texas.

It was our first baby step as a temporary place of worship. But this tiny beginning was inspired by the Scripture Theme for that Sunday which was remarkably appropriate: SEE THE HAND OF GOD!

And why the start in Robina's mobile home? Simply because Robina said: "I have a package deal for you – my home is big enough, and I have an organ, and I'll be your organist, and you can have it all FREE for as long as needed." SEE THE HAND OF GOD! How remarkably appropriate!

Things grew explosively – in addition to all the countless details of starting and organizing as a church we were faced with the need of more space -- especially before the return of all the Winter Texans! Meetings after meetings --- some all day long --- people working tirelessly and praying constantly.

The unique details to accomplish in giving birth to a new congregation seemed endless: Drawing up a legal constitution and bylaws for a non-profit corporation, deciding on a name that would properly describe this special group of worshipers, opening a bank account, getting a post office box, buying stamps, purchasing hymnals, purchasing a communion set, getting a church office and office supplies, arranging for the printing of weekly worship folders, ----- and Oh Yes, finding a Pastor!

Also, that issue of where to go to meet the massive problem of more space when our Winter Texan friends returned seemed almost hopeless.

After many fruitless trips to investigate storefront ministries, vacant buildings and warehouses, former Church buildings, three funeral homes, several existing Churches, God led us to First Presbyterian Church in Weslaco, Texas, and it's Pastor Rev. Cameron Harkness, where we were welcomed with open arms – meshing their schedules and our needs --- became a blessing we could never have imagined happening so easily.

And so, the afternoon of September 14, 1997 became a special milestone as we processed into the Church proudly carrying our new Communion Ware followed by Pastor Harkness and many of the area Lutheran Pastors, all in their colorful clergy attire --- What a joyful experience that first worship service was in our new location, and to dedicate that beautiful new Communion Ware!

This was also the first service for the Rev. Dr. Carl Fredrickson as our first full-time pastor! Actually, it seemed almost a miracle that so much could happen in only three months! SEE THE HAND OF GOD

During the winter months before the birth of Love of Christ Lutheran Church, and the return of the many Winter Texan Lutherans to the Valley, Rev. Jerry Koehler had conducted English services at San Pablo Luterana in Weslaco. Later he, along with Pastor Gene Hasselquist, assisted Pastor Carl in visitations and in the merry-go-round of new activities and services at Love of Christ Lutheran Church.

The joy and love of that first year was contagious – the Hand of God blessed that little group of 24 to an attendance in its first 8 months to 10 times as large— 240 in February, 1998. And weekly Bible Studies led by Jean Anderson that were attended by so many in the Fellowship Hall that you had to get there early to get a good chair! And offerings from that starting date of June 22, 1987 to August in that first summer totaled over \$8,000! What a Miracle! SEE THE HAND OF GOD

Another date that pops up in our minds is September 15, 2002 -- that's when Love of Christ Lutheran Church's status changed from an "Authorized Worshiping Community" to the 178<sup>th</sup> Congregation of the SW TX Synod of the ELCA. Now giant steps instead of baby steps for us!



And who could forget February 2, 2003, when we celebrated Charter Sunday with the Rev. Ray Tieman, Bishop of the SW TX Synod of the ELCA presiding. The signatures of those Charter Members were an inspiration to all Members, Associates, and Friends from then on – that Love of Christ was a true Church which they wanted to support and serve.

After a few years. because of the growing space needs in both First Presbyterian and Love of Christ --- in SEPT.,2006 Love of Christ moved to the facilities of Faith Lutheran Church at 300 South Border in Weslaco, Texas.

Another one of the unheard-of facts in the history of Love of Christ Church is that NOT ONE DIME of subsidy or grant was ever received or needed from the ELCA --- This whole miracle was born and grew to a congregation, completely through the love of Christ working and moving in the hearts of those who started so blindly in the beginning, and in the hearts of those who have supported it those initial years to become a strong, vibrant congregation with almost countless ministries.

Love of Christ Lutheran has been truly blessed by the leadership of its Pastors who led in the way of love from God's word week after week – sometimes under very challenging circumstances:

Jerry Koehler & his wife Roberta

Carl Fredrickson

Gene Hasselquist

Earl Mahan & his wife Shanon

Harold Laursen & his wife Barbara

Randy Nicholas & his wife Linda

And now Bob Slade & his wife Jan

At Love of Christ Lutheran, there are many Bible study opportunities— Sunday mornings, and during the winter months on Wednesdays, study and fellowship for women, for men, and a Co-Ed group.

One of the activities at Love of Christ Lutheran that many of the women find enjoyable and worthwhile is WELCA, the national Lutheran organization for women. It provides monthly Bible studies and fellowship.

This congregation is particularly unique in the generosity of its members. Perhaps because it was never burdened with a huge startup financial debt, the variety of the many ministries it has developed is amazing! For example each month it sends 10% of its undesignated offerings to the SW TX Synod of the ELCA, of which it is a member.

Early on in its history this congregation reached out with love to the Hispanic People on both sides of the Rio Grande. It was involved in building homes for the poor in colonias near Rio Bravo, MX – and in a colonia south of Donna, TX. And it provided funds to pay for major ear surgery for a deaf 4<sup>th</sup> grade girl which enabled her to continue to go to public school, funds for prescription medications and dental work for several children. It has provided support for Mable's Free Clinic in Progreso, MX. It provides baskets of food for poor families in colonias in the Donna School District at Thanksgiving and Christmas.

But most of all, the people of Love Of Christ Church have a deep connection to Runn School – which is located in the Donna School District almost on the Rio Grande –serving children in colonias from grades pre-k thru grade 5. Each year members of Love of Christ mentor children identified by the Runn staff for one-on-one mentoring, sometimes for most of the school year.

Then there is the Runn Christmas program in which our people shop, bag, and present thousands of dollars worth of bags of gifts, t-shirts with the school or LOC logo, and homemade cookies to every child at the Runn school Christmas program. The excited smiles on those little faces each year is a scene never to be forgotten!



Throughout the school year, Love of Christ, also purchases and provides school supplies that the children need in order to attend class. LOC also provides the required school uniforms (which are costly) for children whose parents simply cannot afford such costs.

Another program separate from Runn School, but located in the original building of the Runn School is THE SHARING PLACE. This began years ago with a truck-load of clothing, toys, kitchen ware and bicycles from several Lutheran Churches in Minnesota, served in the summer by Pastor Gene Hasselquist. This has grown the last few years to an annual 18-wheeler truck arriving each December—delivering around 28,000 pounds this past year. The tremendous job of unloading, sorting, displaying and managing the distribution to colonia parents, who shop “free of charge” is done by Love of Christ people, Runn School Staff, the Donna Superintendent, as well as others and assisted by colonia parents.

Love of Christ is deeply indebted to the Superintendent and Principals, Teachers and Staff, Custodians, and School Board Members who have given so much in identifying the needs there, and gently guided us each year in the depth and scope of all these activities.

But the love doesn't stop there— “Happy Stitchers” is a group who make dozens and dozens of quilts that are given to the poorest of the poor and it expands to people frequently who have none. Baby quilts are continuously provided to the local hospital's nursery and as frequently needed.

Out of these Happy Stitchers group another ministry developed called “Prayer Squares”. The recipient of these prayer squares is informed that as each knot in this square was tied, a prayer was given for the recipient.

Another ministry of Love of Christ women is the “Prayer Shawl Ministry”. These beautiful shawls are knitted or crocheted at home, and given to people going through serious illness---to Love of Christ Members and to friends not even connected to Love of Christ Church. With each shawl is a beautiful card (designed by Sally Moe) that says that we love them, and that this gift reminds them that

they are wrapped in God's everlasting love. Some of these shawls are made by former friends unable to return from "Up North" and mailed to us.

Still another quiet ministry at Love of Christ Church is the "Prayer Chain Ministry" in which people who are ill or going through severe crises request daily prayers for them—their names are then entered on the Love of Christ Internet Prayer Chain, and are prayed for each day by those persons who are members of the chain.

The love goes on and on as seen in the support by Love of Christ in many other ministries:

1. WATER TO THRIVE which receives over \$5,000 dollars each year to build fresh and safe water wells in Ethiopia and Sierre Leone, Africa.

2. AURORA HOUSE in Weslaco, Texas. Where hospice care is provided without charge for the terminally ill.

3. Three READING MACHINES provided without charge to people with severe eye-sight problems.

4. Volunteers at KNAPP MEDICAL CENTER in Weslaco, Texas.

5. A group of MEN WHO BUILD WHEEL CHAIR RAMPS where needed, and another group who voluntary repair and refurbish the hundreds of bicycles brought on the 18 wheeler truck each year from Minnesota.

6. Another of our men regularly provides Honor Guard Service and presentation of the US flag to the family at funeral services of Military personnel.

7. Then there is Helen Lamson, our Choir Director and artist in residence, who created the design for our Charter Logo which also became the design for those "Love of Christ Pins" which we wear so proudly.

8. Countless other volunteers who serve on the church council and various committees, volunteers who show up to tend the shrubbery and flowers around the church, fix and repair building needs and leaks—volunteers who help out in the church office—volunteers who usher or serve as Lectors—volunteers who



serve on the Altar Guild to set up for Holy Communion and clean up after worship—our Choir and its director who provide such beauty in worship each winter season---volunteers who serve unnoticed to help in counting and recording each worship offering—volunteers who recruit and organize all these activities and fellowship events—

9. Our 'bicycle' men who love to repair used bicycles for the children at Runn School repaired and refurbished 75 plus bicycles this year alone.

10. Recently Wartburg Theological Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa, which produced so many of our LOC pastors has been added on our "giving list" to thank God each year for this special blessing.

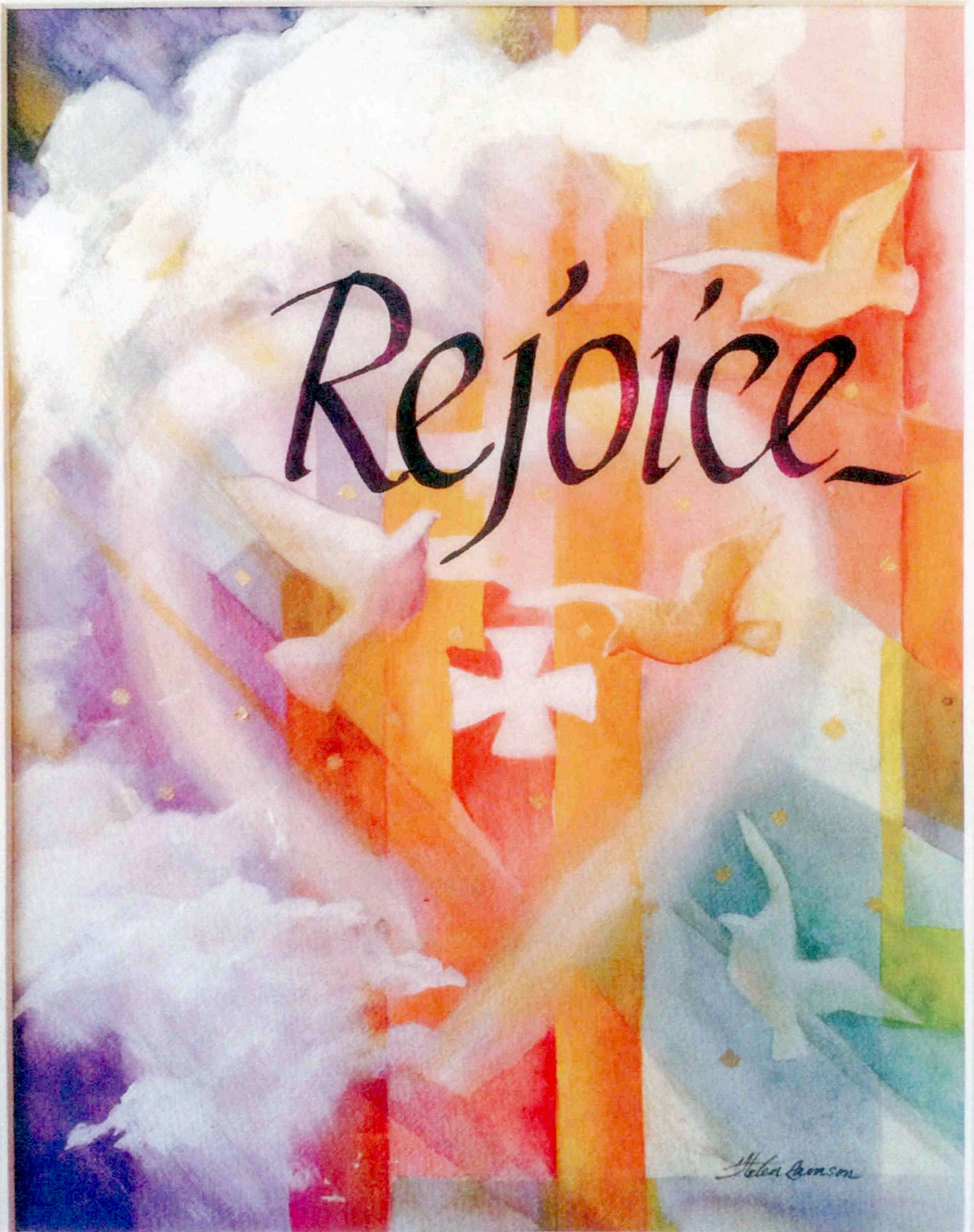
The list goes on and on and on!

How do you account for such growth and activity from nothing but a handful of senior citizens only twenty years ago?

You can't! We can only say: SEE THE HAND OF GOD!

Rejoice

Helen Benson





## 17TH ANNUAL SPRING FLING CELEBRATION

MARCH 9<sup>TH</sup>, 2017

Love of Christ celebrated its Annual Spring Fling event in the beautiful 2<sup>nd</sup> floor ballroom at the Cortez Hotel. What a fabulous event, in a lovely setting, with 139 Members, Associate Members, and Friends of Love of Christ in attendance. The Spring's Fling purpose serves as Love of Christ's main event for raising funds to provide financial support for Runn School and the Sharing Place. This year's event raised the largest 'single' event contributions of \$7, 285 with the largest attendance in the Spring Fling's 17 year history.

Pastor Eugene Hasselquist and his volunteers hosted this year's event, once again, which also consisted of a double celebration as LOC formally celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary as a Member Congregation of the South West Texas Synod of the ELCA. The delicious catered dinner of ham with all of the Spring Fling trimmings and dessert were enjoyed by all.

Pastor Gene conducted the special "Polka Service" titled "THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD".

Pastor Gene took time to speak of each of our LOC Ministries but for this specific article the following speaks volumes specific to Runn School and the Sharing Place.

In paraphrasing Pastor Gene's sermon, he reminded us as we look back, "we are amazed how we've walked in the Presence of the Lord in the land of the living." He reminded us of the truly amazing things we have accomplished through our many ministries and especially in our Runn School and in the Sharing Place Ministries. Pastor Gene tells the story and people respond.

During the last few years the semi has brought to Runn School more than 100 tons of items to the Sharing Place. More than 600 hundred bicycles have been given to the children and were assured by the Bicycle Committee that the bikes were in a safe rideable condition. From blankets to toys, to clothing, to socks and shoes, it is collected and provided in order for parents to purchase 'at no cost' for their children and families, from the Sharing Place."

As Pastor Gene shared something he has experienced that he wanted to emphasize in walking with God; "you never know what he has up His sleeve." Just think of how we have been involved. Twenty baskets of food were given out at Thanksgiving; forty baskets of food were given to people for Christmas that there might be joy in their homes. Each basket contained between sixty and seventy pounds of food. Just think of the number of people that were involved to make this possible.

**Only God knows how many little lives have been touched and how many adults have been affected by your love and concern. Pastor Gene shared a personal story of a little boy he and Elaine encountered in the hallway as they were walking out of the Runn School office. He stopped them and asked? “Did you bring the semi?” And they responded yes, we did. And then the little boy stood with his hands dancing in front of his face and with tears in his eyes he said, “Did you bring a blanket?” And with tears in their eyes too, Pastor Gene and Elaine were so shook, and Pastor Gene wishes each one of us could have shared in that experience.**

**This is what the Runn School Project is all about, and You, We are all involved in it.**

**Pastor Gene closed by saying, tonight we celebrate with gratitude the privilege we have had walking in the Presence of the Lord, we never know what the future holds, but we do know Who holds the future. Thank you for being a part of this congregation.**

**And as Pastor Gene told us to do: “Just tell the story, in your churches as you return and the people will respond. Just tell the story.”**

**With Special Recognition and Appreciation to each of the following individuals and their spouses and families for making this special celebration extraordinary:**

**Special Guests: Runn School Principal, Mrs. Sarmiento and 4 teachers and or staff**

**Hosts: Pastor Eugene Hasselquist, Paul Anderson, Marvin Hedlund, Rodger Nelson, Jon Schwartz, Dave Kangas, and CB Shields.**

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|--------------------------|--|
| <b>❖ Shirley Nelson</b>  | <b>Council Member, Social Ministries &amp; Outreach, Event Chair</b> |
| <b>❖ Pastor Slade</b>    | <b>Co-Host</b>   |
| <b>❖ John Kujda</b>      | <b>Special Music, Accordionist</b>                                   |
| <b>❖ Arlene Crawford</b> | <b>Reservations, Cortez Relations</b>                                |
| <b>❖ Helen Lamson</b>    | <b>Special Design, Spring Fling Invitations</b>                      |
| <b>❖ Bonnie Vollmar</b>  | <b>Polka Service Bulletin</b>  |
| <b>❖ Amy Van Deest</b>   | <b>Table Centerpieces and Decorations</b>                            |
| <b>❖ Don Van Deest</b>   | <b>Live Auctioneer</b>   |
| <b>❖ Betty Piper</b>     | <b>“Got You Framed” Photos and Collage Photos</b>                    |
| <b>❖ Contributors</b>    | <b>Live Auction and Silent Auction Contributors</b>                  |
| <b>❖ The Coyles</b>      | <b>Treasurers for the Event</b>                                      |
| <b>❖ Vicki Bergstrom</b> | <b>Master of Ceremonies</b>  |



