

THE

# BIBLE METHODIST

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE BIBLE METHODIST CONNECTION OF CHURCHES VOLUME 56 | ISSUE 2



## From Grief to Grace

ENCOUNTERING  
GOD IN THE  
PSALMS OF LAMENT



# FROM THE EDITOR

TRAVIS J. JOHNSON

After getting all sad and teary-eyed from something I watched or a book I read, I often wonder why I put myself through that emotional roller coaster. After all, no-one likes to be sad. It's not an emotion we aim for. In fact, I used to avoid it like the plague. Whenever something sad would happen in my life, I would drown out the emotions with old videos of Laurel and Hardy and The Three Stooges! I would do anything to avoid lament, but then I discovered the Psalms. I always read the Psalms, but I didn't really understand the genre. But as I began to really study them and more importantly, pray them, I discovered how important

lament is in the Psalms. Nearly a third of the Psalms are lament in nature.

The Psalms taught me that it's okay to embrace lament and pour out my emotions before God. As St. Athanasius once observed, "Most of Scripture speaks *to* us; the Psalms speak *for* us." Lament is all-encompassing, as it acknowledges that every emotion we have falls within the scope of God's care and concern. Furthermore, lament fervently holds onto the belief that God's nature demands action against evil and that ultimately, justice will be done. It serves as a testament of trust in God's faithfulness, even amidst prolonged waiting and

in the face of circumstances that seem to contradict it. The psalms of lament lead us from grief to grace.

In this issue of *The Bible Methodist*, Pastor Jon Earls shares an insightful article shedding light on the role of lament within the Psalms and its significance for us as believers. I am thankful that lament is never the final word: "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning" (Psalm 30:5, NKJV). I encourage you to embrace lament; it will deepen your trust in God's unfailing character and unending faithfulness. ■

## THE BIBLE METHODIST

REV. TRAVIS J. JOHNSON

*Editor*

[pastortravisj@gmail.com](mailto:pastortravisj@gmail.com)

SHANE MUIR

*Graphic Design*

[shanemuirdesign@gmail.com](mailto:shanemuirdesign@gmail.com)

COUNTRY PINES, INC.

*Printing*

[countrypinesprinting.com](http://countrypinesprinting.com)

*The Bible Methodist* is published four times a year and is the official publication of the Bible Methodist Connection of Churches. Read online at [biblemethodist.org/magazine](http://biblemethodist.org/magazine)

REV. BLAKE JONES

*Connectional Chairman*

Box 5, Cedar Lake, MI 48891

[bejones@nethawk.com](mailto:bejones@nethawk.com)

DR. R.G. HUTCHISON

*Missions Director*

124 Harry Stanley Dr, Easley, SC 29640

[rghutchison867@gmail.com](mailto:rghutchison867@gmail.com)

REV. DAVID WARD

*Great Lakes Regional Conference President*

Box V, Cedar Springs, MI 49319

[davidward@biblemethodist.org](mailto:davidward@biblemethodist.org)

REV. CHRIS CRAVENS

*Heartland Regional Conference President*

16346 TR 166, Arlington, OH 45813

[chriscravens@biblemethodist.org](mailto:chriscravens@biblemethodist.org)

REV. DOUG EADS

*Southern Regional Conference President*

40 Skyview Lane, Pell City, AL 35125

[reveads@aol.com](mailto:reveads@aol.com)

REV. G. CLAIR SAMS

*Southwest Regional Conference President*

2235 Cale Switch Rd, Durant, OK 74701

[gcsams@biblemethodist.org](mailto:gcsams@biblemethodist.org)

# CRYING OUT TO GOD

EXPLORING  
LAMENT IN  
THE PSALMS

By REV. JON EARLS

## WHAT IS LAMENT?

Mark Vroegop defines lament as “a prayer in pain that leads to trust” (Vroegop 2019, 28). Lament in the Scripture is the pathway to praise as those suffering are led through their brokenness and disappointment. We love answers. We want to know why life happens the way it does. What we discover in God’s Word is that God does not always give us the answers we long for, and when He does, the answers are not always satisfying. This is where lament comes in. It is a pathway to praise as we journey through the brokenness and disappointments of life. Vroegop explains:

Lament is how you live between the poles of a hard life and trusting in God’s sovereignty. Lament is how we bring our sorrow to God. Without lament we won’t know how to process pain. Silence, bitterness, and even anger can dominate our spiritual lives instead. Without lament we won’t know how to help people walking through sorrow. Instead, we’ll offer trite solutions, unhelpful comments, or impatient responses (Vroegop 2019, 21).

Since God allows, and even welcomes, us to bring our questions, hurts, and anger to Him in

lament, there is no other way to look at lament than as a grace gift from God. We can be honest with Him about how we are feeling, and He does not strike us down or cast us out of His presence. Instead, He welcomes us. His presence consoles us. While we do not receive all the answers to the questions we wrestle with, He still welcomes us to lament—and this is grace!

## THE PROMINENCE OF LAMENT IN PSALMS

Lament is especially prominent within the book of Psalms. It has been calculated that nearly 40% of the book of Psalms are psalms of lament (Soong-Chan Rah 2015, 20). Dietrich Bonhoeffer called Psalms “the prayerbook of the Bible” and Psalms is often referred to as “God’s inspired hymnbook.”

Laments may be a personal cry to God, or they may serve as a communal cry. Some forty-two of the Psalms are individual laments, and sixteen are corporate cries to God (Waltke, Houston, and Moore 2014, 14).

Psalm 13 is a good example of a personal lament. David, who is feeling forgotten by God, cries out:

How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me? (Psalm 13:1-2, ESV)

What should be noticed in this lament is *how* the psalmist is questioning God. God is not afraid of our questions, nor do we have to stoically pretend we do not wrestle with them. Instead, in the grace of lament, God invites us to bring our questions and pour out our hearts to Him. Concerning David’s questions in Psalm 13, Gerald Wilson states:

The questions at issue here are not simple requests for knowledge but express deep human misgivings about the character and activity of God and their effect on human

life. This kind of questioning—flung in the face of God, as it were—is a product of and a response to the experience of the hiddenness of God, who refuses to appear and act as humans expect and desire. Rather than information, these questions seek divine presence and action on the questioner’s behalf. Such questions reveal a faith seeking to understand in the midst of painful experiences that shake the very foundation of believing. (Wilson 1999, 278)

In Psalm 13, David’s world was in disorder, but lament helped him transition to his expression of trust in verses 5-6, “*But I have trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. I will sing to the LORD, because he has dealt bountifully with me.*” For David, lament was a pathway through pain that led to trust in God.

Lament in the Psalms is not just individual, but also communal. Communal lament keeps us mindful of the pain that others are experiencing, and we share their pain by telling God about it, and then trusting in Him to bring resolution. Psalm 44 is a great example of a corporate lament. The people of God cry out together:

You have made us like sheep for slaughter and have scattered us among the nations. You have sold

your people for a trifle, demanding no high price for them. You have made us the taunt of our neighbors, the derision and scorn of those around us. You have made us a byword among the nations, a laughing-stock among the peoples. (Psalm 44:11-14, ESV)

It is argued that verse 22 of this psalm holds particular significance, with some considering it among the most pivotal verses in the entire book of Psalms. “In the history of Jewish response to catastrophe...Throughout the Holocaust literature—memoirs, poems, rabbinic responses, in public arguments over Jewish resistance or passivity — this one verse has echoed its distinctive death knell” (Waltke, Houston, and Moore 2014, 211). Collectively, God’s people cry out in complaint to God for their present condition, asking Him to come to their aid in order to deliver them and “*Redeem us for the sake of your steadfast love!*” (Psalm 44:26, ESV). Again we see how lament is a pathway to praise as we journey through the brokenness and disappointments of life.

These two examples from Psalms (Psalm 13 and 44) are just brief glimpses of lament in the book of Psalms, but they serve as examples of how the hymnbook of the Bible can help us express our own lament both individually and corporately.

## THE LOSS OF LAMENT

Unfortunately, it seems that the Church in the Western world has largely forgotten 40% of their prayer book and hymnal. Lament is a prominent feature not only in Psalms, but throughout the Old Testament. Claus Westermann argues, “Any survey will show that laments pervade the entire Old Testament and that they are an essential part of what the Old Testament says happened between God and man” (Westermann 1974, 24). One book is even named “Lamentations,” yet somehow the American church seems to have forgotten how to lament. A study done by Denise Hopkins, “found that in the *Lutheran Book of Worship*, the *Episcopalian Book of Common Prayer*, the *Catholic Lectionary for Mass*, the *Hymnal of the United Church of Christ* and the *United Methodist Hymnal*, the majority of Psalms omitted from liturgical use are the laments’...CCLI’s list of the top one hundred worship songs in August of 2012 reveals that only five of the songs would qualify as a lament” (Soong-Chan Rah 2015, 21-22).

Dietrich Bonhoeffer argued that “Whenever the Psalter is abandoned, an incomparable treasure vanishes from the Christian church. With its recovery will come unsuspected power” (Dietrich Bonhoeffer 1970, 26). It is safe to assume the Bonhoeffer would have included the psalms of lament

as well. Walter Brueggemann opined: “It is a curious fact that the church has, by and large, continued to sing songs of orientation in a world increasingly experienced as disoriented” (Brueggemann 1984, 51). There is little argument that our world is in fact becoming increasingly disoriented, perhaps it is time for us to rediscover the grace of lament. “The recovery of the Psalter as the Christian’s lament and repentance may thus help us to become more “open” with God, within ourselves, as well as with each other in progressive relational growth (Waltke, Houston, and Moore 2014, 16).

## LAMENT, NOT TRITE ANSWERS

We naturally want answers, and as we have seen, God does not always provide answers. However, far too often, Christians try to give answers to those hurting rather than lamenting with them. N.T. Wright put it eloquently when he wrote:

It is no part of the Christian vocation, then, to be able to explain what’s happening and why. In fact, it is part of the Christian vocation *not to be able to explain*—and to lament instead. As the Spirit laments within us, so we become, even in our self-isolation, small shrines where the presence and healing love of God can dwell (N.T. Wright, *Time*, March 2020)

Some may wonder if lament is a practice that is fit for the people of faith under the New Covenant. According to Claus Westermann, there is “no text in the New Testament which would prevent the Christian from lamenting or which would express the idea that faith in Christ excluded lamentation from man’s relationship with God (Westermann 1974, 25). Jesus quoted from at least one of the psalms of lament as He suffered on the cross (Psalm 22). As believers, we are called to be like Jesus. We will never rise higher than Him, and if words of lament passed through His lips, we too may need to be led through the pathway of brokenness and disappointment. We too need the grace of lament as we trust in the God who does all things well, but whose ways are higher than ours. Right now, we look through a glass dimly (1 Cor. 13:12) and we know only in part. There is coming a day when Christ will “*wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore*” (Rev. 21:4), but in the meantime we wait. We weep. We question. We lament. We trust. Until that final day when we will lament no more, “we must...” as Soong-Chan Rah concluded in his book *Prophetic Lament*, “...seek to be the church that integrates the theology of suffering with the theology of

celebration. We must seek to be the church that engages in both praise and lament. We must seek to be the church that embodies the full narrative of Christ in his suffering and in his triumph” (Soong-Chan Rah 2015, 203).

Christians do not ignore the cruel realities of living in a cursed world—but they place those laments in the presence of the resurrected Christ, whose victory is our victory. To cry is human; to lament is Christian—but *not forever*. Jesus bought our restoration, and one day soon, He will bring an end to our lament! Until then, why don’t we pick up the hymnbook of our Bibles, the Psalms, and use the pathway to praise He has given us? ■

### WORKS CITED

- Brueggemann, Walter. 1984. *The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Pub. House.
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer. 1970. *Psalms: The Prayer Book of the Bible*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Pub. House.
- Soong-Chan Rah. 2015. *Prophetic Lament: A Call for Justice in Troubled Times*. Downers Grove, Illinois: Ivp Books, An Imprint of Intervarsity Press.
- Vroegop, Mark. 2019. *Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy: Discovering the Grace of Lament*. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway.
- Waltke, Bruce K, James M Houston, and Erika Moore. 2014. *The Psalms as Christian Lament: A Historical Commentary*. Grand Rapids, Michigan; Cambridge, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Westermann, Claus. 1974. “The Role of the Lament in the Theology of the Old Testament.” *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 28:20–38.
- Wilson, Gerald. 1999. *The NIV Application Commentary: Psalms*. Vol. 1. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan.
- Wright, N.T. 29 March 2020. “Christianity Offers No Answers about the Coronavirus.” *Time*. <https://time.com/5808495/coronavirus-christianity/>.



# WORLD MISSIONS NEWS UPDATE

**R.G. HUTCHISON**, MISSIONS DIRECTOR

## BIBLE METHODIST MISSIONS REPRESENTED AT SEA BREEZE CAMP

Last February, Missions Director R.G. Hutchison was invited to share a presentation about the work of Bible Methodist Missions during one of the evening services at the Sea Breeze Camp Meeting in Hobe Sound, Florida. He also participated in a meet-and-greet with Hobe Sound Bible College students during a ministry forum, including several of our Bible Methodist young people.

## NEW CHURCH PLANTS IN THE PHILIPPINES [1]

**Pastor David Yucaddi, Jr.** has begun holding services in the community of Kinakin. Members from the new church plant in Pinnugo have assisted him in finding and preparing a temporary meeting place.

Pastor Jacob Maggiwi has been laboring to establish a new church plant in the community of Calliat. God has given them fruit for their labors. Now they are praying that God will provide

the needed funds to purchase land and build a chapel.

## AFRICA 85 INITIATIVE CONTINUES TO EXPAND [2]

**Missionary Maricka Herrer** has recently shared updates from the Africa 85 Initiative, outlining progress and future objectives concerning the training of trainers across the African continent:

- The Africa 85 Initiative has helped in various ways with training trainers in 13 different countries in Africa.
- The names of these countries are: Lesotho, Eswatini (Swaziland), Botswana, Mozambique, Zambia, Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Cameroon, Ghana, Ivory Coast, and Togo.
- There are now active training programs in 11 of those countries, and at least 5 of these training programs also have multiple training sites.
- 2024 initiatives for Africa 85 are:
  - » To make visits to 3 countries to explore training possibilities;
  - » To add 3 new training

partners (since January 2024);

- » To add 2 new sites for the existing training program in Zambia.

Just recently, a new training program has launched in Kenya! The Africa Gospel Church is now using SGC materials to train their pastors. The first cohort of 15 students began their studies in March, and are working through Principles of Biblical Interpretation. Please pray for pastor Heron and his teaching team.

## WARM RECEPTION IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA [3-4]

**R.G. Hutchison made a visit to PNG** in March, accompanied by Pastor David Fogleman, Jr. (Southwest Missions President) and missionary Shirley Fogleman. The Bible Fellowship Church of PNG re-affirmed their desire to continue partnering with the Bible Methodist Connection of Churches, and are asking for long and short-term missionaries who can teach in the Tega Bible School in Mt. Hagen.

The U.S. delegation participated in the graduation

ceremony at the Tega Bible School in Mt. Hagen where 14 students graduated from the Pidgin Bible School program and 3 from the English (SGC) Bible School program.

During the visit in PNG, Missionary Shirley Fogleman was recognized for her years of service as a resident missionary. “Mama Shirley” (as she is known to them) has served as a mentor, confidant, advisor, and friend to many of the pastors, leaders, and students there. Her presence will be greatly missed. However, we are grateful for her continued help to Bible Methodist Missions as our liaison and advisor as we continue to pursue a closer partnership together.

## SHORT-TERM MISSIONS TEAMS PROGRAM

This year Bible Methodist Missions has taken the first steps in forming an organized

program for recruiting, training, and mobilizing short-term mission teams. Rev. Doug and Judy Eads (President and First Lady of the Southern Regional Conference) have graciously consented to serve as our mission team coordinators. They are the perfect fit for this role, having led 9 teams to places as diverse as Mexico, Ukraine, Philippines and New York City. Additionally, between the two of them, Doug and Judy have traveled and ministered in Honduras, Haiti, India, and Paris, France. Their experience in missions and love for people are contagious, and they are excited to help us mobilize local members in short-term mission teams as God opens the doors for Bible Methodist Missions to send them. We will be sharing more details soon regarding how this new program will be organized, the training that will be made available, and how you can apply to participate in one of our short-term mission trips.





# GREAT LAKES CONFERENCE NEWS

DAVID WARD, PRESIDENT

## GREAT LAKES CONFERENCE NEWS

March featured our Great Lakes Convention. (1-3) Rev. Titus Byer was the Keynote Speaker. Area Churches participated in providing music. Friday night was a Youth Rally with an open gym afterwards.

Three of our churches have new church signs. In addition, Garfield Country Church expanded their parking area to accommodate a growing congregation. Rock Lake added a new church van. The Evert

church had a baptism service with several being baptized. (4-6)

Rock Lake led a team to cut wood at the Blind River Mission. (7-8) At least four different churches participated in this effort.

The Bible Methodist Connection was well represented at Hobe Sound's Camp and Ministry Forum in February. (9-10) The Conference Presidents hosted a breakfast with the Ministerial students. Thursday evening's Ministry Forum had a good representation from Conference and Con-

nectional leadership to interact with the HSBC students.

Connectional committees met for annual meetings at Franklin Ohio. (11) Pictured are the Mission's Committee and the full Connectional Committee.

The Conference Presidents, as well as Mission's Director Dr. RG Hutchison, represented the Connection at the IHC Gatlinburg convention. (12)

Youth Camp is just around the corner, June 24-28, and family camp follows on July 12-21.







5



9



6



10



7



11



8



12



# HEARTLAND CONFERENCE NEWS

**CHRIS CRAVENS, PRESIDENT**

## NEW CHURCHES [1-2]

Two new churches have recently joined the Heartland Conference. Welcome to the congregations in Logan, Ohio and Muncie, Indiana.

## REVIVAL AT FORT WAYNE, INDIANA [3]

A Revival was held at Wesleyan Redeemer Bible Methodist Church. Pictured are the Glicks (singers), Cravens (Conference President) and Eaveys (Pastor). Other special speakers included Rev. John Manley and Rev. Joseph Ratcliff.

## GAS CITY, INDIANA [4]

President Cravens presented the Ministerial Exceptionalism Award to Pastor Michael Johnson and the congregation of Community Bible Methodist Church for their community outreach "Diaper Pantry." This ministry helps needy mothers.

## BEACH CITY, OHIO [5-6]

Beach City Bible Methodist Church recently remodeled the church foyer and added a handicap accessible restroom.

## WESTFIELD, INDIANA [7-8]

Westfield Bible Methodist Church is ready to add a new sign to the frontage of the church.

## J.D. YOUNG MEMORIAL BUILDING [9]

The new building on the grounds of Beulah Grove is just about ready for use. Please join us during Campmeeting for the dedication.

## IHC [10]

The Heartland Conference was well represented at the

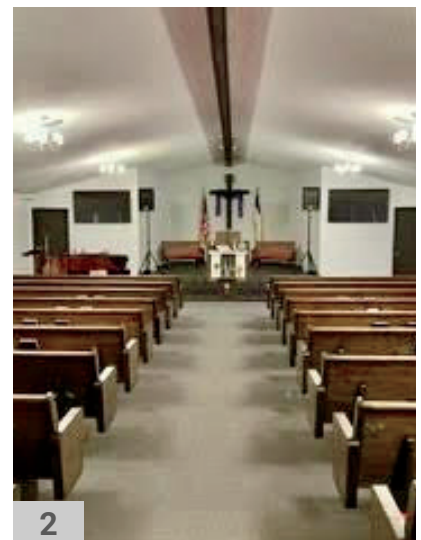
annual IHC in Gatlinburg, TN. Pictures are the conference presidents talking with Rev. Sid Grant of HIM.

## OUTREACH AND BUS CONVENTION [11]

Heartland Elder Rev. Marc Sankey was the main speaker at this year's convention in Lebanon, PA. Other Heartland ministers led in day sessions.

## YOUTH RALLY [12-13]

The annual Heartland Youth Rally was held at Franklin BMC on March 22. Rev. Travis Johnson was the evening speaker





3



9



4



10



5



11



6



12



7



8



13



# SOUTHERN CONFERENCE NEWS

**DOUG EADS**, PRESIDENT

## SOUTHWEST CONFERENCE NEWS CAPTIONS

**Bible Methodism is alive and well! In a day** when everyone seems to want something new, it may be time to stick with some things that are tried and true. Over the last 55+ years, God has used churches here in the Southern Conference to reach out and offer hope to the hurting. Some churches have used free events, like feeding their community. Others have used revival services and choirs. Others simply do the hard work of everyday living the life of Christ for the world to see. The important thing to understand is that Christ wants to be known in your community. He has chosen every one of our churches, camps, and conferences to be a place where His light shines. I believe that Christ is being exalted in place after place, person after person, here in the Southern Conference. The true essence of Bible Methodism lies within its people. Our strength doesn't reside in our structures or gatherings; rather, it thrives within individuals dedicated to God and eager to serve others. Everywhere I go, I encounter individuals wholeheartedly devoted to the King and passionately advancing His kingdom. As long as this remains our collective testimony, our vitality and future are assured.

- 1** Carson Scarbrough and Dr. Phil Brown
- 2** Tom and Jane Watkins along with the Batchelor family from Manchester, TN
- 3** Barry and Pam Shirah from Trinity Bible Methodist, Semmes, AL
- 4** Rev. Dennis and DeJuana Cable, volunteers at Bible Methodist Camp in Pell City
- 5** Matt and Joyce Nation serving meals at Tarrant Bible Methodist
- 6** Pastor Logan Sankey sharing the Word with a new young friend in Stanton, AL
- 7** Bro. Walter Hedstrom does his best to reach his community for Christ in Salem, AL
- 8** Golden Grove Bible Methodist membership Sunday in Pell City, AL
- 9** Priscilla Vernon does great work with the Children's Ministry in Greensboro, AL
- 10** Brand new outreach in Graham, NC has led to new baptisms
- 11** Talladega kids participating in the Palm Sunday service
- 12** Steve Vernon and Cale Manley getting ready for Indoor Camp at Ada Chapel
- 13** Richard and Judy Grout in Cordele, GA are making a difference for the kingdom







# SOUTHWEST CONFERENCE NEWS

G. CLAIR SAMS, PRESIDENT

## LAKWOOD, COLORADO BAPTISM [1-2]

Lakewood, Colorado baptized two believers this month!

## YOUTH CHALLENGE WEST [3]

Youth Challenge West had the largest ever attendance in its history this year. Over 40 kids from the Southwest Conference were there, and several Bible Methodist leaders helped to run the event.

## SHERMAN, TEXAS IHC [4-5]

Sherman, Texas hosted the Texas State IHC Convention. It was well attended, and we enjoyed preaching and singing by our brothers from back East.

## OKC BIBLE CLUB [6-7]

Oklahoma City began a Bible Club outreach in a local public school. Pray for these precious children!

## RONALD AND JOANNA PAULEUS [8]

Congratulations to Ronald and Joanna (Love Others Pastor at OKC) on the birth of their sweet little one, Ava Pauleus!

## OKC ALL-NIGHT PRAYER [9]

OKC hosted “Longing for the Light,” an all-night prayer meeting. It was attended by over 24 people through the course of the night.





# Family Camp Schedule

SUMMER 2024

## HEARTLAND CONFERENCE

*DATE*

June 17-23

*EVANGELISTS*

Rev. Marc Sankey  
Dr. Allan Brown

*SINGERS*

Tim and Tanya  
Crater Family

## SOUTHERN CONFERENCE

*DATE*

July 1-7

*EVANGELISTS*

Dr. Michael Avery  
Dr. Randall McElwain

*SINGERS*

Daniel and Kendra  
Brandon

## GREAT LAKES CONFERENCE

*DATE*

July 12-21

*EVANGELISTS*

Rev. John Parker  
Dr. Matt Hallam

*SINGERS*

Rob and Stephanie  
Ryan Family

## SOUTHWEST CONFERENCE

*DATE*

July 23-28

*EVANGELISTS*

Dr. Michael Avery  
Rev. John Manley

*SINGERS*

Luther and Olivia  
Cole