

Adaptations and Small Group Ideas

Friends, in the 2020s, our models of how to be in ministry with our congregations and with our local communities have dramatically shifted. When the pandemic introduced so many interruptions to our usual rhythms and uncertainty about next steps, we got curious, experimented, and opened up to many new visions of what "church" can look like! Although the acute public health concerns of pandemic have faded away a few years after this series was written in the summer of 2021, we continue to observe very different rhythms and practices of joining together in community. You, your worship staff, and volunteers may still find yourself in need of asking the question: **"What possibilities could open up for offering spiritual nurture if we let go of the expectation that Sunday morning worship holds all of it?"**

I'm not talking about simply adding more programs or small groups. I'm talking about making the content of worship available in many ways to meet people where they are, in the rhythms that actually work for them. This is not to say that I don't have a great passion for weekly worship, but in this increasingly complex age of competing schedules, what if we became more "rhythm-flexible" in the ways we offered the content of worship? So I continue to push myself to brainstorm many ways that the worship content I create could be adapted for use in a variety of formats. Call it "variations on a theme."

I've uploaded more "at-home" version examples than I've done before. You'll see them when you download all the materials. Let them be a jumping-off point for your own adaptation. There is an At-Home version of the worship scripts that people can do on their own if they don't/can't come to church (also the children's scripts and children's book ideas for families in at-home DIY versions). The following pages have a lot of ideas for expanding the theme! Blessings on your discernment. – Dr. Marcia McFee

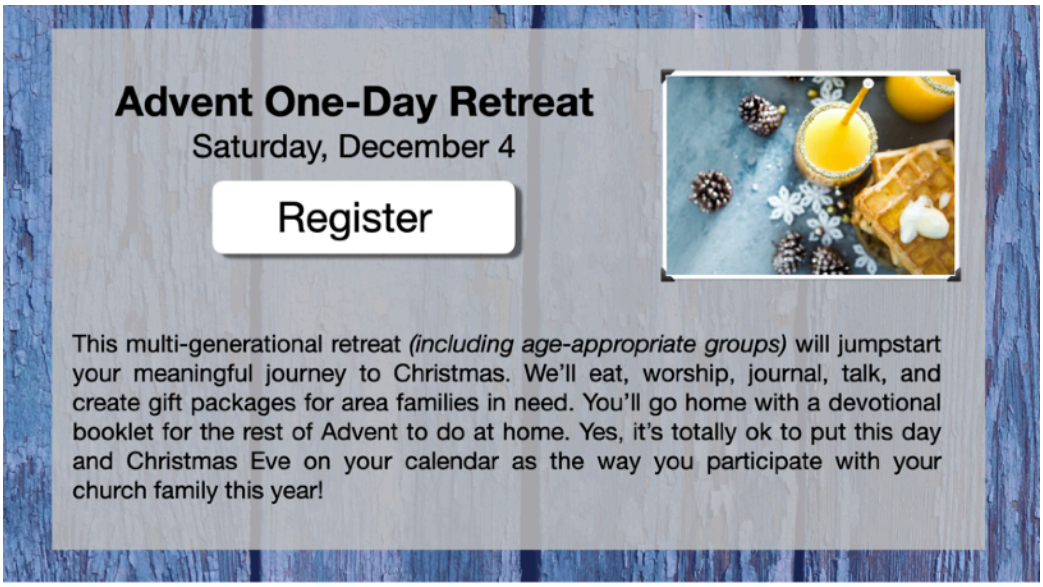
Here are some “mock-up” ideas for **“variations on a theme”** for this series. You won’t want to try them all, and you may come up with your own “outside the box alternatives,” but these might get your juices flowing.



An invitation for people to come into the beautifully-adorned sanctuary for times of respite and quiet. You could even create some stations for the weekly themes so people get a sense of the journey in one visit.

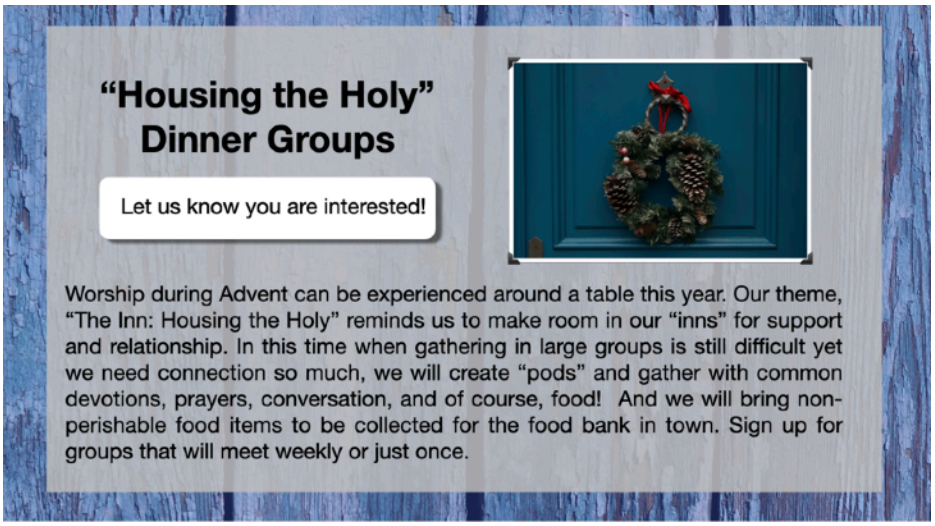
A concentrated experience to reach people for whom weekly worship is not possible. SoundCloud is free and you can create an audio-only version for people to listen to on the way to or from work or on their daily walk.

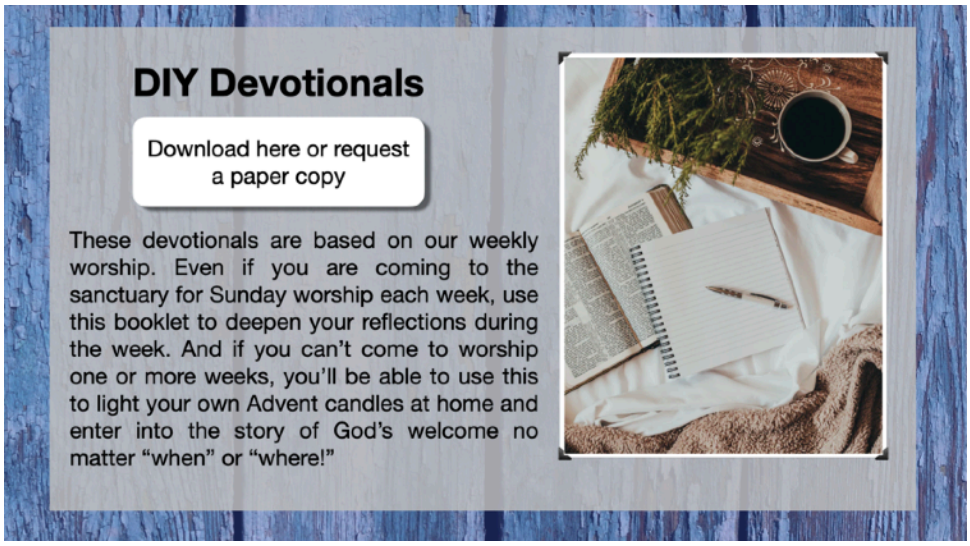




For those who could do an immersive, concentrated experience but weekly worship is more difficult to attend, create a beautiful, fun, giving journey in one day. Send them home with the at-home devotional to continue for the rest of the season.

Rather than a book study for small groups, create dinner "pod" groups that take turns hosting during the season. Start and end with some content from the guided journal or the at-home worship scripts we included in the downloads.





I've included an example of the worship scripts turned into at-home devotionals in your downloads. Edit mine to suit your community or create your own. (Some small group or individual/family devotionals are listed below)

I'm hoping this theme will move your church to consider how they might open the doors wider to serve the community's needs. Perhaps your leadership team will be studying the suggested resource, "We Aren't Broke: Hidden Resources for Mission and Ministry" and they could offer a time of reporting their inspirations and ideas.

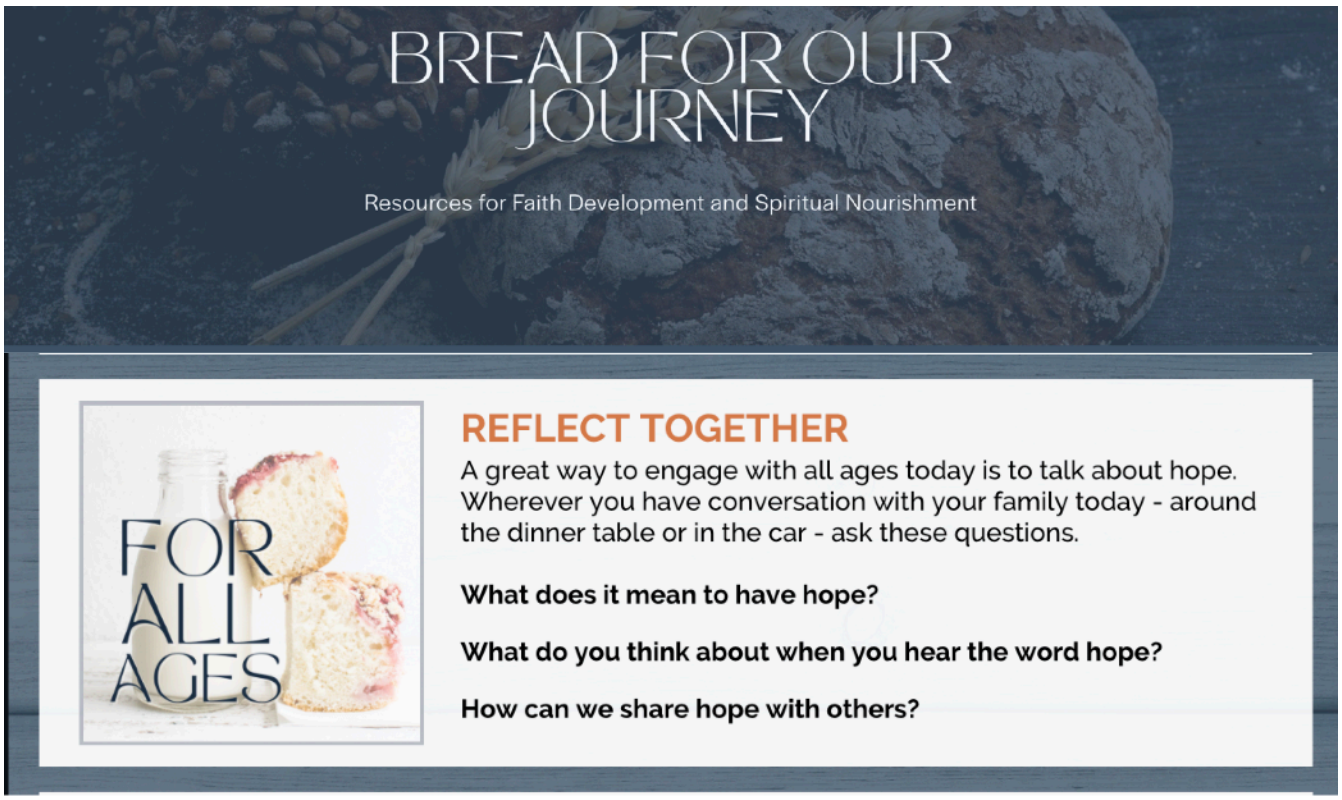


Small Group or Individual Devotions Related to our Theme

Here are some ideas for Advent resources in print elsewhere that would be good materials related to our theme of hospitality and alleviating suffering.

Weekly Curriculum Ready to Use and/or Send - Made to go with "The Inn"!
Long-time WDS Associate, Shelley Walters, and her colleague, Laura Schwarcz, are the creators of a new initiative called "Bread for Our Journey: Resources for Faith Development and Spiritual Nourishment" that **provides weekly curriculum related to "The Inn" theme that is ready-to-use**. You can send it to your congregation weekly via email, or you can send it to any teachers, parents, staff, or small group leaders who may want to use it through the season. **Learn more about the curriculum, see a preview, and purchase HERE.** As you will see, It is an incredible collection of materials–so much value added, and so we encouraged her to "sell separately" from our series ($50). Sign up and you will receive an entire curriculum that will help people dive deeper into the scriptures and theme! We are so grateful for this creative endeavor!

To find out more, go to https://www.breadforourjourney.com/shop/p/advent-series-the-inn-curriculum or send an email to breadforourjourney@gmail.com.



Books and Devotionals *(not vetted, please research before deciding)*

"Anticipating the Birth of Jesus: An Advent Devotional on Immigration" (Daily Devotional)

"Immigration is often a forgotten theme during the Christmas season. However, shortly after the anticipation of Jesus' miraculous birth, His family flees for safety as Migrants to another land. Therefore, Jesus' birth and the theme of Immigration are more closely related than we might think during the Christmas season. In 'Anticipating The Birth of Jesus: An Advent Devotional on Immigration', we explore this and what the Bible says about immigration in a 25-day devotional from December 1st through December 25th."

See more about The Immigration Coalition HERE
Purchase the Advent devotional (daily) book HERE or HERE

"Room in the Inn: Ways Your Congregation Can Help Homeless People" (Book Study)

"You will be moved by the story that unfolds. Just imagine, 120 congregations, from the whole range of Christian and Jewish traditions, who, once each week, transform their house of worship into an "inn" for homeless persons. Jeremiah's call to the people of God to "bring the homeless poor into your house" has been heard!" (from the Foreword)

Find out more about Room in the Inn ministries in Nashville HERE
Free Download of the book HERE

"Prepare Him Room: Weekly Resources to Help Your Family Celebrate Advent" (Weekly)

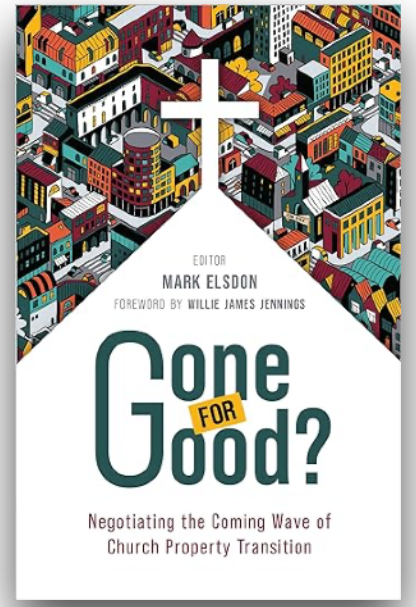
"Each year, my family and I celebrate Advent and the coming of Jesus. By myself, too often I get tied up in the hustle and bustle of the Christmas season and waste time. Advent reminds me that time is precious - especially time with my young children. This free ebook helps my family take a few moments each day and celebrate the coming of Christ. I hope it does the same for your family."

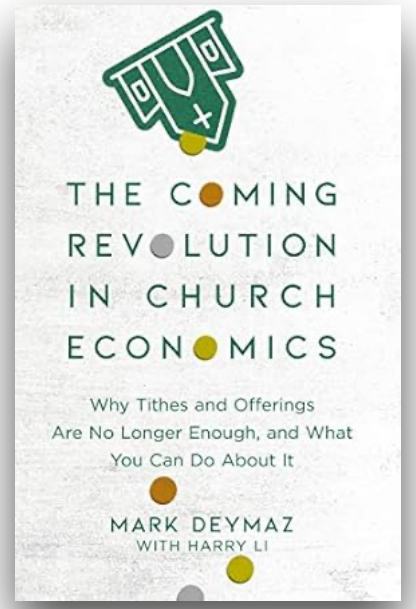
Download the Free resource HERE

“Gone for Good? Negotiating the Coming Wave of Church Property Transition”

“Consider using church buildings and land to further the gospel mission. Mark Elsdon, author of We Aren’t Broke: Uncovering Hidden Resources for Mission and Ministry*, revisits questions of church resources with a team of pastors, scholars, developers, and urban planners. This collection of essays sheds light on how church communities can transform their properties to serve their neighborhoods.”*

Order copies of the book HERE





The Coming Revolution in Church Economics: Why Tithes and Offerings Are No Longer Enough, and What You Can Do About It

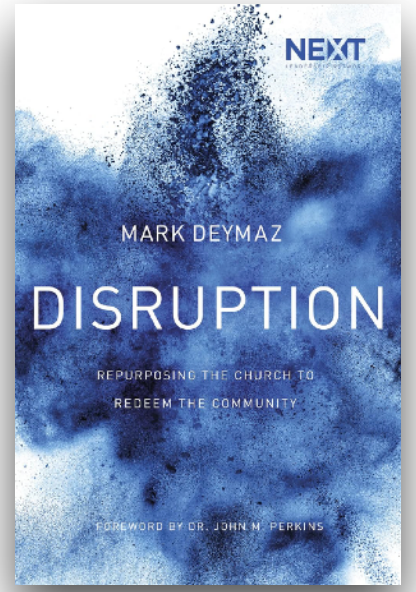
“For churches to not only survive but thrive in the future, leaders must learn to leverage assets, bless the community, empower entrepreneurs, and create multiple streams of income to effectively fund mission. You'll learn why you should and how to do so in The Coming Revolution in Church Economics*.”*

Order copies of the book HERE

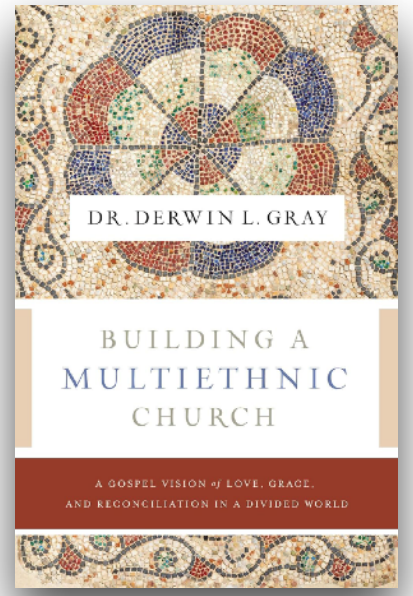
Disruption: Repurposing the Church to Redeem the Community

“In Disruption*, thought-leading author and pastor Mark DeYmaz presents a proven, practical guide to help you rethink your approach to church. Whether your congregation is currently growing, plateauing, or declining, if you are a church planter or pastor, or a denominational or network leader, this book is for you. Mark will help you understand why we need to challenge conventional wisdom, learn what new practices to establish and how current metrics are not the primary measure of a church's influence.”*

Order copies of the book HERE



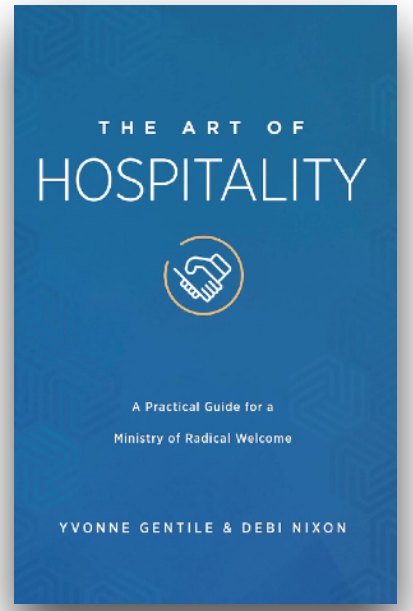
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Building a Multiethnic Church

"America has become a beautiful mosaic filled with many colors and ethnicities—but does your church reflect this change? Are you longing to be a cross-cultural leader who can guide the church into a multicolored world for the sake of the gospel? If so, Building a Multiethnic Church *will give you the tools to embrace an invigorated community of grace, love, and reconciliation."*

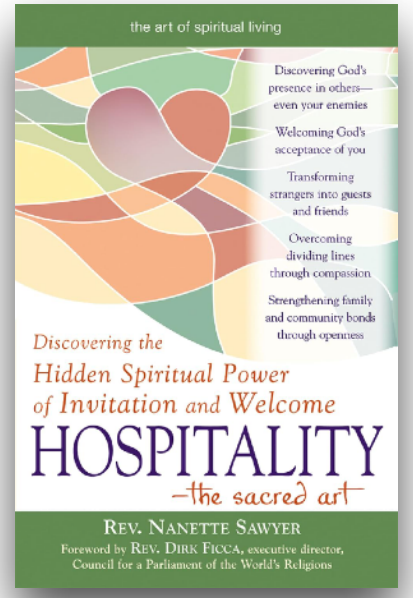
Order copies of the book HERE



The Art of Hospitality: A Practical Guide for a Ministry of Radical Welcome

"The Art of Hospitality, a new comprehensive program developed by hospitality experts from the United Methodist Church of the Resurrection, promises to guide a local church in exactly what the program's title implies: the artform of creating radical hospitality that infiltrates the heart and culture of the entire church. Complete with techniques and strategic planning throughout, The Art of Hospitality will effectively change how you do church, leaving guests surprised, delighted, and eager to return.

Order copies of the book HERE
Get the Implementation Guide HERE
Get the Companion Book HERE



Hospitality: The Sacred Art — Discovering the Hidden Spiritual Power of Invitation and Welcome

"This practical book provides you with the tools you need to cultivate the spiritual power of invitation and welcome in your life. Guided by Rev. Nanette Sawyer, you will discover the qualities of hospitality—receptivity, reverence and generosity—and how these qualities can significantly deepen your self-understanding as well as your relationships with others and with God. Drawing from sacred texts and spiritual practitioners from all faiths, this book also addresses the major stumbling blocks that prevent you from becoming truly hospitable."

Order copies of the book HERE

[print out these two pages for small group leaders]

Small Group Leader Script

No matter what resource you are studying together, this two-page script can be used to guide the group in a structured time of discussion.

Opening, Candle, Prayer

Welcome to our small group discussion of [name of book/resource].
Let's start by lighting a candle and offering an opening prayer.
[light a candle, if you are holding the group online, each person could have a candle if desired.

I invite you to close your eyes if you are comfortable and imagine you are standing in front of a door. As we pray, imagine opening the door.
In this moment we open the doors of our lives to the call of the Spirit,
inviting us to become more than we can ask or imagine.
Let us breathe out our fear… *[pause to breathe out]*
and breathe in the courage of the Spirit of God… *[pause to breathe in]*
and out again, with the Peace of Christ… *[another breath out].*
Amen.

Setting Our Agreements

Leader: In our conversation, everyone is invited to share, but sharing is not required. Please make room for all voices, keeping your contribution to a respectful time limit so everyone has a chance. Whatever is said here stays here – not because we are telling secrets but because we honor that what a person says here is their story to share.

Tip: You may wish to use a minute-timer to ensure that each person gets equal time to share, and/or perhaps designate a volunteer to keep track of when it's time to switch. You may also wish to incorporate a talking item to pass around the circle, such as a rock, stick, plant, a small stuffed animal, or a figurine.

Discussion

[this is a suggested format… if you have modes that are successful in your groups already, please follow those]

Leader: Take a moment and think about what parts of the resource you encountered this week that really resonated with you,
or made you question, or was eye-opening.
[pause for one minute to let people think/write]

Leader: I would like to open the floor to whomever would like to offer their thoughts first, keeping your sharing to brief statements. We will allow everyone to share thoughts who want to and then we will open up for discussion *[explain how the timer works or about passing the "talking object," if you are using those]*

[after your designated time of discussion, move to the closing]

Closing

Leader: Thank you to everyone for your willingness to share from the heart. A reminder that we keep these discussions confidential, not because we are keeping secrets, but because each person's thoughts and stories are theirs to tell. Let us close with words from our worship that remind us of the call to
keep opening to hope, peace, joy, and love.

May God's Door of Welcome
swing open in your heart and in your life.
May Christ's humble first dwelling
remind you of the plenty you already know.
And may the Spirit lead you into
more possibility and hospitality than you can imagine,
making room in The Inn for all.
May it be so for you.
May it be so for us.
May it be so for this church.
Amen.

Guided Journal for Individual Reflection

We have created journal pages that can be adapted for your context by placing your own logo and contact information on them, then printing them off or emailing them out to your folx. You can keep them as individual pages (front and back) or staple them together in a booklet printed on 8.5”X11”.

We have created this journal as “free-standing” content. In other words, you could also offer these pages to those outside of your church for their own reflection and journaling–these pages are a wonderful compliment to worship, but not dependent on being part of worship or a small group. We have begun to do this to model how we are hoping you will see all of your worship content as fodder for a “yes… and” kind of relationship with those who will likely never make a Sunday worship habit work in their lives. Consider placing a “library” box outside your church, or one of those “realtor” boxes with a “take one” sign on it.

Since we are focusing on mental health, we have left a blank page towards the beginning of the journal for you to list the mental health resources in your community or other information that someone might find helpful (or a life-line).

You can access these Reflection Pages in these ways:

1. HERE is the Template link to Canva for you to use if you have a Canva Pro account. This is an easy way to customize for your context. (Remember, it’s free for non-profits to sign up for Canva Pro!)

2. On the main download page, you will find a PDF document of the pages if you want to use them “as is.”







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