

# COLLOQUY

A CONVERSATION WITH GUTENBERG COLLEGE



Celebrating 30 Years!



Fall 2024

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## Visible Roots

By Erin Greco

*The stranger at my fireside cannot see*

*The forms I see, nor hear the sounds I hear;*

*He but perceives what is; while unto me*

*All that has been is visible and clear.*

—From “Haunted Houses” by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

A few weeks ago, as part of an incredibly exciting rejuvenation of the main floor here at Gutenberg College, I got to paint the classroom. A flurry of planning and activity had been ramping up for weeks—months, really. I’d been occupied with scheduling and color choices and orchestrating the removal of carpet, the moving of furniture, and the preparation for floor refinishing. Lots of people were pitching in, and there were a lot of moving pieces.

But when it came time to paint the classroom, a strange *still* came over the project. Most of the other work and preparation was done; most of the people who had been helping me were otherwise occupied; and I found myself mostly alone. Alone with the room, the paint, the brushes and rollers, and a few days in which to complete the project.

As I traced the contours of the room—now up and down a ladder, now shuffling along the floor, all to carefully cut in around the baseboards and window frames and mantelpiece—I marveled at details of the room I had somehow not noticed in the many (many) hours of my life I’d spent within it. Had the plaster walls always been this *textured*? Did the glass doors always have that peaked window above them? Had the crown molding always been that beautifully curved?

But admiration for this stately old room was not the only thing stirring within me as I worked. I could not help but remember, could not help but feel, my *roots* in this building—how many times I had sat in this very room and listened, as a child, as a student, to the voices of patient men and women teaching the Bible, philosophy, history, art; how often one of those voices had belonged to my father—a voice now lost to me except by recording.

And not only my own mother and father but so many other “mothers and fathers” had walked these halls and taught around these tables and organized these rooms. (I remembered, through the eyes of a child, this very classroom being painted the color I was now painting over!) We are blessed to still have many of these women and men with us, but they won’t be here forever. And neither will I. My turn with the brush began to feel weighty.

I turned six years old the fall that McKenzie Study Center welcomed its strange new child, “Gutenberg College,” into the world. Her first freshman class was gathering around those tables in the classroom, but I’m sure I didn’t know that anything had changed. Dad was still going to work at that same big brick building. He and Mom were still towing me along (when my big brother was unavailable to babysit) to slink around said building

while they had their mysterious “staff meeting” in one of those intriguing rooms. The same kind grownups were there meeting with them.

No, I don’t believe I recognized that first fall that a newborn college now lived in that familiar building. But it wasn’t too many years before the idea of Gutenberg College was firmly in my mind, primarily because of the thing I loved best about her—her students.

In that first class, one of the students was a huge movie buff, and when I fell into Star Wars fandom at age eight, he generously talked “lore” with me and showed me his collection of paraphernalia related to the movies. (This is my first memory of Room 1—that room with the fireplace that’s in the corner between the men’s hall and the women’s hall.)

In a class that followed soon after, another student befriended me. I always asked if I could see her room and talk to her, and she was so kind to that inquisitive child. Over one summer, she wrote me back when I sent her letters. I adored her handwriting. (Visiting with her is my first memory of Room 6—the one at the end of the women’s hall with the tall loft bed. I lived in that room later myself.)

Gutenberg students brought other riches to the whole community, too. When one of the students in those early classes found a band that she loved, a husband-and-wife duo out of Ohio who were just beginning to be heard of, she decided to write them a letter. She audaciously asked them if they would please come perform at her little college in Eugene, Oregon—and they did.

Yes, *Over the Rhine* came because of her request, and they performed in the living room (more than once, actually). I will never forget sitting there on one of those evenings, the room’s deep red walls perfectly illuminated, while the hauntingly beautiful voice of Karin Bergquist singing Linford Detweiler’s words reverberated through my soul: “There is a me you would not recognize, dear. Call it the shadow of myself.” Whoa. (This is not my first memory of the living room, but it is one of my favorites.)

After years of learning and loving the Gutenberg students, I had the opportunity to become one myself. Those four years of my college education were so implausibly packed with life, in all its joy and suffering, that this building is filled with its echoes for me to this day. In nearly every room, I can feel and see those layers of the past, if I remember to.

The classroom, library, and loft are full of late nights “studying” and then having to face the consequences in those same rooms the next morning. The living room is full of years of performances and parties. The rooms upstairs begin to get personal. Room 6 is where I first felt the weight of depression, and the kind house manager who could tell I wasn’t okay came to talk to me. Room 5 is where I accidentally deployed my friend’s pepper spray because I thought it was a flashlight. (Sorry, Chelsea and Sinah!) The living room of the managers’ apartment, of all places (I was painting the trim there to make up for a missed house work day), is where I listened with curiosity to a slightly odd freshman named Gil who explained his social woes to me and asked me for advice. And Room 4 is where, about a year later, I said yes when he asked me to marry him.

To hear me recount it now, it may sound like I always held this place, these people, this school in unmitigated high esteem. But that’s not really true. Just as it is natural to go through periods of disillusionment with one’s parents, I think it is natural to go through periods of dissatisfaction with one’s alma mater—and for me, of course, the two were closely related. Like a fish who can’t see water, I could not always see the tapestry of love, support, thoughtfulness, and faithfulness that our fathers and mothers at Gutenberg had woven around us. I could not always see the value of what I had been raised in. It was easy to find flaws to focus on if I wanted to, and I was also eager to go elsewhere and forge my own path.

So when, after we had lived far away (in Kansas City, Missouri) for five years, Gil told me that he wanted us to answer the call Gutenberg had put out for new house managers, I was not *immediately* on board. “I’ve always thought that we would do that someday,” he told me. This was a surprise to me, but I came around to the idea. We moved our young family back to Oregon and began to add new layers of life in this building to our memories.

*(Continued on page 4)*

## Congratulations to the 2024 Scholarship Recipients!



**Nick Eskew**  
(Junior)

Ron Julian  
Memorial  
Scholarship



**Samuel Tardibono**  
(Senior)

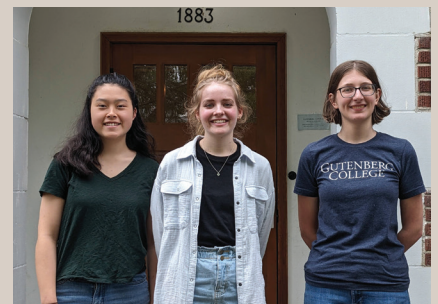
Søren Kierkegaard  
Scholar Award



**Sarah Tardibono**  
(Sophomore)

David W. Crabtree  
Scholarship

## Welcome Freshmen!



We are excited to welcome the class of 2028: Miyei Park, Alison Friesen, and Hannah Davis.

## Early Decision Deadline for Fall 2025: December 1

A one-year \$1,000 grant is available for first-time college freshmen who complete their application for admission to Gutenberg College by December 1 and finalize plans to attend by January 1.

Join the conversation!

Apply at  
[gutenberg.edu/  
admissions](https://gutenberg.edu/admissions)



## Visible Roots

Continued from page 3

The first staff meeting we attended was in the library. I'd been watching my parents disappear behind those closed doors for decades, and now suddenly I was sitting in there with them. My dear father looked across the table at me with a big, skeptically friendly squint and said, "You know, it's pretty surreal to have you here, Erin." We both laughed.

Just two years later, a string of memories that we would not have chosen were added to our family's story—but they are still worth recounting, remembering.

We were in the library again, just Dad and I. He was installing a bracket above the fireplace to hold a TV. It was almost time for fall term of the new school year to start. He told me that he had some slightly weird medical stuff going on; probably nothing to worry about, but all the same he was going to see the doctor.

Only a week later, the medical issues worsened. There were more doctors' appointments. The school year was beginning, but Dad only taught a day or two of classes before being unable to continue. I was upstairs in our apartment when I got the message that it was cancer.

Things progressed so quickly; just three and a half months after his diagnosis, we knew Dad was very close to the end. Late one night in January, I dragged myself home from sitting vigil with my family, weary to the bone and somehow numb and aching at the same time. As I passed by the living room, expecting it to be empty, I instead found a group of students and residents, heads bowed, gathered there to pray for all of us. Their presence was a balm to me. My father passed away late the next morning.


I said I was "mostly" alone while I painted the classroom. Trisha, our administrative secretary and a fellow Gutenberg alum (one of those who was praying for Dad in the living room) was working nearby in the office for much of the time, and she patiently listened to me barely hold back tears while making grandiose statements about the past and the present and the privilege it is to be taking our turn caring for this house and how deeply this place is knit into the fabric of my being.

At one point, without really thinking, I said to her "I wonder if my kids will be doing this someday."

She did not miss a beat. Holding an imaginary phone up to her ear, she called out, "Hey, Linford! Yeah, you're not going to believe what I'm doing today. Yep, the classroom. Man, it needed it. How long do you think it's been since Mom painted this, like thirty years?" We both laughed uproariously—and my eyes were suddenly very leaky.

In reality, who knows if my children will be involved with this building or with Gutenberg College in the future—those are decisions that they will have to make in their own way in their own time. But I hope that when it's their "turn," whether here or elsewhere, they will see the gift that roots are. I hope they will see the beauty of faithful investment in community; I hope they will see the wisdom in careful listening and consideration; I hope they will feel the love of God through the people around them, bearing them up through both sorrows and joys.

I know there are places besides Gutenberg to learn and experience these things—other oases dotting this world—but Gutenberg (and McKenzie Study Center) is the one God placed me in and the one in which he has been

growing me up. I am incredibly grateful to have been able to call Gutenberg "home" in so many ways over so many years, and I thank God for all the men and women who have tended to this place and the people in it since it began. May He continue to help those of us here now be as faithful as we can while we take our turn. 



**Erin Greco** (Class of 2010) is the daughter of Ron and Robby Julian. She and her husband, Gil Greco (Class of 2012), have been House Managers at Gutenberg since 2018. They live on campus with their three sons, Wendell, Linford, and Ewan.



### Summer Floor Renovation at Gutenberg

This summer, through the generosity of donors and volunteers, Gutenberg was able to undergo significant improvements to its flooring. Board member and alum John Hemmerich donated many hours to refinishing the beautiful hardwood floors in the foyer and library, and the classroom and stairwell had new carpet installed. Thank you to everyone who made this possible!



## Gutenberg's Beginning

By David Crabtree

Gutenberg college was born when McKenzie Study Center (MSC) was in transition. The main program of MSC, the School of Exegesis, had run its course. It was unable to consistently attract students. So there was a meeting attended by the board, staff, and some supporters to discuss our options going forward. Three staff members presented proposals. David Marotta proposed that we start a journal. Wes Hurd suggested a L'Abri-style study

program. I proposed starting a four-year, undergraduate, degree-granting program. The board gave the go-ahead for all three proposers to pursue their ideas, wanting to see if any of the ideas could gain traction. So I started meeting regularly with Charley Dewberry, Chris Swanson, and Dale Crabtree (my father), and we were later joined by board member Dave Winchester. None of us knew anything about starting a college, so we started talking to people and asking questions, lots of questions.


The idea to start a college did not come out of nowhere. Our experience with the School of Exegesis had led us to certain conclusions. If we were going to have an educational program, it needed to be degree-granting. The School of Exegesis was a three-year, seminary-type program, but we had trouble retaining students for the full three years because there was no degree waiting at the completion of the program. Students had trouble justifying to themselves and their families why they should spend the time and expense to stay the full three years. So we concluded that if we were to have an educational program, it needed to have a degree awarded upon completion.

We also learned from our experience with the School of Exegesis that most undergraduate programs don't provide a very good educational basis for further learning. Most of the students in the School of Exegesis had already earned undergraduate degrees, but some of them still lacked basic learning skills. We had conversations among ourselves about what kind of education would have been the ideal preparation for students coming into the School of Exegesis. Such training would have fostered reading skills (the ability to read difficult works with understanding), critical thinking (the ability to follow and assess complex arguments), and good writing skills (the ability to express their own ideas clearly and succinctly). We wanted to create an institution of higher learning in which the inculcation of these learning skills was the central focus.

In anticipation of having some kind of degree-granting program, several of us enrolled in graduate school to get MAs and PhDs. Our experience in graduate school led us to other conclusions about what kind of program we wanted to have.

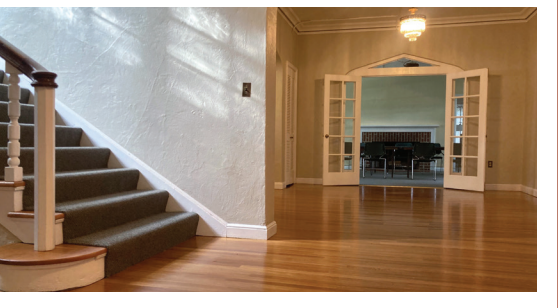
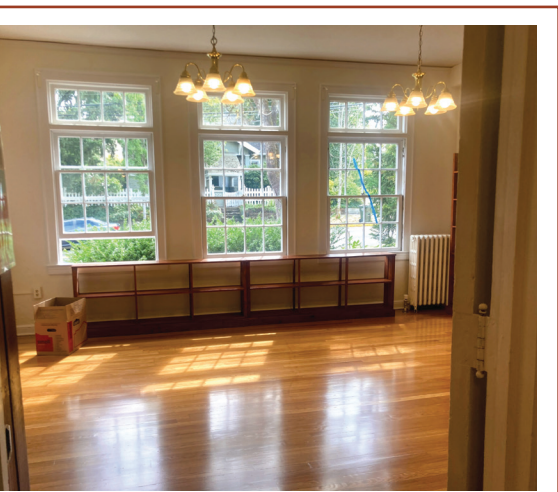
We were struck by the fact that college education is primarily designed to be career training. This is not what we wanted. We wanted to have a college that made exploring the key questions of life facing every human a focus, not a distraction. As we talked about these issues, it became clear that we wanted to devise the kind of undergraduate education that we wished we had had.

Our subcommittee began reading a number of books about education, including several books by Mortimer Adler, one of the leading figures in the development of the Great Books movement. We were attracted to this approach. Adler argued that the most effective learning happens when the students are active participants in the process rather than passive recipients of information. The Great Books style of education has students read the most significant writings of Western culture and then discuss them under the guidance of a "tutor"—not a "teacher" as we typically think of one but rather a more advanced co-learner. The approach of reading the Great Books as the subject matter, the textbooks, in the curriculum also made a lot of sense. So it was that Gutenberg College became a Great Books college.

Teaching at Gutenberg is very challenging but also rewarding. Since the classes are discussion-based, teachers have much less control over the conduct of the class than with a typical lecture format. Getting a good discussion going is an art that I never mastered, but the best discussions are ones that, with just a little push, take off organically. These discussions are most likely to capture the interest of the students and engage their minds. There were many times when I just sat back and listened to the students discuss the texts. I taught at Gutenberg for 22 years. And thanks to the help of students and faculty, I realized my dream of getting the education I wished I had had. For this I am very grateful. 

David Crabtree was a founder and the first president of Gutenberg College. He earned his B.A. in Russian Languages and Literature from the University of Washington and his M.A. in Classical Greek and Ph.D. in History from the University of Oregon.

**Thank you, David, for your hard work and dedication!**



## Top Five Thesis Authors

Before graduating, every student at Gutenberg must write a senior thesis comparing the ideas of two prominent authors or books. Over ninety theses are now housed in Gutenberg's library, and here are the top five authors/books students have written on:

- 1) Søren Kierkegaard
- 2) C. S. Lewis / Plato (tie)
- 4) Jacques Ellul
- 5) The Bible

## Alum Reflections

Thanks to alums who responded to our survey! We will share more in future issues.

### What is a book you read at Gutenberg that greatly impacted you?

- Machiavelli's *The Prince* –Damian, 1998  
Aristotle's *Categories* –Brian, 2003  
Solzhenitsyn's *Cancer Ward* –Colin, 2004  
Lewis's *Till We Have Faces* –John, 2005; Larissa, 2015  
Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* –Melody, 2006; Trisha, 2020  
Ellul's *Propaganda* –Victoria, 2008  
De Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* –Michael, 2011  
Camus's *The Plague* –Emily, 2019  
Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* –Conor, 2023  
Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* –Ryanna, 2023  
Chesterton's *The Man Who Was Thursday* –Emily, 2024

### How has your education at Gutenberg impacted your faith?

It definitely helped provide me with the tools and resources I needed to be constantly evaluating (and being flexible with) my beliefs as I try to navigate a changing world. –Damian, 1998

Gutenberg gave me conceptual tools to use when God hit me with an existential crisis, and those tools let me see more clearly what the real question was, rather than being snowed under by the views handed me by society. –Brian, 2003

Gutenberg has helped solidify for me the understanding that my faith is a miracle that God is committed to bring about within me. –Colin, 2004

My education at Gutenberg has been like the spring rains. It is a gift which keeps giving more life and opportunity to learn. The lesson that true knowledge

and humility are fast friends and not enemies springs eternal. –John, 2005

Gutenberg was hard on my faith at first. I graduated with more questions than answers. However, the books I read and the ideas I encountered gave me a starting place to seek for truth and gave me skills and the confidence to not give up. I am so thankful that Gutenberg opened up to me a world of ideas so that even today, I am unafraid and curious and confident when I encounter new ideas. –Melody, 2006

I think of my time at Gutenberg like the tilling of a field. Gutenberg is really good at getting you to pull out the weeds and dig up the rocks in your soul. It is less good at giving you something to plant there afterwards, but that's what life after graduation is for. I'm grateful for

## From Damian Arlyn, 1998 graduate (the first class!)

**"Do not go where the path may lead. Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail." –Ralph Waldo Emerson**

It's not easy being the first of anything. Whether it be the first individual to suggest that the Earth revolves around the Sun, the first person to circumnavigate the globe or, in my case, the first student to apply and be accepted at Gutenberg College—being a pioneer takes courage, fortitude, and maybe a little bit of insanity.

It is hard to believe that 30 years ago I made the decision that so profoundly impacted my life: to receive a classical education at a Great Books school being founded by members of my church. I remember when I learned that Gutenberg was opening its doors the fall after I would graduate from high school. I did not think it was a coincidence then, nor do I now. I took it as a sign that this was the institution that I was meant to attend.

There were four of us in that inaugural class, and over the next four years of constant discussion, we got to know each other very well (sometimes maybe too well). While it was immensely rewarding, it was also quite tough. I worked harder at Gutenberg than I ever had at anything in my life up to that point. I was discovering new ideas, having my presuppositions challenged, and being forced to defend my conclusions vigorously. It was a painful process, but becoming a critical thinker always is.

As I was growing and changing, though, so was Gutenberg. My tutors may have had more familiarity with the great thinkers that made up the curriculum, but fostering a constructive experience of those thinkers with a group of young people was new territory for them as well. I'm confident that in the decades since my time there, Gutenberg has improved its approach and fine-tuned its education, but I'm also confident that, like all of us, Gutenberg knows that it will never fully arrive, that it is always learning, always evolving, always maturing.

I'm very grateful to the people at Gutenberg for their patience, their wisdom, and their humility. They truly did help shape me into the person that I am today. Being among the first students at Gutenberg was a tremendous risk, a real leap of faith, but I am glad that I went, and I am glad that after all these years the school is still going strong and able to aid others with that same process of discovery.

the soil it gave me to plant true faith in.  
–Victoria, 2008

I learned to reflect on my past decisions, realized the degree of disregard of God's commandments without being aware, and the more I become aware, the greater sin I have in my life. –Michael, 2011

It helped me resolve the role of struggle and suffering in life, and not to fear the hours or days or weeks of doubt when they come. –Trisha, 2020

It has made me realize that confident faith in Christ and asking genuine questions do not have to be mutually exclusive. –Connor, 2023

It has given me the capability of finding the root assumptions in a belief and facing them head on, with choice. –Ryanna, 2023

It has taught me to, above all things, strive to deepen my relationship with God. –Emily, 2024



## A Very Little College in a Very Big World

By President Chris Swanson

Gutenberg is a small school. Let's face it, we are not changing the world. We are not going to be that institution that rescues our society or leads us out of the scourge of human depravity.

There are, however, institutions who do set their sights on "saving" or influencing the world. They are the movers and shakers who wield power and influence. But these institutions generally do not follow God nor care about His commandments. They seek to order the world for themselves, adjusting their goals and purposes—not according to principles but in accordance with the best means available. Unfortunately, the "salvation" they promise brings suffering and separation from God. So it has been from the beginning of civilization.

But God does not call His people through the movers and shakers. Instead, He delivers His Word through the weak and humble. The story of Gideon in Judges is one of my favorite illustrations of this point.

The story begins by describing Israel's desperate situation, a situation caused by their own idolatry: "Then the sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord handed them over to Midian for seven years" (Judges 6:1). As a result, the Israelites lived in caves and were forced out of their land by Midian. Their suffering drove them, finally, to call on God: "So Israel was brought very low because of Midian, and the sons of Israel cried out to the Lord" (Judges 6:6).

Then Gideon, while he was "beating out wheat in a wine press in order to save

it from the Midianites," was visited by an angel of the Lord, and he pleaded with God to save them. Gideon was afraid that God had abandoned Israel, and, in a remarkably bold statement, he called God out:

*Then Gideon said to [the angel], "O my lord, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, 'Did the Lord not bring us up from Egypt?' But now the Lord has abandoned us and handed us over to Midian." (Judges 6:13)*

God's response to Gideon's challenge was the same as it was throughout Judges: to deliver Israel from their enemies. But the Midianites were powerful and Gideon was not:

*[Gideon] said to Him, "O Lord, how am I to save Israel? Behold, my family is the least in Manasseh, and I am the youngest in my father's house." Yet the Lord said to him, "I will certainly be with you, and you will defeat Midian as one man." (Judges 6:15-16)*

God did not choose the mighty to serve Him. He chose the weak because it was His strength, not Gideon's, that would solve the Israelites' problem. To allay Gideon's fears, God graciously sent a series of signs to show He was with Gideon and would use him to defeat the Midianites. So Gideon, seeing the signs, called up Israelites from the nearby tribes, gathering together a large army to fight Midian. Then God did something utterly astonishing:

*And the Lord said to Gideon, "The people who are with you are too many for Me to hand Midian over to them, otherwise Israel would become boastful, saying, 'My own power has saved me.'" (Judges 7:2)*

God wanted to make crystal clear that He was the savior of Israel. He wanted to make sure the Israelites were forced to confront the fundamental spiritual question, "Did they trust God?" They were afraid of Midian's power, and it loomed large in their minds, but rather than giving them the security of earthly power, God used their fear to bring them face-to-face with their faith in God.

But this was not enough. After reducing the Israelite army from 22,000 to 10,000 men, God further winnowed the

group down to 300 men! How could 300 men hope to defeat Midian? It was almost like He was taunting them, "See I can do it with a mere 300." And He did. With God's help, Gideon's small force routed the enemy, and the rest of Israel entered the battle and took back their land.

The story of Gideon is echoed throughout the Old and New Testaments. Man will not save himself; God will save him. The power, influence, technology, innovation, or politics of movers and shakers—be they secular or Christian—will not solve our problems. The movers and shakers are even ignorant of what the true problem is. God will accomplish His purposes and call to Himself the faithful in His own time and His own way, facing these faithful over and over into the spiritual question, "Do you trust Me?"

As I look over the last thirty years of Gutenberg College, it is clear to me that from a purely worldly perspective, in the world of the movers and shakers, Gutenberg should not be. If Warren Buffet analyzed our business and made a valuation of "Gutenberg stock," he would conclude "Don't buy." In our very big world with massive forces surging and competing for every piece of the pie, our very little college isn't even in the game. Somehow, though, God continues to use Gutenberg to face students, teachers, and friends into the question, "Do we trust God?"

I am encouraged by Gideon's story. God is in control and reminds us that power and influence are nothing to Him. The Midianites may have conquered Israel, but God, after using them, laid them low. I feel like we live in a world similar to Gideon's world. Our culture has done evil in the sight of the Lord. He has given our world over to the lusts of its heart, much as He gave up Israel to Midian. We are left to hunker down in small caves and cry out to the Lord. So I pray, as the Israelites did, that He would work in hearts and minds and revive His Word in our world. I pray that we would trust Him for our salvation rather than trusting in the world's idols. I believe that we should boldly call upon Him as Gideon did, "Lord, do not abandon us."

In the meantime, Gutenberg College will wait and hope in Him that He will prosper us in our little cave for another thirty years.



COLLOQUY FALL 2024



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*hope amidst the odyssey of these days*

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January 25, 2025

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