

# The Benediction

St. Benedict's Episcopal Church, Los Osos, California

**The Rev. Dr. Caroline Hall**

Rector

**The Rev. Barry Turner**

Associate Priest

**The Rev. Susan Plucker**

Associate Priest

**The Parish Council**

Stef Shuman, Sr. *Warden*

Jane Wu, Jr. *Warden*

Lisa Gonzalez, *Treasurer*

Esta Kandarian

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**Sunday Services**

**8:00 am** - Eucharist, live at church and available on Zoom (link may be found in the Benediction Weekly under the News tab on our website.)

**10:30 am** - Eucharist, live at church and live-streamed on Facebook:

[www.facebook.com/stbenslososos/](http://www.facebook.com/stbenslososos/)

or on our website:

<http://www.stbenslososos.org/facebook-including-live-stream/>

Service leaflets are available each week under the Worship tab on our website

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**Dear Friends,**

What a joy to be back with you. Thank you for all your greetings and updates. I am glad to be back and excited to see what God will be doing through and among us this fall.

I had a wonderful trip spending quiet time hanging out with family and friends enjoying the luxury of having days rather than hours with each one, and reading a lot of novels. I worshiped in a number of churches and experienced a few different ways of handling Covid restrictions. It made me appreciate the way we have chosen to adjust to the need to care for one another in the time of pandemic.

While I was in Winchester, I was able to attend Evensong in the cathedral. I was struck by the reredos or Altar Screen. It dates from the 16<sup>th</sup> century but many of the figures are from the Victorian era. In the center is Jesus on the cross with Mary and John looking up at him. Above him are four archangels (I'm not sure who the people below are meant to be) and the rest of the wall features 16 church dignitaries.

What stood out for me was not that they were all white males – this is 16<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century England after all – but how many clothes and hats they were wearing. There's Jesus in the center with just a loincloth for modesty's sake, surrounded by his followers who all look seriously overdressed.

It made me think about the clutter we bring to our spiritual lives, when Jesus calls us to a life of simplicity, service, and love of God and our neighbor.

It is good and helpful to create sacred space as we do in church by using sacred and beautiful things – flowers, candles, special clothes, special things – that help us to remember why we are gathering and to turn our thoughts to God. Wearing vestments helps me to remember that in that time and place I have a particular role to play which helps us all to go deeper into the mysteries.

But we can start to think that God is only worshiped and served when we are in a special space and have all the right accessories. That could not be further from the truth. God is served when we are sharing love wherever we are and whatever we are doing or wearing. God is served when we do all the basic tasks of human living with love. There's a poem "The Elixir" by the Anglican poet George Herbert which you may recognize because it's been made into a hymn:

All may of Thee partake: - Nothing can be so mean,

Which with his tincture - "for Thy sake" - Will not grow bright and clean.

A servant with this clause - Makes drudgery divine:

Who sweeps a room as for Thy laws, - Makes that and th' action fine.

Jesus called us to be servants, not to get caught up in pomp and ceremony and funny hats. At this time of Advent it is easy to get caught up in the preparations for the Christmas holiday and lose sight of the basic simplicity of God coming to be with us in the vulnerability of a new-born baby and in the dying man naked but for a loincloth.

My prayer is that each one of us will experience the love of God touching us in our vulnerability, in the simple places of our souls.

With love,



Caroline J.A. Hall



@StBens\_LosOsos

## **Thank you from Caro**

Thank you to the Leadership team, Stef Shuman, Jane Wu and Alan Kiste who kept everything running smoothly in my absence. Thank you to Jay Matthew who works really hard and was everywhere we needed him to be, cheerful and pleasant. Thank you to the Landscaping Committee and Earthcare, especially Liz and Don Maruska and Ron Thompson for their leadership with the tree project and the bioreactor installation. Thank you to Esta Kandarian for her continued leadership in the Abundance Shop and for the service to the community and the income to St Ben's that she and her volunteer team provide. Thank you to Sarah Chesebro and the Altar Guild and Eucharistic Ministers who have worked cheerfully with different clergy. Thank you to Rev. Brian Stein-Webber and Susan Plucker+ for leading worship and teaching and proclaiming the gospel with such love and skill. Thank you to Dave Alm for jumping in and providing music and leading the choir so skillfully. Thank you to the Membership Committee who have welcomed newcomers and to everyone who works with Laundry Love, the Community Dinners and 40 Prado, especially Maureen Titus, Barbara Skipper and Pat Henry. Thank you to you for being here.

## **Fire Sprinkler System**

It is finished!! A big thank you to Jane Wu who has pushed and pulled, encouraged and scolded until the project that has confounded us many times in the last twenty years is really over. And many thanks to the major donors on this project: Faye Hogan, Lisa Gonzalez, Sharon Dalrymple and Shelley Watanabe. Above all thanks be to God that we have finally achieved this goal; now the church building is truly finished and can turn our minds to other things.

## **Covid safety**

We continue to live with the challenge of Covid-19 and to explore how to be together safely and deeply. I am grateful to everyone who is making the changes necessary so that even the most vulnerable among us can feel safe. If you have a concern, please let Caro+ or one of the wardens know so that we can try to address it.

One area of concern is distancing, especially after church. Those of you who are choosing to stay after church to enjoy coffee and fellowship together, please be aware that the veranda is narrow and it is hard to stay sufficiently distanced. Once you have your coffee, please move away from the coffee pot to continue your conversation.

## **Called to Leadership?**

Is God calling you to take a more active role in the leadership of the church? Every January we hold our Annual Parish Meeting when we review the year together, agree a budget for the coming year, and elect new members of the Parish Council and delegates to Deanery and Diocesan Convention. Most Parish Council members and all delegates must have been confirmed or received into the Episcopal Church (or pledge to do so on the Bishop's next visit). If you think that you would like to serve in one of these positions please talk with a Parish Council member.

## **Tuesday Spiritual Conversation**

Starting on November 30, our spiritual conversation will be based on [The Book of Joy](#) by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and the Dalai Lama. It is based on their conversation over a week of being together to celebrate the Dalai Lama's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. We get to listen as they explore the Nature of True Joy and confront each of the Obstacles of Joy—from fear, stress, and anger to grief, illness, and death. They then offer us the Eight Pillars of Joy, which provide the foundation for lasting happiness. Throughout, they include stories, wisdom, and science. Finally, they share their daily Joy Practices that anchor their own emotional and spiritual lives.

This conversation is open to anyone and everyone whether or not you read the book. Tuesdays at 10:15 starting on November 30, on-line via Zoom.

## **Vespers**

Consider coming on Tuesdays at 5:30 for some mid-week fellowship. This short service includes time for bible reflection and sharing together. It is a good way to build relationships and deepen community. If you come in person, please consider staying afterwards for a glass of wine or other beverage. You can also participate in Vespers via Zoom. You will be able to see and hear the participants in the church as well as others joining via Zoom and those in the church will be able to see and hear you as well. Everyone is welcome.

## **Advent is not just for humans.**

Advent is a special time of preparation; preparing our inner selves for the coming of the Christ. To help us do that, we will have an online Advent study group on Thursdays at 3pm, starting December 2<sup>nd</sup> and finishing on Epiphany – January 6. There will not be a group meeting on December 30. The meetings will include time for prayer and silence as well as conversation based on [All Earth is Waiting – Good News for God's Creation at Advent](#) by Katie Z. Dawson. You can get the book for just \$6 at that link and we will have a few available in church. You are welcome to participate without reading the book, or to read the book without participating in the group!

Following on from COP26, together we will explore the familiar Advent themes of hope, preparation, joy, and peace with the heavens and earth in mind and consider how all creation longs for the coming of Christ, taking seriously the notion that the good news of Christ is good news for all the world. Topics are: The Source of Hope; Clear the Way; Discovering Joy; The Peace of the World; and The Reconciliation of Heaven and Earth.

Sessions will last no more than 90 minutes and will be on-line. If you have a strong preference to meet in-person please let Caro+ know as it can become a hybrid event (In-person and on-line).

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## **Christmas Services and Celebrations**

Please join us to celebrate Christmas:

- Celebration of Carols: Sunday December 19th at 3pm
  - Blue Christmas for those who are finding this a challenging Christmas: Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> at 5:30 instead of Vespers
  - Christmas Eve: 4:30pm carols and communion around the creche and 8pm Sung Eucharist preceded by carols at 7:45pm
  - Christmas Day: 10am quiet service with acapella carols followed by light brunch
  - St Stephens Day/Boxing Day/ Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> 8am as usual, 10:30 Christmas Lessons and Carols
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## **Gratitude**

Stewardship talk delivered at St. Benedict's Oct 17 by Cathy Gildea

When I first started attending an Episcopal church, I was not aware of the time-honored tradition of fall stewardship talks, as it was not part of my prior faith tradition. I have since learned to appreciate the season of gratitude as an opportunity for a type of 'health check' on my spiritual relationship to money; something I would most likely continue to avoid without such an external reminder. As our readings in recent weeks have highlighted, this often a challenging dimension to our spiritual lives and it is no less true for me than it was for those who lived in Jesus' time.

Nevertheless, I now welcome this season as a time of personal reflection and growth. For example, I used to see the story of the rich man and the eye of a needle as an illustration of futility – I would never get to the desired state of being able to sell all my possessions and follow Jesus, so what was the point? Recent life experiences, including living through the pandemic, have caused me to see things through a different lens, and today I experience the familiar story as a call to reframe my perspective and to reconsider to what extent my choices – big and small – align with the things I consider truly important.

The Tuesday book study group is reading "Lovingkindness: The Revolutionary Art of Happiness" in which Sharon Salzberg outlines Buddhist spiritual practices that remind us that by being present in the moment, we can create opportunities to reframe our perspective and perhaps take one small step toward something that can feel like an impossible goal. She states that "gratitude brings delight." My friend says "it is impossible to be depressed if you are grateful." Thus, the spiritual practice of counting your blessings can actually reframe your perspective and make stumbling blocks on the path to delight disappear – or at least seem less consequential.

So, as I practice counting my blessings, I include gratitude for the community of St. Benedict's. Thank you for reminding me to pay attention to the spiritual discipline of stewardship on my path to greater delight in God's creation.

## Gratitude Dinner

6:30 pm Friday, November 12

All St. Benedict's members and associated volunteers are invited to our annual Gratitude Dinner on November 12 at 6:30pm at the church. Each year we celebrate our gratitude to God and each other for the many blessings we have received as part of St. Benedict's. Everyone is welcome, including those Abundance Shop and Laundry Love volunteers who are not regular church members. We have much to be grateful for and it is a wonderful time to gather and remind ourselves of the abundance of God's love. No need to bring anything; the dinner is being provided by the Parish Council

*It will help us if you would RSVP to the church office if you are coming and if you are bringing family or other guests. In keeping with Diocesan Safety Protocol social distancing will be observed when eating and conversing with others during the event, and masks must be worn except when eating and drinking, but must be replaced when people are engaged in conversation.*

**EVENT!**

## Thanksgiving Dinner

1 pm Thursday, November 25

For those wishing to celebrate Thanksgiving with their St. Benedict's family, we are having a potluck style dinner on Thanksgiving Day at 1pm. You are invited to bring a side dish or dessert of your choice. Volunteer(s) are also needed to cook the turkey, which may be cooked in the church kitchen and will be paid for by the church. Speak with Caro+ if you'd like to volunteer.

*It will help us if you would RSVP to the church office if you are coming and if you are bringing family or other guests. In keeping with Diocesan Safety Protocol social distancing will be observed when eating and conversing with others during the event, and masks must be worn except when eating and drinking, but must be replaced when people are engaged in conversation.*

## Pledge Drive

Please consider prayerfully your level of financial support of St. Benedict's in 2022. Pledge cards are being mailed out now. Please return them promptly. Completed cards will be blessed at the altar on Ingathering Sunday, November 14<sup>th</sup>. Thank you!

## Bioreactor Built to Support Nature's Work in Our Soils

Earthcare and Landscape Committee

Eleven hearty souls from St. Benedict's Earthcare and Landscape teams, Rotary Club de Tolosa, Los Osos Valley Garden Club, and Rotary Passport Club built a bioreactor with world-expert Tim LaSalle on Saturday, October 30. It's located on the far northwest corner of St. Benedict's property.

**Why are we doing this?** Our planet faces a climate crisis. Rather than despair, we are taking action. Nature has been drawing down CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere and turning it into living carbon for eons. Unfortunately, humans are producing so much CO<sub>2</sub> that natural processes can't keep up. Consequently, global warming is occurring and creating an unhealthy climate. We are working to restore our soils and planting trees to enhance nature's ability to clean our atmosphere. The soils produced by the bioreactor will accelerate our results.

**What's a bioreactor?** It's a large cylinder in which we put a slurry of wet leaves, wood shavings, hay, and horse manure with a watering system to keep it moist for 12-14 months. Since the bioreactor is an aerobic (air) process, it doesn't smell or attract pests. [See photos]

**How does it work?** The naturally-occurring mycorrhizal fungi available in the area feed on the material in the bioreactor and multiply. Mycorrhizae are beneficial fungi growing with plant roots that increase the plant's ability to absorb more nutrients and water from the soil. They also increase plant tolerance to different environmental stresses, which would increase yields and crop quality, improve drought tolerance, help control soil erosion, and maintain soil quality and nutrient cycling. When applied to plants and trees, these fungi increase productivity and amplify the conversion of CO<sub>2</sub> into living carbon that stays in the ground. We will use this material for the new grove of 30 trees planned for the church property.

**What's our hope?** We want our example to inspire other faith-based communities, service clubs, and commercial agriculture to see how aligning with nature offers practical solutions to the climate crisis. The bioreactor effort is part of a larger movement to support regenerative agriculture. That's agriculture that keeps our soils alive (and holding carbon) with no-till or low-till techniques. As noted in the documentary "Kiss the Ground" (available on Netflix), if half of U.S. agriculture used these practices, it could remove all of the excess CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere. We need to get people aware and acting to make this possible.

(Bioreactor, continued)

We give special thanks to our Rector and the Parish Council for supporting the project and a member who donated \$300 for the out of pocket costs. Tim LaSalle, Ph.D., professor emeritus of agriculture at Cal Poly and co-founder of the Center for Regenerative Agriculture, provided valuable expertise and some equipment and materials. The Earthcare and Landscape teams, Rotary Clubs, and Los Osos Valley Garden Club have all provided encouragement and labor. Now the church needs donations to complete the irrigation system required to support the new trees. We welcome your participation.



## Visit the “Beginner’s Guide to Climate Change” to Take Climate Action

Mike Eggleston

With the encouragement and some funding from the Episcopal Diocese of El Camino Real, St Benedict’s Earthcare team has now completed the first guided five-session discussion series of “A Beginner’s Guide to Climate Change.”

Attendees were as many as 40, and at least ten faithfully attended every session. Some joined the Zoom sessions from the St Benedict’s community, others from other churches in the diocese, and a few attendees joined from around the nation and beyond the church. The hope and intent is that other congregations and groups will now use these materials in their own settings. Intended for congregations, the Beginner’s Guide can also be used by individuals. It can be found on the St Benedict’s website, the diocesan website, and will be available as a resource through Interfaith Power and Light.

The five sessions are:

- What is Climate Change and What Are Its Consequences?
- How do Christians See Creation?
- What’s a Christian to Do About Climate Change?
- What Can Our Congregation Do?
- How are We Called to Be Public Advocates for Climate Health?



Each session, intended to be 1 ½ hours in length, is flexible and includes prayers, Bible study, videos, questions for discussion, a glossary, and additional resources appended.

Many thanks to the members and friends of the Earthcare team who created, videotaped, and hosted all parts of the “Beginner’s Guide. Those include Rev. Caroline Hall, Don Maruska, John Horsley, Rev. Barry Turner, Rev. Mike Eggleston, and Bob Pelfrey. Thanks also to Jay Matthew, who managed the tech for all sessions, Robyn Provis, who advised and edited, Kathryn Bumpass, who led an earlier five-week “trial run” discussion group as the materials developed, and the Rev. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas, who contributed the videotaped message on public advocacy for the fifth session.

Writing as a pastor who has led and participated in church studies for over half a century, the “Beginner’s Guide to Climate Change” is the best local-church-created study series I have yet seen. Tap in on the St Ben’s website. May it be used many times in many settings again.

## UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow – Follow It, Pray!

Mike Eggleston and EarthCare Team

With a topic so vast as climate change and an event so complex as the UN COP 26, it is impossible not to cherry pick information while making a one-page report for the Benediction. Yet, here goes. This is Mike Eggleston, assisted by from John Horsley writing for the St Benedict's Earthcare team.

**What is the UN COP(Conference of the Parties) 26?** It is the United Nations' 26<sup>th</sup> Climate Change Summit, meeting from October 31 to November 12 in Glasgow, hosted by Great Britain and Italy with over 180 nations to be represented and approximately 25000 attendees. It will be the largest gathering ever of world leaders on British soil.

**If it's the 26<sup>th</sup>, why is it especially important?** This one needs to have an impact on a par with the Paris Conference of 2015, the Kyoto Conference of 1997, and the initial UN Earth Summit in Rio De Janeiro of 1992. John Kerry (and others) have called it "the last good chance for humans to solve the climate crisis." Many believe we are in "The Last Chance Saloon."

**What's the main order of business?** At the Paris Conference, all 195 nations present agreed to work to hold the world's global average temperature increase to below 1.5 degrees centigrade in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and to each develop their own plans for reaching net zero carbon emissions by 2050. At Glasgow, each nation is to share their update and plans for how they plan to accomplish that.

**Why is keeping temperature increases Under 1.5 degrees the target, not more nor less?** At 2 degrees or more, impacts on humans and nature would be severe and widespread. One third of the world's population would be regularly exposed to severe heat. Almost all coral warm water coral reefs would die. Irreversible ice sheet melting in Greenland and Antarctica could be triggered. 1.5 centigrade rises are all but locked in now, but would bring less severe, more bearable impacts.

**What are more specific goals for COP 26?** Those include: 1) Secure global net zero carbon emission by mid-century to keep 1.5 degrees within reach; 2. Protect communities and natural habitats that are most endangered by restoring ecosystems, putting warming systems in place, and increasing resilient agriculture; 3) Generate at least \$100b per year from the world's more developed countries to the less developed for climate finance, and 4) work together to finalize the rules needed to implement the Paris Agreement. A good sign would also be if COP 26 is able to negotiate an agreement on carbon trading.

**Is there progress in limiting climate change?** Generally, the answer is yes, though not fast enough. On the positive side, two nations, Suriname and Bhutan, already have negative carbon emissions, and 137 nations representing 73% of the world's largest economies have announced by late October their plans to reach net zero by 2050. For one example, the United Kingdom has become the world's leading producer of off-shore wind energy, and has announced their sale of new petrol cars will end by 2030. On the negative side, the UN itself recently estimated that, if all the targets presently set by nations are actually reached, that would still result in a 16% **increase** in carbon emissions by 2030, rather than the needed 45% decrease by that time. There is progress. So much more is needed.

**How do we follow the events in Glasgow?** There are so many sources of information. Check out Interfaith Power and Light, at <https://www.interfaithpowerandlight.org/cop-26-resources/> and the UN's own site, at <https://www.ukcop26.org>. One excellent news source is the Guardian, at <https://www.theguardian.com/us/environment>.

**What can we do to help as concerned earthlings and Christians?** The Interfaith Power and Light site opens with a petition to sign urging President Biden and other national leaders to do everything possible to make COP 26 a success. Don't neglect to petition God also. Try praying every day from now through Nov 12 for the best possible outcomes from UN COP 26. For those who use twitter or Instagram, the UN site above suggests following @COP26 for updates on how to be involved. Perhaps above all, hope. Cultivate hope for earth and all it's creatures.

## Highlights of the Parish Council Meeting, October 17, 2021

### Monthly Reports

**FINANCES** (Lisa Gonzalez reporting) Increased spending in September due to increases in the Rector's salary, pension, and insurance, and this was a 3-payroll month. Several un-budgeted repairs recently, paid from the operating fund. Still in good overall shape with resources and savings. Endowment fund lost some ground last month, but it still has a net income for the year.

**BUILDING AND GROUNDS** (Jane Wu reporting) Toilet, hot water heater, thermostat, and disposal have all been repaired recently. Now focusing on landscaping and repairing irrigation system.

**ABUNDANCE SHOP** (Esta Kandarian reporting) Business is doing very well. Looking forward to a successful final quarter. Some new volunteers have started, but additional volunteers could help the shop stay open later and take donations for 5 days/week instead of the current 3 days/week. The Shop has made another \$10K contribution to the Church, for a total contribution of \$40K so far this year.

## Quarterly Reports

Every three months the work of standing committees are reported to the Parish Council. Here are brief descriptions of each committee and summations of their reports:

**FINANCE** committee (Jane Wu reporting) *The Finance Committee has three primary duties: to prepare the annual budget for the church, to conduct an annual audit, and to advise the Parish Council regarding feasible and strategic expenditures.* The committee has been doing ad hoc review and recommendations of expenditures and staff actions. Jane has been working closely with Lisa regarding landscape costs, facility repairs for church and Abundance Shop. The biggest upcoming task is building the 2022 budget.

**LANDSCAPING** Committee *The landscape committee is responsible for oversight of the grounds and plantings. They work to ensure the health of the current plants and trees and make recommendations to the Rector and the Parish Council for any significant changes.* No report this quarter because they presented a proposal regarding the planting of new trees and expansion of the irrigation system at last month's PC meeting, which was approved.

**MEMBERSHIP** Committee (Sandy Fisher reporting) The membership committee works in a number of ways in conjunction with the Rector and other staff to welcome and assist guests to become new members, to integrate new members, and to retain existing members. The committee has met recently and is working on plans to make new attendees, whether online or in person, feel welcomed to our parish at the level of wanting to come back and be a part of us.

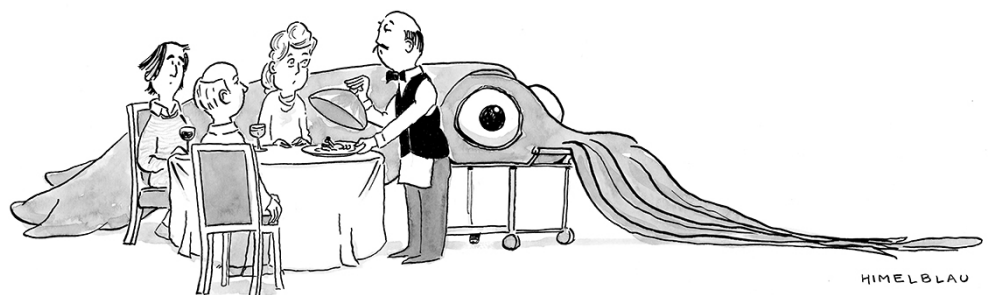
**STAFF-PARISH Liaison** (John Horsley reporting) *The Parish-Staff Liaison Group acts as the personnel committee for the parish, meeting quarterly.* The details of the discussions are confidential and were not reported to the PC. The last meeting of the Group with the Rector took place in July hearing of her recent activities both in the parish and in the community and a brief report on each member of the staff followed by a discussion of specific staff issues. The next meeting is scheduled in November.

**STEWARDSHIP TEAM** (Stef Shuman reporting) The Stewardship Team works to educate the people of St. Benedict's about all aspects of stewardship with an emphasis on financial stewardship. Its activities focus on stewardship education, encouraging planned giving, working with individuals when requested, and planning and assisting with the annual pledge drive. During this quarter information was mailed to all members and published in the Benediction regarding and encouraging Planned Giving. A planned Benefactor's gathering was canceled based on the level of people's hesitancy to gather together due to a surge in CoVid cases. Fall Stewardship mini-talks are planned after services by Cathy Gildea and, remotely on video by Michael Lucas. The Gratitude Dinner will be held in November. The next task will be the annual pledge drive.

## Art Show

### November 5-24

**FOOD:** Collage and Cartoons about Food and Dining is on display at SLO Provisions (1255 Monterey St, SLO). Artist **Kit Gould** (collage) and **Ed Himelblau** (cartoons) invite you visit the show...it will make you hungry! Profits from art sales benefit the SLO FoodBank!



"For madame... And who ordered Le Calmar Géant?"

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