

# LIGHT MATTERS

December 2023-January 2024

## From the Desk of Pastor Phoebe

Greetings Church Family and Dear Friends,

The Advent to Epiphany season is upon us. It is with tidings of great joy that I write to encourage you to read about our beloved Church and all the wonderful gatherings we have planned this holiday season in this edition of Light Matters. Advent calls us to be attentive. To set aside time to prepare for the incoming of Christ anew in our lives. It is a season that always seems to move too quickly. Just four weeks to open ourselves to God's way of being with us, in us and around us. This year it will rush by with even greater speed as Christmas Eve is also the Fourth Sunday of Advent.

Please join us for worship each Sunday as we celebrate together with glorious music, stories, and prayers. In this season of preparing, seeking, opening, and awakening our spiritual lives, may you find joy in the simple aspects of life. A glorious winter sunrise, reading a good book, wrapping gifts for loved ones and neighbors, taking a brisk walk, spending time with family or reaching out to those you know may be having a hard time this year.

Christmas comes with lots of emotions. Some find the dark cold nights challenging – others find the winter to be their favorite season. We all have different memories of the holidays. For many this is a time of great joy and celebration for others it can be a time of deep sorrow and longing. I pray God blesses you with the gift of a Holy presence that reminds you that you are loved, you are welcomed here, and you are a gift to all of us at Loving Shepherd. I pray that we will be your spiritual home in the weeks ahead.

May the light of the stars this holiday season guide you as they guided others to the manger. We look forward to seeing you in the Barn and wishing you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

With Joy,

Thoebe



Christmas Eve Services 10:00 am and 5:00 pm

**The Loving Shepherd VISION** To be a community rooted in spiritual consciousness, guided by Christ's spirit of compassion, called into service, and committed to encourage each member's journey into God and community.

**The Loving Shepherd MISSION** To provide a democratic Christian fellowship of faith and acceptance whereby through worship, education, programmed ministries and welcoming facilities, members and the larger community find nurture and growth.



#### 2023 Advent Meditations

As has been the custom for many years here at CLS, a harvest of short readings, poems and prayers is presented to the congregation and friends to savor during a busy Advent season... my thanks to all who contributed.—Maureen McGovern

December 3 (First Sunday of Advent) - Circle me Lord, keep protection near and danger afar. (Rev. David Adam, 1936-2020 CE, Anglican priest and writer of prayers in the Celtic pattern)

December 4—We live as feathers on the breath of God. (Letter to Odo of Soissons, Hildegard of Bingen, 1098-1179 CE, German Benedictine Abbess, writer, composer, philosopher and mystic)

December 5—People who pray for miracles usually don't get miracles any more than children who pray for bicycles, good grades or good boyfriends get them as a result of praying...But people who pray for courage, for strength to bear the unbearable, for the grace to remember what they have left instead of what they have lost very often find their prayer answered. (Rabbi Harold Kushner, 1935-2023 CE, American rabbi and author-*When Bad Things Happen to Good People*)

December 6—Your days are numbered. Use them to throw open the windows of your soul to the sun. (Marcus Aurelius, 121-180 CE, Roman Emperor and follower of Stoic philosophy of logic, ethics and temperance)

December 7—In the Gospels Jesus is asked 187 questions. He answers (maybe) 8 of them. He himself asks 307 questions. Maybe faith isn't about certainty but learning to ask and sit in the complexity of good questions. (Kevin Nye, American writer on theology, grace and homelessness)

December 8—Music doesn't get in. Music is already in. Music simply uncovers what is there, makes you feel emotions you didn't necessarily know you had inside you and runs around waking them up. A re-birth of sorts. (*How to Stop Time*, Matt Haig, English author and journalist author)



December 9—Drink tea and nourish life; with the first sip, joy; with the second sip, satisfaction; with the third sip, peace; with the fourth sip, a Danish. (*The Jewish Buddha*)

December 10 (Second Sunday of Advent)—Circle me Lord, keep hope within and keep doubt without. (Rev David Adam, 1936-2020 CE, Anglican priest and writer of prayers in the Celtic pattern)

December 11—It is Hope who carries Faith and Love. It is Hope who moves the world. (Charles Peguy, 1873-1914 CE, French poet and essayist)

December 12—Silence is essential. We need silence just as much as we need air, just as much as plant need light. If our minds are crowded with words and thoughts, there is no space for us. (Thict Nhat Hanh, 1926-2022 CE, Vietnamese Buddhist monk, poet and peace activist)

December 13—My deepest vocation is to be a witness to the glimpses of God I have been allowed to catch. (Henri Nouwen, 1932-1996 CE, Dutch Catholic priest, theologian, author)

December 14—Hate has talked so loudly for so long. Greed has talked so loudly for so long. Liars have talked so loudly for so long. Love has got to stop whispering. (Marianne Williamson, American spiritual leader and author)

December 15—God of Hope, Help us not to despair at the brokenness of this world. Remind us that your healing presence is at all times in all things. (Church of Scotland)

December 16—Going to church doesn't make you a Christian any more than standing in a garage makes you a car. (Attributed to Winston Churchill, 1874-1965 CE, British statesman and author)

December 17 (Third Sunday of Advent)—Circle me Lord, keep light near and darkness afar. (Rev David Adam 1936-2020 CE, Anglican priest and writer of prayers in the Celtic pattern)

December 18—Any time is a good time to pray, "prayer" will look, feel, sound...unique to each person because it is a unique conversation between that individual and their higher power. Sometimes that thing doesn't have a name and "prayer "doesn't fit, worry less about that. Instead, make space for intentional connection with something greater than yourself. Nature, music, breathing...may you find the space and connection that nourishes you at your core. (Reverend Cairn Neely, the Outdoor Chaplain and member of Church of the Loving Shepherd)

December 19—When you pass through the waters, I will be with you and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through the fire you shall not be burned and the flame shall not consume you. (Book of Isaiah, C43, v2)

December 20—You become what you give your attention to. (Epictetus, 50-135 CE, Greek teacher of Stoic philosophy of logic, ethics and temperance)

December 21—Gardening taught me things I didn't even know I was learning about, patience and care taking, but most importantly about disturbance as a condition of growth, that solid ground has to be plowed up for new seeds to take root. (*Fire Shut Up in My Bones*, Charles Blow, American journalist and commentator)

December 22—Understand this well, there is something holy, something divine hidden in the most ordinary situations, and it is up to each one of you to discover. (St Josemaria Escrivera, 1902-1975 CE, Spanish Roman Catholic priest who founded Opus Dei, an organization that teaches everyone is called to holiness in ordinary life)

December 23—A wise man fills his brain before emptying his mouth. (African proverb)

December 24 (Fourth Sunday of Advent Christmas Eve) —Circle me Lord, keep peace within and keep evil out. (Rev David Adam, 1936-2020 CE, Anglican priest and writer of prayers in the Celtic pattern)

December 25(Christmas)—Lead us from death to life, from falsehood to truth. Lead us from despair to hope, from fear to trust. Lead us from hate to love, from war to peace. Let peace fill our lives, our world, our universe. Peace, peace, peace. (Universal Prayer for Peace, the Iona Community, an ecumenical Christian community working for justice and peace)

December 26—Our role in life is to bring the light of our own souls to the dim places around us. (Sr. Joan Chittister, American Benedictine nun, passionate advocate of peace, human rights and women's issues)

December 27—If you see what needs to be repaired and how to repair it, then you have found a piece of the world that God has left for you to complete. But if you only see what is wrong and what is ugly in the world, then it is you yourself that needs repair. (Lubavitcher Rebbe--Menachem Mendel Schneerson, 1902-1994 CE, Seventh leader of Chabad Lubavitcher movement)

December 28—Use what talents you possess. The woods will be very silent if no birds sing there except those that sing best. (Henry Van Dyke, 1852-1933 CE, versatile poet, writer and minister)

December 29—Religion is at its best when it makes us ask hard questions of ourselves. It is at its worst when it deludes us into thinking we have all the answers for everyone else. (Archibald MacLeish, 1892-1982 CE, American poet and writer)

December 30—Hope is not always safe and lovely, she is not always cascading rivers and sunlit skies, dancing, hope knows there is work to be done. (Ullie-Kaye, Canadian poet, writes for a world that needs repair)

December 31 —It is requisite for the relaxation of the mind that we make use, from time to time, of playful deeds and jokes. (St Thomas Aquinas, 1225-1274 CE, Italian friar and priest, influential philosopher and theologian)

January 1—In school, a teacher lays out work for his pupils. I resolve to accept each situation of this year as God's layout for that hour and never to lament that it is commonplace or a disappointing task. One can pour something divine into every situation. (*Letters by a Modern Mystic*, Frank Laubach 1884-1970 CE, Congregational Christian missionary and mystic)



# Worship in December-January Church of the Loving Shepherd

Pag

**December 3**th Advent One Holy Communion

**December 10**th Advent Two Guest Preacher, Rev. Dr. Carrie Call

**December 17**th Advent Three Lessons and Carols w/ Coffee Hour

December 24th 10:00 am Advent Four Morning Worship

**December 24**th **5:00 pm** Christmas Eve Communion and Carols

December 31st 10:00 am 1st Sunday of Christmas and

Service of Healing and Prayers

January 7<sup>th</sup> Epiphany Holy Communion

January 14th Celebration of Civil Rights for All

January 21st Sunday Worship

January 28th Service of Healing and Prayers w/ Coffee Hour

# MUSIC IN WORSHIP



December 3th Psalm Choir

**December 10th** Timothy Urban, Renaissance winds

December 17th Psalm Choir

December 24th CLS choir and string trio
December 31st Rich Arment, Christmas carols

January 7th CLS Choir

On **Psalm Choir Sundays** (December 3rd and 17th) please arrive at **9:15 AM before Sunday worship** to rehearse the Psalm!

Before **CLS Choir Sundays** (December 24th and January 7th, **please come to choir practice the Saturday preceding** (December 23rd and January 6th) from 10 AM—12 PM.



#### Music in Worship Biographies

**Rich Arment** has been attending CLS since the 1980's and has always been willing to share his musical gifts. He received a degree from West Chester University and with over 40 years teaching experience he continues to provide instruction on piano, guitar, trombone and harmonica. He offers private lessons at his home studio as well as Hinkletown Mennonite School and Honey Brook Christian Academy. Rich has performed professionally with various musical groups in Lancaster County including Music in the Schools programs and The Dutch Apple dinner theater. For the last 10 years his main "gig" has been performing music programs in nursing homes and retirement communities. December 31 Rich will help us close the Christmas season with a Christmas Carol Singalong. He promises a fun filled, entertaining morning!

**Timothy Urban** is active as both performer and teacher. He has performed as both singer and instrumentalist in solo and chamber recitals throughout the Tri-State Area, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Brazil and Hungary, where he studied at the Kodály Institute. In addition to graduate degrees in voice and recorder performance, and early music performance practice, Timothy holds a Ph.D. in music history and theory and currently serves as the coordinator of aural skills at Rutgers University.

On November 12th, CLS welcomed Katie Clay and Alondra Martinez of the West Chester University Resource Pantry. The WCU Foundation sent us this letter regarding CLS gift to the Pantry:

"On behalf of West Chester university, I send my Gratitude to Church of the Loving Shepherd for the Generous gift of \$200.00 in support of the WCU Resource Pantry.... Your support enables us to give students the tools they need to become the next generation of leaders and problem solvers.



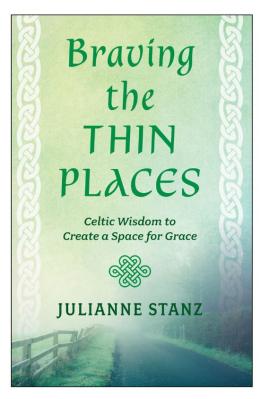
Thank you for sharing our passion for education and for supporting our mission, our students, and West Chester University." - Pamela Villagra, Director of Corporate and Foundation Relations, West Chester University Foundation

# Bible 101 Continues on Tuesdays at 12:30 pm. – 2:00 pm.

The Advent to Epiphany Season brings a time of reflection, preparation, and celebration all into perspective within a six-week period. Sometimes it feels like a flurry of activity and within a blink of an eye it is January, and we are hunkered down for winter. To help us fully reflect more on the coming of Christ this sacred season, Bible 101 is reading, "Stay Awhile: Advent Lessons in Divine Hospitality" by Kara Eidson. Join us every Tuesday from 12:30 – 2:00 pm on Zoom for a thoughtful discussion on the meaning of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany at this season in our lives. Themes of invitation, planning, preparing, hospitality, and Divine Presence will weave through our reflections. **We will not meet on December 26th or January 2nd.** Please check the Loving Shepherd website for the link to Bible 101.

NOTE: On December 12<sup>th</sup> everyone in Bible 101 is invited to have lunch and Bible Study at Carolyn Rayburn's home in West Chester Borough. Lunch begins promptly at 11:45. Please RSVP to Carolyn by Monday 10 am the 11<sup>th</sup>.





# Friends on the Journey 2023-24

Friends on the Journey: All are welcome to join the conversation with Friends on the Journey, December 14, at 7:00 pm over Zoom. Our topic will be a conversation on the Advent Meditations which are published in the December January Light Matters. Friends on the Journey is a self-guided discussion group who wrestle with the concerns of living spiritually in today's world. The Zoom link can be found on the CLS website and in the weekly e mail from the Office on virtual gatherings. Looking ahead, future meetings include January 11, a discussion on Nature as a spiritual teacher. What lessons do we receive from air, water, fire and earth? During Lent Friends meet weekly to discuss a book. This year's book is *Braving the* Thin Places (Celtic Wisdom to Create a Space for Grace) by Julianne Stanz. Dates for the Lenten discussions are February 15, 22, 29 and March 7, 14 and 21. If you interested in having a copy of the book, please contact Maureen McGovern either in service on Sundays or via e mail: simkovich1@comcast.net Wherever you are on your faith journey, feel to join us!

#### Come Let us Adore Him

The introductory sounds of the notes leading into a choral rendition of, "O Come, All Ye Faithful" stirs something in me that goes deeply into my bones. All the memories, stories, and images of Christmas flow through me. When the chorus, "O come in adoration" is repeated there is a communal sense of connection to God and the birth of the Jesus. No doubt, each of us has a Christmas song or memory that touches on the gathering of kindred spirits to celebrate the birth of a child God has sent to us for healing, redemption, and hope.

This Advent to Christmas season Loving Shepherd needs your help. As you prepare for your end-of-year giving, we hope you will remember the church. There are a multitude of ways to show our love for God, our hope for a better world,



and our love for this church. The Christmas Special Offering is one of them. We will hold our Special Offering from December 1 to December 31<sup>st</sup>. A special mailing with an offering envelope will be mailed to your home.

This year's Christmas Special Offering will help offset variable expenses for the winter months. The snow plowing and salting of the church driveways is a huge expense for us. As we all know the cost of heat, gas, electricity, and water have gone up this year. As we planned for the 2023 budget we did our best to factor in these issues, but the increase has been dramatic and dependent on the unpredictable weather. In addition to getting ahead of our winter expenses, the Special Offering will also help us close a modest deficit that we anticipate for the 2023 budget.

We put our faith into action in diverse ways. We celebrate the coming of Jesus into our lives as our individual faith unfolds. No one's journey to the manger is the same but we hope you will join us this Christmas season and find ways to "come in adoration" with bright spirits and generous hearts.

Yours in Light and Love,

Pastor Phoebe



CLS closes its 2023 financial books on December 31st, 2023. If you would like to give a contribution for the tax year 2023 please make sure the office receives it on or place it in the offering basket on Sunday, December 31st 2023. You can give by check or cash in an envelope marked with your name in the offering plate or by mail, online at churchofthelovingshepherd.org/donate, or contact Megan in the office for information on how to give gifts of stock to CLS. As always, we are deeply grateful for all the ways you care and support CLS.

#### Notes from the Barn Pantry

Food Ministry News by Ann Bare





With over 20 volunteers to help and a perfect November weather day we were able to pack and deliver the makings of a Thanksgiving dinner and ShopRite gift cards to the 48 families who participate in our Food Delivery Program. As always this delivery was festive and fun with a wide array of wonderful fresh and non-perishable foods donated by The Chester County Food Bank and gift cards provided by our CLS community.

Once again, for our Christmas delivery on <u>Friday</u>, <u>December 15<sup>th</sup></u>, our Food Ministry will be able give \$50 in ShopRite gift cards, and a bounty of donated fresh produce, eggs, cheese, non-perishable foods and paper towels to our participating families. If you have an hour or two to spare on <u>Fridays</u>, <u>December 15<sup>th</sup> and January 19<sup>th</sup></u> (weather permitting) we can really use your help. Meet us in the Barn Pantry around 8:30 AM. We will pack food, load our cars and leave CLS around 9:30 AM for deliveries. We are usually finished by 10:30 AM if not before and deliver in pairs or groups.

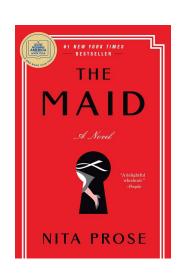
The generosity of the CLS community knows no bounds. It is with great joy and abundant thanksgiving that we can report that once again our Thanksgiving Special Offering during the month of November has been a huge success. In fact it has surpassed our goal!! Currently, at this counting, our CLS family has donated \$12,287 which is over our goal of \$12,000. This will easily allow our Food Ministry to continue to deliver \$35 ShopRite gift cards for 9 months of the year to up to 48 families who participate in our Food Delivery Program and \$50 ShopRite gift cards during the holiday months of Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas. These gift cards allow our participants to choose some of the food and additional items they need. Your continued generosity and constant care enable our Food Delivery Program to remain strong and provide donated food, paper towels and ShopRite gift cards to about 80 individuals young and old (from 4-97!) every month. Together we are helping our neighbors combat food insecurity and are making a difference. Thank you. Thank you.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact Megan Myerson in the Church Office.

**Ann Bare** 

## Church of the Loving Shepherd Book Club

All are welcome to join the Loving Shepherd Book Club via Zoom at 7:00PM on Monday, January 8, 2024 when we'll discuss "The Maid", by Nita Prose. Megan Myerson will provide the CLS community with a Zoom link to Book Club. Please bring friends and come even if you haven't read or finished the book. There will be no Book Club meeting in December.







A picture DOES speak 1000 words! The happy faces of the volunteers and recipients tell it all! Saturday, November 18 was our Thanksgiving Dinner Distribution. It was a day of camaraderie and joy working with friends at Mt. Carmel COGIC. Many of us remembered the early days with Ms. Lillian Middleton over 30 years ago! We distributed over 105 full Thanksgiving meals within the West Chester community. Special thanks to the West Chester Food Cupboard, ShopRite of West Chester, and Wegmans for their contributions.

With deep gratitude, Meg Cowan-French





## Winter Prayers Every Wednesday at 11:00 AM on Zoom:

Our church family gathers for at time of prayers every Wednesday from 11:00 to 11:30 AM to hold all of you, our neighbors, and the world in prayer. In Katherine May's book, *Wintering: The Power of Rest and Retreat in Difficult Times* she mentions that in the depths of our "winters" whether that be this season or any other time of year, we are all "wolfish." We have a longing to be whole and a yearning to find the elemental things in life – love, beauty, comfort etc.

Each Wednesday this winter we will gather to lift your prayers and pray for a wholeness to come for all of us. We pray` for peace in this world and health for the planet. If you have specific prayers you wish us to pray for please send them or text them to Pastor Phoebe by 10 am Wednesday mornings. She will include them in our time with God. A card will be placed in the prayer box if requested and we will add your prayers during our time of Healing and Prayer the last Sunday of each month. If you cannot join us on Wednesdays but wish to have the prayer list for a time that is convenient for you, please let Phoebe know and she will add you to the email list or text chain that she sends each week with the prayers of the day from our Wednesday gathering.

We will gather for prayers every Wednesday in December and January including Dec. 27th and Jan. 3rd.

### 2023 Calendar of Light

The Calendar of Light is offered by Alignment: Interfaith Contemplative Practices. As we continue to engage in the ongoing work of seeking peace in a world ravaged by war, pain, and loss, we look to the wisdom of our world's traditions and to the grounding of our own hearts. Beginning December 1, open a door to a new practice each day for five minutes, joining with people around the world who are centering their day in a practice of peace. Revisit the ones that hold particular meaning for you throughout the year.



These offerings come from a wide variety of traditions from faith and spiritual leaders around the globe. This is a collaboration in which all traditions are honored, all prayers uplifted, in the hope that this will pave the path to greater peace among all the peoples and nations of this world. And in finding this intersection, there may we find the road to justice.

Our theme this year is nurturing the light within us and in our communities in times of deepest trial. We are holding in light especially those whose lives are ravaged by war and violence.

You are invited to join by visiting <u>www.interfaithalignment.org/calendar-of-light</u>



#### Family News

We share with sadness the passing of Bodie Price, grandson of Hank Price.

We also grieve the passing of Charles Thomas French, brother of Rich French.

Dear Phoebe and the entire CLS Family:

Thank you so much for all your prayers and goodies. This beautiful plate was filled with yummy coffee hour delights, delivered by Carolyn—bless her—and all that put it together. You have all been so attentive and we appreciate it.

We love all our our friends at CLS. xo—Renny

#### More Family News

We share with joy that A Holiday at Disney, a Teddy Diskin production at West Chester University on November 19th, was a wonderful show.





#### Calling all Artists!

Artists are wanted for an art exhibit in the Walti Room of Church of the Loving Shepherd. The exhibit will run from December 4th, 2023 to February 2nd, 2024. Please contact Megan in the office and she will put you in touch with Glen Blandy for more information.



# PLEASE CONSIDER DONATING POINSETTIES THIS SEASON IN HONOR OF OR IN MEMORY OF A LOVED ONE.

CONTACT MEGAN IN THE OFFICE BY TUESDAY, DECEMBER 19TH FOR MORE INFORMATION.

#### **December-January Office Hours**

#### Megan Myerson

Monday—Thursday 9:30 AM—3:30 PM and Sunday by appointment.

Megan will be on vacation December 4-6.

Please note that Megan is not available on Fridays, even by phone or text

#### **Pastor Phoebe**

December Mon – Thurs 9:30 – 3:30, Friday by Appointment Phoebe will be away on vacation Dec. 8 – 11th.

January Mon- Thur 9:30 – 3:30, Friday by Appointment

The office is closed: December 25th, December 29th and January 1st.



# Join Us Outside for This Year's Final Grounds Day! Saturday, December 2nd from 9 am—12pm, lunch served at 12 pm

Work with Loving Shepherd members and visiting teens to care for the grounds at Bournelyf. Lend a hand in maintaining and enhancing the sacred beauty of our church surroundings. No experience needed and your help is deeply appreciated!

Grounds Days are always fun, educational, and the work accomplished by volunteers is invaluable.

Thank you for all the ways you care for our beautiful church!



#### Chester & Delaware Counties, PA Chapter

**Project Linus:** Project Linus is a nonprofit organization with the mission "[to provide] handmade blankets to children 0-18 in the United States who are seriously ill, traumatized, or otherwise in need." You are

invited to join Project Linus Chester/Delaware County on **December 9th from 10 AM - 12 PM** in the Barn where we will sew Project Linus labels handmade blankets awaiting donation to local organizations such as WIC, Chester County Hospital, and more. If you can sew in a straight line, you can help! Bring your own sewing machine highly recommended. If you are interested, please contact Megan in the church office for more information.

We had a lot of fun at our past Label Sew-A-Thons, and hope even more people can come join us in December!





Please join Project Linus in the Walti Room on Monday, January 15th at 12:00 PM for a Day of Service Project. We will be making no-sew fleece blankets.

No craft experience is required for this fun, easy to complete project! The blankets provide comfort and love for local children.

# **Opportunities for Virtual Meetings**



Our church meetings and programs remain in a hybrid mode. Worship is in-person and on Zoom. Wednesday prayers are on Zoom. You may join us online for any of our regular programs and meetings, including:

Sunday Worship Every Sunday at 10 AM

Christmas Eve Worship December 24th at 5 PM

Morning Prayers Every Wednesday at 11 AM

Book Club *The Maid* by Nina Prose

Monday, January 8th at 7 PM

Bible 101 Continues

Stay Awhile: Advent Lessons in Divine
Hospitality by Kara Eidson
Tuesdays 12:30 PM
December 5th, 12th, 19th and
January 9th, 16th, 23th, 30th

Friends on the Journey December 14th at 7 PM Advent Meditations January 11th at 7 PM

Look for links in your e-mail. If you are having trouble connecting to Zoom or can't find a link, visit churchofthelovingshepherd.org where each event will have a green box link for you to follow.

We look forward to seeing you!

#### **BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2023**

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