

“Look deep into nature and you will understand everything better.”

- Albert Einstein

What is it with great thinkers and spiritual leaders and their love of nature? Moses met God up on the mountaintop, Jesus went into the wilderness to confront Satan, and the Buddha attained enlightenment sitting underneath a tree. Something happens when we go to nature, something that can change us so deeply that it ripples out into the world and continues changing others for thousands of years.

As the choir director and organist, most of you know of my passion for music, but I am equally as passionate about my outdoor pursuits. As soon as I change out of my church clothes, I often charge out on Sundays for some rock climbing or trail running or canoeing. The more time I spend in nature, the more I feel the call of the wilderness as a constant in my life.

Things are different when you're in the wilderness, and you don't even have to go far to experience it. I was on a cliff near Hartford, CT when I had my first real moment of terror as a rock climber. I had climbed too far off route and couldn't see or hear my partner. The howling winds scared me. I didn't like my position and didn't want to go up or down. My cell phone was in my backpack, over a hundred feet down. I was crippled in fear, and my only tangible connection to the outside world was a bit of slack rope being held by a guy I didn't even like that much.

We often live lives that are not our own. We make deeply personal choices based on the imagined judgment of others. The music we listen to, the foods we eat, and even the people we call our friends – we care what others think of our choices more than we realize. Others surround us all the time with their possessions, their ideas, and their inventions. Who is really deciding how you spend your life? And if those deepest choices are made by others, who are you, really?

In those three minutes that I stood frozen in spot on the cliff, I felt completely alone. My choices in life were few: find a way to climb on, or let go and risk a fall with let's-not-think-about-them consequences. So, eventually, hesitantly, I moved. I reached for the next hold and it felt like I was reaching for life itself. I felt more me than I have ever felt before.

Continued on Page 3...

LIGHTINGS AND ALTAR FLOWERS...

THE TOWER lighting for February is given in loving memory of Lois and Bill Bird and Paul Carlson by Timmy and Charlie Bird.

THE ALTAR FLOWERS on Sunday, February 22nd are given in loving memory of Natalie Gutridge by Stanley Gutridge.

THE ALTAR FLOWERS on Sunday, February 22nd are given in loving memory of Janette C. Hedenburg by Ken Hedenburg and family.

WE LIFT UP IN PRAYER THIS WEEK...

- ✠ Dorothy Palmgren in St. Vincent's Hospital, Pulmonary ICU, after having a cardiac arrest.
- ✠ Donald Tremblay as he recovers from a major back surgery. Pray for healing and strength, and for his family members who are worried about him.
- ✠ Sue Lambert as she recovers from a knee replacement. Pray for healing and strength, especially as she is struggling with pain.
- ✠ Donald Houston at UMass Hospital recovering from a fall.
- ✠ Gary Robinson and family on the death of his father Donald Robinson on Feb 5th. Please pray for Gary's mother, Marilyn, during this time as well.
- ✠ Hunter who is fighting cancer at 6 months old, and for his family members who are very worried about him.
- ✠ Family, friends, and co-workers of Steve Pupkar, who passed away suddenly last weekend in a sporting accident.
- ✠ Debbie Hawkins, friend of Deb Ritacco's, who had a massive stroke.

WESLEY CHURCH NEEDS: 1 lb Coffee cans (plastic or aluminum) are needed at church. The altar flowers are transferred out of the liners into the coffee cans so Wesley Shut-Ins can enjoy the flowers as they are donated. If you have any, please drop them off in the Welcome Office. Thank you.

ONECALL TELLALL... If you'd like to receive a call when worship or another service/event is cancelled due to bad weather, or a reminder call of an upcoming event, please stop by the Welcome Office and sign up on the list. If you are unable to come to the church, contact Debi in the office at 508-799-4191 or email her at office@wesleyworc.org. Thank you.

Cover Article Continued from Page 1...

Nature is real. It invites you to experience your emotions at a deep and intimate level. It teaches you to recognize them in the “real” world and see them with a different perspective. At our core, I think we people are pretty awesome, and I think these wilderness moments help us connect with our best selves. It is who we are outside of the incessant – and at times insane – voice of the “others” that can dominate our sense of identity. I think we have the most to give when we approach others from this place.

Please don't think you have to go rock climbing to get a sense of this. The wilderness has descended on us in massive heaps of white. It takes over our roads and forces us to work together to get our cars moving. Familiar paths look different. Driving is dangerous with ice patches hiding in plain sight. The map may not match the reality right now, and that is a familiar theme to anyone with experience in the wilderness. You have to move on and find a way in spite of these hardships imposed by the natural world.

As Pastor Shandi guides us on an exploration of our deep wilderness emotions this Lent, I hope you will all take a moment to physically connect with nature and reflect on these themes outside of church. The wilderness is here – we are covered in snow and engulfed by freezing temperatures. Simply stepping outside at nighttime after everyone else is asleep will connect you with a sense of nature's presence. Or try snowshoeing some weekend and walk into the woods.

Over the course of Lent, you will find yourself in nature. It may be because you set off for a starry walk, or you may be helping a neighbor shovel snow, or it may be because you are breathing heavily after the ice spun your car out of control for a few moments. Whenever these experiences arise, I hope you will pause for a moment, reflect on how you feel, and ask yourself, “Who am I?” You may discover more than you thought you knew.

~ Brett Maguire, Director of Music

LENT

WESLEY AND ALHUDA MOSQUE EXPLORE CONNECTIONS... Pastor Shandi, Director Lisa, and Margaret Watson met with representatives from the Alhuda Mosque on East Mountain Street in Worcester, hoping to develop an association that will lead to better understanding and friendships in our Worcester community. Asima Silva and Mona Ives of the mosque's Outreach Committee met with us earlier this month to explore joint programmatic possibilities and sharing of events on an on-going basis. This idea has a great deal of potential, we believe, and may involve many groups and areas of our church. If you have suggestions, please pass them on to us and watch the Herald for future developments. Thank you.

IHN THANK YOU – A big thank you to all volunteers during the recent IHN week. Despite the wintry weather everyone fulfilled their commitments! The following people donated food cards so that the families could do their own cooking three nights: Gary Robinson, Tom Ingrassia, Janet DeNapoli, and Mark Muncey. The remaining suppers were provided by: Kathy Swan, Caroline and Mindy Sherman, Lisa Fagerstrom, and Gladys Poku. Evening hosts were: Allison Hansen, Betsy Pennino, Jeanne Dhavale, Nancy Cook, William and Michael Kilmer, and Chris Kerns. Overnight volunteers were: Carolyn Bellil, Peter Hansen, Ron Ramsay, Paul Arsenault, Phil Smith and Chris Kerns. I appreciate all of your efforts. ~*Nancy Cook*

SMALL GIFTS FOR SHELTERS... **Sarah Circle** will again be collecting useful or edible items for Worcester shelters. On Sundays through Palm Sunday (March 29th), you're invited to leave any of the following in the purple bag you'll find in the church pantry:

- * Soap, hand sanitizer, shampoo, toothpaste, lotion, deodorant
- * First Aid supplies, sunscreen, Chap-stick
- * Chocolate, dried fruit, cereal bars, small bags of cookies or crackers, or other snacks which have some food value
- * Packets of hot chocolate, small juice containers
- * Socks, hats, washcloths, pens, Post-its, Scotch tape
- * whatever else you think a person at a shelter would appreciate

The items will be delivered to shelters on Easter weekend. Questions? Contact Betsy Pennino at betspenn35@hotmail.com.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS: A CLASS FOR YOUTH... The Massachusetts State Police, with the leadership of Captain Fran Leahy, is going to be leading a class for youth on “knowing your rights” on February 28, 2015 at 9am here at Wesley. This offering is initiated by Isaac Berko and the Wesley Basketball program and it is open to all young people who would like to learn about their rights. Parents are welcome to join their youth in the class. The event is free to all as it is a public service by the MA State Police. If you have any questions please contact Isaac Berko at isaacb94@hotmail.com.

CARTY CUPBOARD FOOD PANTRY

The following is part of a press release that was sent out by Mr. Feinstein...

“Feinstein’s Foundation to Suspend \$1 Million Challenge to Fight Hunger...

The Feinstein Foundation has suspended its annual \$1 Million Giveaway to Fight Hunger for 2015 until further notice in order to concentrate on its ever increasing number of Feinstein Jr. Scholars, now over 150,000 strong, pledged to help better the lives of others.”

While we are very grateful for the many, many years of Mr. Feinstein’s generous giving, we have always relied on the thousands of pounds of food and thousands of dollars donated during past challenges to help keep our shelves full. **This is a very big loss for us.** So as we enter the Lenten Season please remember those men, women, and children who are hungry and in need of what our mission provides.

At this time of year we never have enough **Low Sodium Hearty Soups & Meals in a Can** on the shelves. Just one can of either will help us keep up with the demand.

We have two volunteer opportunities open for you to consider... We are still in need of a person who is able to lift 40lbs to work on Friday morning’s distribution giving out the pre-packed food bags. The time required is from 9:15 AM until 12:15 PM from now until the beginning of May.

We are also in need of someone to be able to fill in when needed to get bread from the Price Chopper on the corner of Park Ave & Highland Streets, on Tues and Friday between 8:00 and 8:30 AM.

If you can help with either of these please call Nancy at 508-887-1481.

~ Sincerely, Nancy Spencer

SUNDAY SCHOOL

CHILDREN'S MISSION: HEIFER INTERNATIONAL ~ STARING FEBRUARY 22, 2015

our Lenten mission this year will be to participate in Heifer International's "Give up to Give Back" mission. Children will be handing out Collection "Arcs." During Lent we will fill the arcs and in the spring will bring the money raised on a mission retreat to Heifer. Heifer empowers families to turn hunger and poverty into hope and prosperity by bringing sustainable agriculture and commerce in the form of work animals and those that provide eggs, honey, and milk.

SPIRITUAL FORMATION OPPORTUNITIES

One Book Reading Group:

During the fall, a number of Wesley folks have been reading "A Quiet Pentecost" by Dwight Judy. We have had several conversation groups to discuss the book, and will offer several more next week. There will be a group this Sunday (2/22) between the worship services in Brewer Hall (look for the round table with the sign "*A Quiet Pentecost* Discussion"), as well a table in East Hall following the 10:30 worship service (look for the table with the sign described above). The final conversation times will be Tues. Feb. 24, from 5-6 p.m. and Weds. Feb. 25, from 5:30-6:30 p.m. in the John Wesley room. Additionally, there will be an on-line e-mail chat group over the next two weeks. If you are interested in being a part of that on-line group, please e-mail Lisa at: Lisa@wesleyworc.org.

Beginning on **Sunday, March 1st**, the next book in the "One Book" group will be available for those interested in taking part in this group. **The book for Lent is "One Day at a Time: Discovering the Freedom of 12-step Spirituality" by Trevor Hudson** (South African Methodist pastor, author, and spiritual practices teacher). In this book, Trevor shares his own experiences and insights as an invitation for others to explore areas within our individual and communal lives that could benefit from the lessons of 12-step spirituality. This book also ties in with the themes in Pastor Shandi's Lenten sermon series. All are invited to take part in this reading group. You are welcome to purchase a book for your personal use/library, or to utilize one of the copies that will be available for borrowing.

MISSION MATTERS

FEBRUARY 28TH COMMUNITY SUPPER... The Wachusett Regional High School (WRHS) Mission Possible group is in charge of the February community supper, led by Rachel and Cordelia Ferdinand. They will be preparing and serving baked chicken, rice pilaf, steamed vegetables, beverage and dessert. *If you could volunteer to cook, set up, or clean up, please contact Cordelia Ferdinand (puttsghs@msn.com). Donations of cupcakes, brownies, or bars are also requested.* Could someone put together a craft for children?

COMMUNITY SUPPER LEADERS NEEDED FOR MAY, JUNE, JULY... Linda D' Acri and family are in charge of the March supper, and Kimberly Lindsey-Amoah with the choir are running the April supper. All of the other months are available for you to volunteer with your group! Fairly thorough guidelines have been developed and written, based on experiences with the past 16 suppers, and needed support will be given. Food purchases will be reimbursed by the Mission Committee. If you can volunteer, please tell Pastor Shandi or Betsy Pennino.

IMAGINE NO MALARIA (INM) UPDATE... Our Conference calculates that New England Methodists have saved over 68,000 lives by our donations from fundraising efforts. The annual death rate from malaria is down 54% in Africa since 2000. The Mission Committee is planning our 3rd INM Event at Wesley on a Sunday, May 17th.

THE MISSION COMMITTEE WOULD WELCOME NEW MEMBERS. If you would like to join us, please tell Pastor Shandi or Betsy Pennino. Our meetings are second Wednesdays at 7 PM — March 11, April 8, May 13, and June 10.

HOSPITALITY NEEDED FOR EYEGLASSES MINISTRY ON FEB. 23RD... Pastor Shandi has noticed that people seeking eye exams and glasses start lining up hours before our doors open. On days which are very cold or raining/snowing, volunteers are needed to offer light refreshments and give out numbers from 4:30 to 6 pm on Mondays. We will start with two people on alternate Mondays, when the optometrist is here giving eye exams and prescriptions. If you could volunteer to offer hospitality, please tell Betsy Pennino (betspenn35@hotmail.com).



SHINE OUT GOD'S LIGHT
What Dark Places Can WE *Light Up* Today?

WOMEN'S RETREAT

Saturday, March 7, 2015

8:30 am - 1:30 pm

Wesley United Methodist Church

114 Main Street, Worcester, MA

*Join women from all of the Worcester area United Methodist Churches
for a time of
worship... singing...fellowship...and a choice of workshop sessions.*

Explore stories in stained glass, walk a labyrinth, experience prayer yoga, or share faith stories of women who shone: Dorcas, Esther, Priscilla, Rebecca, and Sarah
Worship leader: Rev. Nancy Collins, Aldersgate UMC

Breakfast and lunch will be provided.

Free will offering. Childcare will be available.

All sessions handicapped-accessible.

Ingathering of new or like-new household goods to help
the Florence House mothers
get started in their own apartments.

Invite a friend!!

To aid in our planning, **PLEASE REGISTER BY MARCH 2**
call Barb Ingrassia at 508-829-6359 or **email:** umw@wesleyworc.org
Directions: <http://wesleyworc.org/contact/directions/> 508-799-4191

(Image source; <https://openclipart.org/people/laobc/sun-3.svg> public domain)

WESLEY'S EASTER GARDEN

Once again, Easter is fast approaching which means it's time to order your Easter flowers that will be used to beautify the altar on Easter Sunday, April 5th. The flowers this year again will be a mix between Lilies, Tulips and some Hyacinths.

Is there someone you would like to remember or celebrate on this very special day? Please use the form below to order your plant(s). You can mail your form in along with \$10 for each plant or you can drop the form off in the Church Office and put in the box marked "Easter Flowers" on the counter. Payment must be received along with the order form. (Checks can be made out to "Wesley United Methodist Church").

ALL ORDERS MUST BE RECEIVED BY MARCH 25TH.

I AM ORDERING:

___ Lily(s) ___ Tulip(s) ___ Hyacinths

I will take ___ plant(s) home.

I will leave for a shut-in(s): *(please choose)*

___ Lily(s) ___ Tulip(s) ___ Hyacinths



Please note: Any plant(s) not indicated for pick up will be delivered to shut-in(s).

Given by _____

In Memory of / In Honor of *(please circle one)*

Given by _____

In Memory of / In Honor of *(please circle one)*

Given by _____

In Memory of / In Honor of *(please circle one)*

Given by _____

In Memory of / In Honor of *(please circle one)*

2015 LEADERSHIP WORKSHOPS

Connecting with your



February 28, 2015 ~ 8:30 AM — 3:00 PM

Leominster United Methodist Church

77 Hall Street, Leominster, MA 01453

\$20 EARLY REGISTRATION, (BEFORE OR ON 2.15.15)

\$25 REGISTRATION- AFTER 2/15/15

\$15 PP FOR TEAMS OF 7 OR MORE

You may also register online: www.cmdresourceday.com

February 28, 2015 the CMA District Congregational Development Team will be sponsoring the Annual Church Leadership Workshops and we are inviting you and members of your church to come and experience a world-changing journey.

There will be great music and outstanding workshops, life changing conversations, yummy food, and authentic people. What more could you ask for?

You will be a part of a transformational experience taking place in the Central Massachusetts District of the New England Conference. You can't miss it!

All of our workshops will be designed to equip church leaders to bring about a personal and cultural transformation to their local congregations. The workshops will be practical giving you the tools you will need to begin the work or to share with your congregation. Be transformed as you learn new ways of doing effective ministry in the 21st century

For more information there is a brochure in the welcome office. You may go ahead and register directly with the district office, but please let Shandi know if you plan on attending so he can have a chance to follow up with you. See you then!

JOHN IN ULTRA-HIGH CONTEXT: JOHN 3:22-36

(notes from the Brewer Hall Study Group, February 8, 2015)

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The balance of chapter 3 begins with John's disciples bringing to John an unstated complaint over purification by Jesus' disciples, who were baptizing alongside them. The subcontext of the complaint is that John's disciples were concerned about Jesus' incursion into John's field of activity. This scene is a thematic parallel with the previous scene of the private conversation between the Pharisee Nicodemus and Jesus (3:1-21).

vv. 22-24 The author does not clarify the reason for Jesus and his disciples to be baptizing within the context of John's prophetic witness, but it would seem that Jesus' disciples baptized for the same reason as John (1:31-34) – to reveal Jesus to Israel. The usual significance of baptism in the New Testament derives from Jesus' death and resurrection, but in the Johannine community, baptism was a revelatory experience that eventually leads to new birth through the experience of Jesus (3:3-8). **vv. 25-30** Although the details of the dispute over purification are not described, such disputes are generally over group boundaries and identity. That the dispute was reported to John indicates that Jesus was the subject of gossip (implicitly or explicitly evaluative talk). The author introduces his own evaluation, which places John in a subordinate position to Jesus (again; cf. 1:29-30). The Greek verbs *auxánein* ("to increase") and *elattoústhai* ("to decrease") (v. 30) are those used for the waxing and waning of light from celestial bodies. Later calendar makers placed the birth of John the Baptist at June 24 (three days after the summer solstice), on the day the light noticeably begins to decrease, and the birth of Jesus at December 25 (three days after the winter solstice), the day light noticeably begins to increase. **vv. 31-36** The issue in this passage is origin. Given the first century tendency to stereotype people by birth status, the one who is from the earth speaks about the earth, and the one from above can testify only what would be known to one from there. In v. 34, the metaphor changes to one of patron (God) and broker (the Son). Because love means "attachment", hate and wrath mean "disattachment". If one rejects the broker, one naturally loses any attachment with the patron, God. It is unclear who is speaking in this passage, but it may well be the author's summary of the thematic elements common to both scenes, which largely focus on the person of Jesus:

John in Ultra-High Context continued...

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. "born from above" (3:3, 7) | 1. "He who comes from above" (3:31a) |
| 2. "he who descended from heaven" (3:13) | 2. "he who comes from heaven" (3:31b) |
| 3. "earthly things...heavenly things" (3:12) | 3. "of the earth...from heaven" (3:31c) |
| 4. "you do not accept our testimony" (3:11) | 4. "no one accepts his testimony" (3:32) |
| 5. "God sent the Son" (3:17) | 5. "he whom God sent" (3:34) |
| 6. "whoever believes in him (may) have eternal life" (3:15, 16) | 6. "He who believes in the Son has eternal life" (3:36a) |
| 7. "And this is the judgment... because their deeds were evil" (3:19) | 7. "he who does not obey the Son... the wrath of God..." (3:36b) |

~ Charles Kiefer {& the members of the Brewer Hall Study Group (open group; Sundays, 9:30)}

Marshall, A. *The R.S.V. interlinear Greek – English New Testament*. London: Samuel Bagster and Sons Ltd., 1958.

Malina BJ, Rohrbaugh RL. *Social-Science Commentary on the Gospel of John*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998.



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DID YOU KNOW?

With the observance of Ash Wednesday this week we have begun the spiritual journey through the liturgical season of Lent. Images of journeys of various types are prominent in the Bible. The Old Testament tells of the travels of the patriarchs such as Abraham, Jacob and Joseph. Eventually various sites associated with divine activity became worship centers that became the goal of pilgrimages for the ancient Israelites. In the stories of the Old Testament we hear of many such sacred places including Bethel, Shiloh, and Gilgal, to name a few. Jerusalem became a religious center for Israel in the time of David, and after the first temple was built by Solomon, it became a requirement for all adult Jewish males to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the three great feasts of the Jewish liturgical year: Passover, the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost) and the Feast of Booths. Groups of traveling pilgrims would sing along the way, and some of those songs are recorded in the Bible as Psalms 120-134, as well as a few others, all known as “Songs of Ascent”.

Pilgrimages, journeys to holy places for religious reasons, are known not only in Old Testament times, but are a common feature of religious expression across the centuries in many traditions and cultures. The Holy Land still is a focal point for pilgrimage of the three major monotheistic religions—Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. Once the second temple in Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70, it was no longer possible for Jewish males to fulfill the Biblical injunction to worship there; however, to this day many Jews travel to Jerusalem to pray at the “Wailing Wall,” the remains of the western retaining wall of the Temple Mount. For Muslims, Islamic law requires a special pilgrimage (known as a *hajj*) to Mecca once in the believers’ lifetime.

Although in the Christian tradition there is no scriptural mandate to undertake pilgrimage, the tradition of pilgrimages to the Holy Land to visit places associated with the life and teachings of Jesus began as early as AD 100, and became even more popular by the 4th Century during the reign of Constantine. Rome as the site of the tombs of Peter and Paul, as well as the eventual seat of the Pope, was also an important pilgrimage destination. In the Middle Ages other sites that were associated with famous saints and miracles also became goals for European pilgrims.

The New Testament sees the Christian life as a journey towards a heavenly city, and after the Reformation, Protestants were more interested in pilgrimage as a metaphor for the spiritual journey of life, as illustrated most famously in John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*. The 20th century saw a resurgence of interest in pilgrimage among all denominations. Modern destinations of pilgrimages include many of the traditional locations such as the Holy Land, Rome, and various cathedrals and shrines in Europe, but there are also new destinations such as the religious communities of Iona in Scotland and Taizé in France. Even without exotic foreign travel, we can all continue the allegorical pilgrimages of our personal spiritual journeys.

Want to learn more about the Christian practice of pilgrimage? See details in this newsletter about the “Journey Lenten Study” being offered at Wesley.

Submitted by, Deborah A. O’Driscoll

2015 HERALD SCHEDULE

Below are the next Herald mailing dates along with the deadline dates.

<u>Article Deadline Date</u>	<u>Herald Mailing Date</u>
Mon., March 2	Wed., March 4
Mon., March 16	Wed., March 18

If you have an article, please email it as a Word attachment to:

office@wesleyworc.org

2015 ALTAR FLOWER calendar is now available in the Welcome Office. If you would like to donate flowers on a particular Sunday in honor, celebration or in memory of a loved one or friend, stop by the office and reserve the date. You can reserve the chapel or the sanctuary. After church you are welcome to take the flowers home to enjoy or you may leave them to be delivered to a shut-in. The cost for the two arrangements in either the chapel or sanctuary is \$50. Please be sure to complete a form with the dedication and return it to Debi with the payment as soon as you are able.



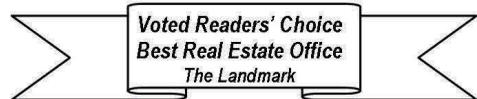
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WESLEY HERALD
FEBRUARY 19, 2015

***DON'T MISS OUT...
READ THE HERALD TODAY!***

WESLEY STAFF & LEADERSHIP TEAM

- Pastor Shandirai Mawokomatanda
- Director of Music Ministries Brett Maguire
- Ghanaian Choir Master Kwaku Dankwa
- Music Assistant Deborah O'Driscoll
- Director of Children's Christian Education Jean Grant
- Director of Christian Formation & Discipleship Lisa Fagerstrom
- Toddler Care Leader Lori Conlon
- Building Superintendent Phil Johnson
- Business Administrator Lorna Mattus-Merrill
- Church Secretary Debi Ritacco
- Custodians Carol Flionis, Gerard Piscitelli, Steve Boyns
- Head Usher David Dagle
- Administrative Council Ron Ramsay
- Board of Trustees Annelle Benson
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