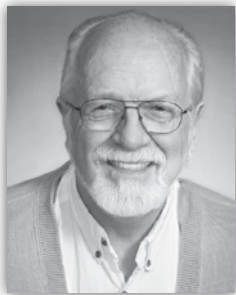


On Slumps and Avalanches:

Risking New Approaches

by Loyde Hartley



About eight years ago our stewardship program at Saint James Episcopal Church in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, began to slump. The amount pledged increased somewhat from year to year, but the number of pledges went down sharply, and we had to amend expectations as annual campaigns failed to reach their goals. Parish stewardship leaders were, however, skilled and spirit-

ed. Our stagnation stemmed from more general problems rooted in (among other things) the departure of able but short-termed Rectors for “higher callings” – such as Bishop and cathedral Dean – a perennial source of our joy and malaise.

We needed new approaches, ones better suited to the unsettling changes avalanching around us. Even before our new Rector arrived (the fourth in a decade, plus three interims) the Stewardship Committee began rethinking our tried-but-less-and-less-true plans, examining both strategies and theological rationales. We launched our new approaches in October 2008, possibly the worst time to do so since the Great Depression. The resulting increases, nevertheless, did reassure us. Giving in 2009 was up over fifteen percent, and we expect a similar increase for 2010. Volunteers have been more forthcoming. People now speak more openly about giving money as a normal expression of their discipleship.

What we are doing, however, won't work everywhere. In parish stewardship programs, one size never fits all. Without the arrival of an energetic, imaginative Rector, our plans would have failed. So, I describe below the changes we're making with two reservations: (a) like layer cakes, they may not travel well; and, (b) our success sprang more from the Holy Spirit's meddling than from our planning.

Forewarnings declared, here's how and what we're changing in our congregation:

- ☉ We use the vocabularies of hope-filled gift givers and disciples in our materials, largely replacing the traditional language of stewards and tithers. Our theme for 2009 was “Imagine Saint James.” For the next two years, 2010 and 2011, the ongoing theme is “Inspiring Community.”
- ☉ We challenge members to extraordinary giving, much larger gifts than their usual ones, rather than asking them to nudge their giving up by two, five or even a hundred percent. Of course, we don't always get the big leap when we ask, and we don't ask everyone for it. We've been mistaken, sometimes, about what to ask. Segmenting our approach, with sensitivity to parishioners' individual resources for discipleship, has helped. Parishioner enthusiasm helps even more.
- ☉ We develop our own printed materials, finding none among the canned fund-raising materials that fit us. We don't rely solely on campaign literature for getting out our messages. Year-round, our parish media tell the stories of parishioners whose giving inspires: those considering calls to holy orders; those adopting children from Ethiopia; those facing difficult times faithfully; those sacrificing conveniences so they can give more.
- ☉ We draw strongly on Jesus' teaching about money, rather than on biblical references to stewards and tithing. For example, parables about pearls of great price, mustard seeds, and greedy farmers with overflowing barns are used effectively. So, too, are Jesus' teachings about rich young men, brothers stealing inheritances, and the widow's mite

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NEW APPROACHES

On Slumps and Avalanches – continued from page 1

(not as an example of extreme giving to be imitated, but as an example of the temple ignoring the cruel circumstances of the widow's life). These are, we acknowledge, all hard teachings for folks to accept, because they demand giving even beyond everything we have. We are unaccustomed to such talk.

☉ The parable of the talents (talents here meaning money, not personal abilities) rings especially true for us. The servants that Jesus spoke about in this tale were praised when they produced two-fold over what their master initially gave them. We assume our parishioners are disciples whose reasonable service is to give *all* to God but, even beyond that, to give in such a way that their gifts actually increase in value. The key question for them is whether or not part of their *all* can be wisely invested at Saint James Church. Might their gifts to our parish be expected to increase in value by two-or-more-fold? The Stewardship Committee's duty is to respond honestly and convincingly, "Yes, they can!" Parish media and periodic reports to the congregation link generosity to results.

☉ We encourage parishioners to pledge not only to Saint James, but also in our community and throughout the world. Most opportunities for giving are not in church life narrowly defined, but in the broader contexts of our lives, neighborhood, work, civic duty, recreation and commerce. Funding grandchildren's college education, in this way of thinking, becomes the gift of a faithful disciple. So is paying taxes.

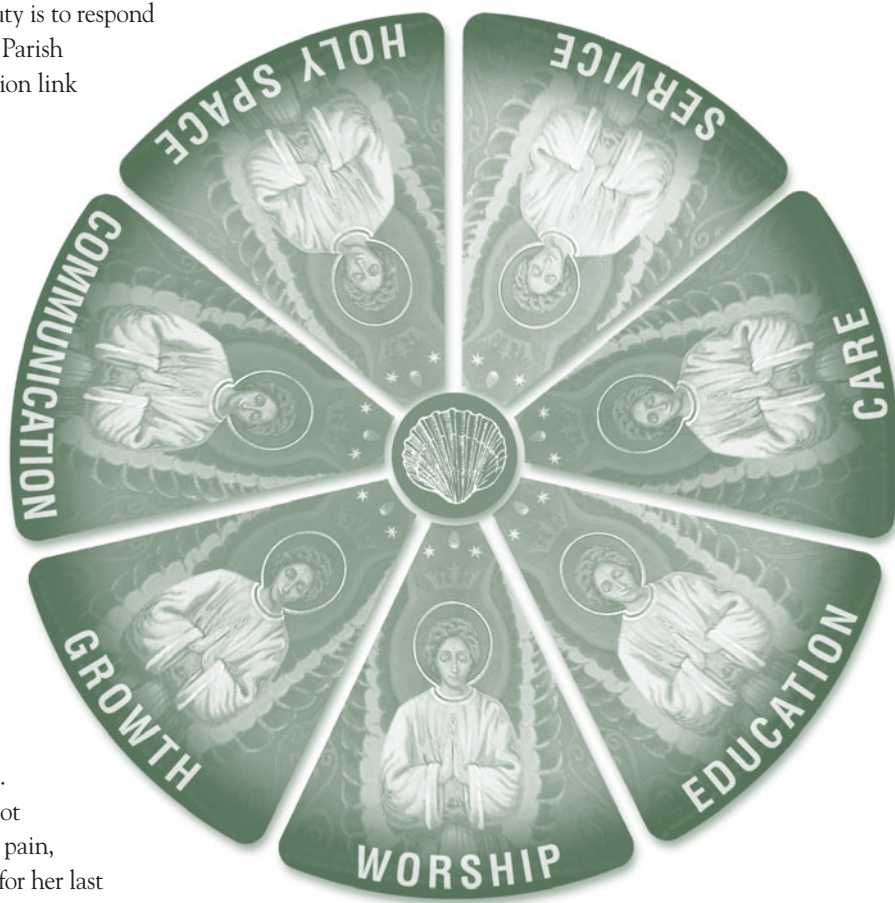
☉ We ask parishioners to give not only out of their wealth but also out of their adversity. One parishioner gives her struggle with cancer and profoundly inspires others with her candor and courage. We celebrate whatever a disciple gives. It's not just time, talent and treasure; sometimes it's pain, sorrow and misery. We don't ask the widow for her last mite, but we may want her wisdom about the despair-reeking evils that reduced her to poverty. The AIDS community might offer their grief and outrage as worthy gifts, too.

☉ We base campaign goals on the costs of what we believe the parish is being called to become, not on what we think we can raise. The resulting financial goals are ambitious, even daunting. We risk failure, and sometimes we fail. Then we pick up the pieces. We also risk succeeding.

☉ Asking for gifts has become a year-round activity, not just the traditional "October ask." Sometimes we use public campaigns; more often it's quiet conversations. And we never stop thanking givers.

☉ We don't assume that all parishioners are on board with the changes we're introducing. Some barely notice anything different.

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On Slumps and Avalanches – continued from page 2

- ⊗ Although some folks mightily resist this change, we discourage special fund-raising events. We do this for four basic reasons: (1) They don't raise much money, given the valuable volunteer time they absorb. (2) They make parishioners feel as if we're always asking for more. (3) They imply that poor budget planning has resulted in unanticipated costs. (4) Ultimately, they cheapen generosity.

During the first years of our new Rector's tenure, we are depending greatly on the increasing financial support from our existing members. We trust that at least some of the experimental ministries currently underway, such as occasional Saturday evening Masses featuring the songs of popular musicians like Bob Dylan and Johnny Cash, will attract new people. But, for awhile at least, newcomers' giving will likely remain at low levels. We expect greater attendance to increase costs, not to solve short-term financial problems. And we believe it's unwise to finance innovation by draining the endowment. Long-standing members must fund the new programs by giving more – a lot more – which is a reasonable expectation of committed disciples.

Early results encourage us. Giving is up. We've created a positive buzz in the city. Attendance is growing. People are considering possible gifts that they didn't even know they had. The Dylan and Cash Masses attracted 330 Saturday worshipers, well beyond the normal Saturday congregation of fifty. But it's still too soon to tell whether these early successes will translate into long-term growth.

If our energy slumps or unforeseen avalanches snow us under, maybe someone will suggest yet another new approach. You may want try some of what we're doing – or maybe not. Our story should not be construed as one of glowing successes, but rather a story of trials and errors that may, by grace of God, lead to something worthwhile. †

Loyde (Bud) Hartley, Minister for Stewardship at Saint James Episcopal Church in Lancaster, PA, also serves as Emeritus Professor of Religion and Society at Lancaster Theological Seminary. He is the author of books and articles about urban churches and church planning, including *Understanding Church Finances* (Pilgrim Press, 1982.) Bud has taught graduate level courses on the Bible and money and is a frequent consultant to parishes on financial planning and the theology of giving. Contact him by e-mail to bud@stjameslanpa.org.

Go to http://tens.org/docs/st_james_lancaster_2010_mailer.pdf to read a full-color, four-page brochure designed and produced at St. James as a tool for presentation of their 2010 Program Budget.

Love as Teacher

by The Rev. Canon Cathy Gray



We are taught, we know, we teach.

We often think in such linear fashion when we consider the tasks of teaching and learning. One generation passes on to the next the knowledge and the wisdom they have been given, or have found, collected and created. At times old knowledge gives birth to new, new knowledge pushes aside the old and irrelevant, and some knowl-

edge, sadly, is lost. We may reach back in time and attempt to pull forward something older to see what it might still hold for us. We may strain our vision forward to look for what might be possible. The number of lines is probably endless, and the knowledge we will find is likewise more than can be counted. And then we will pass it on.

But life is not so linear. When tempted to set our eyes determinedly ahead or to the side or to the rear, we do well to remember that the world of knowing exists in a swirl, in a lively dance, and that what we thought was sitting securely at Point B may by now have waltzed and pirouetted its way into a whole other place. Even the disciplines of mathematics and physics have escaped the ideas of strict construction that say everything moves in one direction from some beginning to some end. Ideas like strings and clusters, quantum theory and chaos theory, reports of expanding galaxies and stars that shrink and explode all point to a universe that is in constant formation and ever being made new.

We, as individual persons and as human communities, are not unlike the universe that swirls around us. As long as we are alive we are in constant formation, forever being made new. As Christians we are privileged to say that we are constantly in formation and forever being made new in the hands of God: in the hands of love. For all of our lives, if we are willing, God continually re-creates us and sets us on new paths where we are again privileged to pass that love outward into the dancing of the world. When we are engaged in the work of Christian Spiritual Formation (which we all are, in one way or another) whether we share stories and wonder and pray with children in a classroom, take on any of the additional tasks in the church school, or simply walk our children into the church on Sunday morning, we are

called to live supple, pliable lives that allow God's Spirit to enter and renew us.

We want to lead our children on the pathway where love will teach them, to help them engage the world through acts of compassion and to find the face of God in the faces of those in need. We want them to connect to one another in ways that are rich and grace-filled, in a manner that respects and cherishes life and living. We want them to find their deepest joy and their best comfort in God's arms. It is in all these sacred moments that God's presence bursts unhindered into our lives. But we cannot so gift our children if we have not first opened ourselves to the gift.

In his book *To Know as We Are Known* Parker Palmer defines "education" as the act of "drawing out" what is already present and alive within each of us. For those who are "educators," the task is essentially about guiding others, be they small children or sturdy adults, to seek and find where God lives in their own lives, and about giving them the language to be able to draw that liveliness to the surface and offer it to the world. For those who are "learners" the task is to throw open the doors of the heart and breathe deeply so that God's presence can be known that far into the center of things. But the "educator" and the "learner" are not distinct roles to be assigned to one person or another. Instead they are, in our best moments, present and active in all of us at once. Teacher and student are mutually inclusive categories – we cannot be one and not be the other. Generations teach one another and learn from one another in constant and often unpredictable interplay. Adults and children spin out the "good news" of life in God's hand and pass it 'round the circle as in a lively game of toss and catch. And God has promised to be with us through it all.

Being made new can seem a scary proposition. We become comfortable with life as it is and content that God is with us and that we are a part of a long procession of faithful people who have managed to pass God, or the knowledge of God, from one generation to the next. That is not a bad thing. In fact, it is a critical piece of what makes the whole keep on working. But "teaching" is not about the addition and multiplication of knowledge or information; it is, instead, about being mutually open to one another and open to the various comings and goings of life itself.

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Love as Teacher – continued from page 4

It is allowing what is common to us – *common* as in belonging to all of us, and *common* as in belonging to the everyday – to set us on new pathways and new journeys with God as both guide and destination.

In everything we do, in every act of relationship, in every good word spoken, in every true seeking for what is real and life-giving, Love is who God folds herself in and becomes the true teacher and the gracious re-maker.

When I visit those who are ill and pray with them, or simply sit next to them for a time, or chat about things that may seem inconsequential in the face of death but may be truly the summary of life's joy, then I am being taught – re-created by love. When I allow a child to show me a bug, even when it makes me squirm, and when I cherish the gift of a new-fallen leaf, love makes me new. When I sew a quilt to warm someone who is cold and alone, or play with my four rescue-shelter dogs in the quiet, dewy morning – love re-makes me. When I write, preach, teach and lift my hands at the altar – love shapes me into someone I could not have imagined before. And God offers to each of us this gift in common. God calls us to toss aside our complacency

and step into a place where life is more lively and where we are all caught up in the delightful commotion that is Love's dancing among us.

We need to take the time to find where love dwells and interleaves itself in our lives, where it is missing or broken, where we can breathe it in and how we can, with grace and joy, breathe it back out into the world. Only when we engage love in its varied and wondrous forms, when we nurture it inside ourselves and in our actions, when we wash ourselves in it, roll and stretch in it, live in it – then we are ready to toss it outward, scatter it on the wind and watch as it springs up new and delightful all around us.



The Rev. Can. Cathy Gray serves at Christ Church Cathedral in Indianapolis, IN, focusing on spiritual formation and outreach ministries for children, youth and families. She worked in a small, diverse Episcopal School in the heart of Los Angeles, CA, before she and her family moved to Indianapolis in 2009. Contact her at CathyG@cccindy.org.

Called to Adventure

Birds that don't fly are like Christians who don't do God's work.

When an adult bird knows it's time for babies to fly, it starts to push. Now if the chick doesn't get it, the adult bird starts to peck at the talons or feet of the baby. And it gets to a point where it becomes more painful for the little bird to hold on than to let go.

You see, the adult bird knows there is no danger in making the baby bird do what it was designed to do. Birds have feet and can walk, and birds have talons and can cling, but walking and clinging was not what they were designed to do. And the mother bird knows that it is no big deal to force her babies to do what they were designed to do, which is flying. Flying is what birds do best.

God knows that giving ourselves to God's work and kingdom and to others is what we do best. That's the design of the universe. And some of us

look pathetic clinging to the dead branch of this world – the dead branch of bank accounts and of things – clinging to a nest of selfishness.

We don't think we can risk because we have never let go. God is calling you today to let go.

And when we do, we will be amazed at the experience. We will soar. We will soar in God's grace.

-Source unknown



Reprinted with permission from "Stewardship for the 21st Century," the e-mail newsletter of Luther Seminary. "Stewardship for the 21st Century" is produced by Jerry Hoffman, Director of the Center for Stewardship Leadership. For online stewardship resources and to subscribe to the e-mail newsletter, go to <http://www.luthersem.edu/stewardship/>.

Sharing Our Story: Storytelling in Stewardship

by Brenda Milam



In 2009 I had the opportunity to attend the TENS conference in Gatlinburg, Tennessee. One of the workshops that especially interested me was titled “Sharing Our Story – A Key to Nurturing Generosity” and led by Bruce Rockwell. The focus was gaining new insight into the power of storytelling in stewardship.

While *stewardship* is a word often heard in church, money itself is rarely discussed in terms of the ethical and daily choices we make. A holistic understanding of stewardship is important, but it's time to deal with money and what it means for us in all aspects of our lives.

Money is everywhere in our society, affecting lifestyle, political agendas, workplace relationships, medical care and everyday hopes and dreams. If religious leaders want to help people apply their faith to their finances, breaking the barriers against talking about money is the first step. We cannot exclude this one part of our lives from critical examination. We need to overcome our reluctance to talk about money in terms of our faith.

Marie T. Cross, in her book *The Price of Faith*, says, “faith and money belong in the same sentence.” The book contains ten lesson plans – which deal with personal finances, church funds, charity and attitudes about money – intended to help adults gain a new understanding about stewardship. *The Price of Faith* would make a good study for a stewardship committee or parish as part of a year-round stewardship program.

One way to get people to talk about money is to encourage them to give a personal giving testimony. Hearing about other parishioners' struggles and successes in the area of stewardship is a powerful witness. Here are some suggestions adapted from *Generous Living* magazine:

❖ One of the best ways to prepare yourself is to interview yourself. To assist you in defining your giving story, ask yourself questions. What was your family's attitude toward money while you were growing up? What was your own adult attitude towards money? What were your giving practices? What was your motive for giving? What people have influenced you to give more generously? What passages of Scripture have influenced your giving? How would you describe your change in giving – gradual or sudden, difficult or easy? What are your giving practices today – how much and to whom? What is your motivation for giving today? What is the experience of giving like for you, i.e., how do you feel when you give? How is your life different today because you are a giver? What is the most exciting gift you have given? What are your future plans for giving?



- ❖ Because testimonies are basically stories, you should think about how you will organize yours. Three suggestions that have worked for people in the past are My Life Before vs. My Life Now, Three Lessons God Has Taught Me, and My Key Giving Experiences (possibly three.)
- ❖ Preparing your testimony is half the battle. (In cases where the testimony is written out and spoken, it is the whole battle!) Read your story or extemporize from an outline. Either is fine, so do what feels most comfortable for you. You need not be terrified. This is not “public speaking,” it is simply telling your story.

We are all called to live by faith, a faith that is evident in all aspects of our lives: worship, prayer and church attendance; bank accounts; habits of spending, saving and sharing our money, wealth and possessions. We need to be willing to talk about it. ✝

★
Brenda Milam chairs the Commission on Stewardship in the Episcopal Diocese of Western Louisiana. She is a member at St. James Episcopal Church in Alexandria. You may e-mail Brenda at brendamilam@suddenlink.net.

CARL KNIRK'S LEGACY

DEAR FRIENDS,

All of us at TENS mourn the passing of our dear friend and colleague, Carl Knirk, Canon for Planned Giving/Stewardship and Evangelism in the Episcopal Diocese of Olympia. Carl, age 65, died suddenly at his home in Seattle on May 29. His memorial service was held on June 12 at St. Mark's Cathedral, the Rt. Rev. Greg Rickel officiating. In his homily, Bp. Rickel reminded us that "to speak of Carl Knirk is to preach the Gospel." He recalled that Carl often pointed out that each of us "might be the only Bible a person ever reads. [Carl] took that seriously, and introduced so many to the Gospel just by being who he was."

Carl was a dedicated member of TENS' Board of Directors since 2000, had served as Vice President, and just this past March became President of our Board. A man of integrity and one without pretense, he encouraged all to consider their faith journey together with their journey in generosity, and to explore the connection between the two. Bp. Rickel said it best: "We will be, and be better, because Carl Knirk was in our lives, and there will never come an end to the good he has done for us. He built the foundation of his work in our souls. That will be his legacy, profound and eternal."

A memorial scholarship fund has been established in celebration of the life and ministry of Carl F. Knirk. More information is available at the website of the Episcopal Diocese of Olympia <http://www.ecww.org>.

Please remember Carl, Susan and their entire family in your prayers.



— Tom Gossen

What TENS Means to Me

Written in 2008 by Carl Knirk

I began employment, full time, as Bishop's Deputy for Planned Giving/Stewardship for the Diocese of Olympia in June 1998. In September 1999 we held a regional TENS Conference in Seattle with support from four other dioceses: the Anglican Diocese of New Westminster in Vancouver, B.C., and also the Episcopal Dioceses of Oregon, Idaho and Spokane.

Over 200 participants attended that conference. It was the start for me and for many others of a transformation on how I see Christian stewardship, brought on by the witness of countless presenters and attendees who were able to connect their faith journeys with giving back to God.

It is not just about the money. It's about what we do with all that God has provided us, in grateful, joyful giving.

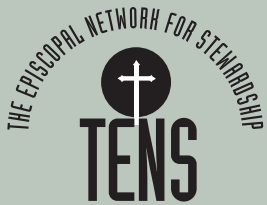
I was invited to join the TENS board in 2000, and in the Northwest we have held five regional conferences led by TENS. The Episcopal Diocese of Olympia is a diocesan Corporate Member and we send the TENS newsletter to each of our 100 congregations. I also utilize the many resource booklets and materials that TENS produces.

This has a continuing, compelling effect on how congregations view and act around Christian Stewardship.

My new Bishop, Greg Rickel, will be joining the TENS Board. [Bp. Rickel became a Board member in 2009.] He is a strong proponent of TENS. I only wish that we could have the opportunity to offer training to other Bishops in our church and to open their hearts so they can model the TENS message.

While TENS is a young non-profit in terms of history, I believe we are poised to take the next steps, utilizing our new Strategic Plan. In partnership with The Episcopal Church Center, we are ready to reach even further across our church to offer resources, training, and a message that will bring new life to The Episcopal Church.

We owe Tom Gossen a huge debt of gratitude as he prepares to step away from the organization he had the vision and resources to begin. I see great things ahead for TENS to continue and to grow what is now the leading source of stewardship resources in the Episcopal Church. ✝



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UPCOMING EVENTS

2010 TENS Conference, July 29-31, Indianapolis, IN.

TENS' 15th Annual International Leadership Conference, Pre-conference for diocesan stewardship staff and anniversary celebration. More information available at <http://tens.org> or call 800-699-2669 or 316-686-0470.

It's So Much Richer Than Money, August 6-7, Camp Allen, TX.

2010 Bishop's conference on Stewardship in the Diocese of Texas. Plenaries and workshops led by: the Rev. David N. Mosser, Sr. Pastor, First Methodist Church (Arlington, TX) and author; the Rt. Rev. Andy Doyle, Bishop of Texas; the Rev. Laurel Johnston, Program Officer for Stewardship, TEC; Tom Gossen, Executive Director, TENS; Terry Parsons, former Stewardship Officer, TEC; Lisa Davidson Hines, Drama Instructor, the Geneva School (Orlando, FL); the Rev. Dr. Steve Rottgers, Rector, Grace Episcopal Church (Georgetown, TX); and Kathy Culmer, Sr. Mission Funding Coordinator (Diocese of Texas). Registration fee \$90.00. For more information go to <http://dotstewards.blogspot.com> or contact Julie Heath at 713-353-2125 or e-mail julie@epicenter.org.

Faith and Money Network offers workshops and retreats that equip people to explore the many aspects of their relationship

with money within the grounding of their faith. Workshops can be programmed to fit evening and weekend time periods. At the core of Faith and Money Network events is the space and freedom to ask questions and find one's own answers. The atmosphere of trust and confidentiality that is created empowers people to get in touch with their beliefs, attitudes and actions regarding money. People at a Faith and Money Network event can engage with experienced, faithful leaders and other thoughtful participants around the deep issues of money and faith. See our eight-week *Faith and Money Study Guide* for small groups. For more information visit www.faithandmoneynetwork.org.

TENS will publicize your events in this space and on our website.

Please contact Tom Gossen or Ann Elizabeth Bishop by calling the TENS office or sending e-mail to tens@tens.org. *Networking* is a bimonthly publication, so send your information as early as possible.

Sponsorship/Hosting Opportunities for future TENS events are available.

If interested in participation in the planning of a national or regional event, please contact Tom Gossen at tom@tens.org.

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