

Season's Greetings

# First Presbyterian Church

WINTER 2024 NEWSLETTER

## PEOPLE WHO HAVE THE HOPE

Hope is faith projected into the future. We are entering Advent, the season characterized by hope. "Advent" comes from a Latin word that means "coming." In this season, we recall the hope and the patient waiting of the Hebrew people for the Messiah that God had promised them. At Christmas, Christians rejoice in the Christ who has come, more wonderfully, more gloriously than we could have imagined.

***"Hope is a star that shines in the night,  
Leading us on till the morning is bright."***

The prophet Zechariah called God's people "***prisoners who have the hope.***" St. Paul told the Roman Christians that we "***rejoice in hope.***" We are those who hold tenaciously to a deep, glorious conviction that beyond this physical existence there is a new world waiting for us, that our Messiah has prepared for us. So St. Peter wrote, "***...according to His promise we are looking for a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness dwells***" (II Pet. 3:13). Imagine it... a world we have never seen, but which we will instantly know to be home, where things will finally be *right*, just as they should be.

Advent points us to another hope. Jesus spoke of a day when we "***...will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory.***" (Matt. 24:30). When I was young, I remember being scared out of my wits by preachers who brought the most ferocious, blood-curdling messages about the end-times. It was a terrible misrepresentation of a glorious doctrine. The "***parousia,***" the sudden second appearing of Christ is the great hope of the Church of Jesus Christ. There's a great day coming, a day of unimaginable joy and glory and celebration. The Christ who came once at Bethlehem will come again for His faithful people, and all things will be made *new!*

In summing up his teaching on this subject to the Thessalonian Christians, St. Paul exhorted them, "***...therefore, encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.***" (I Thess. 5:11).

As we enter Advent, as people "***who have the hope,***" let us be known as the people who bring encouragement and up-building in all our words and actions, as bearers of the Good News of Jesus Christ, the fountain of all our hope.

Blessings,  
Rev. Paul Shaw,  
Pulpit Supply

*Where contact information is not provided,  
phone/email Linda in the Church Office and she will forward your request.*

## A MESSAGE FROM OUR INTERIM MODERATOR



*Hail to the Lord's anointed, great David's greater Son!  
Hail in the time appointed, His reign on earth begun! . . .  
The tide of time shall never His covenant remove.  
His Name shall stand forever, That Name to us is Love.*

Dear Members and Friends of First Presbyterian Church Chatham,

Once again the Christian calendar-year comes to an end with a celebration of “Christ the King Sunday” (November 24<sup>th</sup>), and then the liturgical year begins over with a time of waiting: *Advent*.<sup>1</sup> This waiting period is one of anticipation as we prepare ourselves to celebrate the birth of Jesus.

The world-wide Church today is in a similar situation to Israel at the end of the Old Testament: waiting and hoping in prayerful expectation for the coming of the Messiah. Israel looked back to God’s past gracious actions on their behalf and, on that basis, they called for God to act for them again. In the same way, the Church, during Advent, looks back upon Christ’s first coming in celebration while at the same time looking forward in eager anticipation to the full realisation of Christ’s kingdom, when God finally put to right all that is distorted and evil in the world. We sing of this in various traditional Advent hymns, like “Hail to the Lord’s Anointed” and “Lo! He Comes with Clouds Descending.” Let’s not lose sight of this vital theme, founded on our Easter hope, as we focus once more on Christ’s humble beginnings.

Yet, in this time of waiting, we do so in confident hope of whom and what we are waiting for - because of the Christmas story and subsequent life of Jesus that we read about in the Gospels. While it’s good to look back and see how far we have come as a church, as we did recently on Anniversary Sunday, it is unwise to dwell in the past. We need to look forward in both hope and realism, confident of Christ’s continued presence as we celebrate God’s gift of his Son. And as we wait in hope, God wants us to be busy doing the kinds of things that please him: loving God and others wholeheartedly – together, as a faith community.

Finally, remember the words of the angel to the shepherds: “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people,” (Luke 2:10). In this time of uncertainty, hold on to the good news of Jesus’ coming. God keeps his promises; that’s why Jesus came. And may we, along with the shepherds (Luke 2:20), glorify and praise God for all the things we witness this Christmas.



Blessings,  
Rev. Tim Reddish<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The word “Advent” is derived from the Latin word *adventus*, meaning “coming,” which is a translation of the Greek word *parousia*. In the New Testament, this word is often used in the context of Christ’s *return*.

<sup>2</sup> I can be contacted through Rev. Paul Shaw and Joan M. Fletcher (Clerk of Session).

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## UPCOMING SERVICES



- 1 December: Squeaky Clean (Rev. Paul Shaw) / Holy Communion
- 8 December: A Very Good Year (Rev. Paul Shaw)
- 15 December: Great Expectations (Rev. Paul Shaw)
- 22 December: My Soul Rejoices (Rev. Paul Shaw)
- 29 December: Full of Grace & Truth (Rev. Paul Shaw)
- 5 January: TBA (Rev. Tim Reddish)

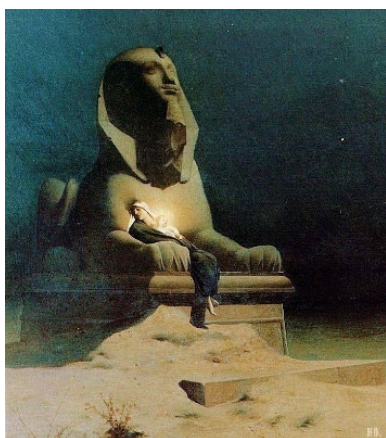
## FROM ADVENT TO EPIPHANY

Advent covers the four Sundays preceding Christmas, during which time we light the candles of hope, peace, joy and love. This year, it begins on 1 December and continues up to sundown on 24 Dec, at which time the Advent purple changes to the white and gold of Christmas. And 25 December? It's the first of the Twelve Days of Christmas, which ends on 5 January, again at sundown, when Epiphany begins.

During Advent, we share in the longing of the Old Testament saints for the Messiah's coming, the ministry of John the Baptist, and the Church's joyful expectation for the second coming of Christ. On Christmas Day, we mark the birth of Our Lord. And upon reaching Epiphany, we commemorate the visit of the Magi, Jesus' own baptism, and the wedding at Cana, at which point the season concludes.

In short, Advent marks the beginning of the Church Year, but make no mistake: **IT IS NOT CHRISTMAS YET!!!** As for 1 January, it's simply the Eighth Day of Christmas, with or without any maids a-milking.

## AN ADVENT PRAYER



May this eternal truth be always on our hearts:  
That the God who breathed this world into being  
Placed stars into the heavens  
And designed a butterfly's wing  
Is the God who entrusted his life  
to the care of ordinary people.

A mystery so deep it is impossible to grasp,  
A mystery so beautiful it is impossible to ignore

*Intrigued by this painting? Check out Christianity and the Arts (p.7)*

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## TELL ME ABOUT THE MUSIC & WORSHIP TEAM...

Music is a vital part of First Presbyterian Church. We have opted for a blended service which means both traditional music and contemporary songs are offered. First Church is blessed to offer several instruments. We can truly offer a joyful noise with the pipe organ, flute, guitar, keyboard and percussion. Our Music Director, Adam Shaw chooses music that reflects and enhances the scripture and message of the week. The congregation is treated to a weekly anthem by our dedicated and enthusiastic four-voice choir, while the Praise Team leads in the singing of contemporary praise songs. Typically, two hymns are sung with Adam playing the pipe organ.



We meet in person every Thursday from mid August until the end of June. The Praise Team practises 6:30 -7:30, the Choir 7:30- 8:45 (ish)

Want to join in? You're more than welcome. Come and make a joyful noise with us!

## ... AND THE PERSON WHO CHAIRS IT



*Her name is Julie Collins!*

**How far back to your church roots go?** I was raised in a family that made church attendance a priority, so I have always belonged to a church.

**What are your earliest church memories?** I grew up on a farm and attended a small rural church with a small, rural congregation. My two older sisters, along with two other girls formed the choir. My younger brother and I were often the only two children in Sunday School and my mother was the teacher. It was difficult for my parents to get the four of us out the door in a timely fashion, but service didn't start until we arrived. There was a lovely mural at the front of the Church with the following Scripture: Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. (Matthew 11:28)

**Who were/ are your spiritual mentors?** My maternal grandmother was a born again Christian and attended a Baptist Church. She was loving and kind but also did not tolerate laziness or foolishness in any form. My siblings and I affectionately nicknamed her, "Sargent Hunter". But her faith was beautiful and she and I had many discussions over the years. I was also blessed with a Christian neighbour. Since my husband and I purchased the family farm, I knew Ann my entire life. She demonstrated faith in action and was a mentor to me. And of course, my parents who have exemplified love, kindness, generosity and faithfulness throughout my life.

**What Church activities are you currently involved in?** I am a choir member (currently on "sabbatical"), a volunteer for the Church Breakfast, a Sunday School teacher and a member of Session

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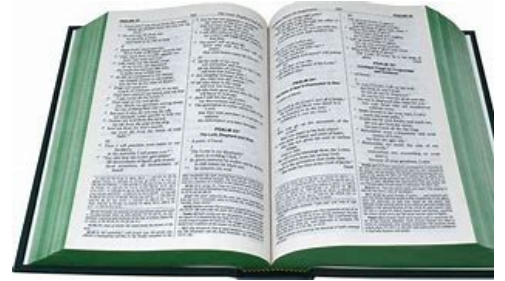


## BIBLE STUDIES

From a Roman prison cell, possibly only days before his final appearance, and subsequent martyrdom, before the tyrant Nero, the Apostle Paul wrote to his young protegee, Timothy, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God... accurately handling the word of truth." (II Tim. 2:15). Bible Study is important, challenging, sometimes befuddling, edifying, enlightening, and can be full of immense joy! The Bible is our greatest earthly treasure. To be able to hold it in our hands, to open it, read it, and let it transform our lives, is our greatest privilege.

Our Tuesday morning Men's Bible Study and our Wednesday evening Zoom Bible Study will continue through December 10 & 11 respectively, and then will resume in 2025 on January 7 & 8 respectively. Please join us!

*"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My Words will not pass away."*



Blessings,  
Rev. Paul Shaw,  
Pulpit Supply

## SUNDAY SCHOOL



**NURSERY:** We are pleased to announce that the nursery open is now open the first, second and third Sundays of each month. Thank you to our volunteers! And do consider helping on the fourth Sunday and/or becoming a substitute. **CONTACT:** Maureen McLachlin or Allison Shaw.

**SUNDAY SCHOOL:** Merrily we go along, Sunday by Sunday, learning more of the stories in the Bible and, in turn, learning more about Jesus.

**TEENS:** We continue working on our artwork through Scripture, as well as renovating the teen room. Progress is being made, with photos to come upon completion!

**COMING UP:** Our annual Sunday School Program will take place during the 8 Dec service. And be sure not to miss "Summer in December" and Movie Sunday, both on the 29th!

**FEBRUARY:** It's time for the "SOUPerbowl", when we will be asking for donations of canned/boxed meals, ready-to-eat soups and stews, pastas, and rice dishes, which will be made available to our Saturday Breakfast guests on 1 March.

Allison Shaw, Christian Education Coordinator  
519.352.2313, ex 3

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## PASTORAL CARE

*Dear friend, you are faithful in whatever you do for the brothers,  
especially when they are strangers.  
(3 John 1:5 NIV)*

As do most churches in North America, First Church fills its sanctuary with poinsettias for Advent. Unlike most churches, we have been blessed with 5 generations of Rosses to provide us with locally grown plants at significantly less cost than other congregations pay. You might want to take a minute to thank Bill the next time you see him. I for one cannot imagine a sanctuary without them.

There are plenty of tales attached to why poinsettias are associated with Christmas, and what they symbolize. But in terms of this column, there is only one of importance to me: they put smiles on faces that don't exercise those muscles nearly enough. In the pre-pandemic era, we used to deliver them to those of congregants in long term care; and anyone on my Team back then knows exactly what I'm talking about. That vibrant red captures the attention of everyone you pass.

I have no doubt that some, maybe even most of those smiles hide a level of covetousness. It is certainly clear that we weren't stopping for them, and they had no illusions that we would. At the same time, the very fact that we noticed those smiles, and returned them, was just as great a gift: the gift of acknowledgement at a time of life when the world seems intent on wishing them gone. We didn't know their names, nor did they know ours, and the exchange was at best transient. Even so, in that moment, we have truly "shared with the Lord's people who are in need" (Romans 12:13 NIV). All that from one plant.

Of course, we didn't only deliver to nursing homes: then as now, we had congregants in seniors residences and still in their own homes. In those situations, public reactions tend to be muted and less communal. But there was just as pleasure to be given (and taken), with on average a livelier fellowship.

Spreading Christmas cheer can be a two-edged sword: it can anger and annoy as much as delight. It can become one more obligation atop too many errands and preparations. Yet it seems to me a simple smile, a brief chat, and a bit of living colour can hardly be called damaging.

The scriptural passage at the head of this column describes our homebound congregants to a T: they are brothers and sisters in Christ yet too often strangers. So I implore you, please consider dropping off a poinsettia (from Ross's, of course) to someone you've never met. Or pick up the phone and extend a holiday greeting to an old friend you've missed seeing on Sunday mornings. Either way, you and they will surely experience "the fruit of the Spirit [which] is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness [and] gentleness" (Galatians 5:22).

Sue Easun, Coordinator of Pastoral Care

[pastoral.care@firstchatham.org](mailto:pastoral.care@firstchatham.org)

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*Give, and it will be given to you.  
(Luke 6:38 NIV)*



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## SPECIAL EVENTS

### CK Singers



Their annual Christmas Concert will take place in our sanctuary on 1 Dec at 2:30 pm. All proceeds to Outreach for Hunger

### The Voiceprint Choir



Along with our own Adam Shaw, they will be presenting 3 Christmas Concerts in Glencoe and Highgate. See <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/12BaotXw9xg/> for more details

### Christmas Eve Service



We're switching it up this year: please join us for The Festival of Lessons & Carols on 24 Dec at 7 pm. If you like to sing, this is the place to be!

## CHRISTIANITY AND THE ARTS

*Christianity has inspired the arts for two millennia, beginning with the simple drawing of a fish. At one point, its symbolism was as recognizable to the people of its day as emojis are to us.*

The detail from *Rest on the Flight into Egypt* (1879) on p.3 is by French painter Luc Olivier Merson. While this subject has been covered by painters far more famous than he, the inclusion of the sphynx makes it unforgettable.

In the original scripture, Matthew 2:13-15, Joseph is told in a dream to flee with Mary and Jesus. Typically, he is shown leading a donkey with the other two perched on top. But unlike other stories in the Nativity narrative, there aren't mean innkeepers, various stable denizens, or adoring shepherds and wise men to lend an air of visual drama to the scene. Which may explain why, over time, artists began to think about what might have happened along the way, which in turn led to a focus on what it must have been like to cross a scorching desert. As a result, you will often see Mary either slumbering under a palm tree or with one in the immediate vicinity, Jesus breastfeeding, Joseph busying himself with something or other, and perhaps one or more angels popping by for a visit.

In contrast, Merson offers us a completely different scenario. Instead of a palm tree, Mary is sheltered by a sphynx. If you were ever a fan of Greek mythology, you will remember a rather cruel and bloodthirsty sphynx harassing the residents of Thebes until outfoxed by Oedipus. This sphynx, however, is Egyptian, and as such a powerful symbol of protection very often guarding the tombs of kings. Note too that it is deep night, not high noon. There is no activity whatsoever, on earth or in heaven. Now look at Mary's face: what was it that drew her gaze before she fell asleep? Is she looking ahead to her new home, or back at her old one? And what about Jesus? Though it's hard to tell, he seems to be looking in the opposite direction, but most definitely not at his mother.

One final note. Think for a moment on the first verse of *Silent Night*. At no time was their tenure in that stable even remotely silent. But here, in this depiction of divine rest, they are finally able to "sleep in heavenly peace".

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## FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT

Roof Tile Management has been contracted to handle our **roof repairs**; they expect to start by the end of November, so you'll see scaffolding going up shortly. They will remain on site for several weeks; and they will be using two spaces in our parking lot to store their tools and materials, so parking will be extremely limited when they are on site. Repairs will be made to the roof itself as well as repointing some brick on the exterior walls.

A new **mailbox** has been installed by the Sunday School entrance. This will allow larger packages to be delivered to the church (such as magazines etc) while ensuring all of our mail is safe and secure.

Every Saturday morning, several guests arrive for breakfast on their bicycles. As there are no nearby **bike racks**, Bruce Reissner reached out to the city; thanks to Dennis Chepeka of the Public Works Department, we will soon receive one from a local bicycle club.

**Offering envelopes** for 2025 will be available in late December. If you no longer need them, or want to start using them, be sure to let us know before then.

**Happy New Year!** Ok, it may be a little early, but there's no time like the present to consider your givings. Our budget is holding its own but only because we haven't had to cover a minister's salary since June. Plus we have significant expenses coming up, especially the roof repairs (which are budgeted to exceed \$75,000). Any increase you can manage will be gratefully received.

(Want a real-time glimpse into our finances? As we are a registered charity, Canada Revenue Services ensures they are made public: <https://tinyurl.com/3c5295ux>)

Ed McLachlin, Chair, Property & Finance Committee



## FUNDRAISING



We are in the process of upgrading our **Sound and Livestream Equipment** to enhance our worship in the sanctuary and the clarity of our livestream. If you enjoy our services (on site or from home), please consider donating toward the cost of these upgrades. CONTACT: Ed McLachlin

*Have an idea to help us reach our goal? We'd love to hear from you.*

P.S. The Presbyterian Church of Canada requires that we show we can afford a minister before it will allow us to extend a call. That means fiscal health is especially important this year.

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## HOW TO DONATE

- **Weekly Envelops.** If you attend most Sunday services and would like to pay by cash or cheque, you can request a box of envelops; there are also special envelops for Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, and Anniversary Sunday. The first envelop in your box is labeled Initial Offering; please consider helping us defray the cost of continuing to offer this option. CONTACT: Linda Weeks at [office@firstchatham.org](mailto:office@firstchatham.org)
- **PAR.** If you would like to support us on a monthly basis and prefer the convenience of automatic withdrawal, you can sign up for PAR. This is the most cost-effective option, from the church's point of view. CONTACT: Linda Weeks at [office@firstchatham.org](mailto:office@firstchatham.org)
- **Occasional, Fundraising or Memorial Donations.** If you are in the sanctuary on Sunday morning, you can use one of the spare envelops in your pew. You can also drop by during office hours, or mail it in (cheques only).

We can provide tax receipts for any amount, if you give us your full name and contact information.

## OTHER WAYS TO CONTRIBUTE

Of course, your tithes and offerings are essential to ensure the smooth running of our building, programs and activities. And without volunteers, none of those programs and activities would be possible. However, no contribution is too small.

- **Stamps:** The Canadian Bible Society accepts used stamps, selling them to collectors and vendors and using the revenue to purchase bibles for the Canadian prison ministry. Ten pounds of stamps = approximately 6 bibles for distribution. While it takes a lot of stamps to equal 10 pounds, every little bit helps! CONTACT: Cindy Reid
- **Recycling:** Terracycle Canada will accept the following items: used Brita filters/broken pitchers; used Crest dental products, including packaging; used Burts Bees products, including packaging. CONTACT: Sue Easun
- **Outreach for Hunger:** Our Session regularly sends a financial donation. However, you can help by donating in non-perishable food items and toiletries.
- **Saturday Breakfast Program:** In addition to a good meal, our guests can choose from among a variety of toiletries & hygiene items, pantry staples, and new/gently used clothing & blankets. CONTACT: Rebecca Ladd

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## BECOME INVOLVED

- Audio Visual: Barb Capeling (Team Lead)
- Bible Studies: Rev. Paul Shaw (Pulpit Supply)
- Christian Education: Maureen McLachlin (Team Lead & Session Liaison)
- Coffee Hour: Judi Aitken (Coordinator)
- Decorating: Judy McCarthy (Team Lead)
- Mission & Outreach: Oscar Njumba (Team Lead & Session Liaison)
  - Backyard Mission
  - Saturday Breakfast Program: Bruce Davidson & Rebecca Ladd (co-Team Leads)
- Music & Worship: Julie Collins (Team Lead & Session Liaison)
  - Choir: Adam Shaw (519.352.2313, ex 4)
  - Praise Team: Adam Shaw (519.352.2313, ex 4)
- Pastoral Care: Sue Easun (Team Lead, [pastoral.care@firstchatham.org](mailto:pastoral.care@firstchatham.org))
  - Visitation
  - Prayer Force: Joan Fletcher ([pastoral.care@firstchatham.org](mailto:pastoral.care@firstchatham.org))
  - Prayer Shawls: TBA
  - Widows & Widowers: Judy McCarthy
- Property & Finance: Ed McLachlin (Chair & Session Liaison)
  - Health & Safety: Ross Simpson
- Social Media: Sue Easun & Mike James
- Sunday Greeters: Mike Bennett
- Sunday Livestream: Mike Fry & Ed McLachlin

Each of these Teams is short one member: You!! Please give prayerful consideration to giving a little (more) of your time.

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phone/email Linda in the Church Office and she will forward your request.*

## STAY IN TOUCH

Do keep us informed of births, deaths, and anniversaries. We will only include them in the Bulletin with your permission. CONTACT Linda Weeks at [office@firstchatham.org](mailto:office@firstchatham.org)

Do let us know if you or someone you know is in hospital, sick or in need of comfort. We will only share this information with designated pastoral folk: Rev. Reddish, Rev. Shaw, and/or Sue Easun. CONTACT: Linda Weeks at [office@firstchatham.org](mailto:office@firstchatham.org) or Sue Easun at [pastoral.care@firstchatham.org](mailto:pastoral.care@firstchatham.org)

In need of prayer? For yourself or someone else, our Prayer Force is near at hand. CONTACT Joan Fletcher at [pastoral.care@firstchatham.org](mailto:pastoral.care@firstchatham.org)

Wondering what's going on? There are lots of options!

- Website: [www.firstchatham.org](http://www.firstchatham.org) / typically updated Mondays and Thursdays
- Facebook: [www.facebook.com/FirstPresbyterianChatham](https://www.facebook.com/FirstPresbyterianChatham) / typically updated Mondays and Thursdays
- YouTube: [www.youtube.com/@fpcchatham9093](https://www.youtube.com/@fpcchatham9093) / livestream every Sunday morning

The Office also maintains an email distribution list that sends out the Bulletin and livestream link every Friday, as well as special announcements. CONTACT: Linda Weeks at [office@firstchatham.org](mailto:office@firstchatham.org)

## WHO'S WHO

Interim Moderator: Rev. Tim Reddish

Pulpit Supply/Hospital Visitation/Bible Studies: Rev. Paul Shaw

Christian Education Coordinator: Allison Shaw (519.352.2313, ex 3)

Church Office: Linda Weeks ([office@firstchatham.org](mailto:office@firstchatham.org), 519.352.2313, ex 1)

Custodian: Benson Tarrant

Music Director: Adam Shaw (519.352.2313, ex 4)

Clerk of Session: Joan Fletcher

Roll Clerk: Ernie Koehler

Pastoral Care Coordinator: Sue Easun ([pastoral.care@firstchatham.org](mailto:pastoral.care@firstchatham.org))

*Did you find an error or omission?  
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