

ASH WEDNESDAY 2026 LITURGY



INTRODUCTION

Lent begins with a solemn call to fasting and repentance as we begin our journey to the baptismal waters of Easter. As we hear in today's readings, now is the acceptable time to return to the Lord. During Lent the people of God will reflect on the meaning of their baptism into Christ's death and resurrection. The sign of ashes suggests our human mortality and frailty. What seems like an ending is really an invitation to make each day a new beginning, in which we are washed in God's mercy and forgiveness. With the cross on our brow, we long for the spiritual renewal that flows from the springtime Easter feast to come.

PREPARATION

Silent Prayer & Personal Meditation

* PSALM (ELW): Psalm 51:1–17

**¹Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love;
in your great compassion blot out my offenses.**

**²Wash me through and through from my wickedness,
and cleanse me from my sin.**

**³For I know my offenses,
and my sin is ever before me.**

**⁴Against you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight;
so you are justified when you speak and right in your judgment.**

**⁵Indeed, I was born steeped in wickedness,
a sinner from my mother's womb.**

**⁶Indeed, you delight in truth deep within me,
and would have me know wisdom deep within.**

**⁷Remove my sins with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be purer than snow.**

**⁸Let me hear joy and gladness;
that the body you have broken may rejoice.**

**⁹Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my wickedness.**

**¹⁰Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me.**

**¹¹Cast me not away from your presence,
and take not your Holy Spirit from me.**

**¹²Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit.**

**¹³Let me teach your ways to offenders,
and sinners shall be restored to you.**

**¹⁴Rescue me from bloodshed, O God of my salvation,
and my tongue shall sing of your righteousness.**

**¹⁵O Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth shall declare your praise.**

**¹⁶For you take no delight in sacrifice, or I would give it.
You are not pleased with burnt offering. (continued...)**

(*) Congregation Stands; If for any reason you are unable to stand during the service, please remain seated.

**¹⁷The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit;
a troubled and broken heart, O God, you will not despise.**

*** THE EXHORTATION** *(For this portion of the service you are invited to either kneel or sit)*

Brothers and sisters: God created us to experience joy in communion with him, to love all humanity, and to live in harmony with all of his creation. But sin separates us from God, our neighbors, and creation, and so we do not enjoy the life our Creator intended for us. Also, by our sin we grieve our Father, who does not desire us to come under his judgment, but to turn to him and live.

As disciples of the Lord Jesus, we are called to struggle against everything that leads us away from love of God and neighbor. Repentance, fasting, prayer, and works of love - the discipline of Lent - help us to wage our spiritual warfare. I invite you, therefore, to commit yourselves to this struggle and confess your sins, asking our Father for strength to persevere in your Lenten discipline.

Most Holy and merciful Father:

We confess to you and to one another, and to the whole communion of saints in heaven and on earth, that we have sinned by our own fault in thought, word, and deed; by what we have done, and by what we have left undone.

We have not loved you with our whole heart, and mind, and strength. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We have not forgiven others, as we have been forgiven.

Have mercy on us, Lord.

We have been deaf to your call to serve as Christ served us. We have not been true to the mind of Christ. We have grieved your Holy Spirit.

Have mercy on us, Lord.

We confess to you, Lord, all our past unfaithfulness. The pride, hypocrisy, and impatience in our lives,

we confess to you, Lord.

Our self-indulgent appetites and ways, and our exploitation of other people,

we confess to you, Lord.

Our anger at our own frustration, and our envy of those more fortunate than ourselves,

we confess to you, Lord.

Our intemperate love of worldly goods and comforts, and our dishonesty in daily life and work,

we confess to you, Lord.

Our negligence in prayer and worship, and our failure to commend the faith that is in us,

we confess to you, Lord.

Accept our repentance, Lord, for the wrongs we have done. For our blindness to human need and suffering, and our indifference to injustice and cruelty,

accept our repentance, Lord.

For all false judgments, for uncharitable thoughts toward our neighbors, and for our prejudice and contempt toward those who differ from us,

accept our repentance, Lord. *(continued...)*

For our waste and pollution of your creation, and our lack of concern for those who come after us,

accept our repentance, Lord.

Restore us, good Lord, and let your anger depart from us.

Hear us, Lord, for your mercy is great. Amen.

THE IMPOSITION OF ASHES

(Those who desire to receive ashes come forward and kneel before the altar. The Pastor applies ashes to the forehead of each person with the words: Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return. After receiving ashes you may return to the pew and sit or kneel.)

Accomplish in us, O God, the work of your salvation,

that we may show forth your glory in the world.

By the cross and Passion of your Son, our Lord,

bring us with all your saints to the joy of the resurrection.

(The minister stands and addresses the congregation.)

Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, does not desire the death of sinners, but rather that they may turn from their wickedness and live. Therefore we implore him to grant us true repentance and his Holy Spirit, that those things may please him which we do on this day, that the rest of our life may be pure and holy, and that at the last we may come to his eternal joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

* HYMN

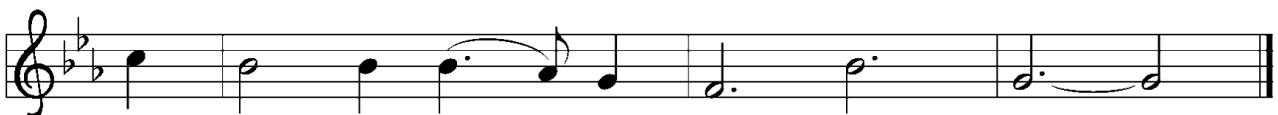
Just As I Am, without One Plea



1 Just as I am, with - out one plea, but that thy blood was
2 Just as I am, though tossed a - bout with man - y_a con - flict,
3 Just as I am, thou wilt re - ceive, wilt wel - come, par - don,
4 Just as I am; thy love un - known has bro - ken ev - 'ry



shed for me, and that thou bidd'st me come to thee,
man - y_a doubt, fight - ings and fears with - in, with - out,
cleanse, re - lieve; be - cause thy prom - ise I be - lieve,
bar - rier down; now to be thine, yea, thine a - lone,



O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Text: Charlotte Elliott, 1789-1871

Music: WOODWORTH, William B. Bradbury, 1816-1868

*** PRAYER OF THE DAY**

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us pray: Almighty and ever-living God, you hate nothing you have made, and you forgive the sins of all who are penitent. Create in us new and honest hearts, so that, truly repenting of our sins, we may receive from you, the God of all mercy, full pardon and forgiveness through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen**

FIRST READING: Joel 2:1–2, 12–17

Blow the trumpet in Zion;

 sound the alarm on my holy mountain!

 Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble,
 for the day of the LORD is coming, it is near —

²a day of darkness and gloom,

 a day of clouds and thick darkness!

 Like blackness spread upon the mountains

 a great and powerful army comes;
 their like has never been from of old,
 nor will be again after them

 in ages to come.

¹²Yet even now, says the LORD,

 return to me with all your heart,
 with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;

¹³rend your hearts and not your clothing.

 Return to the LORD, your God,
 for he is gracious and merciful,
 slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing.

¹⁴Who knows whether he will not turn and relent,

 and leave a blessing behind him,
 a grain offering and a drink offering
 for the LORD, your God?

¹⁵Blow the trumpet in Zion;

 sanctify a fast;
 call a solemn assembly;

¹⁶gather the people.

 Sanctify the congregation;
 assemble the aged;
 gather the children,
 even infants at the breast.

 Let the bridegroom leave his room,
 and the bride her canopy.

(continued...)

¹⁷Between the vestibule and the altar
let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep.
Let them say, "Spare your people, O LORD,
and do not make your heritage a mockery,
a byword among the nations.
Why should it be said among the peoples,
'Where is their God?'"

SECOND READING: 2 Corinthians 5:20b—6:10

^{20b}We entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. As we work together with him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. ²For he says,

"At an acceptable time I have listened to you,
and on a day of salvation I have helped you."

See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation! ³We are putting no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, ⁴but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, ⁵beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; ⁶by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, ⁷truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; ⁸in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; ⁹as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see — we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; ¹⁰as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

*** VERSE**



We are turn - ing, Lord, to hear you; you are mer - ci - ful and kind -



slow to an - ger, rich in bless - ing, and with love to us in - clined.

*** GOSPEL: Matthew 6:1–6, 16–21**

Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

²So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. ³But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

⁵And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. ⁶But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

¹⁶And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. ¹⁷But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

¹⁹Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; ²⁰but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

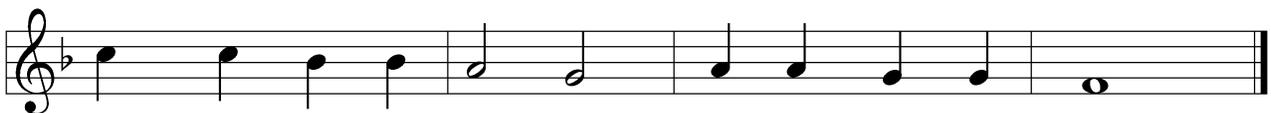
SERMON

HYMN

Glory Be to Jesus



1 Glo - ry be to Je - sus, who, in bit - ter pains,
2 Grace and life e - ter - nal in that blood I find;
3 Blest through end - less a - ges be the pre - cious stream
4 A - bel's blood for ven - geance plead - ed to the skies;



poured for me the life - blood from his sa - cred veins.
blest be his com - pas - sion, in - fi - nite - ly kind.
which from end - less tor - ment did the world re - deem.
but the blood of Je - sus for our par - don cries.

Text: Italian, 18th cent.; tr. Edward Caswall, 1814–1878
Music: WEM IN LEIDENSTAGEN, Friedrich Filitz, 1804–1876

*** NICENE CREED**

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven; by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

*** PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

Trusting in God's promise to reconcile all things, let us pray for the church, the well-being of creation, and a world in need.

A brief silence.

You call us to return to you, steadfast God. Renew a right spirit within the church and cleanse the hearts of your people. Strengthen those who proclaim your gospel in word and deed. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You sustain your creation, generous God. Supply all that is needful for life to flourish. Protect endangered species and fragile habitats. Teach us to live lightly upon the earth and to honor it as our home. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You seek justice and peace, righteous God. Rebuild cities and homelands devastated by war (*regions in conflict may be named*). Provide welcome, help, and safety to refugees. Prosper negotiations that lead to lasting peace among the nations. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You care for all people, loving God. Heal any who are scarred by violence, addiction, or trauma of any kind. Comfort those who grieve and bring relief to any in pain. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You gather this assembly, abiding God. Unite us in serving our neighbors and working for justice. We pray for caregivers and people who are hospitalized, in treatment, or recovering from illness (*especially*). Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

You redeem us from death, faithful God. We give thanks for those who served you in the church (*especially Cyril and Methodius, missionaries, whom we commemorate today*). Bring us with all the saints into everlasting joy. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

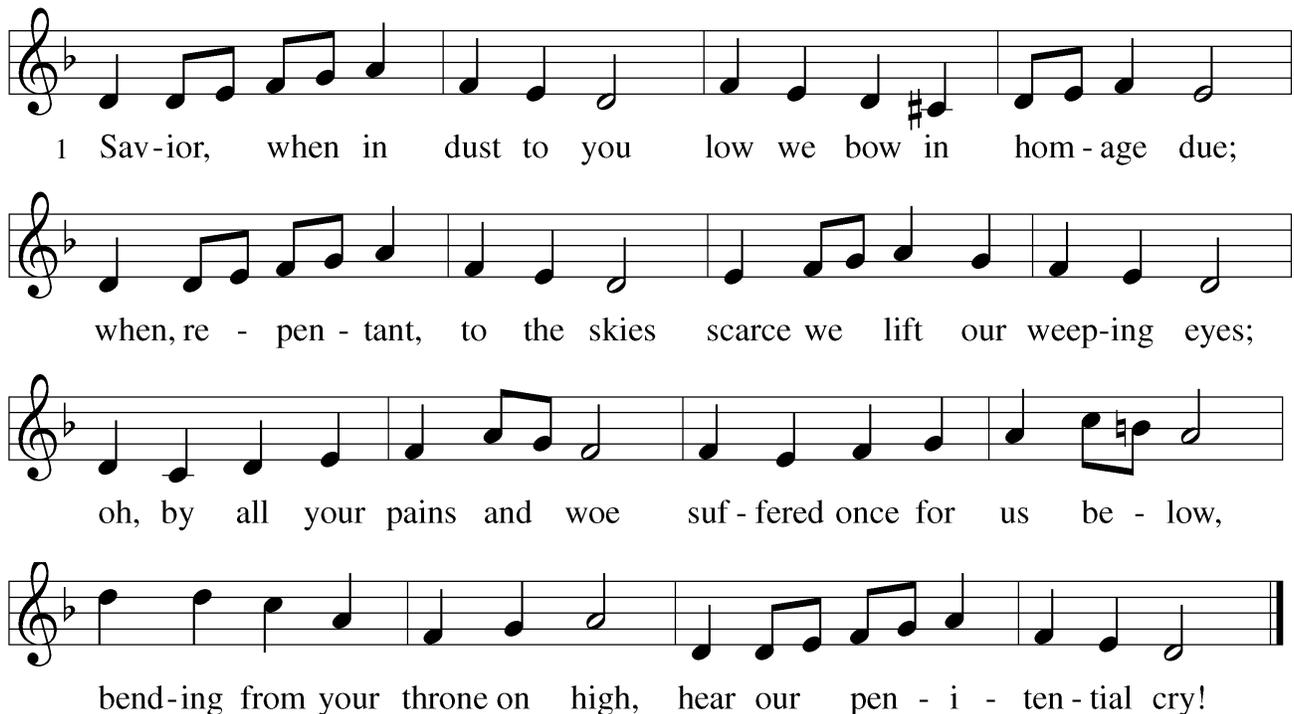
Accompany us on our journey, God of grace, and receive the prayers of our hearts, through Jesus Christ, our Savior.

Amen.

OFFERING

* OFFERING HYMN

Savior, When in Dust to You



1 Sav-ior, when in dust to you low we bow in hom-age due;
when, re - pen - tant, to the skies scarce we lift our weep-ing eyes;
oh, by all your pains and woe suf-fered once for us be - low,
bend-ing from your throne on high, hear our pen - i - ten - tial cry!

* OFFERING PRAYER

Let us pray: Jesus, you are the bread of life and the host of this meal. Bless these gifts that we have gathered that all people may know your goodness. Feed us not only with this holy food but with hunger for justice and peace. We pray this in your name. **Amen.**

* THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

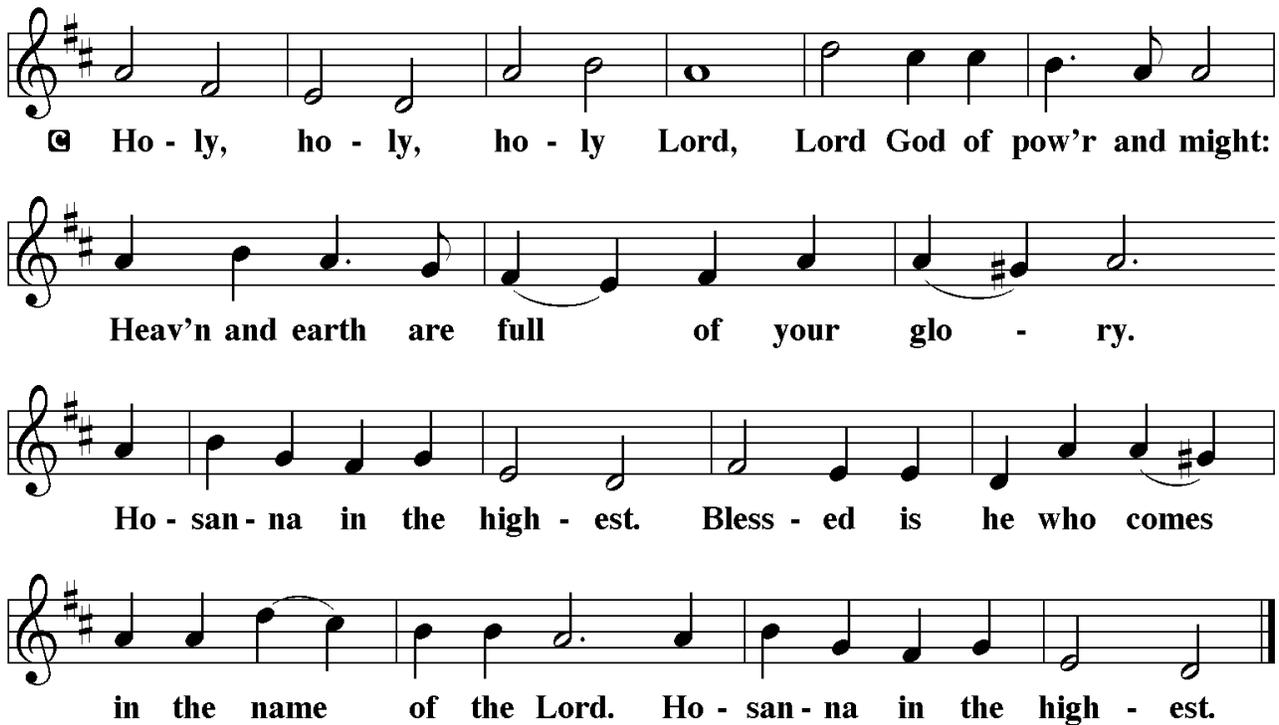
Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give him thanks and praise.

It is indeed right and salutary... (*Here the minister continues with the preface appropriate to the day or season, concluding:*) we praise your name and join their unending hymn:



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, Lord God of pow'r and might:
 Heav'n and earth are full of your glo - ry.
 Ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless - ed is he who comes
 in the name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

*** WORDS OF INSTITUTION**

With Thanksgiving, we remember that in the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread and gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to the disciples saying: "Take and eat; this is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this in remembrance of me."

For as often as we eat of this bread and drink from this cup, we proclaim:

Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again. Amen.

*** THE LORD'S PRAYER**

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen

*** INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

Bread for the journey. A feast for hungry hearts. Come!

We come.

DISTRIBUTION OF HOLY COMMUNION

(BAPTIZED CHRISTIANS who believe that the risen Christ is present in the Eucharist to forgive sin and renew life are invited to either come to the altar area for communion as directed or share at your pew. If you come forward, you will receive the elements. If you choose to receive at your seat, please remain there, kneel as you are able, and receive the elements using the communion packets available from the ushers. If there are other special needs, please speak to an usher.)

*** POST COMMUNION BLESSING**

The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace.

Amen

*** PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Let us pray: Generous God, at this table we have tasted your immeasurable grace. As grains of wheat are gathered into one bread, now make us one loaf to feed the world; in the name of Jesus, the Bread of life. **Amen**

*** BLESSING**

And now a blessing: Beloved, we are God's own people, holy, washed, renewed. God bless you and keep you, shower you with mercy, fill you with courage, and ✝ give you peace.

Amen

* CLOSING HYMN

Beneath the Cross of Jesus



1 Be - neath the cross of Je - sus I long to take my stand;
2 Up - on the cross of Je - sus, my eye at times can see
3 I take, O cross, your shad - ow for my a - bid - ing place;



the shad - ow of a might - y rock with - in a wea - ry land,
the ver - y dy - ing form of one who suf - fered there for me.
I ask no oth - er sun - shine than the sun - shine of his face;



a home with - in a wil - der - ness, a rest up - on the way,
And from my con - trite heart, with tears, two won - ders I con - fess:
con - tent to let the world go by, to know no gain nor loss,



from the burn - ing of the noon - tide heat and bur - dens of the day.
the . . . won - der of his glo - rious love and my un - wor - thi - ness.
my . . . sin - ful self my on - ly shame, my glo - ry all, the cross.

Text: Elizabeth C. Clephane, 1830–1869

Music: ST. CHRISTOPHER, Frederick C. Maker, 1844–1927

* SENDING

Go in peace. Share your bread.

Thanks be to God.

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