



## Welcome



Welcome to this issue of BRF Ministries News, with its focus on belonging and inclusion.

Last autumn I visited the design and disability exhibition at the V&A Museum.

Described as

‘both a celebration and a call to action’, it showcased the contributions of disabled, deaf, blind, and neurodivergent people and communities to design history and contemporary culture from the 1940s to the present day.

Design plays a huge part in how people experience the world, but environments are often designed in ways that privilege some people over others. Historically, disability has been seen as a problem to ‘solve’, with disabled people viewed as passive users, rather than recognising their unique needs and their ability to invent, adapt, and confront systemic imbalances, and to create opportunities.

The exhibition showcased a selection of projects from disabled practitioners who use art and design to assert

themselves and the communities they reflect. Importantly, the displays were designed to enable people with a variety of disabilities to take part. The space was deliberately quiet, with audio for film clips accessed through headphones; all films had either text or BSL captions; there were plenty of chairs to rest on; signs were in Braille; and there was a touch and feel map of the different exhibition areas, alongside objects you were encouraged to pick up.

As I toured the exhibition, I wondered how many people are excluded from church through poor design and pondered our need to work with those with lived experience of disability to redesign our church buildings, programmes, and services, so that everyone is welcome.

This is something we constantly try to address in Messy Church. With its core values of being Christ-centred, for all ages, creativity, hospitality, and celebration, we have an opportunity

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and more...

to create Christ-centred communities able to adapt and experiment with approaches that work for those who might struggle to sit quietly through a 30-minute sermon.

To truly welcome all ages, abilities, and backgrounds to our gatherings, we first need to get to know people and, as you’ll read in these pages, listen to them attentively as they share their needs and experiences. Only then will we be able to create safe spaces where everyone can experience beloved belonging and the opportunity to encounter Jesus.

**Aike Kennett-Brown**  
Messy Church ministry lead

## Julia Burton-Jones honoured in Rochester



We’re delighted to report that Anna Chaplaincy’s training and development lead, Julia Burton-Jones, has been made an honorary lay canon in Rochester Cathedral, in recognition of her services to older people and her establishment of Anna Chaplaincy in the diocese.

Julia has worked in Rochester Diocese as a dementia specialist and then as Anna Chaplaincy coordinator for eleven years. Her commitment enabled Rochester to become the first Anglican

diocese to embed Anna Chaplaincy strategically across their area, demonstrating at the highest level that older people matter, and those who serve among them matter too. The local network now comprises more than 70 Anna Chaplains and Anna Friends, with more individuals discerning and training for the role every year.

## Pray with us...

In the words of this prayer from *Growing in Prayer*, edited by Susanne Carlsson

*God of stillness and creative action, help me to find space for quietness today, that I may discover the inner meaning of silence and hear your still, small voice through Christ, in the love of the Spirit. Amen.*

[brfresources.org.uk/growing-in-prayer](https://brfresources.org.uk/growing-in-prayer)

Our prayer resources can be found at [brf.org.uk/pray](https://brf.org.uk/pray)

‘Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;  
I have summoned you by name; you are mine.’

# Hello from Julie and the fundraising team



Thank you so much to everyone who donated to our appeal in the January issue of BRF Ministries News. I am

delighted to say that besides raising funds to support our ministries, we were able to supply 650 copies of *The Easter Story* (a BRF Resources children and families booklet) to be included in goodie bags for children attending this year's hugely popular Christian festival, Spring Harvest.

Our Easter cards are also proving popular again and the full range is available on our website, along with our attractive every day and occasion cards. We know people find our greetings cards

a blessing, both to send and receive, and sales help raise vital funds to support our ministries, so thank you again to everyone who purchases them. If you would like greetings cards order forms to share with your church please do get in touch at [enquiries@brf.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@brf.org.uk) or 01865 319700.



As we approach the end of this financial year, I can only repeat my thanks to everyone who has helped us to make a difference to people's lives by making a donation, remembering BRF Ministries with a gift in a will, becoming a regular giver, and, above all, praying for us.

These are very challenging times financially and every gift of any amount makes a difference. If you would like to make a donation to support our ministries, or become a regular giver, please do contact us.

My sincere thanks for your prayers and generous support.

*Julie*

Julie MacNaughton, MCIOF (Dip)  
Head of fundraising

## A light to my feet



When Dick Forsyth renewed his *Guidelines* Bible study notes subscription, he added a lovely message: 'Your notes,' he

said, 'have brought light to my feet, challenge to my daily living, occasional irritation, and also much joy.' We had to find out more!

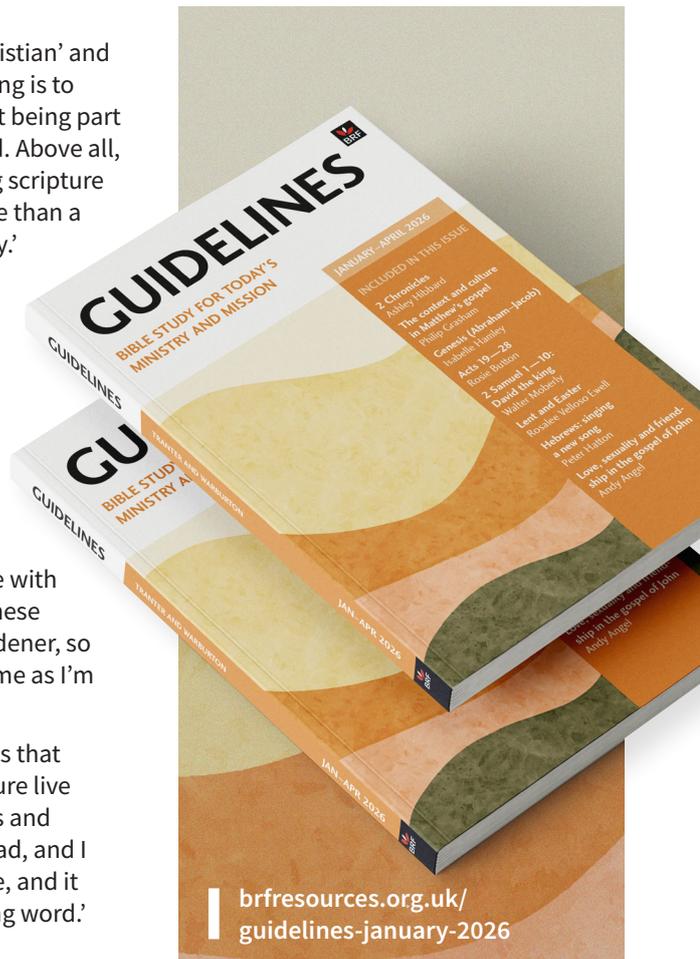
Dick is a retired history teacher, part-time gardener, and church warden. He has lived in Kendal on the edge of the Lake District for nearly 40 years. Reading *Guidelines* has been part of his morning routine for so long he can't remember when the habit formed. But he does know how important it is to him.

'I have been a practising Christian for 51 years and it's easy to get utterly into a routine. And so the light has been in those sudden, "Oh goodness me, how amazing" moments, when something in the reading strikes you in a new way. They're moments of quickening which I can only put down to the work of the Holy Spirit.'

Dick describes himself as 'the quintessential small town Christian' and says the challenge to daily living is to keep going forward. 'It's about being part of the travelling people of God. Above all, the challenge is about reading scripture and taking it seriously, in more than a middle-of-the-road sort of way.'

He even appreciates being irritated occasionally. 'I would hesitate to give you examples, but it links back to the challenge to my thinking. As it says at the beginning of the notes – I'm paraphrasing – chew on them. You don't have to agree, but it's the chewing on what you disagree with that can yield new insights. These days I work as a part-time gardener, so I have got lots of "chewing" time as I'm hacking things back.'

And the joy? 'The "much joy" is that these notes have made scripture live for me. They give me thoughts and ideas that buzz around my head, and I talk about it with other people, and it becomes, once again, the living word.'



[brfresources.org.uk/  
guidelines-january-2026](http://brfresources.org.uk/guidelines-january-2026)

# The 80/20 solution



When Maggie Dodd was appointed four-and-a-half years ago, she was the first Anna Chaplain in St Albans. After four years in a full-time paid role, Maggie now works 20 hours per week, funded mainly by the Methodist Churches in St Albans. She also keeps in touch with wider social developments and current research, and one of the issues which concerns her more and more is the 'digital exclusion' of older people.

'Exclusion is a very big issue,' says Maggie. 'In general, society excludes older people: their opinions and their experience. If you look at the social media platforms people use now to share their opinions, younger people vastly outnumber older people and those are the voices that are heard.'

The main concerns, however, are access to medical care, financial services and general services.

'I think of my mother-in-law who is 93. She lives with us. She doesn't do online banking at all. My husband organises her NHS appointments and prescriptions: she's got the app, but my husband uses the portal for her. I know other families where the older person's son or daughter will do their online banking. So you're always dependent on someone else to do it for you. It's not necessarily "Oh, I don't want to touch that!" Sometimes it can be due to visual impairment, or loss of dexterity, or cognitive ability.

'Also, if you sit at home and watch daytime TV, it delights in the all the scam stories – you know, someone's lost £70,000 because someone rang them and convinced them that their bank account had been infiltrated – it really scares people.'

Maggie sees a worrying new trend: 'For a lot of older people, these things are definitely bringing forward the moment when they're not independent anymore. Digital exclusion is one of the things that speeds up a decision to move into residential care: "I cannot live alone anymore because I cannot manage the utility bills online." Running a home, even a small one, is complex, and if everything is online it can become too difficult to manage even if your health is still relatively good.'

Maggie is quick to acknowledge that many older people have embraced online life and use digital technology

comfortably and creatively. She mentions a group that meets in the local Morrisons supermarket.



'Some of them have these smart rings and smart watches and use them to help monitor their health. So they're taking ownership of some of their wellbeing by monitoring their blood pressure for example, and how much sleep they're getting. So, if you are in a space where you are adopting these things by choice, using technology for good, and not being forced into it, then it's great!'

But sooner or later, we will all reach a stage when we no longer have the capacity to function safely in the digital world and that, for Maggie, is where campaigners like Professor Garry E. Hunt of the Worshipful Company of Information Technologists, British Computer Society, and University College London, come in. Professor Hunt is working, with others, to achieve 'an 80/20 solution', in which in every situation, but particularly those related to medical care, financial services, and general services, there would be an accessible analogue alternative and day-to-day living will not be allowed to become exclusively digital.

For Maggie, it should be a national priority for the government to look more closely at how to mitigate digital exclusion and the 80/20 principle would be 'a very good place to start.'

The highly regarded Spiritual Care Series will soon be available in a new self-learning edition, created so that individuals can follow the course in their own time and at their own pace. The course is designed to equip health professionals and volunteers with the skills necessary to provide effective spiritual care for older people. While it is recognised that the Spiritual Care Series is best completed in a group, for some users this is not practical or possible. The new edition is designed to help self-learners maximise the experience of the course. It was launched in late autumn 2025 in Australia and is launching in the UK this spring.

For more information, including an introductory video go to [brfresources.org.uk/spiritual-care-series-self-learning](http://brfresources.org.uk/spiritual-care-series-self-learning)



# The imperative of inclusion



Kay Morgan-Gurr is one of the expert advisors the Parenting for Faith team turned to when they were developing

their SEND resources. That was two years ago. For Kay and the SEND families she seeks to support – through training, writing and campaigning, the co-founding of the Additional Needs Alliance, and her own website ([theponderingplatypus.com](http://theponderingplatypus.com)) – it's been a particularly tough two years. Which makes it all the more important that church leaders and congregations listen and take action.

'I constantly hear stories of parents saying they've been asked to leave with their children with additional needs, or being told their child is a health and safety risk, which is horrendous. I heard from one family whose child with Downs Syndrome loved craft and was very proficient with scissors, because they'd worked hard with her and made sure she knew how to use them.

'And then the church said that this little girl with Downs Syndrome couldn't come to Sunday school. They'd done a risk assessment and she couldn't come because she was a health and safety risk, and yet she was safer with scissors than most of the other children in the class, and the parents had grown up in that church. It broke their hearts to be asked to leave.'

Kay has had a heart for people with special needs since she was nine years old. She trained as a paediatric nurse in response to a powerful call from God when she was 14 and went on to become a children's evangelist with a focus on special needs. While training as a nurse she was diagnosed with certain

conditions that developed over time into a disability, and today she normally uses a wheelchair. She says, 'I sense God's promise that he will keep me well enough to do the job he's called me to do.'

That job is her passion, but it's an uphill battle. 'I'm a placid person,' she says.

'But when I hear of another child who has been tipped out of the church, I'm not happy. In some cases, I offer to speak to the church, but most of the time they don't want to know. I get emails that actually say we've got a child with additional needs. How can we legally remove them from the church?'

But there are wins too and thankfully Kay isn't always hammering on locked doors.

'I went to a small church in Sheffield a couple of weeks ago. It's in one of those estates where life for many people is a struggle, and where the level of additional needs is high, because it's always higher in situations of poverty. They really wanted to know how to welcome and include SEND families and invited me to give some training. Only five people turned up, and I could understand that, because many of the people who attend their church will be single parents so who was going to look after the kids? But all the church leaders

came and that's quite rare. They were so open and so honest, and what should have been a two-hour session turned into a three-hour session because they wanted to stop and discuss. They were an absolute delight.'

So what does Kay want the churches to understand and to do?

'There should be an imperative of inclusion – theologically, Christianly, humanly. We need to open their eyes to that, because clearly they're finding very effective ways of blocking it out.'

The current negative political climate and messaging in the media is making things much harder for the people Kay supports and for whom she advocates. Where churches could be taking a lead on countering such messaging, she fears the majority aren't taking any notice.

'So I'm seeing weariness, depression, and burnout in parents and children, and in adults who also have additional needs and disability.'

Is it too strong to say it's a crisis point?

'No, I don't think it is. It's getting worse day-by-day and what this means for families with children who use all these state services is horrendous. Churches need to wake up to what's actually happening, because someone cannot learn from God when they are buried in the mess of the UK's current SEND system. They're too stressed to hear anything about God.'

Find Parenting for Faith SEND resources here [parentingforfaith.brf.org.uk/topics/additional-needs](http://parentingforfaith.brf.org.uk/topics/additional-needs)



Home Catalog

**THE DIGITAL LIBRARY OF BRF MINISTRIES**

Including content from Anna Chaplaincy, BRF Resources, Messy Church and Parenting for Faith

JOIN THE COMMUNITY

## New digital platform

New for 2026, BRF Online will bring all the Parenting for Faith courses together on a single, easy-to-use platform. This will include brand-new resources for Deeper, Rooted, Lasting – an initiative that helps churches engage with the Parenting for Faith approach. Designed for churches, families, and ministry teams, BRF Online will make accessing, sharing, and delivering these trusted courses simpler than ever. In the coming months, BRF Online will become the home for all BRF Ministries' digital resources. Keep your eyes peeled for more content from the other ministries soon.

■ [brfonline.org.uk](http://brfonline.org.uk)

# Hands in the sandbox



**Trish Hahn has pioneered two SEND Messy Churches, the first for five years in Hemel Hempstead and the second, for**

**the past 11 years in Clacton, Essex. Trish's eldest daughter has quadriplegic cerebral palsy due to birth trauma and when she was little it was hard to find a welcoming group to take her to.**

'I prayed about it,' says Trish, 'and said to God, "Look, is there anything in Hertfordshire I can take her to?" And what came back was, "I want you to start a group." And of course, I went "la, la, la..." but the more I spoke to other families, the more I heard that there was nothing out there for families with children with disabilities or additional needs, or for the siblings. The more I thought about it and prayed about it, the more God spoke to me really clearly.'

Some friends went to Spring Harvest and came home with one of Lucy Moore's first books about Messy Church and a DVD. 'It was exactly what God was telling me to do! Except I was thinking about families who had a child/children with disabilities and additional needs: the exact same format. For me, that was confirmation that I needed to do something.'

Trish took her idea to the church meeting, and to the Sunday congregation at the United Reformed Church she and her husband attended, and contacted all the special needs schools in the area. There was a lot of support for the idea – 'volunteers came out of the woodwork and it really snowballed!' – and she was in touch with Lucy, the Messy Church ministry lead at the time, and Jane Leadbeater in the national team.

'Very quickly we had a lot of families who were just so relieved to be able to come to church. Some of them had never set foot inside the church. Some of them had had really bad experiences of not being welcomed, or their child/children not being welcomed. God had been breaking my heart in the run up to setting it up but hearing from those families really made me realise that there was a purpose in this.'

The need was so clear that when Trish moved to Clacton eleven years ago she immediately set about starting another SEND Messy Church, even though she was expecting her third child. They meet once a month on a Saturday morning and have up to 14 families at a session.

'We get a lot of integrated families,' says Trish. 'So it could be cousins, it could be grandparents, it could be aunts and

uncles... it's very intergenerational, with a lot of single parents, and we kind of mash everybody together and they really do seem to enjoy coming.'

So what is it about the Messy Church model that makes it especially suitable for SEND families?

'In any kind of youth work the welcome is incredibly important: to help our families – whether they've got additional needs or any kind of disability or not – know that Messy Church is their church and their congregation, and to help them to feel they're part of it, that they're important, and that they belong. It's loving people into the church; God's love in action. It's about hands in the sandbox, not bums on seats!'

## I like a challenge!

Chloé Wells works for Flourish, the Church of England initiative to grow new Christian communities in schools. Her school is The Bay CE School in Sandown on the Isle of Wight. It's an 'all-through' school – so both primary and secondary. Chloé works mainly in the primary school and her Flourish colleague Neil focuses more on the secondary school, but they have worked together to start a school-based Messy Church, which the headmaster has described as 'the highlight of the Flourish year!'

The new Messy team has been involved in creating a session for the next issue of *Get Messy!* and Chloé has been working closely with ten-year-old Maddie (pictured left), who has been visually impaired from birth, to ensure the session activities are as inclusive as possible.

'I asked Maddie if she would like to help and she was really keen. She's totally up for it and has been absolutely brilliant. Once a week, we just have a lovely time trying out all different activities and rating them. She always rates them twelve out of twelve. They get the Maddie approval. I said to her, "Maddie, you're such an inspiration!" She said, "It's a challenge, but I like a challenge."'

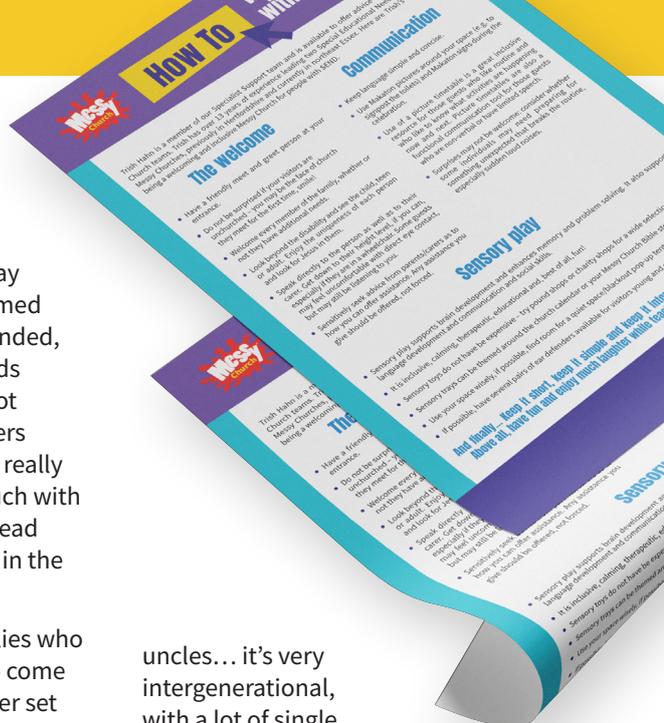
What are some of the key things Maddie has taught Chloé?

'I realise just being asked to be involved has helped her to feel like she belongs and that she's been seen and cared about. And because she blows me away by giving everything a try, it's also made me realise that we should really expand our preconceptions about she's capable of.'

'My natural bent is visual, so she opens up all these new approaches using the different senses. And she's going to teach me Braille!'

For Messy Church SEND resources go to [messychurch.brf.org.uk/latest/resources/how-to](https://messychurch.brf.org.uk/latest/resources/how-to)

Read longer versions of these interviews with Trish Hahn and Chloé Wells at [messychurch.brf.org.uk/latest/stories](https://messychurch.brf.org.uk/latest/stories)



# Belonging Without Barriers



Lois, Triona and Claire with one of the teens using the SEND tent at a Bible festival

This issue of BRF Ministries News takes its theme of belonging and inclusion from our new title *Belonging without Barriers: Building accessible*

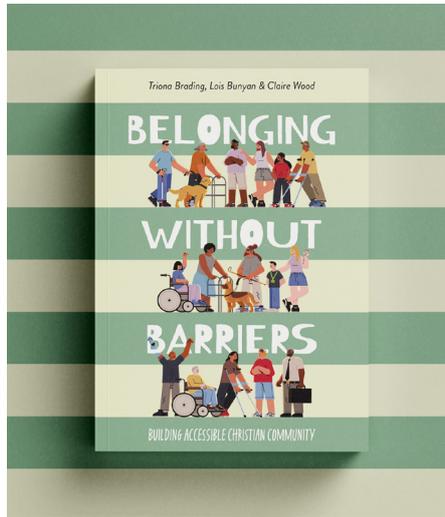
*Christian community* by Triona Braiding, Lois Bunyan, and Claire Wood. Here, Claire tells how the book came into being, and what the authors hope and pray will grow from it.

The whole Bible is a story of belonging: the uniqueness of humanity made in God's image; the tragedy of a world broken by our rejection of him; and the beauty of a God who goes to extraordinary lengths to love us and tear down the barriers of sin and death. God is at work even now, shaping his church into a body where every part has a role and the seemingly weaker members are indispensable. He calls us to belong to him and to each other. As God's love changes us, we learn to value others more and to serve one another. His vision for the church is a community that notices needs, gives time and energy to meet them, and helps everyone feel they belong.



We've seen this again and again in the people we've spoken to. One woman, who often feels 'like a fish out of water' socially because of her neurotype, recently joined a group for autistic women at her church. As others welcomed and accepted her, she found her own ways to serve and form relationships – especially in the church garden, where no one expects her to make eye-contact while she's working!

We experienced this in microcosm



ourselves as we wrote this book. Triona is autistic; accessibility is her special interest, fuelling her research and careful engagement with the online disability community. Lois is probably dyslexic, but her professional work with people with learning disabilities has given her deep insight and affection for them and their families. Claire was able to provide the structure and focus which meant the book actually got written!

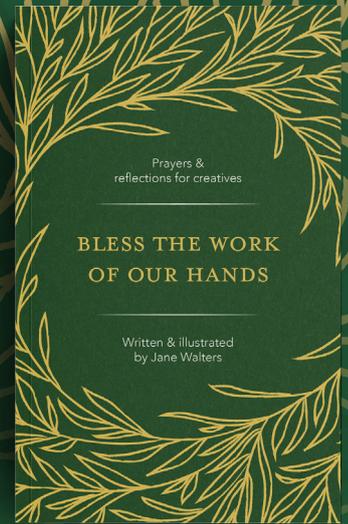


Each of us had personal and professional experience to contribute, but without our different personalities, perspectives, and neurotypes, the book would never have come together. One of the greatest joys of writing has been interviewing people with diverse needs and hearing how they've been welcomed, given access and belonging, and have in turn served others. Again and again, they've reminded us that accessibility and belonging are not niche, modern concerns but central to the heartbeat of the gospel.



We hope that the book will offer encouragement to the weary, practical ideas for those wanting some advice, and a deeper sense of God's heart for accessibility and community.

[brfresources.org.uk/belonging-without-barriers](http://brfresources.org.uk/belonging-without-barriers)



## Bless the Work of our Hands

Prayers and reflections for creatives

Pausing to think, pray, and yield to God at every stage can become a natural, vital element of the creative process. In this beautiful new book, Jane Walters offers prayers, reflections, and biblical character studies to encourage Christian creatives to commit themselves and their projects to God. Written for hobbyists and professionals alike, working in every genre, it encourages an honest, open-handed and open-hearted approach, in order that all we produce and all we become from our creative toil may bring glory to God.

Jane loves being creative as a musician, textile craftworker, and interior designer, and drawing on her passion for scripture, communicating it honestly and accessibly. She is chair of the Association of Christian Writers and enjoys supporting emerging talent through leading retreats and workshops.

[brfresources.org.uk/bless-the-work-of-our-hands](http://brfresources.org.uk/bless-the-work-of-our-hands)

As a charity, we rely on fundraising and gifts in wills to deliver Anna chaplaincy, BRF Resources, Messy Church and Parenting for Faith. Your gift helps us impact thousands of lives each year. Please support our work.

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