



WELLESLEY VILLAGE CHURCH

Congregational † United Church of Christ

Church Profile

May 2021



Easter sunrise service, 2021

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WELLESLEY VILLAGE CHURCH
Associate Pastor Job Description, May 2021

The Associate Pastor shares in the pastoral leadership of the congregation, serving full-time as a generalist with a range of pastoral duties, but with a particular emphasis on congregational care, adult spiritual formation, and ministries of justice and joy for all people. The Associate Pastor is called by the congregation, supervised by the Senior Pastor, and works in mutually supportive collaboration with the Senior Pastor, the other Associate Pastor, and two full-time Pastoral Residents.

“With open hearts and minds, Wellesley Village Church welcomes the curious, the seeker, and the sure. Inspired by the Spirit and guided by the love of Jesus, our innovative worship, intentional communities, and inter-generational ministries deepen our faith and compel our service in God’s beautiful and broken world.”

Wellesley Village Church Mission Statement, Vision2020

Associate Pastor Responsibilities:

1. Guided by the Love of Jesus: Coordinating congregational care.

- **Oversee and coordinate pastoral care:** Serve as the primary point of contact for congregational needs and planning for important life events such as funerals, baptisms and weddings as requested. Coordinate with pastoral team and staff to direct Churchyard commitments, provide care and follow-ups as needed.
- **Provide direct care:** Working with the other pastors, call upon church members in need, especially to those homebound or hospitalized, provide pastoral care and spiritual nurture. Provide referrals to other care providers as appropriate.
- **Lead and train caregivers:** Equip church members to become effective caregivers. Oversee, train, and encourage new members for these ministries, with special focus on continuing the Befrienders ministry for congregants in transition.
- **Facilitate Small Groups:** In coordination with staff, provide pastoral presence, encouragement, and support to adult church members (e.g., seniors, singles, parents) who participate in small groups that build community and bind hearts together in Christ. Support lay leaders in planning and cultivating these ministries, including communicating with the congregation about them.

2. With Open Hearts and Minds... Inspired by the Spirit: Adult spiritual formation.

Cultivate and extend an adult faith formation program and provide support to teachers and group leaders. Offer spiritual nurture and formation experiences for the congregation and Pastoral Residents.

- Cultivate and teach GIFT (Growing in Faith Together) formation topics, as well as shorter-term educational offerings. Recruit, train, and support teachers and group leaders.
- Support our Pastoral Residency Program: Along with other pastors, meet bi-weekly with our two Pastoral Residents to provide mentorship, guidance, and support.
- Organize and facilitate opportunities for retreat and spiritual nurture.

3. Our Service in God's Beautiful and Broken World: Ministries of justice and joy for all people. With the pastoral staff, promote justice, equity, and inclusion for all God's people by leading congregational efforts to make God's love and peace visible in the world.

- Extend an extravagant welcome to all: "the curious, the seeker, the sure."
- Guided by our Vision2020 statement, cultivate a congregational plan of action toward social justice, environmental justice.
- Contribute to the church's public voice and outreach.

4. Our Innovative Worship: Plan and lead creative worship services. Work with the pastoral team and music directors to design worship services that help the congregation experience the fullness of God's presence in worship.

- Preach approximately every five weeks and lead worship most Sundays, at one or both Sunday services.
- Coordinate other special services, such as the Easter Vigil, summer worship, Christmas Eve Communion.
- Participate in seasonal worship planning and reflection meetings.
- Take part in seasonal chapel set-ups and liturgical adornment of chapel and sanctuary.

Preferred qualifications: Master of Divinity, Ordained in the United Church of Christ, at least 2 years' experience in Parish Ministry, experience in pastoral care.



ABOUT US

Wellesley Congregational Church (affectionately known as Village Church) is located in Wellesley, a town of 28,000 residents, fifteen miles west of Boston. At Village Church (founded in 1798), we are particularly known for our vital worship, our longstanding commitment to the nurture of young people, and our commitment to ministries of service and outreach. Our innovative Pastoral Residency program offers a place for promising pastoral leaders to develop their ministries for the next generation, and we treasure our decades-long tradition of worshipping with the Historic Charles Street AME Church. We have just over 1,000 members, with over 300 young adults and children. We are often described as a healthy church where people seek to grow in their faith and where joy is manifest. We have a history of loving and supporting our pastors, as well as one another.

VISION & MISSION

An Open and Affirming Congregation of the United Church of Christ

Grounded in Christian love, we boldly reimagine our faith journey together.

With open hearts and minds, Wellesley Village Church welcomes the curious, the seeker, and the sure. Inspired by the Spirit and guided by the love of Jesus, our innovative worship, intimate community, and inter-generational ministries impact our lives and deepen our call to serve God's beautiful and broken world.

WHO GOD HAS CALLED US TO BE

Beloved: By God and one another at every age and stage of life

At Village Church, we trust that no matter where we are on our journey, no matter where we fall short, we are worthy of receiving and giving love.

Belong: Welcome, affirm, connect

As newcomers, transplants, and natives, when we set down roots, find our purpose and support each other, our lives grow into our potential. Fueled by Christian love, together we commit ourselves to the broader community, in and around Boston, New England, and the world.

Befriend: The neighbor, the stranger, the Earth

We nurture and nourish, maintain and sustain what God has entrusted to us. With an intention of peace for the people and the planet, Village Church commits to building a bridge to a better future for all—whether standing up against racial injustice, feeding the hungry, or investing in environmental responsibility.

Become: Question, learn, grow

Boisterous debate, candid questioning, and the fire of faith reside in equal measure at Village Church. Through Bible study, book groups, visioning workshops, weekly

philosophical reflection groups, prayers for discernment, and more, we actively explore together our corporate and individual spiritual journeys.

Behold: Worship, witness, and walk with Jesus

There is no greater sense of God's presence in our lives than when we gather together, shoulder to shoulder, voices as one, to reflect on and reaffirm our commitment in song, in words, and in action to a life for others.

Be real, be vulnerable, be open to the transforming love of God

We are committed to belonging over believing, to loving over judging, and to peace over piety. We believe Jesus is a model for living and giving. We prioritize affirming people's potential over reminding them of their brokenness. We embrace the power of reconciliation.



EXPLORING FAITH AT THE VILLAGE CHURCH

At Wellesley Village Church, we believe that something special happens when we come together with people we may have no reason to meet otherwise. We may not be in the same stage of life. We may not work in similar jobs. And we may be from vastly different geographies, cultural backgrounds, and faith traditions, or even no faith at all.

What is possible?

What we do have in common as members of a Congregational church is a profound curiosity about what is possible through a life of faith. What is possible when we

genuinely welcome someone who lands here from Louisiana or Indonesia or Medfield? What is possible when we come together to share and reflect on our lives, our purpose, our challenges and our impact on others? What is possible when we work together to create a world of justice and joy for all?

At Village Church, when we talk about what we believe, it is an invitation to a conversation, not a dogmatic test. We believe that each of us bears the image of God and that these unique expressions of God's presence in the world is a priceless gift. We believe that God is still speaking, and we lean in to hear how God calls each of us to live up to our potential.

Where do you experience God?

Whatever you believe, however you experience God, whomever you love, wherever you call home, you matter to us, and you matter to God. To be church together is to see our common humanity and to experience God in the stranger, in our neighbor, and in ourselves.

We believe we are called to be the body of Christ—a community of beautifully diverse parts, working together to express God's love for all creation. We believe we are called to be a place of radical hospitality, extravagant welcome, and intentional inclusion. A member congregation of the United Church of Christ (UCC), we seek to love mercy, do justice, and walk humbly with God.



FAITH FORMATION: CHILDREN AND YOUTH PROGRAMS

Today, children are vulnerable to concerns that can distract them from who God meant for them to be. Peer pressure, popularity, video games and social media, the cold shoulder

of judgment, and the anxiety of not being good enough are a reality of growing up in our world. Many families have found in Village Church a way to give their children the support and nourishment for inner strength, healthy community, and a spiritual resource. When children develop in relationship with God and each other, they thrive with confidence.

Wellesley Village Church is a place where children and youth will immediately feel at home. We gather children and youth together to experience the love and joy of God personally and in relationship with each other. Children's Church and youth groups on Sundays include games, music, conversation, art, Bible stories and many entrees into a life of growing faith, joy and meaning. Children and youth will find many mentors and adults who truly care about them. In a time when many families live far from loved ones, the intergenerational community at Village Church becomes an extended family. From infancy through high school, children are held and supported in a rich variety of group activities, retreats and service to others.

Prayground

Children are welcome to remain in worship with their parents. A child-centered Prayground, located in the front-left of the Sanctuary, is filled with books, children's bulletins and mindful practices for children to use while they listen to worship.

Family Worship Room

When we are in-person, parents who wish may worship with their young children in a specially equipped room that is a child-centered space with the service on a live feed. This space is also attended by a nurturing childcare provider so families may drop off infants or toddlers for childcare during 10:00am worship.

Children's Church

When we hold in-person worship, children in preschool through fifth grade begin each Sunday with their families in the sanctuary at 10:00am. After the opening hymn, children are called forward to the chancel steps for a Children's Moment before they leave with their teachers for class on the second floor. Children can be picked up from their classrooms at the conclusion of worship.

Confirmation

The year of preparation that confirmands experience has frequently been called life changing. In weekly classes, our youth tackle questions of the meaning of faith and responsibility, of their truth and authenticity, and of their embrace of a broader Christian community.



FAITH FORMATION: ADULTS

What does God have to say to us? What does faith have to teach us? How do we grow in faith, individually and in community? These are just a few of the questions we try to answer when we examine faith together.

As a congregation of the United Church of Christ, we believe God is still speaking. Our mantra at the United Church of Christ, of which we are a part: “Never place a period where God has placed a comma.”

One of the best ways to study Scripture is through group discussions as we seek to understand the Bible in its historical context and then listen for what it is saying to us today. Scripture challenges us by presenting perspectives from an ancient time that can seem radically different from our own. We wrestle with Old and New Testament writers who invite us to see ourselves, one another, and all of creation through a lens that brings into fresh focus our role to behold, befriend, and be love.

Wednesday Lenten Meditation

A weekly 30-minute session in which we share what is on our minds and hearts as we grapple with uncertainty. We are guided to reflect on a Scripture passage as a way to see reality with a new lens. In just a few minutes, we gain an opportunity to be more present, to breathe in grace, and to see ourselves with a humble sense of compassion.

Bible Study

Each fall we select a focus for our study, and this year we examine the life of Paul, the apostle. Few figures in Christian history are as complicated, controversial, and central as Paul. We will read N.T. Wright's biography of the apostle and a selection of his writings. We will discuss what Paul wrote, what he likely did not, and how the body of work that bears his name continues to inspire much-needed theological reflection. You may love him, you may hate him, but you cannot ignore him. Our study will be critical, historical, and personal, as we consider what Paul and his legacy means for the Church, and what his scripture means in our lives today.

Wednesday Lectionary Bible Study

Each Wednesday morning, we dive into the scripture reading that is from the week's Sunday worship service. We take turns leading Bible study, which involves an opening reflection, prayers of concern and celebration, guiding discussion, and a closing prayer. Over the past 20 years, this group has studied the many books of the Bible, important themes, such as the parables of Jesus and the prophets of the Hebrew Bible, and the span of generations in the Bible.

The Rohr Group

The Rohr Group meets weekly on Thursday mornings to engage in discussion and grow in faith through contemplative practice. The meetings are named for Father Richard Rohr, a Franciscan friar, theologian, scholar, and spiritual guide whose Daily Meditation emails are widely read and beloved. The Rohr Group typically chooses a topic of discussion that stems out of Rohr's *Daily Meditations*.

TESTIMONIES

SOME PERSONAL STORIES of life at Wellesley Village Church from current members can be found [HERE](#).



FELLOWSHIP AND FAITH

FELLOWSHIP FOR YOUTH



High School Youth Group

When youth enter high school, they begin to question their place in the world, their purpose, and their relationships. While God is at the center of our life together, questions of faith and doubt are part of the Christian journey. The youth follow closely in Jesus' footsteps when they ask questions of faith: Jesus asked over 300 questions to his followers in the Gospels. Questions create community through discussion, and build strong relationships as the youth dive deeply into the matters of the heart with respect, wonder and humor. Weekly youth group is marked by love, forgiveness, holy listening, and sharing the truth of our lives in a non-judgmental environment. We play games, share food, take weekend retreats, and participate in weeklong service projects each year.

Middle School Youth Group

Here, youth in grades 6 through 8 find a place where they are encouraged to grow closer to their own hearts, to one another, and to the people in their community and our world. The youth come weekly to experience the freedom to be — to be who they are within a non-judgmental and supportive group of peers.

FELLOWSHIP FOR ADULTS

We believe that connecting with the small group communities at Village Church helps us to understand the answers to these fundamental questions: Are we alone? Are we enough? What is our purpose? Through word and prayer, we discuss what weighs on us and what lightens us, what separates us and what binds us. We care deeply about

welcome and nurture, about supporting the vulnerable, about growing up and growing old, about standing for others, about empowerment and redemption.

Village Church Parents Group

The parenting road has its highs and lows. Village Church Parents Group (VCPG) meets monthly on Sunday evenings to offer support through it all by sharing experiences and resources. While everything can look picture-perfect on the outside, sometimes families feel huge relief to know “we went through that too.”



Village Churchwomen

For eight decades, the Village Churchwomen have organized the largest annual fundraiser for Village Church — the Annual Village Church Rummage Sale. Savvy shoppers score valuable fashions, accessories, housewares, toys and antiques on the first Saturday of October. The Churchwomen consistently raise more than \$20,000 for Village Church partner organizations, including Family Promise Metrowest, Wellesley Food Pantry, Hoops and Homework Inc., and Women’s Lunch Place, a women’s shelter. The Village Churchwomen also create the annual Wellesley Village Church directory, host luncheons, and invite speakers.

Pathfinders: Partnership with Charles Street AME

Wellesley Village Church and Charles Street African Methodist Episcopal (AME) have enjoyed a partnership of friendship, mutual support and understanding that has spanned two decades, taking turns hosting a worship to commemorate Martin Luther King Jr. every January. Each church has committed a team to meet once a month to explore new ways to deepen the relationship that has developed. As both churches sense the gravity of the Black Lives Matter movement, members have a desire to be more, know more, and do more for each other.

Fellowship Supper Group

One of the most popular group activities for singles and couples, dinners for 6 to 10 people are assigned and organized each fall for members who take turns hosting potluck suppers. Supper groups become a source of bonding and connection, such that small talk, substantive dialogue and friendship flow effortlessly. We are on hold during the pandemic but look forward to reconnecting.



FELLOWSHIP FOR EMPTY NESTERS AND SENIORS

If you engage our seniors on questions of faith and life, you will notice they practice a mental and spiritual openness to change. This active group of lifelong learners gathers monthly to connect with friends old and new with the goal of staying current, staying connected, and staying curious. Often one of our seniors will speak about a career, an experience, or an area of expertise in the spirit of sharing and learning. The topics, like our seniors, are eclectic and have ranged from art appreciation to world travel to medical care for the unhoused.

Seniors Connect

In response to COVID19, seniors have been gathering weekly over Zoom for “Seniors Connect,” continuing conversations about connecting across family generations with

technology, the changing face of community over the decades, and spiritual sustenance in a pandemic.

Senior Life

Seniors meet once a month to catch up and share about what is going on in their lives. Since the pandemic, we have been meeting as Seniors Connect (see info above).

North Hill Coffee

Seniors living at North Hill Retirement Community are an important and faithful group who meet for coffee once a month with our pastor. During the pandemic, we have been meeting as Seniors Connect (see info above).



WORSHIP & MUSIC

WORSHIP SERVICES

During this pandemic year we were reminded that when, in 1916, the Wellesley Village Church burned in a disastrous fire, it took seven years to fully rebuild the church. During that time, the congregation sought to be a church outside of the sanctuary: at Town Hall, in members' homes, and in other churches in Wellesley. Like the saints from over 100 years ago, this year we reimagined church because the people of the church yearned to be together more than ever. Worship evolved so that we could again feel what makes our church community a home, a haven, and a source of strength. Our pastors brought forth their creative gifts. Our congregation tuned in, applauding, contributing, encouraging—and hitting the “like” button.

When we meet in person, Sunday morning worship comes in two versions: a 9:00 am worship service in the chapel that is contemporary and informal and a 10:00 am worship service in the sanctuary that is more traditional. A lively coffee hour gives members a chance to share conversation.

In 2019, Wellesley Village Church began exploring a partnership with the [Congregational Church of Weston](#). This partnership, founded in the firm hope that God makes more of us together than we can ever be apart, honors the freedom and autonomy of our congregational polity, even as it challenges us to imagine new ways of being in relationship with one another. This emerging collaboration offers our Pastoral Residents opportunities to be engaged in a smaller congregational setting, in addition to their work with the large, multi-staff congregation at Wellesley Village Church. The Congregational Church of Weston brings a passion for engaging its neighbors in complex conversations around issues of racial, social, and environmental justice, and we are currently exploring how we might collaborate on ministries of education, outreach, and empowerment around these issues.



MUSIC

Village Church holds up music as a primary mode of faithfulness. Soaring scores of Bach and Handel, familiar hymns and spirituals, folk and world music, we sing together to heal and hope. We are fortunate to have three music directors who bring a multidimensional perspective to our music program. Each musician has a distinct approach and seeks to amplify the human urge to sing, whether for the purpose of prayer, advocacy or self expression.

Director of Music David Carrier recently offered his thoughts on ministering through music during the COVID-19 pandemic, and some of the joy he experiences through the

music at Village Church: “Being in the same room and intuiting each other’s energy is missing, but many fine conversations still take place. Like everyone, I long for when we can be together.... My favorite season is definitely Advent/Christmas. All the familiar music that everyone knows and can sing with abandon, the sense of togetherness, the light rising as the sky gets darker, the church filled and bubbling with energy, the amazing congregational singing, the traditional and new anthems the choir sings, and the lovely energy everyone shares. When ‘O Come, All Ye Faithful’ begins on Christmas Eve, I feel a thrill that is unmatched. Much comes close, but still unmatched.”

Youth Music

The strong tradition of choral music at Wellesley Village Church has been passed down to the youth, who are inspired to experiment with how and what they play. Keyboardists, guitarists, brass players, woodwinds and percussionists feel at home. It is an important way our youth bond. The Director of Youth Music, Kevin McDonald, believes that “music is a gift we have all been given by God... In God’s eyes, we are all loved and all welcome. Therefore, the voices of ALL children and youth in worship of God and fellowship with one another make a glorious sound that brings joy, love, peace, and comfort to the soul. Making music is our way of doing God’s work here on Earth to make this world a better place for all people.”

High School Youth Group Music

Our youth have taken initiative in finding ways to bring their music to worship. As the church has moved to online worship, the High School Youth Group has taken an active role in producing and performing music for worship.



Members of the High School Youth Group, Russell Hornung, Nell Simister, Isaac Hargrave, Alex Hoskyns, Connor Simko, and Evan Strouse sing their rendition of “You Say” by Lauren Daigle. May 2020.



CHORAL GROUPS

Senior Choir

Wellesley Village Church is fortunate to have a large, devoted and thriving choir. Led by David Carrier, choir members say it is a thrill to master music together and win over David's nod of approval. The choir rehearses Sunday mornings before 10:00am worship. (Rehearsals on Zoom during COVID19.)

Youth Choir

The Youth Choir is a joyful and dedicated group of youth who enjoy making music together, having fun, and being in service to our church and community. Open to all youth from grades 6 through 12, we meet each Wednesday from 6:00pm – 6:45pm. Trained voices and voices in training, soft singers and loud singers, voices that have changed and voices still changing, all are welcome to join us. Youth sing during worship services throughout the year but practice a special program for Christmas and Holy Week. They have also been known to break into song just about any old time.

Joyful Noise

During Children's Church each week, we include a time of singing and music making. Led by Michaela McDonald, Children learn how to sing Bible songs and play children's handbells. Several times a year, Joyful Noise will sing or play in worship often in collaboration with the Youth Choir or Senior Choir. Children can also participate in the Christmas pageant each December. (Meeting outdoors during COVID19.)

SERVE & ACT

We, as a church community, recognize that there is much work to do in God's beautiful and broken world. We, as children of God, recognize we all have gifts to share and a call to use them with purpose.

If you are interested in answering God's call and living with purpose, please join us by reaching out to the contact for any of the programs below. (Some activities are on hold or have shifted to a Zoom format during COVID19.)



OUR SERVICE & ACTION MINISTRIES

Village Table ~ A Food Program

Inspired to help in the face of a growing pandemic-fueled need, we mobilized a small army of volunteers, led by one of our members who is a culinary professional, to create the Village Table. Each week, armed with herbs, tomatoes and bounty from the Village Garden, we leverage our industrial kitchen to cook high-quality, nutritious meals. These meals are then blessed, individually packaged, and delivered to those in need, including the "Community Fridges" in Boston.

Family Promise Metrowest

In 2003, led by Village Church members, 12 local churches rallied together to provide struggling Metrowest families nourishment and shelter on church premises, one week at a time, on a quarterly basis. Although Family Promise has temporarily suspended the rotations by host congregations due to the COVID19 outbreak, shelter families are living in a residence hotel while continuing to take part in the program. Family Promise is accepting gift cards for groceries, school clothes, and cleaning supplies.



For His Children, Ecuador

Village Church volunteers of all ages travel each spring to Quito and Latacunga to serve and nurture infants and children and their caretakers at For His Children, a home for children who have been abandoned, abused, or neglected. Adults and youth help with daily care and feeding, initiate games and play, and assist with construction and maintenance projects. For His Children, a beloved partner of Village Church for over two decades, strives to find adoptive homes for the children and advocates on their behalf. (On hold during COVID19.)

Youth Service Trips

Each year during the April school break, members of the confirmation class (9th grade) and the high school youth group (10th-12th grade) participate in a week of service, sometimes in the Pacific Northwest or the Southwest. In 2019, more than 50 youth journeyed to Santa Fe, New Mexico, to learn from and serve alongside Pueblo communities. (On hold during COVID19.)

Rosie's Place and Bristol Lodge

Village Church volunteers create and serve Sunday dinner once a month at Rosie's Place, a Boston shelter for women in crisis, and once a week at Bristol Lodge Men's Shelter in Waltham. (On hold during COVID19.)

Feeding Frenzy

Last year, we packaged 16,000 meals in partnership with The Outreach Program, a nonprofit organization that hosts large food-packaging events to provide easy-to-prepare meals for hungry individuals and families. We call this event the “Feeding Frenzy.” It is a fun and family-friendly opportunity to put our hands to work in helping to feed people throughout New England. Due to the COVID19 pandemic, this year, we are participating in The Outreach Program’s virtual Feeding Frenzy Fundraiser.

Hoops & Homework

Located in Framingham, Hoops and Homework is a nonprofit organization that nurtures low-income families with needed after-school support, homework help, and recreational activities. There are two ways to support this ministry: (1) Each August, Village Church members are invited to purchase a backpack for a child, along with school supplies. It is a rewarding service opportunity, particularly when we receive photos of the students with their brand new backpacks. (2) As Christmas nears, Village Church sets up a tree – but instead of ornaments, we adorn the tree with notecards listing items that children hope Santa might bring for them. Members are invited to take a notecard and purchase a gift for a specific child. A few days before Christmas, volunteers wrap the presents and deliver them to Hoops and Homework.

Pathway to Possible (P2P)

Pathway to Possible, formerly the Newton Weston Wellesley Committee for Community Living, maintains several group homes for adults with developmental disabilities in the Boston metrowest, including in Wellesley, where Village Church members have shared monthly ecumenical fellowship dinners and social activities with residents. (On hold during COVID19.)

Village Church shares the commitment to encourage independent living for these adults to provide housing, support, and advocacy while providing opportunities that enrich their lives and their communities.



CHURCH LEADERSHIP

[Rev. Sarah Butter, Senior Pastor](#)

[Rev. Pamela Emslie, Associate Pastor](#)

[Rev. Diane Seaborn, Interim Associate Pastor](#)

[Michaela McDonald, Director of Children's Ministries](#)

[Rev. Sean Patrick Coady, Pastoral Resident](#)

[Rev. Bob Feeny, Pastoral Resident](#)

[David Carrier, Director of Music](#)

[Dr. Kevin McDonald, Director of Youth Music](#)

[Ed Broms, Associate Director of Music](#)

[Meg Sweeting, Church Administrator](#)

[Christine Toppin Riordan, Communication and Worship Support Coordinator](#)

[Sharon Funk, Assistant to the Pastor](#)

[Douglas Baskett, Properties Administrator](#)

[Marina Berga, Church Accountant](#)

[Gladys Murillo, Sexton](#)

[Gerardo Ortiz, Sexton](#)



[Wellesley Village Church](#)

United Church of Christ, Congregational

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