

JANUARY 2023

The

Epistle

First Baptist Church of Vienna, Va. | "Fruit Bearing Disciples"



From
Pastor
Walton's
Desk



Grace and Peace from God our Father!

Last year, we kicked off the year with great expectation. Even in the midst of uncertainty, our theme, "The Resilient Church", was not just a theme. It has been our testimony. We endured a 20-month journey virtual worship, virtual discipleship, and virtual fellowship. I was overjoyed to see how we came back together on Sunday mornings as, not only a community of believers, but as a church family.

In 2022, we were able to help our brothers and sisters in Jackson, MS during their water crisis, give away over 70,000 pounds of food to our friends and neighbors, relaunch and rebrand our academic enrichment program with Excellence Academy, celebrate 8 years together as Pastor and people, as well as 155 years of ministry here in Vienna and around the world. As I share with colleagues around the country and listen to many of their stories, we have much to be thankful for.

I am grateful, and understand we are extremely blessed because of the

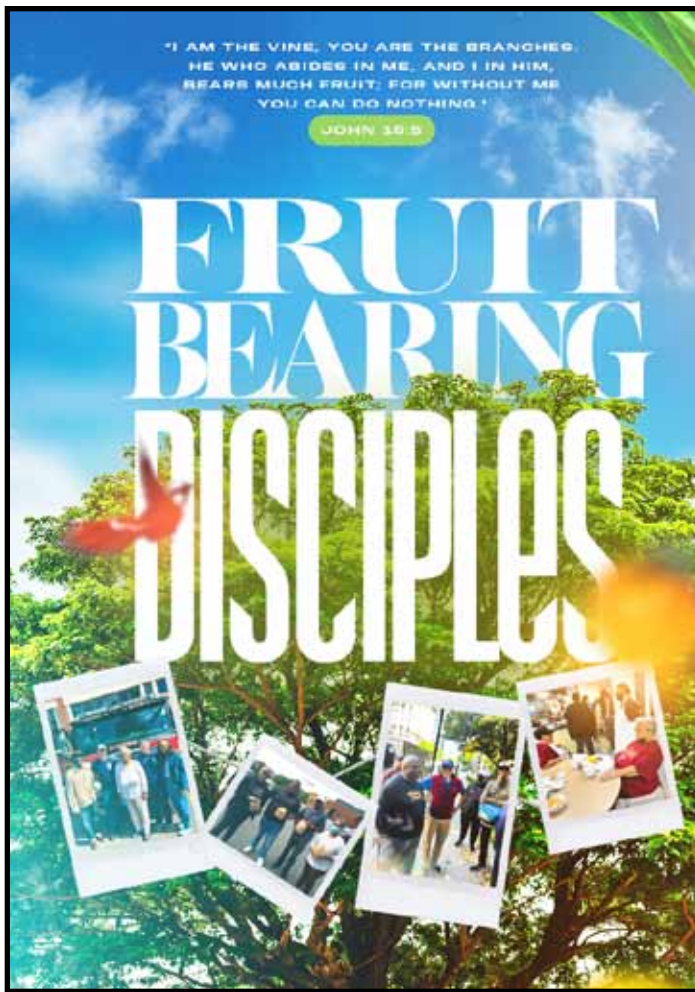
PASTOR, continued on page 2

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY SERVICE

JAN 16TH
11:00 AM

REV. AUSTIN ALMAGUER
LEAD PASTOR | VIENNA BAPTIST CHURCH

Presentation of Spirit of King Awards +
Community Service Project Immediately
Following Worship.



First Baptist Deaconess Ministry

Deaconess Ministry Dedicated to Service

Happy New Year from the Deaconess ministry! We are excited for all the wonderful things 2023 will bring to the FBCV congregation. The Deaconess ministry will be releasing a new informational pamphlet and would like to preview a few things. Our revised mission statement, based on Romans 16:1-2:

In keeping with our Christian heritage, the Deaconess Ministry is dedicated to service with a spirit of love and compassion. We are godly women, set aside to actively support the Pastor and his vision for the church and community. We strive to support the deacons and other church ministries for the spiritual advancement and well-being of our members.

Our ministry outreach focuses on sick and shut-in members, hospitalized members or bereaved family, incarcerated and those experiencing emotional hardship. We reach out with prayer, phone calls, cards, and special touches or outreach gifts as the Lord leads.

We will be launching a “deaconess email” soon so that you can easily add information for the Sick and Shut-in list or leave prayers concerns. We want to be easily available to support church members and ministries. Please feel free to keep the office informed or reach out to any FBCV Deaconess if you need, or know of someone that needs, prayer or words of encouragement! —*Deaconess Marcia Taylor*

... no prophecy ever
came by human will,
but men and women
moved by the
Holy Spirit
spoke from God.

2 Peter 1:21, NRSV

MLK WISDOM

“To return hate for hate does nothing but intensify the existence of evil in the universe. Someone must have sense enough and morality enough to cut off the chain of hate and evil, and this can only be done through love.
—Martin Luther King Jr.



SEASONS OF GRIEF: Understanding the Road to Recovery Workshop

The Stephen Ministry has been honored to be a participant in the Seasons of Grief: Understanding the Road to Recovery Workshops, facilitated by Rev. Caffie Risher, that were launched at FBCV. Sessions one and two of the four planned workshops aired on Nov. 17, and on Dec. 8 on Zoom. Rev. Caffie Risher of Good Mourning Ministry is a Thanatologist (one who studies the scientific aspects of death and the losses which occur), Death Educator, Grief Specialist, and licensed Minister. Rev. Risher skillfully enlightened the viewers about the many layers of the grieving process that can take place during the first year of loss, and beyond.

In Session 1, her topics included:

- 1) understanding the seasons of the grieving process;
- 2) the terms, types, and stages of grief;
- 3) Biblical role models who mourned;
- 4) myths associated with grief; and
- 5) tips for recovery. Helpful takeaways were how to accept the reality and experience the pain of the loss; adjusting to the new normal without the person; and reinvesting in the new reality.

In Session 2, after being reminded of the general summary of what had already been shared, the viewers were challenged to do introspection on how they were doing emotionally, mentally, physically, spiritually, and financially. Each of these areas were fully described. Many helpful coping strategies were given to assist those in mourning with the overall grieving process, especially during the holiday season. Emphasis was placed on:

- 1) giving yourself permission to grieve with no time limit imposed;
- 2) reading and listening to the Word of God, especially the Psalms;
- 3) avoiding indulging in condemnation, guilt, or shame;
- 4) giving healthy self-care;
- 5) developing a support system of family and friends;
- 6) connecting with grief and bereavement groups rather than trying to go it alone; and
- 7) learning how to identify and help adults with developmental disabilities related to the loss of someone close. Stephen Ministry was suggested as an in-house grief and bereavement support.

Anyone who is experiencing grief or is helping someone during their season of mourning is strongly encouraged to tune into the remaining sessions. In addition to the presentations by Rev. Risher, in both sessions, there was time given for questions and answers from the viewing audience. Please plan to take advantage of this life empowering series, and join us for the next workshop on January 19.

—*Sylvia Taylor*



Happy New Year FBCV!

The Marriage Ministry will meet on Jan. 15 immediately after church at 12 p.m.

We will fellowship and discuss the following bible plan; “Being Intentional in your Marriage.” (<https://www.bible.com/en/reading-plans/20909>)

We look forward to connecting with you and starting the year off being intentional. Please reach out to us if you have any questions.

Natalie Ruffin
natm20@gmail.com
336-707-2121

PASTOR, from page 1

faithfulness of Gods people. However, I realize that, unfortunately the pandemic has not changed the 80/20 rule. We still see 20% of the people doing 80% of the work. I can only imagine what God could do with us and through us if we all committed ourselves to the work of the Kingdom through FBCV. How much more would we accomplish with greater commitment to the mission? Beloved, it isn’t too late for that to happen. Let’s start this year off by committing ourselves in a greater way to the Kingdom of God.

As we enter into 2023, we will endeavor to focus on what it means to be a “Fruit Bearing Congregation”. John 15:5 says, “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” The real test of our discipleship is, not simply what we do, but what we produce! It is my sincere hope and prayer that we make this the year where God allows us not only to produce, but also to multiply. We have seen God do wonderful things through us. I want to challenge each of us to stretch ourselves individually as a congregation to produce more fruit in 2023. Let’s go higher!

Resolve to Physical Fitness

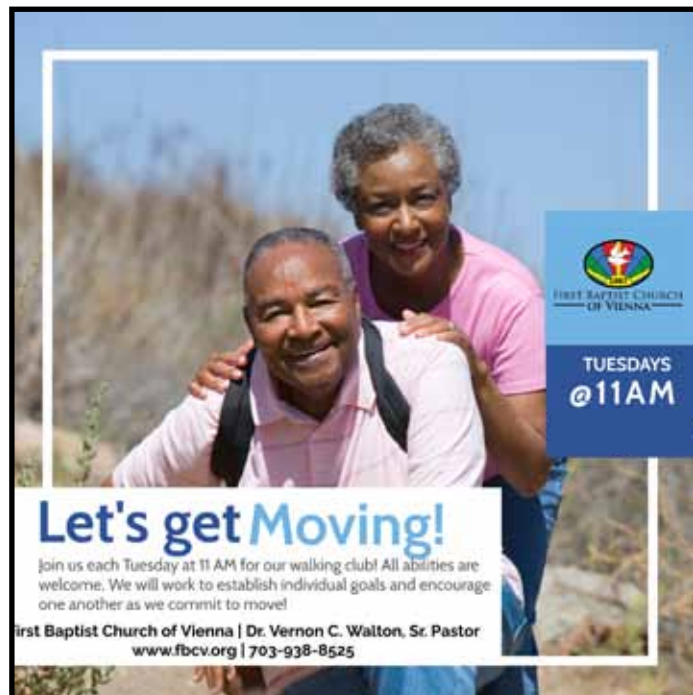
It's January and once again many of us are contemplating what our New Year's Resolutions should be. As you consider your 2023 resolutions, remember the scripture found in I Corinthians 6: 19-20. The New Living Translation says it like this: "Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body."

Prayerfully consider joining us for the many opportunities we have in 2023 to commit to our physical bodies:

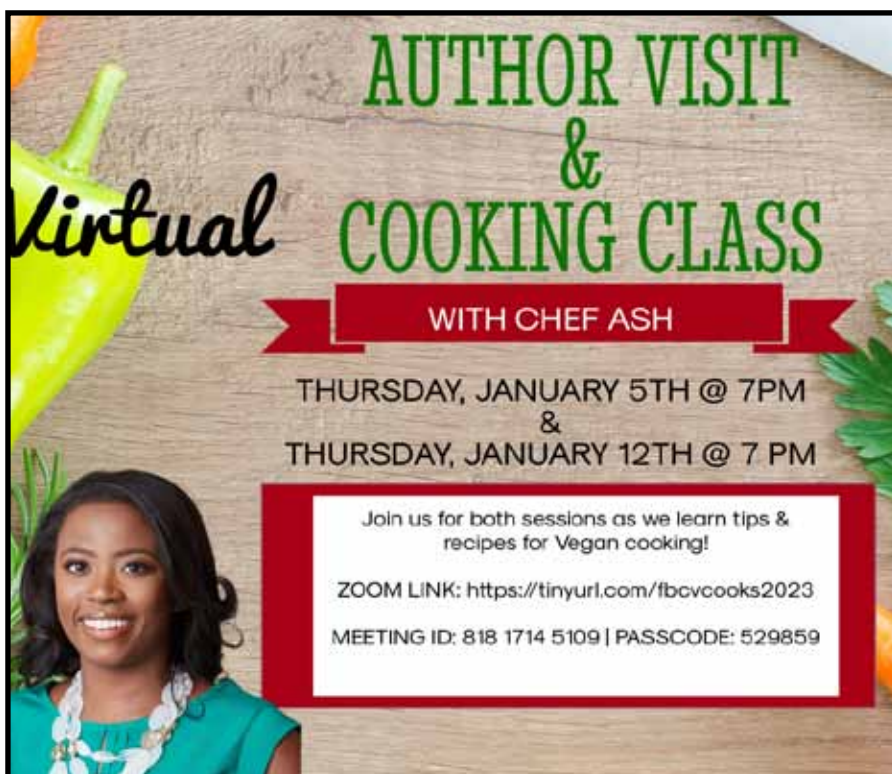
1. **Join our 21-Day Church-wide fast.** Our fasting guide will be available on the church website and print copies will be available at the church. The fast will begin on January 9th and the guide will assist you in planning how you will participate. You can also use the guide to follow along for 21-days of daily scripture readings and join us for the 12-noon prayer call where we will share in a time of daily devotion and prayer.

2. **Take part in the 2 Virtual Author Talk/Cooking Class opportunities.** These sessions will assist you with meal planning, recipes, and tips that will help you through our fast and beyond.

3. **Participate in our Walking Club.** Our Walking Club will resume on Tuesday, January 11th. We will work together on your visit to establish personal walking goals and then get moving! Whether you can walk for 10 minutes or the full hour, let's do it together! These sessions will be held indoors during inclement weather and outdoors when weather permits. The goal of these sessions is to get moving together, hold one another accountable for our individual goals and to fellowship and encourage one another. We will be adding an evening or weekend time early this year. Participants will receive a number of gifts and resources to assist with their progress.



4. **Join our Fasting and Fitness Group.** Our fasting and fitness group will run through the end of May and is a great opportunity to have a deeper commitment to our physical health. Participants will receive gifts and resources throughout the year that will assist us as we commit to our physical health through dietary changes and exercise. This group will provide more extensive support and encouragement in the coming months. You can register for the group at: www.tinyurl.com/fbcvgroups —Stacey Seay



Missions Updates

December was a wonderful conclusion to a year of making meaningful impact throughout our local community. Thanks to your willingness to continue to give both your time and talent to missions. We were able to provide 200 Christmas blessing bags to children this year. The blessing bags were chocked full of wrapped gifts that included games, books, toys, and warm socks. These gift bags were given to children living in area shelters, identified by partner schools and community programs, and to families who reached out to the church.

One parent was near speechless and in tears when we walked the gifts for her family to her car and was overwhelmed by the care and generosity reflected in the blessing bags. Mary Hamilton, a Community Coordinator at Patrick Henry Shelter said: "It means so much to the families to know that they do not have to budget for holiday gifts for their children. This takes a lot of pressure off of the parents and puts them in a position to budget more funds for things such as apartment application fees and first month's rent as they plan for leaving the shelter and moving into housing."

What we do matters and makes a significant impact on the lives of those we serve. How wonderful is it to know that there are parents who rested a little easier and a Christmas holiday that was a little brighter for 200 children because of our willingness to share the love of Christ through our gifts.

Our work continues. Our next church wide mission project will take place on Dr. Martin Luther King Day immediately following our King Day worship service. At that time, we will minimally prepare 1000 backpack food bags for children in our community. The bags will contain shelf-stable, kid-friendly food items (two each of breakfast, lunch, dinner, snack and drink) that will help children from food insecure families have something to eat over the weekends and school holidays when they do not have access to free lunch at school. It is our prayer that you will join us and dedicate some time to serve others as we honor Dr. King.
—Stacey Seay

Directorial Debut!

Sydney Meekins had her directorial debut as part of the Student Directed One Acts held at Osborn Park High School in Manassas. The performances were held on Dec. 9 and 10 in the Lillian Orlich Auditorium.

Sydney directed a play entitled, "Mime in a Box," which is a short play written by Stephen Bittrich. The play featured a simple set and three actors. It is set in New York City and the characters explore the idea of what is real. The performance was well-received and was a clear indication of the great things in store for Sydney in the drama world. Her mom, Antoinette Guidry credits Sydney's many opportunities to participate in FBCV productions as time for Sydney to build her confidence and further explore her interest in drama.
—Stacey Seay



**We need
your
creative
gifts!**

**YOUTH CHOIR
MEN'S CHOIR
ADULT CHOIR
DANCE
MINISTRY
MEDIA TEAM
and more!**

*Rehearsals begin
SOON!*
email:
mcknight@fbcv.org

**MAKE
ROOM**

Youth and Young Adult Update

Greetings FBCV Family!

Welcome to 2023! What an incredible and wild ride we had in 2022. The youth and young adult ministry is excited about the plans to help partner with you in building a faith that lasts in our youth and young adults! A new year is here and with it comes a new opportunity for your youth and young adults to make a difference – in their homes, schools, and in their community. They need our encouragement and prayers to help them push through the obstacles around them and become the person God wants them to be. We have amazing opportunities that will help you as a parent, challenge our youth and young adults, and I hope encourage both of you as you journey the New Year together.

—Minister KJ

The Call Out Prayer Call begins at 6pm. Be sure to have your prayer journal during our devotional time. This is will allow us to journey together during our prayer call. If you do not have a prayer journal, you can still join the prayer call!

The FBCV Excellence Academy provides individualized attention and group assistance for students. Tutors participate in a collaborative training to understand best practices and plan effectively for students. Tutors help to motivate students' participation and engagement in the classroom, as well as help to provide additional support for students that will aid them in the learning experience. We also have our Purpose Academy music enrichment program which allows students to utilize their musical gifts and talents through the arts. Excellence Academy assists students in grades K–6 to identify strategies to support learning and enhance academic performance. Tutoring and music enrichment is conducted in a constructive atmosphere of learning using a variety of learning techniques tailored to each student's individual learning style.

The Excellence Academy's main goal is to inspire students to become confident, independent learners prepared to meet academic and personal challenges. Be sure to register at www.tinyurl.com/fbcvacademy.

Youth and Young Adult Sunday will take place on January 29. This will be a time where our youth and young adults will take over the Sunday morning worship experience. We must recognize that all of us have a responsibility to continue taking an active part in the mission Jesus sets us— the mission which leads us to see that we are more than we think, more than we own, or more than we can do. You have to be sure to join us!

THE CALL OUT
YOUTH WEEKLY PRAYER CALL
NUMBER: 605-313-5111 ACCESS CODE: 291598
EVERY MONDAY @ 6 PM
with Min. Kennard Jones
Director of Youth & Young Adult Engagement

Excellence ACADEMY
Academic Enrichment (K-6)
*Math *Reading *Science
Music Enrichment
*Recorders *Guitar *Drum *Piano
Dinner
*Provided weekly for all students
*Transportation available
JOIN US THURSDAYS @ 5:30 PM
REGISTER AT: WWW.TINYURL.COM/FBCVACADEMY

Young Adult Check-in

The vision of the Young Adult Ministry is to provide a safe space for young adults to promote spiritual growth and development. We aim to create experiences that broaden perspectives, empower each other, ignite passions, expose possibilities, and inspire pursuits. The Young Adult ministry wants to personally invite you to our first Young Adult Virtual Check-in. You will get the chance to meet and greet with other young adults and learn about all things, Young Adult Ministry! This will take place on January 5, at 7 p.m.! Please be on the lookout for the zoom link information. This is going to be a time of fun and fellowship!

★ ★ ★ COLLEGE CONNECTION ★ ★ ★

ATTENTION FBCV MEMBERS AND FAMILY

Join our NEW College Connection Mentoring Program
Our College Connection Students NEED YOU. As our scholars matriculate through school, they are looking to connect with FBCV members who majored in the same subject or currently work in the fields of their majors. They are looking to make “CONNECTIONS” and learn more about preparing for their future from those of us who have first-hand experiences.

Majors include:

- Medical Sciences
- Dance Education
- Engineering
- Education
- Computer Science and Information Technology
- Business and Business Communication
- Aerospace
- Accounting
- Family and Consumer Science
- Music

If you studied any of the fields above or currently work in any of these areas, WE NEED YOU. Please complete the College Connection Mentor form (or click here: <https://forms.gle/Ss8Cm8ngWXzVfai8A>). An orientation session will be held in mid-January for those interested.

SCHOLARSHIP/INTERNSHIP INFORMATION NEEDED

If you have information that you are willing to share about scholarships or internships that could benefit our high school and college scholars, please email that information to Arnitra Duckett (arnitrad@mac.com). We will forward that information to our scholars to assist them in finding funding for school and gaining valuable professional experiences.

COLLEGE CONNECTION SCHOLAR UPDATES

DATABASE: Welcome to the Spring Semester of the 2023 school year. It is time to complete and/or update your information in the Scholar Database. If you did not submit for the fall semester OR if your information has changed, please use this link: COLLEGE CONNECTION SCHOLARS or paste this url into your browser: <https://forms.gle/Xrcyj1WXFwBWL0Z17> to share your information. If you completed the database for the fall semester, you are all set.

Our next VIRTUAL CHECK-IN will be held on Tuesday, Jan. 17 at 6:30 p.m. ZOOM information will be provided in our GroupMe chat.

Are you a member of our COLLEGE CONNECTION GROUPME? If not, please send your name and phone number to Arnitra Duckett (arnitrad@mac.com or 404-798-5252) to be added to our newest communication tool.

PAY FOR AS – FALL 2022 SEMESTER

For college scholars who earn A's during the Fall 2022 Semester, please submit your transcripts to Vivian Morton at vivmorton@gmail.com to participate in the Pay for As program. All transcripts should be submitted by January 15, 2023.

CALLING ALL HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS...It's Early Admission Season

We want to know where you are applying to school. Send the College Connection a note letting us know where you have applied for early admission. All information can be sent to Arnitra Duckett (arnitrad@mac.com)

THE COLLEGE CONNECTION MINISTRY WELCOMES YOU...JOIN US FOR OUR NEXT MEETING. The College Connection Ministry meeting for this month is scheduled for Jan. 17 at 7 p.m. We have been meeting virtually. Please send Arnitra Duckett an email (arnitrad@mac.com) to request the contact information for our next meeting.



Deacon Jeff and Linda Grant and family
for the loss of his brother,
Eldon F. Grant

Teddy and Wanda Robinson
for the loss of his cousin,
Direk J. Boswell

Money Matters: These are the Major 401(k) Retirement Changes for 2023

The \$1.7 trillion dollar spending bill that Congress passed includes several significant changes to retirement plans that could help Americans keep their pensions untaxed and untouched for longer.

The bill will change the age at which Americans are required to withdraw from tax-deferred retirement accounts: raising the age to 75 from 72, and will increase contribution limits for older workers, and hopefully incentivize low to moderate wage workers to save in retirement accounts.

The age limit — known as required minimum distributions (RMD)—increases from 72 to 73 on January 1, 2023, and then to 75 on January 1, 2033.

The changes to the age are meant to reward taxpayers who have to work as they get older, as the mandatory distributions are to ensure a portion of the retirement savings are spent during one's lifetime and makes the money tax-deferred but not tax free.

Employers who start new retirement plans after 2025 would be required under the new bill to automatically enroll workers into 401(k) or 403(b) plans by 2025 at a rate between 3% and 10% of pay.

For Americans with student loan debt, the bill will allow their loans to be treated as a deferral, and make it possible for employers to offer plans to allow workers to save for retirement while also paying off student loan debt.

The package includes an enhancement for low-income earners' retirement contributions and is known as the saver's credit an underutilized federal match of up to \$2,000 for eligible filers (e.g. married couples making \$73,000 or less) getting a matching contribution from the government up to 50% of their savings.

The package also aims to encourage employers to offer retirement accounts, increasing tax write-offs and incentives for small businesses if they begin to offer 401(k) plans and allowing employers to automatically enroll employees into emergency savings accounts with 3% of their salary, or up to \$2,500, set aside.

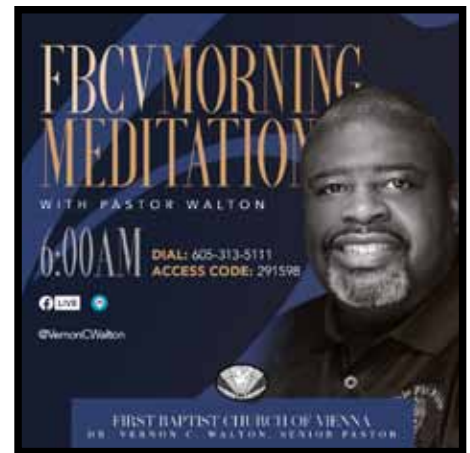
The 10% penalty employees under the age of 59-and-a-half face when making an emergency withdrawal will no longer be in place for withdrawals up to \$1,000 annually, though this rule won't take effect until 2024.

Hopefully this information will assist you as you execute your retirement planning activities for 2023. Have a happy New Year as you develop and update your current retirement plans.

This information is based on a Forbes Article by Anthony Tellez Forbes Staff with the same title

If you need help understanding any of the information presented, please feel free to contact your First Baptist Church Federal Credit Union.

—Submitted by Willie L Boykin



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