



Beyond Consumerism

# Feasting and Fasting

A Six Week Study Guide for use during Lent



Arthur Rank  
Centre

CONFIDENT RURAL CHRISTIANS

Based on material begun by  
Revd Elizabeth Clark and  
completed by Revd Helen Bent



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## Introduction

This study guide has been specially written for the Arthur Rank Centre based on material begun by Revd Elizabeth Clark before her retirement and untimely death. Elizabeth was a colleague and friend to many at the Arthur Rank Centre and this Lent course is a token of her dedication to the rural church and our farming communities. As part of the *Beyond Consumerism* project, the six weekly studies examine different aspects of something we enjoy three times a day – eating food!

These days, Christians observe Lent in different ways. It can be a time for reflection and meditation, self-examination and penitence, abstinence and acts of charity. Traditionally it begins with the wearing of ashes on Ash Wednesday, followed by forty fast days and six Sundays. The forty days remind us of the forty days spent by Jesus in the wilderness, being tested by the devil.

However you usually observe Lent, this resource can help you look more deeply at food issues, and give you additional ‘food for thought’. We will be asking questions like: How can Christians make their diet sustainable and ethical? What do we learn from Jesus’ teaching about food? How does our grocery basket help, or harm, God’s creation?

The guide explores a different aspect of our relationship with food each week, with prayers, Bible readings and questions for group discussion, ending with a short act of worship. Most music suggestions are available on YouTube. Each study should take about an hour and could readily link in with a weekly Lent lunch or supper. Keep any food basic, perhaps bread and soup sourced locally, to help us learn how to live differently and more simply. Even the most frugal meal, when shared with others on the Lenten journey, is something to be savoured and enjoyed.



# Shrove Tuesday: The Feast before the Fast

As this study guide is all about food, why not start by getting together for a pancake party?

Shrove Tuesday, the day before Ash Wednesday, is traditionally a day of feasting before the abstinence of Lent. Shrove comes from the verb 'to shrive' associated with confessing sins to a priest, who might impose a penance as well as offering absolution.

Although the marking of Lent goes back over a thousand years, the specific custom of eating pancakes on Shrove Tuesday in Britain seems to date back to the sixteenth century.

Shrove Tuesday is also known as *Mardi Gras*, the French for *Fat Tuesday*, when people indulged in a last night of eating richer, fatty foods before the ritual fasting, self-sacrifice and abstinence of Lent began. It was traditional in many societies to eat pancakes or other foods made with the butter, eggs and fat or lard that would need to be used up before the beginning of Lent. This is a time of carnival celebration in various European countries, so we've included the easiest pancake recipe and an alternative recipe for potato pancakes from Sweden.

## Flippin' good pancakes...

*Makes 6 - 8 pancakes.*

### Ingredients:

100g plain flour

2 large eggs

300ml milk

1 tbsp oil, plus extra for frying

- Put all the ingredients in a bowl, add a pinch of salt, and beat to a smooth batter.
- Put a little oil in your frying pan and pour a ladle of batter mix into the pan.
- Cook for one minute and then flip and cook for another minute on the other side.
- Plate up with a squeeze of lemon and sugar, or slap on some syrup.

Or for something new, you could try...





## Raggmunk from Sweden

*Makes 8 patties*

### Ingredients:

125g plain flour  
75ml milk  
1 egg  
1 sprig of thyme leaves  
175g white potatoes, grated  
1 carrot, grated  
Oil for frying  
Extra eggs for poaching

- Whisk together the flour, milk, egg, thyme and some seasoning.
- Add the grated potatoes and carrot to the batter and mix well.
- Use a spoon to portion enough of the mixture to make flat patties 8cm wide.
- Fry the patties in hot oil until crispy and golden - about two minutes on each side.
- Plate up served with a poached egg.

Enjoy!

# Week 1:

## Food and Social Justice

**A Prayer** (based on Proverbs 13:23)

Lord God,  
when fruits flourish in the fields of the poor  
injustice sweeps them away.  
Families still hunger.  
Help us to share  
the fruits of your bounty  
so all your children may cherish your gracious gifts.  
Amen



**Bible Reading: Matthew 4. 1 - 4**

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.” Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

### Reflection

Starting this Lent study, many Christians will be trying to give up things we enjoy – wine, sugary treats, maybe Coronation Street! It can be tough to go without, whether it is intended as a sacrifice, purification or acknowledgment of Christ’s suffering. But the poorest around the world go without every day. Proverbs 29:7 says, ‘The righteous care about justice for the poor’. As Christians, this is part of our responsibility towards others. We are called to follow the example of Jesus, who put himself among those who were without worldly assets such as money and power. I wonder how we can use this time of Lent to show God’s love to people in deserts of hardship.

During Lent, we examine our inner selves, but also the systems around us which create wealth and hardship. Today, all round the world, even in the UK, some people will face a hungry day with little or no food to eat. It is time to seriously consider the impact of our food choices on the lives of others, the effect of food shortages around the world, and the role of foodbanks within our own local communities.

### Some questions to think about?

- Are you giving anything up for Lent – what is it, and why?
- What do we learn from Jesus’ teaching about food?
- What would a world with social justice in the area of food look like?



# Worship Together

*Place a loaf-sized stone, a small loaf of bread and a Bible centrally as a focus for worship.  
Encourage everyone to still themselves after all the discussions.*

## Music Suggestions:

‘Forty days and forty nights’, George Hunt Smyttan, Francis Pott, to be found in most hymnbooks.

‘You lead us through the wilderness’, Sam Hargreaves, recording, chord chart, backing track, piano and choir scores available from: [www.resoundworship.org](http://www.resoundworship.org)

‘God is forgiveness’, a short chant from the Taizé Community, *Ancient and Modern: Hymns and Songs for Refreshing Worship* 834

## Bible Verse: Matthew 4. 4

Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

## A Simple Examen

*Leave plenty of space between each section.*

1. Thanksgiving: Today, for what am I most grateful?
2. Examination: Today, what have I found most difficult or challenging?
3. Confession: Today, where have I been challenged to amend my ways?
4. Hope: Today, how will I allow God to lead me into the future?

*A time of open prayer may be included here followed by:*

## The Lord’s Prayer

### Closing Prayer:

Be with us, Lord God,  
to strengthen us on our journey,  
to guide us in all our doings,  
that we may share in the love and care  
of your world and its people.  
Amen.

# Week 2: Food and the Environment

**A Prayer** (based on Psalm 102. 1 – 11, 17)



Hear our prayer, O Lord,  
let our cry for help come to you.  
The earth lies parched,  
reduced to cracks and dust.  
Wells run dry, yet the oceans rise.  
Land and seas are blighted with tossed aside plastics,  
water and air polluted by industrial waste.  
The Lord hears the cry of the destitute,  
he will not despise their plea.  
Amen.

## Bible Reading: Genesis 1. 26 – 31

Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” So God created humankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.” Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.” And it was so. God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.

## Reflection

The book of Genesis tells us that everything God created was very good and that Adam was placed in the Garden of Eden to subdue and rule over it. Different translations use the words dominion, control, trustees, master, govern or reign. In this way we participate in God’s gardening and farming ways within the world. These are activities which draw us into a more honest understanding of our place in the world and a more honest understanding of what it means to be a creature living among other creatures: finite, vulnerable, fragile, beautiful – all these things together. Every green plant provided food for all the living creatures. And it was good!

Right from the beginning, Adam and Eve were given the freedom to make choices. In Genesis 3, when they ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they made a wrong choice. This one act of disobedience began a chain of events which has blighted creation and the human race ever since.

Climate emergencies will likely become more frequent and will reduce access to natural resources and food for many. We also wrestle with the environmental impact created by food waste and discarded packaging, particularly plastics.

## Some questions to think about?

- What for you would have been attractive about living in the Garden of Eden?
- What are the environmental challenges affecting Christians today?
- To what extent do you believe solving environmental problems is a personal responsibility and to what extent is it a universal responsibility?

# Worship Together

*Place a shallow dish of soil, a shallow dish of water and a growing food plant or a few vegetables centrally as a focus for worship.*

*Encourage everyone to still themselves after all the discussions.*

## Music Suggestions:

‘Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us’, James Edmeston, to be found in most hymnbooks

‘Beauty for brokenness’, Graham Kendrick, to be found in most newer hymnbooks

‘A Kyrie’ from Ghana, Dinah Reindorf, with a yearning blues melody, *Ancient and Modern: Hymns and Songs for Refreshing Worship* 371, *Singing the Faith* 751, *World Praise* 87

## Bible Verse: Genesis 1. 31

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.

## A Simple Examen

*Leave plenty of space between each section.*

1. Thanksgiving: Today, for what am I most grateful?
2. Examination: Today, what have I found most difficult or challenging?
3. Confession: Today, where have I been challenged to amend my ways?
4. Hope: Today, how will I allow God to lead me into the future?

*A time of open prayer may be included here followed by:*

## The Lord's Prayer

### Closing Prayer:

To God the Father, who created the world;  
To God the Son, who redeemed the world;  
To God the Holy Spirit, who sustains the world;  
Be all praise and glory, now and forever.  
Amen.



# Week 3: Food and Animal Welfare

**A Prayer** (based on Habakkuk 3. 1, 17, 18)



Lord, I have heard of your fame,  
I have heard of your awesome deeds,  
renew them in our day and act with mercy.  
Though the crops fail  
and the fields produce no food,  
though there are no sheep in the pen  
and no cattle in the stalls,  
yet I will rejoice in the Lord,  
I will look to God my Saviour,  
and I will ask you, Lord, to remember mercy.  
Amen.

## Bible Readings:

Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth. The fear and dread of you will fall on all the beasts of the earth, and on all the birds in the sky, on every creature that moves along the ground, and on all the fish in the sea; they are given into your hands. Everything that lives and moves about will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything. **(Genesis 9. 1 – 3)**

The righteous care for the needs of their animals, but the kindest acts of the wicked are cruel.  
**(Proverbs 12:10)**

Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is overlooked by God.  
**(Luke 12:6)**

## Reflection

It is interesting to notice here that, while Adam’s diet was vegetarian, God told Noah that he could eat everything that lives and moves about. Children’s author, and theologian, C.S Lewis queried traditional Christian thinking that only humans are capable of suffering when he wrote: ‘If the life of a newt is merely a succession of sensations, what should we mean by saying that God may recall to life the newt that died to-day? It would not recognise itself as the same newt.’ For much of its history Christianity regarded animals without much compassion. They were there for our convenience. God had given people dominion over the natural world, but, over time, our understanding has started to move from an attitude of consumerism and exploitation to one of sustainability and stewardship. The use of animals for food production creates important questions for Christians. If the rearing and slaughter of animals brings them suffering, how is this compatible with creating a world which honours a loving creator God? Some might suggest this is a sound argument for us all to become vegetarians!

The position of animal welfare is clear, but the question of animal rights is more open to debate, as the Bible has teaching both for and against the rights of animals.

## Some questions to think about?

- What sort of rights do animals have? How can they be taken into account?
- How can we minimise animal suffering, whilst still accepting God's gifts on the table?
- In what ways does being a Christian challenge how we think about eating meat and fish?

## Worship Together

*Place a glass of milk, a jar of honey, an egg, a can of fish and a can of meat centrally as a focus for worship.*

*Encourage everyone to still themselves after all the discussions.*

### Music Suggestions:

'O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder', Stuart K. Hine, to be found in most hymnbooks

'Think of the world without any flowers', Doreen E. Newport, especially verse 2 concerning animals, popular with schools and to be found in most newer hymnbooks

'He's got the whole world in his hand', an African-American traditional song with the capacity to add different verses to include animals, birds, and fish, to be found in many hymnbooks

### Bible Verse: Luke 12. 6

Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is overlooked by God.

### A Simple Examen

*Leave plenty of space between each section.*

1. Thanksgiving: Today, for what am I most grateful?
2. Examination: Today, what have I found most difficult or challenging?
3. Confession: Today, where have I been challenged to amend my ways?
4. Hope: Today, how will I allow God to lead me into the future?

*A time of open prayer may be included here followed by:*

### The Lord's Prayer

#### Closing Prayer:

The God, who feeds the birds of the air  
and loves his creation,  
calls you to seek first his kingdom  
and his righteousness.  
Then you will be blessed  
with all that you need for each day.  
Amen.

# Week 4: Food and Food Producers

**A Prayer** (based on Isaiah 58. 3, 6 - 8)



O Lord, why have you not heard our cries?

The Lord says:

“On the day of your fasting, you do as you please  
and exploit all your workers.

You cannot fast as you do today  
and expect your voice to be heard on high.”

O Lord, you call us  
to loose the chains of injustice  
to break every yoke  
and to share our food with the hungry.  
Lead us in your ways.  
Amen.

## Bible Reading: Isaiah 2. 1 - 4

This is what Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem: In the last days, the mountain of the Lord’s temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. Many peoples will come and say, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.” The law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.

## Reflection

The food on our plate has a complex backstory. The lucky ones can pluck fruit from a tree in their garden and munch a fresh apple, but most of our meals were sown, watered, harvested, sorted, milled, slaughtered, plucked, refined, pulped and roasted by people somewhere in the food supply chain. The network of food is global in reach, involving millions of farmers and processors.

Getting food on the shelves is an intricate and fast-moving operation, with people working in picking, processing, packing and distribution. A consumer desire for cheap or convenience foods can lead to exploitative labour practices, such as hazardous working conditions, poor pay and unfair trading. Farmers are hard workers, often challenged by thin profit margins and an increasingly unpredictable climate. Our food system is extremely vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. War can also hinder food distribution.

The prophet Isaiah had a vision of the final days, when the nations turn to God, replacing swords with ploughshares and spears with pruning hooks; they too will become producers of food, who till the soil and prune the orchards. Inherent in this is the righteousness of agricultural work, and the desire of God that we should all become closer to growing the food we eat.

## Some questions to think about?

- What are your perceptions of farming, here and around the world; a desirable job or a hard life?
- How might a more peaceful world bring about more efficient food production?
- What can we do as consumers of food to benefit food producers around the world?



# Worship Together

*Place some packaged groceries in cans, boxes and packets from different countries of the world centrally as a focus for worship.*

*Encourage everyone to still themselves after all the discussions.*

## Music Suggestions:

‘Kyrie Eleison’, Stuart Townend, Keith Getty, a contemporary hymn reflecting on the scars of war, *Songs of Fellowship* 2403, *Mission Praise* 1321

‘We will not take what is not ours’, John L. Bell, Graham Maule, reflecting on fair trade, from *Love and Anger Songbook*, Wild Goose Publications

‘Kyrie’, short chant from Ukraine, *Ancient and Modern: Hymns and Songs for Refreshing Worship* 372, *Singing the Faith* 750, *World Praise* 86

## Bible Verse: Isaiah 2. 4

They will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks.

## A Simple Examen

*Leave plenty of space between each section.*

1. Thanksgiving: Today, for what am I most grateful?
2. Examination: Today, what have I found most difficult or challenging?
3. Confession: Today, where have I been challenged to amend my ways?
4. Hope: Today, how will I allow God to lead me into the future?

*A time of open prayer may be included here followed by:*

## The Lord’s Prayer

### Closing Prayer *(attributed to St Teresa of Avila)*

Christ has no body but yours,  
no hands, no feet on earth but yours.  
Yours are the eyes with which He looks  
compassion on this world,  
yours are the feet with which He walks to do good,  
yours are the hands, with which He blesses all the world.  
Christ has no body now on earth but yours.  
Amen.

# Week 5: Food and Production Impact



## A Prayer of Grace

Lord, we thank You  
for the food before us,  
the friends beside us,  
the love between us;  
and Your Presence among us.  
Amen.

## Bible Readings

On this mountain the Lord Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine – the best of meats and the finest of wines. **(Isaiah 25:6)**

Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus... When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread. **(John 21. 4, 9)**

Therefore I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will. **(Romans 12:1 - 2)**

## Reflection

Food is often linked with hospitality. Many times we read of Jesus eating with others, he even ministered to his disciples after the resurrection by giving them a BBQ on the beach. Food is good! However, busy lives and busy families mean sometimes we find it hard to pause at the table for an evening meal and fewer families now make time for Sunday lunch together.

Food nourishes, but it can also create problems. Obesity rates are increasing, diabetes and heart disease are attributed to unbalanced diets, while malnutrition harms the life chances of children in the poorest parts of the world. God has provided us with rich fayre and there is enough food in the world to feed everyone if only we could overcome the obstacles to its distribution.

Our food choices make an impact on food production. Over-fishing has reduced fish stocks whilst industrial-scale farming methods and climate change have had an impact on meat production and soil management. Debate over how we safeguard adequate food supplies is growing and could intensify over genetically modified crops as well as the prospect of 'lab-grown' cultured meat.

## Some questions to think about

- What do you see as the advantages of eating together and how might we encourage this?
- What might we do to help address the twin problems of obesity and malnutrition around the world?
- Unsustainable agriculture is agriculture we cannot keep doing. How can we make our diets sustainable and more ethical?

# Worship Together

*Place a globe or atlas, an open Tear Fund or Christian Aid magazine, or some images of farming from around the world centrally as a focus for worship.*

*Encourage everyone to still themselves after all the discussions.*

## Music Suggestions:

'God in his love for us lent us this planet, Fred Pratt Green, *Singing the Faith* 727ii

'Touch the earth lightly', Shirley Erena Murray, *Ancient and Modern: Hymns and Songs for Refreshing Worship* 553i, *Singing the Faith* 729

'O Lord, listen to my prayer', Margaret Rizza, a short prayer song, *Light in our Darkness*, p.50, *Ancient and Modern: Hymns and Songs for Refreshing Worship* 406

## Bible Verse: Romans 12. 2

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

## A Simple Examen

*Leave plenty of space between each section.*

1. Thanksgiving: Today, for what am I most grateful?
2. Examination: Today, what have I found most difficult or challenging?
3. Confession: Today, where have I been challenged to amend my ways?
4. Hope: Today, how will I allow God to lead me into the future?

*A time of open prayer may be included here followed by:*

## The Lord's Prayer

## Closing Prayer:

Lord God,  
we thank you for feeding us.  
May we offer ourselves as living sacrifices  
to work together for a sustainable future,  
inspired by the message of hope  
that comes from our Lord Jesus Christ,  
in whom all things hold together.  
Amen.



# Week 6: Food and Sacrament



## A Prayer of Preparation

Lord and Giver of all good things,  
we bring bread and wine to Christ's table.  
These gifts will be for us  
the body and blood of Christ.  
Our witness against hunger,  
our cry against injustice,  
and our hope for a world  
where God is fully known  
and everyone is fed.  
Thanks be to God.  
Amen.

## Bible Reading: Mark 14. 17, 22 - 24

When evening came, Jesus was reclining at table with the Twelve... While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take it; this is my body." Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, and they all drank from it. "This is the blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many," he said to them. "I tell you the truth, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it anew in the kingdom of God."

## Reflection

Before his crucifixion Jesus celebrated the Passover with his disciples at what we now know as the Last Supper. This is a meal of remembrance, featuring special dishes, which called to mind the great deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt in the time of Moses. During Holy Week, many Christians recreate the Passover by hosting a 'Seder' meal, traditionally eaten as a family or community.

The most important dish is the Seder plate, which hosts portions of six ritual foods. The first food on the plate is Karpas, a green herb, usually parsley, dipped in salty water, to represent the tears of Israel during their exile. The second, Charoset, is a combination of fruit, nuts and wine to represent the mortar used when the Israelites made bricks for the Egyptians. Maror, usually horseradish or other bitter herbs, reminds us of the bitterness of slavery endured by the Israelites. Zeroah is a roasted lamb shank, sacrificed by the Israelites on the eve of the Exodus. Beitzah, a roasted egg, represents life and renewal. Another plate has pieces of matzo, the unleavened bread, that the Israelites baked before they escaped from Egypt.

During the Last Supper, Jesus added a new level of meaning by taking bread and wine to represent his own body and blood offered as a sacrifice to put people right with God once and for all. Christian churches have been remembering this eucharistic sacrament week by week ever since as an outward sign of the significance of Christ's death and resurrection.

## Some questions to think about?

- Think of a time when you enjoyed a meal to celebrate with friends or family. What stands out to you from the memory of that meal?
- Are there any special meals or dishes that remind you of a significant person or event?
- The Lord's Supper, the Eucharist, Breaking of Bread, Holy Communion, Mass are all names used for the taking of bread and wine. What do we learn about its importance from its names?

# Worship Together

*Place a plate of bread and a cup of wine centrally as a focus for worship. This could be shared informally before the closing prayer.*

*Encourage everyone to still themselves after all the discussions.*

## Music Suggestions:

'A gift each day, our daily bread', Ally Barratt, Tune: Kingsfold, offers a good summary for the end of this Lent course. For the full text, see <https://reverendally.org/reverendallys-hymns/>

'Here is bread, here is wine', Graham Kendrick, *Ancient and Modern: Hymns and Songs for Refreshing Worship* 334, *Singing the Faith* 776, *Songs of Fellowship* 762, *Mission Praise* 842

'In the Lord I'll be ever thankful, a short chant from the Taizé Community, *Ancient and Modern: Hymns and Songs for Refreshing Worship* 334, *Singing the Faith* 776

## Bible Verse: Mark 14. 22 - 23

Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples...Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, and they all drank from it.

## A Simple Examen

*Leave plenty of space between each section.*

1. Thanksgiving: Today, for what am I most grateful?
2. Examination: Today, what have I found most difficult or challenging?
3. Confession: Today, where have I been challenged to amend my ways?
4. Hope: Today, how will I allow God to lead me into the future?

*A time of open prayer may be included here followed by:*

## The Lord's Prayer

## Closing Prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ,  
we thank you for this memorial of your passion.  
You renew us with the living bread from heaven,  
nourish our faith,  
and increase our hope.  
Give us grace to follow you  
serving one another  
with patience and humility  
to your praise and glory.  
Amen.



# Arthur Rank Centre

CONFIDENT RURAL CHRISTIANS

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