

Bristo Baptist

M a g a z i n e

May / June 2006

Reaching Out



Bristo Baptist Church

41 Buckingham Terrace / 1 Queensferry Road, Edinburgh EH4 3DJ

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Editorial



From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. (Acts 17: 26-27).

God is only as far from each of us as the distance we can reach out! Reaching out emphasises the personal relationships we have with him and with other people. Almost every time "reaching out" is mentioned in the Bible, it is in the context of reaching out one's hand – us to God in faith (*Ex. 4:4*), Jesus to Peter (*Matt. 14:31*), Jesus in healing ministry (*Mk. 1:41*), God to Jeremiah when commissioning him (*Jer. 1:9*). Reaching out demands relationship, intimacy, courage and faith. Sometimes we don't reach out because we feel we're on our own. But, as Acts 17 reminds us, God is close to us. So we *can* reach out in His name! Let's start doing it.

Robert Mill

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Dear Friends,

Do you ever think of reaching out to others in Jesus' name? Let me give you three helpful hints.

Firstly, don't reach out to others until you have first allowed God to reach in. In the Thursday night Cell Group, we are working our way through an old, spiritual classic, Richard Foster's *Celebration of Discipline*. Foster, an evangelical Quaker, introduces us to what are unknown to many: the classic spiritual disciplines, practised by our forefathers throughout the Christian centuries.

Vision statements, goals and programmes are common in everyday life. This should be a warning to us in church! It is so easy to focus on using our energy and to project carnal desires, even for noble purposes. But in the Christian life, we are making ourselves available for God to work in us and through us, expressing His nature and pursuing His purposes. To truly do this, we need to find



time, preferably each day, to allow God to reach in to us and to change us. Time and space for God to reach in.

There are different ways of doing this, but an important one lies in cultivating 'holy leisure'. Space and time for ourselves to be touched by God. To enter His presence. To meditate on scripture, allowing a passage to 'soak into us'. To allow ourselves to enter and enjoy His presence.

Secondly, do not begin to reach out until you are motivated by genuine care and compassion for the people you are reaching out to. There is no place for any other agenda, other than love and compassion for people. Bringing more people to church is not a valid reason. Getting people 'saved', or spiritual scalp hunting, is not a reason. People are not fools. They can sense and see an agenda that is anything else than genuine care and concern. When we reach out, we must do it on God's terms, truly in Jesus' name. We must trust that it is He, not our 'spiritual goals', that

will bring genuine growth and add to the numbers of people being saved. Of course people will be drawn to you, and the church you are part of, if they are being touched by the God who lives among us.

Thirdly, be confident that the church belongs to God. He is the one who cleanses us. He is the one who dwells with and changes us. Of course we are yet imperfect. All Christians are people on a journey of transformation. No particular church or fellowship is 'better' than

any other. What matters is that we take Jesus seriously, when He says "wherever two or three gather in my name, there I am with them", and "I will build my church". If we have faith that Jesus is in the centre, that will manifest itself and people will see and sense it.

Got it? Now you're ready to draw others into the mighty love of God that we are part of, in Jesus' name!

In His love,
Jim

COMING EVENTS

Life of Jesus Christ play, Dundas Castle, South Queensferry, *Wednesday 7th – Sunday 11th June*. Performance times: Wed–Sat 10.15 a.m.–3.45 p.m. (please arrive by 10 a.m.); Sunday, 2–7 p.m. (please arrive by 1.45 p.m.). Tickets adults £12, children £6, concessions £10, family (2 adults + up to 4 children) £30. Book online using the website <http://www.jesus-at-dundas.com/>; by phone from 'The Hub' booking office (0131 473 2000); or by post using a printed booking form (can be downloaded from the web site). Bring packed lunch and waterproof clothing in case of rain.

Frenzy, Christian Festival, *Saturday 10 June*, Highland Hall, Royal Highland Centre, Ingliston, near Edinburgh airport, 12 noon – 10 p.m. Tickets: adults £27.50, children under 16 £18. *Frenzy* is the UK's largest one day Christian music festival. Bands appearing will include Delirious?, Hillsongs United, Tim Hughes, Tree63 and others. Tickets can be booked by phone without booking fee (08708 748 748), or online with booking fee payable (www.seetickets.com).

Clan Gathering, Strathtyrum by St Andrews, *Saturday 15–Friday 21 July*. There is still time to book! (£80 adults, £60 youth 17-24, £48 kids 5-16 or £38 kids under 5). There are some booking forms available on the Bristo Magazine stand in the Crush Hall.

TREASURER'S REPORT

End of Year Summary

The end of the financial year has come and gone, but the work still continues. The end of year accounts and the report to OSCR (the Scottish Charities Regulator) are almost complete. This has been my first attempt at producing any form of accounts. I am most fortunate in that I had such helpful and complete documentation on which to base my work.

	General Offerings	Mission Fund & Designated	Gift Aid Tax Refund	Total Offerings
Offerings Year to Date	£37,379	£6,502	£7,672	£51,559
Mar - Apr Offerings	£6,490	£1,279	-	£7,769
Annual Income from Halls				£5,255
Total Income				£56,814

In summary in the last year we have been able to donate:

BMS	£3,375
Scottish Baptist Fund	£2,750
Bethany	£975
Edinburgh City Mission	£500
Fatela	£1,324
Tear Fund	£500
Lom, Bulgaria	£3,500
Total	£12,924

We're already nearly a month into the new church financial year. Please remember your monthly designated offering envelopes. Also if anyone wishes to sign a Gift Aid declaration please see me for a form because as you can see from the above figures, we are able to claim back a substantial sum from the taxman.

Paul Watson

STRETCH YOUR TENT CURTAINS WIDE

On Sunday morning 23rd April our pastor Jim began a sermon series on Isaiah 53 to 61. As he led us into God's word, these two verses stuck in my mind as saying something special to our church.

*Enlarge the place of your tent,
stretch your tent curtains wide,
do not hold back:
Lengthen your cords, strengthen
your stakes,
For you will spread out to the
right and to the left;
Your descendants will dispossess
nations, and settle in their
desolate cities.*

Isaiah 54: 2-3

At this present time the deacons of Bristo are considering different ways in which our wonderful building can be used more effectively for kingdom purposes. We have been entrusted with the task of spreading the Gospel to all peoples and being a light to the nations. We as a church were given a prophecy on 28th September

2003 that "You are going to hear the words of people saying 'Make room for us!' and you are going to hear the words 'We're filled and we're satisfied', you are going to hear the words 'Once I was sick and now I am healed', you are going to hear the words 'Once I was hopeless and now I have a future'". The prophecy concludes "SO BE READY".

We feel that we have the privilege, not given to all churches in the city, of a particularly spacious and well-equipped building. At present, however, in spite of the presence of the language school, the building is still under-used, and from the outside would appear to many in the unchurched community as intimidating and unwelcoming. In fact there are faithful members of our cell groups who seldom if ever enter the building, and we have to seriously ask ourselves why this is so.

Isaiah 54 makes it clear that the enlargement of the tent in boldness and in faith will bring blessing. God, through the words of Isaiah, is not

addressing Israel at a point when the nation is strong, but instead he gives Isaiah the metaphorical picture of a barren and rejected woman. This suggests that it is when we feel at our weakest and least triumphant that we should be bold, stand on the promises of God and act according to His will. God seldom uses the humanly strong and confident to carry out his purposes. In the words of God to the apostle Paul, “My grace is sufficient for you, my power is made perfect in weakness.”

The tent in those days was a dwelling place for an extended family, a family that supported and defended each other through thick and thin. It was not a fortress and it did not have doors that could be locked and secured. If a stranger arrived he would be fed. If enemies appeared the men of the family would go out to meet them, and if necessary overcome them. Life was fluid from the inside to the

outside, and vice versa. A tent is flexible – it can be picked up and taken away according to circumstances. Abraham was a man who lived in tents – he chose to leave the security of the city and go wherever God might lead him. He did not depend on the possession of a tent for his security, but instead he depended solely on the promises of God. Remember that he never quite knew where the final destination would be (*Hebrews 11: 8-9*). We are similarly called to be “sojourners and strangers”, not to cling to the security of the familiar and the material. Our one requirement is to “seek first the kingdom, and then all things will be given us”

If you have your own dreams and desires for the future of this church and the building we meet in, and how best to seek the kingdom as a church family, feel free to approach any of the deacons.

Gill Schärer

SEEKING GOD’S VISION FOR BRISTO’S BUILDING

In April, the deacons invited Douglas Flett, a Christian architect with considerable experience in remodelling of church buildings, to lead them in an hour long session of question and answers and ‘heartstorming’ as he put it.

Douglas’s objective in the meeting was to stretch our thinking and to start a process of seeking God as to the vision that He’d give us as a church, before embarking on any type of remodelling of the building; the principle being that the vision must shape the building, and not the other way round.

Two things have resulted from this ‘heartstorming’: firstly it seemed right in the Lord even after all the discussion about vision, to push ahead with the work to improve the appearance of the building facade. We felt that this would be required no matter what future changes would be decided upon.

Secondly, people have begun to dream dreams, in fact two in particular. Both have at their heart a desire to see the building utilised

for the kingdom seven days a week, including the sanctuary. The first dream is a suggestion to turn the upstairs part of the church, including the space over the sanctuary, into accommodation for a good quality Christian hostel with a number of small, simple, but very comfortable single, double and dormitory rooms with basic ensuite facilities. The front Buckingham Terrace entrance could be a spacious and attractive reception area for the hostel with a small open-plan breakfast and morning coffee area where guests could have breakfast, and also hopefully it could build up a clientele of office workers dropping in at lunchtime. The language school would also continue on the ground floor of the church using the same reception area, and perhaps sharing the same coffee area.

The second dream complements the first, and it envisages Bristo hosting a team of young people undertaking a year long course of discipleship along the lines of BMS Action Teams and YWAM Operation Year teams. The intention would be to run this alongside the internship programme



and that both groups would live on the church premises. This would develop a sense of a 'living' community within the church.

From a practical viewpoint, perhaps both could work together side by side. From a structural viewpoint both would need complementary facilities. For instance both would need bedrooms; both could support a cafe, Discipleship teams would specifically need seminar type rooms and equipment for presentations, talks, classes as well as room for worship together.

The important thing is that we allow ourselves to dream dreams and see visions without any constraint in terms of what it costs. If the vision, whatever it may be, is accepted and owned by the whole church, money will be found.

Please could everybody be thinking and praying specifically about what vision God would give us, his body, in Bristo.

Craig Smith

REFLECTIONS ON A VISIT TO LOM

Having had some time now to reflect upon the most recent visit to Lom in Bulgaria by a party from our church, my most enduring memory is of a hospitable and humble people who readily embraced God's moving among them. For some in our party it was a case of 'Welcome back'; but for others, like myself, it was an opportunity to meet these dear brothers and sisters for the first time and to experience first hand their warmth and fellowship. And I was not disappointed.

Bulgaria is a land of contrasts. Poverty co-exists with affluent wealth. The drab outlook of the Sofia suburbs, standing testimony to the harsh realities of life for much of the urban population, soon gives way to breathtaking rustic scenery. Those in the rural villages, still living and working as their forefathers did generations earlier, have a richness and depth to community living which we have all but lost. The church people, many of whom belong to the Roma community, have a hunger and desire for the Person and Presence

of God which many here in the West have either lost or have surrendered for a godless version of Christianity which has neither sacrificial love, transformative power nor an expectancy for God to move among His people. All this caused me to reflect and wonder, 'Who are really the 'rich' ones and who are really the 'poor' ones'?

Nevertheless, the widespread unemployment (some estimates place this at 80% in Lom) makes life very difficult for much of the population, church people included. Yet they have a resilience and pragmatism to life which we would do well to observe. It was humbling to receive from these dear people, many of whom gave generously from what little they had. They were honoured to have us among them. I only hope they knew how honoured we also felt to be with them.



The Lom church building

Our church party consisted of Jim & Jennifer, Maureen, Jeanette, Neil & Judy,

Stuart (who attends the Wednesday cell group at East Craigs), Sharon (daughter of Jess) and myself. Not one of us was left untouched as God not only worked through us to channel his blessings to others but He also worked in us, to challenge us and to refresh us. It was a time of spiritual enrichment, as the Lord clearly spoke to us as we ministered to others, bringing His healing, His Word and His Spirit into their lives. It is always a humbling occasion to be used of the Lord in this way, and it left us with a deep lasting joy and sense of renewal as we saw Him so clearly move and work in His people's lives.

Two lasting impressions remain with me; firstly, the Sunday afternoon service held in a small house-church in an outlying village to Lom, and secondly, the time of prayer held for the Lom congregation later that same day. In that little village we met brothers and sisters who materially had nothing yet who gathered together in the

Lord's Name to worship Him. This had quite an impact on me and it was a privilege to bring God's Word to them and to hear their testimonies of how the Lord worked in their lives. Later at the Lom church we gathered to pray for anyone who desired prayer. A good many of the congregation attended, a sobering fact for us here at Bristo. Jim asked us to discipline

ourselves only to pray what we felt the Lord had put on our heart to pray.

When people came up individually for prayer the Lord clearly led us what to pray for and many were

touched by the Lord that night, a fact testified to the following evening when we met with the church for a farewell social gathering and time of fellowship and testimony.

There is much more I could say. I could speak further of fellowship shared, of lasting impressions, of spiritual renewal, of God moving both among the team and the Lom

fellowship, of small and large acts of kindness and generosity, but I left with a deep impression that one day I will be back and that the Lord has granted me the awesome privilege of sharing His Word and my life with these brothers and sisters. We here at Bristo have a responsibility to discern His leading in how we further partner and support our brothers and sisters in



After the Sunday morning service

that little North Western corner of Bulgaria. I do not speak lightly when I say that there is the beginning of a wonderful work of God in that small town and its surroundings, and that we have an

important part of play.

“O Lord, he who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

David Pollard

HOME FROM HOME

Home from Home now meets regularly on Tuesdays between 1 and 3 p.m. in Bristo's lower lounge - it provides a free opportunity for those new to Scotland who can't attend more formal language classes to develop friendships and learn more about Scottish culture while improving their English. Some parents bring their pre-school children, who are looked after by church volunteers.

We currently have about six learners attending regularly with students from Taiwan, Bangladesh, China, South Korea, Poland and Brazil and we hope to reach out to the growing Polish population in Edinburgh soon by distributing leaflets in Polish to specialist shops.

The class is very informal, starting with a cup of tea and a chat and then, using games, pair work and role play, we focus on practical topics such as going to the doctor, renting a flat, asking for directions, telephone skills, discussing families, job interviews and that most necessary of skills in Scotland -

talking about the weather! On Shrove Tuesday we talked about the meaning of Lent and made pancakes together and during Holy Week we discussed a PowerPoint presentation about Easter.

Once we have a few more learners attending regularly, we hope to develop the group by splitting into two levels of proficiency. Moving to a new country where you don't speak the language can be frightening and difficult and sometimes folk just contact us for help e.g. we have had requests for help in finding stress counselling and in completing a C.V. for a job application.

How do the learners feel about the group? - well, here are a couple of comments :

Jane from Taiwan says,

“I found the class very practical and useful. More important, it gives me the opportunities to learn English from the natives and practise it with the natives.”

Alice from China says,

“Although I have been living in the UK for a few years, I still have a lot of language problems with communicating with local people and understanding British society. I became pessimistic about my career development in the UK due to my communication problems. When I first joining the group study, I was completely absorbed in the teaching style and helpful atmosphere. Now I am looking forward to every Tuesday as I can attend the group. I benefit so much from the group. Not only I learn a lot of native expressions and get used to them little by little but also I feel comfortable to express myself in English. I know all these improvements can not be easily achieved unless you have some local friends who are patient, thoughtful and ready to help you wholly and heartily. I value the group study so much as I think it maybe a point of turn for me to be incorporated into the British society gradually. I feel more confident with back up from the group.”

And the volunteers ? -

“I have really enjoyed being part

of Home from Homelt is very interesting to meet people from different countries and to be involved with them and I feel it is a good opportunity to show God’s love in practical ways. An added bonus is that I am learning so much about different countries and cultures as well!” (Maureen)

“I’ve really enjoyed being part of this group, and it’s made me appreciate some of the difficulties facing those who are learning English as a second language!” (Linda)

“I really feel in my heart that this is a service that the Lord wants us in Bristo to provide.” (Gill)

Jennifer Purves

[Ruth] exclaimed, "Why have I found such favour in your eyes that you notice me - a foreigner?"

Ruth 2 : 10b

CARE VAN MINISTRY

Isaiah 58 verses 6-7 say:

“Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter - when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?”

This chapter was given as a word to the church a couple of years ago, and now we’re seeing some of it being acted out in reality through our association with the Bethany Care Van.

The Care Van is a Bethany ministry which has been on the go in Edinburgh daily since Alan Berry, its founder, began it in the early 1980s. Currently over 30 churches are involved in manning the van 52 weeks in the year. Its purpose is to provide soup and rolls to the homeless on Edinburgh’s streets each night.

But what’s it like ‘on the ground’ when the team is out?

Each night is different. The first stop is the Waverley Bridge at 9 p.m. As we turn the corner from Princes Street onto the bridge we can see the ‘clients’ waiting in or around one of the bus shelters on the side of the gardens. Numbers vary from 15-40. They have come to rely on the regularity of the van and in fact many have built their evening routine around it. Its importance is also strengthened during the winter months because the Van is also then the point for the Care Shelter pick up.

Later on the route takes the team via Kings Stables Road to the Grassmarket, from there down the High Street to the Canongate Church, turning back to go up the Pleasance, passing Bristo Square, down Chambers Street and to the Bridges, stopping wherever we see someone sitting at the side of the road.

What about the people that we serve? They all have their own

story. There was the ex-master of a merchant naval ship who ended up on the street by sheer circumstance. He was cold having been sleeping rough for five days wearing only a thin shirt and jeans, and holding an umbrella. His chat with members of the van was the first contact he'd had with any sort of help since he'd arrived. The team were able to give him a sweater and jacket which both providentially fitted him because he was tall, and pointed him to the Cowgate Centre for the night, where at least he'd be warm.

There was also the young girl, who had been harassed and followed by a group of youths, and was extremely agitated. One of the team members was able to talk to her to bring reassurance, and also to arrange that she be accompanied home by a friend whom she trusted and who was also at the van.

For every individual there is a different story. Our hope and prayer is that through the consistent and faithful work of Christians through the van in showing God's love, that many will come to know the Lord Jesus in a personal way.

Craig Smith

RETURN FROM UKRAINE

My visit to Ukraine to take part in an English language course on behalf of Wycliffe Associates has come and gone, but leaves me with many vivid memories. What impressions particularly stay with me? Among so many other experiences, are the open-hearted hospitality of the people, the single-minded desire of so many of the students we taught to reach their country with the Gospel, the crowded churches, the time-warp we seemed to have stepped back into, the beauty and silence of the winter snow ... too much to describe here.

First I should mention my prayer requests in the last article, and give a report on what happened as a result of your prayer.

1. My cough, which had been with me non-stop since a cold early in November, cleared up literally days before I left. I had, in fact, had a very strong confidence that this would happen.

2. We all four stayed together in the Skazko family farmhouse. It

was quite crowded, in fact I slept in the living room, and we never did discover exactly where the family themselves slept, except that someone had moved into the pantry! It was, however, extremely comfortable, and we were overwhelmed by the quantities of food and the loving care we received. Ala, the matriarch of the home, who seemed superhumanly capable of all things from singing beautifully in the church choir to delicious cooking and the daily care of cows, pigs and chickens, even insisted on drying our hair with her hair drier and mending our clothes!

3. Although we did not in fact take with us all the materials that we needed, as so many complete beginners turned up for our classes, the grace of God took us through it, and we managed to cope with every situation. I found that one of the most successful teaching aids that I used was a selection of Bristo Church magazines! There were other problems with the actual teaching: for example, no one had thought of providing us with any blackboards in the church where we held the classes. At the last minute someone went out to the town and

found us rolls of wallpaper. I was teaching in the tiny church crèche, and I stuck my wallpaper up bit by bit on the glass window between the sanctuary and the crèche. The others found sticks, and hung theirs up in rolls on the walls. The important thing was that no one panicked, and I am sure that our attitude to such problems was the result of continuing prayer back here in the UK.

Very little information was given to us before we left about where we were going and what to expect there. Everything went wrong on our journey out from Luton to Warsaw on Wizz Airlines, a Central European version of easyJet. The result was that we didn't leave Warsaw until it was almost dark, in a rather rickety minibus minus seatbelts. All we knew was that our destination was Rivne, a railway junction in the Ukrainian language-speaking historical heartland, and an area sometimes called the "Bible Belt of Ukraine". We arrived at three in the morning, not in Rivne, but in a village street under deep snow, looking for an unknown farmhouse!

Our first real shock of the trip was discovering at three that morning that the only 'toilet' at the farmhouse was in the farmyard next to the cowshed, and required wading through the snow in a temperature of what was then ten degrees below zero (later to go down to minus twenty degrees). One or two of us at that point probably felt that they had made a big mistake in coming! But this, among so many other things, was so similar to my life as a child in the forties and fifties. The ongoing 'toilet-problem' became in the end part of the enjoyment of life in a country that was so obviously European, but at the same time so different from our present twenty-first century lives here in the West.

Instead of teaching in Rivne, as we had expected, we used a Baptist church in a small and quite attractive neighbouring town called Zdolbuniv. We lived in Zdolbitsa, a village about half an hour by bus or people-carrier, further out in the country. This was a delight, as we could go out after work and before it got dark, on walks in the snow around the village. Not many

people had cars that could negotiate the snow, so we sometimes went to work and returned by bus. I now know the exact meaning of being 'packed in like sardines'! There was also a rota of church people, sometimes our students, who came to get us in four-wheel drives. One of our regular drivers was the regional chief of Interpol!

One purpose in going was to publicise the work of Wycliffe Bible translators, and there was a small national Wycliffe Conference end-on to our course. On both Sundays we spoke at churches, giving testimonies and talking about volunteering, as Wycliffe is now trying to encourage the large and growing church in Ukraine to look beyond its own borders, and for the first time send their own members overseas. I was speaking particularly about short-term volunteering, and how age is not a barrier to this. Our leader, Rachel, had spent twelve years translating the Bible in the Amazon area of Brazil, and she also gave short lunchtime talks to the students about Wycliffe's work.

The students were keen to hear our personal testimonies, as they put it, "Tell us the story of how you repented!" I received an email at the end of April with the good news that one of my students, a Russian speaker from Crimea called Iryna, had been accepted as a Wycliffe trainee, and would begin her course in the summer. After we left, a camp for young people was held, and six or them also volunteered.

We were quite amazed at the churches we visited and heard of and could not help comparing them with churches here in Scotland. Ukrainian churches seem to have a very high Sunday attendance, to cater particularly for children and young people, to have a heart for taking the Gospel throughout their nation, for church planting, and for choral singing! Among our students there were a number who were involved in village church plants, and there was a determination to finally have an evangelical church in every village of the nation. Although big churches, like the



church at Zdolbitsa



some of the students

First Baptist Church at Rivne, are popular, very few people have cars, and the aim is a church for everyone within walking distance. This must be particularly necessary in the winter snow, when we, at least, found walking extremely difficult! We particularly enjoyed the small modern village church at Zdolbitsa, less formal than the larger ones and not unlike Bristo. We only visited Baptist churches, but our students also came from Pentecostal and independent house church backgrounds.

We four teachers also came from different church backgrounds. I think that we all found our visit to Ukraine an experience which strengthened our personal faith, and helped us to look at our own very different church situations afresh. As is always the case, we came away feeling that by the grace of God we had probably gained more from the experience than those we went to serve! In all, it was a more than worthwhile experience.

Gill Schärer

Service Times

Sunday

Morning Celebration (including Junior Church) 11.00 a.m.
 Evening Celebration 6.30 p.m.

Monday / Tuesday / Wednesday / Thursday

Cell Groups (refer to weekly sheet for times / locations)

Monday

Prayer Meeting 10.00 a.m.
 International Soup 12 noon

Tuesday

Home from Home 1.00 p.m.

Friday

IT Youth Club 7.30 p.m.

Saturday

Morning of Prayer 9.30 a.m.

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