

Temple Emanu-El

Annual Report 2023-2024



Temple ✧ Emanu-El
A Home, A Family, A Warmth to Tradition

Devorah Marcus, Senior Rabbi ✧ Benj Fried, Associate Rabbi
Shaun Copans, Executive Director ✧ Janet Arkin, Preschool Director
Martin S. Lawson, Rabbi Emeritus ✧ Morton J. Cohn ל"ו, Founding Rabbi
Matt Meis, President

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

OFFICERS

Matt Meis, President
Stefani Lenett, 1st Vice President
Barbara Braasch, 2nd Vice President
Barbara Braasch, Financial Secretary
Jeff Schindler, Treasurer
Alec Irwin, Recording Secretary
Marc Glazer & Cathi Marx, Immediate Past Presidents
Eric Rosenzweig, Executive Past President

DIRECTORS

Marcia Berneger, Amy Blum, Gail Braverman,
Daniel Cohen, Joe Cohen, Richard Erth, Aimee Le,
Barbara Learner, Andrea Musicant, Jane Muschenetz,
Debbie Tirouda, Felise Zollman
Michaela Snyder-Braasch and Josie Zubkoff,
Youth Representatives
Becca Bierman, WRJ Representative

TEMPLE STAFF

EXECUTIVE STAFF

Devorah Marcus, Senior Rabbi
Benj Fried, Associate Rabbi
Shaun Copans, Executive Director
Janet Arkin, Preschool Director
Martin Lawson, Rabbi Emeritus

SUPPORT STAFF

Donna Lopez, Executive Assistant
Star Laddon, Torah School Administrator
Natalie Fritz, Bookkeeper
Victor Palos, Maintenance Director
Brandy Alegria, Front Desk Administrator

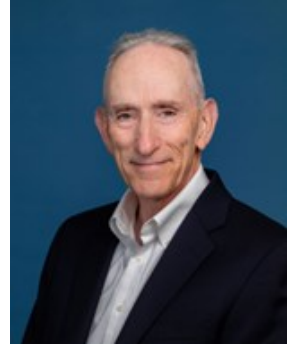


PRESIDENTS' MESSAGE

To our Temple Emanu-El Family,

It is an honor and a privilege to serve as your President. Together as a congregation we have accomplished several achievements during the past year.

- Our membership is up to 495 households, more than ever before in our history, during a time when the trend at synagogues across the country is declining membership.
- Financially we remain strong. Today we are presenting a balanced budget for the 2024-2025 fiscal year. We are in a very fortunate position relative to many congregations around the country.
- Thanks to the generosity of many in our congregation, our endowments are growing, ensuring the long-term future financial security of our Temple family.
- This year we installed a new state-of-the-art security system, which includes new cameras and alarms, and a new key card system, to name just some of the details, all helping to keep us all safer when we're on campus.
- We hired a full-time music director, Michelle Jirkovsky who inspires our youth while joyfully engaging our congregation and creatively broaden our touch within the greater community.
- We have completed work on our new Code of Ethics and Conduct. This project, which has been one of my goals as president, was encouraged by the URJ to all member congregations. It is a statement of our commitment to the ethical behavior we have always fostered and expected from one another at Temple Emanu El.
- Hopefully by the time this report is distributed, our brand new Temple website will be online. This project was headed by our executive director Shaun Copans and a team of committed volunteers.
- Finally, I initiated a process of board development at our annual board retreat last February. The intention is for this process to continue moving forward, ensuring your board of directors is working together in a professional and committed way towards maintaining our current strong fiscal position, and that we continue to be the finest reform congregation in San Diego.



I want to thank Rabbi Marcus and Rabbi Benj for their commitment to the spiritual life of our congregation and their wonderful pastoral care. We are all better because of them.

I am especially grateful to Shaun Copans for his exceptional leadership and his dedicated staff for all their hard work on all of our behalf's.

In addition I want to recognize Janet Arkin, the director of the Price Family Preschool, for her tireless 23 years of dedication to our youngest children, and to their emotional, spiritual and educational growth. They are the future of our Temple Emanu El community.

Lastly, I am indebted to our remarkable Board of Directors, a group of committed volunteers, who give freely of their time, experience and individual expertise, to ensure that Temple Emanu El is, and continues to be, a home, a family, a warmth to tradition.

With love and gratitude,

Matt Meis

SENIOR RABBI, DEVORAH MARCUS

Dear Temple Emanu-El Family,

With great wisdom our Jewish tradition teaches us that the reason we have to study the same texts over and over again, each in season at its appointed time, is not because the text will magically change since last year nor because we will forget what we've studied, but rather, WE will have changed, and we will read the beloved old texts in an entirely new light. We will have gained hard-earned wisdom and new perspectives... some of them welcomed and others leaving us to wish we were still happily ignorant.



This has been such a year.

I would have been happy to live in ignorance my entire life of what it means to witness our people slaughtered, humiliated, degraded and dehumanized simply for being Jews. Simply for being.

I would have been happy to live in ignorance my entire life of what it means to watch a loud vocal minority openly embrace and extol Jew Hatred as a righteous cause. I would have been happy to live in ignorance my entire life of what it means to feel the particular loneliness that is the hand maiden of the silent or unconcerned majority who does not share the views of the vocal minority but who cannot be stirred to openly and publicly stand against the rising tide of chic hate.

I would have happily chosen ignorance of the grief and heart smothering worry that has become like an old worn in pair of flip flops that carry me around all-day, ever present and oh so familiar as part of my every-day life now.

But Jewish traditions teaches that everything is in balance and everything can be for a blessing if we allow it to transform ourselves and our world for the better.

This year, we learned just how important our Jewish community is. True, Covid already taught us this lesson, but this year, the world has reinforced it. Raising the next generation of our people who know it means to have strength, integrity, and courage in the face of such adversity, is a sacred obligation on all Jewish adults and one which is a blessing to have the privilege to fulfill.

Realizing the reality that Kol Yisrael aravim zeh v'zeh (that all of Israel is responsible for one another) is truly a blessing. Seeing the broad majority of our people come together in solidarity and love for one another has been one of the greatest blessings of my lifetime. Watching our people choose to stand together in solidarity and love across so many political, social, and ideological divides has been nothing short of a miracle. God willing we will never need such a terrible reminder to remember what we mean to one another.

Knowing that we are commanded to celebrate life's joys, even when our world is upside down, is a blessing of sacred time. Jewish tradition demands that even amidst our grief, worry and woe, we not allow ourselves to languish in anguish. This is why, even in the face of a horrific war, even in the face of popular and trendy Jew Hatred, we celebrate B'nai Mitzvah students, we dance at weddings, and we welcome new children into the covenant. Each simcha celebrated is a victory in the face of hate, and each celebration helps ensure that we will never allow our hearts to become embittered. As Torah teaches... "see this day I have put before you both life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life that you and your children may live." This year has taught us that we must always choose life - an intentionally joyful life.

And of course, while I could have remained blissfully ignorant about the true realities of newborn-no-sleep reality, I am unspeakably grateful for the incredible privilege of knowing what a blessing we have been given and why we must always fight to make the world a better place.

Thank you for the privilege of being your rabbi for these past 11 years.

With Love and Deep Gratitude,

Rabbi Devorah Marcus

ASSOCIATE RABBI, BENJ FRIED

As we end another school year and begin planning and anticipating our next, I will reflect on a year of growth, new endeavors, and lots of learning. I want to thank our amazing staff as well as our Torah School Administrator, Star Laddon, for their efforts and their dedication in continuing to provide nurturing and rich Jewish education to our students and families.



Our Torah School this year served 106 students, and our partnership with the Price Family Preschool in being the conduit to Torah School has been fantastic. Our families are eager as ever for programming, and participation in Family Camp, Family Shabbats, Cabaret Night, and many other programs has been robust.

Our youth group programming has continued to be a strength of our community. Our clubs, interest groups that meet each week after Torah School, have continued to thrive as so many of our kids are actively choosing to spend extra time at Temple after school. We have run clubs including art, Dungeons and Dragons, and musical theater. Each week, over 30 of our students have opted to stay after Torah School for this additional programming, which not only enriches their attachment to our synagogue, but also helps them make friends and build community. Our SanETY high school group has also continued to keep our high school students involved in our community spiritually, socially, and through acts of tikkun olam.

Our new Cantorial Soloist, Michelle Jirkovsky, has enriched our students' education with her music programming. She has run a youth choir, who have periodically throughout the year, performed in services and holiday observances. She also led our musical theater program which successfully put on a Hanukkah play and Esther, the Musical. The production values and performances were strong and professional, and we are excited for the growth of our program through camp and future performances.

As we wrap up the year, we also know that there will be a lot of transition in our Torah School in the year ahead. After 21 years, our Torah School Administrator, Star Laddon, is retiring. We thank her for her incredible service to our synagogue through the years. Her endeavors have made the Torah School the fun, welcoming, and vibrant place that it is today. Though no one can truly replace Star, we will carry on, always striving for the same level of excellence as we bring on new staff and prepare for the new school year.

Overall this year has been a year of joy, meaning, and successes, big and small.

Thank you all for your continued participation and support for education at our synagogue!

Rabbi Benj Fried

SHAUN COPANS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As we close the books on another year at Temple Emanu-El, I want to recognize our incredibly dedicated and hardworking staff, who come to work each and every day ready to serve our community. Everyone has their role, but I am continually impressed with their willingness to step up and assist whenever and wherever it is needed. They are the engines that make the Temple go!



During the past year, we fully re-opened our High Holy Day services (without the necessary covid-era safety guidelines) and brought back other programs that had been paused or slowed down. Our community responded with appreciation and gratitude to be able to return to our sacred space to worship, study, socialize and be together in community. In addition, we continue to devote resources to our live-streaming platform and hybrid programs to allow members to connect from the comfort of their homes.

Financially, we remained steadfast in our commitment to fiscal responsibility and sustainability. I would like to thank our Board Treasurer, Jeff Schindler, Financial Secretary, Barbara Braasch and the other members of the Finance Committee, who meet monthly to make sure the Temple makes wise financial decisions that allow us to provide the important services and programs but also make sure we are preserving the long-term viability of our institution. Through strategic planning and collaborative decision-making, we continue to invest in critical facility improvements and allocate resources to initiatives to better serve our congregation and community.

As we know, Temple Emanu-El has always been a beacon of compassion and advocacy, championing social justice causes and serving as a catalyst for positive change. We had a record number of participants march alongside our LGBTQ+ families in the San Diego Pride Parade, and we came together to support the efforts of our elected officials creating legislation to punish cowardly individuals spreading hate and antisemitic rhetoric with leaflets in our neighborhoods.

In closing, I would like to extend a thank you to our Board President, Matt Meis, for his support and collaboration throughout the year. Additionally, to the Temple's Board of Directors, committee chairs, committee members and volunteers, we truly appreciate your commitment to Temple Emanu-El. Big or small, we couldn't do it without you.

Shaun Copans

PRESCHOOL DIRECTOR, JANET ARKIN

I am delighted to announce the exciting news that we are successfully concluding another remarkable academic year at our preschool. Once again, our reputation within the San Diego community shines brightly, as evidence by our full enrollment for the upcoming school year and the waitlist of many families seeking to join our community. This accomplishment speaks volumes about the dedication of our staff, the support of our families, and the unwavering commitment of our congregation.



Together we continue to cultivate an environment where children flourish, grow, and learn each day.

In addition, I am proud to announce that for the second consecutive year, we have successfully provided both winter and spring break camps in efforts to assist our community and working parents.

As we celebrate our achievements from this past year, and anticipate the many opportunities that lie ahead, let us continue our collective efforts to uphold the standard of excellence that defines our preschool.

As always, it is my great privilege and honor to lead this sacred mission as the Director of Price Family Preschool of Temple Emanu-EL

Janet Arkin

COMMITTEE REPORTS

ADULT EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Chair: Rabbi Benj Fried

Committee Members: Cecile Fleetwood, Claire Fritz, Ellie Mout, Yvonne Williams, Madelynn Micon, Madeline Gershwin, Jill Linares, Hayley Salazar

Mission Statement: The Adult Education Committee of Temple Emanu-El is dedicated to meeting the life-long educational needs of each adult member of the Congregation by facilitating overall learning experiences that enhance understanding of Jewish tradition, history and culture. This is accomplished through utilization of all available resources.

We have been able to offer wonderful presentations on a wide variety of Jewish culture and contemporary issues of concern to us all. In addition, our well-received movie series and ongoing programs brought many educational experiences to Temple members this year.

SPEAKERS AND PRESENTATIONS:

- Coastal Roots Farm: Climate Resilience
- Time to Prepare: movie and presentation on end of life choices and legacy planning
- Oz Laniado and Karen Parry: mental health and 10/7
- MLK Dinner and “Shared Legacies” movie screening
- Scholar-in-Residence weekend with Yisrael Klitzner
- Rachel Korozim: Israeli poetry

INTRODUCTION TO JUDAISM: Rabbi Devorah and Rabbi Benj again taught this course presenting the fundamentals of Jewish thought and practice for anyone interested in exploring Judaism or reviewing the basics.

ADULT B'NEI MITZVAH: with Michelle Jirkovsky

ADULT CLASSES

- *The Multi-Vocality of the Bible* taught by Rabbi Benj Fried
- *A God We Can Believe In* taught by Rabbi Marty Lawson
- *Tikkun Ha'Am* taught by Rabbi Mary Lawson
- *Torah for the Table* taught by Rabbi Devorah Marcus and Barry Lander

MOVIE SERIES facilitated by Laurie Baron.

On-Going Programs:

TORAH STUDY: Saturday Mornings before services.

COFFEE WITH RABBI: Wednesday mornings

COMMITTEE REPORTS

MENTAL HEALTH COMMITTEE

Chair: Marie Raftery

Committee Members: Carol Arkin, Bonnie Baron, Judy Becker, Gail Braverman, Bobbi Cohen, Peggy Cohen, Toby Hartman, Lisa Goldberg, Madelynn Micon, Ira Moskowitz, Barbara Pollack, Barbara Saltzman, Fern Siegel

Mission Statement: Our purpose is to educate and shine a light on mental illness by connecting our community with resources and providing a platform for opening discussions.

We have continued promotion and addition to our Online Resource page of the Temple's website. These include carefully vetted links to websites, books, and local resources for evaluation and emergency treatment and support, primarily for children, teens, and young adults.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

CHAIR: Amy Blum

Committee Members: Karen Eisman, Trish Freund, Jill Linares, Aimee Oberndorfer Le, Audrey Patterson, Andrew Siegel, Erica Whinston

Goal/Purpose:

To serve as ambassadors to our new Temple families, to reach out to new members to foster relationships, to engage and help them feel more comfortable. Members are available to answer questions or concerns of interested community members.

Activities:

Assigned committee members to serve as ambassadors to new members.

Shared our experiences and explored various ways to engage in ways that are authentic and consistent.

ADVOCACY COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE CHAIRS: Barbara Learner and Janice Steinberg. **Committee Members:** Rhonda Amber, Mark Berger, Ellen Goren, Marc Hamovitch, Marlene Hamovitch, Nancy Herzfeld-Pipkin, Alec Irwin, Barry Lander, Pat Libby, Dana Quittner and Hayley Salazar

The Advocacy Committee is a nonpartisan group that works to educate, inspire, and mobilize Temple members. We advocate for social justice issues that reflect Jewish values and have a direct impact on San Diegans and the Jewish community. During the past year our efforts focused on combating antisemitism, working for environmental justice, voter engagement and gun violence prevention.

We sadly had to focus on the issue of antisemitism in San Diego. We supported the City Attorney's effort to make the leafleting of hate flyers against the law. That initiative has been taken to the State level by City council member Chris Ward. We will continue to support this effort.

As part of our work on the issue of Climate Justice we joined forces with the San Diego Audubon Society. The speaker at our Limmud Hour at Yom Kippur was Andrew Meyers, of the Audubon Society. He shared with us some of the Society's initiatives. Temple Emanu-El became a partner with the Re-wilding of Mission Bay. Many community groups are working to reimagine Mission Bay for recreation and habitat restoration. The Audubon Society has been working hard with partners to increase the acreage going toward habitat restoration and carbon sequestration.

Voter engagement continues to be an important issue for the committee. We have begun to work with high school students to make sure they register to vote when eligible and then vote in the upcoming election.

We have supported the efforts of San Diegans for Gun Violence Prevention with making phone calls and sending emails supporting their efforts on safe gun storage and other initiatives.

Thank you to all of the members of the Advocacy Committee for your dedication to working on these important issues. With great admiration and appreciation, Barbara & Janice.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

WOMEN OF REFORM JUDAISM

The Women of Temple Emanu-El is a proud member of the Women of Reform Judaism (WRJ) and the Women of Reform Judaism Pacific District. We are an affiliate of the Union of Reform Judaism (URJ). We support programs within our Temple and in the greater Reform Jewish world.

We support programs of interest to women, scholarships for graduating high school seniors attending college, scholarships for high schoolers attending NFTY (North American of Temple Youth) events, the Purim Carnival, the TEESD Talent Show, the TEESD Gala and more.

We proudly present an engraved Kiddush Cup to each B'nai Mitzvah student. We partner with the Adult Education and Social Action Committees.

This year we have been able to have in person activities including:

Monday Mah Jongg
The Artisan Festival
Supper in the Sukkah
Bunco
Chanukah Bingo Night
Tu B' Shevat Seder
Sisterhood Shabbat
Craft Night
Women's Seder



Incoming Board: Co-Presidents
Treasurer
Secretary
Membership Trustee
Mitzvah Chair

Barbara Chancy and Nancy Marcus
Barbara Chancy
Becca Bierman
Darlene Oolie
Elana Levens-Craig

TEESD Board Liaison

Becca Bierman

Honey from the Heart Liaison
Theater Party Chair

Becca Bierman
Rhonda Schwartz

Historian
Mahj Jongg Chair
Bunco Chair
Members at Large
Judy Becker
Flo Bornstein
Artisan Festival Chairs

Cecile Fleetwood
Marcia Berneger
Beth Mann

WRJ PD Rep
Pat Libby, Barbara Braasch, Beth Mann

Our Board Meetings are the 2nd Wednesday of the month. If you have 2-3 hours a month , please join our Board. We welcome you!

Please read our monthly article in the TEESD Bulletin for details on upcoming programs. You can reach us at: wrj@teesd.org

COMMITTEE REPORTS

SOCIAL ACTION COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE MEMBERS: Aimee Benner, Becca Bierman, Angela Canin, Kathleen Colbert, Carrie Colona, Helen Elias, Cindy Flynn, Lisa and Fred Goldberg, Leslie Gollub, Ellen Goren, Elana Levens-Craig, Elizabeth Leventhal, Barbara Pollack (Secretary), Marilyn Pongeggi, Ron Reff (Zoom facilitator), Suzanne Schulman, Jean Seager, Saul Snyder, Laurie Spiegler, Jim Stengel, Char Sultan, Nubia Swain, Betsy Arnold, Barrett Holman Leak, Linda Sand, Lisa Garcia

All Jews are called to do Tikkun Olam (repair of the world).

Our goal is to make a positive impact on San Diego, the country and the world. We try to make it easy for the entire Temple community to be involved with our projects and our collections. The committee meets monthly on Zoom. We welcome new members and new ideas.

The Hunger Project at St. Vincent de Paul, which we partner with Congregation Beth Israel, just celebrated our 38-year anniversary. Temple Emanu-El has traditionally been responsible for most of the staffing on the first Sunday of each month, but volunteers are welcome to come any Sunday. This is a wonderful project for families, for students preparing for Bar/Bat Mitzvah, and for anyone who has even one Sunday morning available to help those people who most need our help. Donations to the Social Action Hunger Project Fund go directly to support this work.

Our Bagel Brigade volunteers deliver unsold bagels each Wednesday from Einsteins on Lake Murray to Rachels Women's Center downtown. We are proud that this project, which reduces food waste, continues each week without interruption. Our recipients at Rachels look forward to this special treat.

Our Mitzvah of the Month collections ask for specific items each month to be donated to local organizations. This year's collections included blankets and warm clothing during this cold and rainy winter, towels and linen for Basic Needs Center at City College, "preloved" kitchen items for Kitchens for Good, infant items for "Gently Hugged," school supplies, gift bag items for Meals on Wheels clients, and more. The High Holy Day Food Drive brought in over 5700 pounds of food for the Jewish Family Service Food Pantry, plus gift cards and cash donations. Our collections for Monarch School, which supports homeless and at risk children, topped 1,000 toiletry kits since we began the project.

In 1998, we were the very first Jewish group to march in the Pride Parade and have participated every July since then. In 2023, we received the Light of Pride Award, and Rabbi Devorah was the keynote speaker at the Light Up the Cathedral event the week prior to the Parade.

Our Safe Parking Dinners at Jewish Family Service have resumed, with volunteers providing food and serving at the Balboa site. More dinners are planned for the coming year. Donations to help this project are welcome and may be earmarked when donating to the Social Action Fund.

We are planning for another nonpartisan Proposition Seminar to be held this fall prior to the November elections to help voters make their best decisions and navigate the often-dense language. This has been well attended and helpful in past years.

Our financial subcommittee evaluates organizations to donate money from our Social Action Fund using stringent guidelines. Each year, we vote on the list of distributions for the following year, and also approve emergency allocations based on the same stringent guidelines. During the 2023-24 fiscal year, the committee approved donations to vetted organizations including Feeding America San Diego, Reading Legacies, Magen David Adom, World Central Kitchen, the Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, Yad Sarah, and the Jacobs and Cushman Food Bank. Information on the month's donation is included in every Temple bulletin.

Our committee organizes and promotes a diverse group of programs in our community to appeal to those of all ages, financial means, and physical abilities.

We look forward to working with you in the coming year.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

ENDOWMENT COMMITTEE

CHAIR: Dr. Bob Rubenstein

No meetings were held during this fiscal year.

The chairman of the committee, Dr. Bob Rubenstein attended Temple Finance Committee meetings through the year and advocated for contributions from the Temple general operating funds to augment Endowments.

The Temple held a fundraiser for the Torah School and Campership Endowment in April which has resulted in \$80,000 in contributions to that fund.

The chairman has advocated for a greater amount of available funds being transferred to Endowments to follow Rabbi Marcus's concept of greater long-term stability in order to serve all congregants as needed.

The Endowment and its subcommittee, the Investment Committee was reduced in size due to resignations and illness and is in the process of being reconstituted.

We thank Temple members for their contributions to these endowment funds which have increased in value by \$112,000, not including additional contributions by individual donors

Rabbi Marty and Anita Lawson Endowment Fund

Preschool Endowment Fund

Torah School and Campership Endowment Fund

Temple Emanu-El Operations and Facilities Endowment Fund

Robert A. Rubenstein, Chairman

COMMITTEE REPORTS

SAFETY AND SECURITY COMMITTEE

Chair: Greg Houska

Members: David Cherrick, Claire Fritz, Matt Smith, Cathi Marx, Matt Brown (ADL).

Purpose: To provide guidance and recommendations to Temple staff and the Executive Board on safety and security related procedures to assist in safeguarding Temple staff, students and congregants. Work closely with local law enforcement, and others, such as the SDPD, the San Diego Law Enforcement Coordination Center (LECC), which is San Diego's Regional Threat Assessment Center, the SD Federation's Secure Community Network (SCN), and the San Diego Chapter of the ADL.

Goals/Accomplishments: The Safety and Security Committee provides a link to the larger community of local law enforcement agencies, the Anti-Defamation League and other Jewish organizations. Together we share information, best practices in faith-based safety and security policies and provide a link that allows for a continuous assessment of vulnerabilities and calculated controls.

This year, we:

- Coordinated in-person SCN training for congregants related to identification and response to potential threats, how to conduct internal threat assessments, including "Stop the Bleed" first aid training. Approximately 60 congregants and guests attended.
- Received a \$10,000 High Holidays security grant from the SD Jewish Federation to help defray security related expenses.
- Attended ADL/SCN regional meetings as scheduled, representing Temple Emanu-El.
- Worked closely with Shaun Copans and our new security surveillance vendor to assess and update the Temple's security camera system, which now includes enhanced video quality, facial recognition and vehicle license identification capabilities.
- Conducted annual lockdown/fire evacuation with the Torah School and the Preschool.
- Provided guidance and assistance with Temple staff with preparations for High Holy Day Services.
- Created and submitted for Executive Director approval, Cal-OSHA's new Workplace Violence Prevention Plan that is effective 07/01/2024.



Temple ✧ Emanu-El
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