

FAITH & JUSTICE

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Life Affirming

Defending Life Comes Easily For A Church
That Nurtures It Everywhere

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Minutes With Michael

Then And Now: A Time To Give Thanks

By Michael Farris



“Never lose sight of how blessed we are to be Americans.”

Vice President Mike Pence offered this charge when he addressed the Alliance Defending Freedom team recently, reminding us that “there is nowhere like America.”

I think of that as we approach Thanksgiving. Our nation is in a moment of intense ideological conflict. There are attacks on our freedom to speak, our freedom to raise our children, and our freedom to live out our faith in the public square. But things are certainly no worse now than they were when the celebration of Thanksgiving began.

We were in the midst of Civil War when President Lincoln called upon the nation to give thanks. On October 3, 1863, he issued the Thanksgiving Proclamation that began our national tradition of celebrating the holiday on the fourth Thursday of November.

The year had seen bloody battles at Chancellorsville, Chickamauga, and most famous of all, Gettysburg. The war was far from over. No one would have blamed the president for lamenting the sorrow brought in the past year.

Instead, he decided it was a time to give thanks.

The economy was growing. Domestic laws were, for the most part, being obeyed. Except on the battlefield, harmony generally prevailed.

What was the source of these blessings? Lincoln leaves no doubt:

No human counsel hath devised nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy.

Lincoln got it right. We should give thanks at all times.

We have much to be thankful for at ADF. This year we’ve seen many, many legal victories, including huge wins for cake artist Jack Phillips, filmmakers Carl and Angel Larsen, and artists Joanna Duka and Breanna Koski. In October, we were privileged to stand beside Tom Rost and R.G. & G. R. Harris Funeral Homes at the Supreme Court. (See “Harris At The Supreme Court,” p. 5.)

As ADF’s 25th anniversary year comes to a close, I am especially grateful for our calling to be a voice for faith and freedom in the world. I am confident that many victories lay ahead, for ADF and for our nation.

“He who planted this miracle of democracy on these wilderness shores centuries ago has blessed America throughout our history,” Vice President Pence told our team. “And He will still bless America in the days ahead.”

As we celebrate Thanksgiving in the coming days, may we all praise God for the countless blessings He has bestowed upon us. And may you and your family have a truly blessed Thanksgiving. 

News & Quick Takes

Case Updates From Around The World

Anchorage, Alaska

The city of Anchorage agreed in September to drop its complaint against a faith-based women's shelter.

In January 2018, a biological man identifying as a woman tried to gain access to Downtown Hope Center's overnight shelter. Because he was inebriated and injured, employees arranged for him to be transported to a local hospital. Anchorage pursued a complaint against the center, claiming that it had denied services to the man based on "gender identity," in violation of the city's anti-discrimination law.

ADF attorneys filed a federal lawsuit to **stop the city from misapplying this law and from forcing the shelter to allow men to sleep next to homeless and abused women.**

Lakewood, Colorado

ADF attorneys representing Colorado cake artist Jack Phillips and his business, Masterpiece Cakeshop, have filed a motion in state court to dismiss the latest legal attack against him for declining to create a custom cake that would express a message or celebrate an event in violation of his faith.

The same attorney who filed an unsuccessful complaint with the Colorado Civil Rights Commission in 2017 commenced the new lawsuit in June over the same custom cake request. In the new lawsuit, the attorney **seeks monetary damages of more than \$100,000 against Phillips** in addition to legal fees.

California

ADF has appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, challenging a California law that requires nonprofits that fundraise within the state to **disclose major donors to the state attorney general's office.**

ADF attorneys represent Thomas More Law Center, a Michigan-based nonprofit that defends and promotes religious freedom, moral and family values, and the sanctity of human life. Only about 5% of its donors are California residents. In 2012, the state attorney general's office began to demand the names and addresses of the law center's major donors, even though the center's donors, clients, and employees have faced intimidation, boycotts, and even an assassination attempt from ideological opponents.

The California attorney general's office has no need for donor information and has historically handled it with negligence by making confidential documents publicly accessible online.



Washington D.C.

In October, the U.S. Supreme Court heard oral arguments to review a lower court decision that **redefines the word "sex" in federal law to include "gender identity."** ADF is representing R.G. & G.R. Harris Funeral Homes, which is being punished for relying on the law as it is written. (See "Harris At The Supreme Court," p.5)

New York

In the wake of a lawsuit, the New York City Council voted in September to repeal a law that **censors private conversations between counseling professionals and their patients.**

ADF attorneys representing an Orthodox Jewish psychotherapist, Dr. Dovid Schwartz, asked a federal district court in June to halt enforcement of the city's new law that violated Schwartz's freedom of speech and infringed on his religious faith and that of his patients.

In 2018, the city council adopted a law making it illegal for a psychotherapist or counselor to work with patients to address unwanted same-sex attractions or confusion over gender identity. Under the law, Schwartz faced a choice of turning away individuals seeking his help or incurring fines of up to \$10,000 per patient.

Connecticut

In August, the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights granted the request of three Connecticut teen track athletes to investigate their allegations of illegal discrimination.

In 2017, the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference (CIAC) adopted **a policy that allows biological males who identify as female to compete in girls' athletic events.** Since then, boys have consistently deprived Selina Soule, Alanna Smith, and other female athletes of honors and opportunities to compete at elite levels. CIAC's policy violates the requirements of Title IX, a federal law designed to protect equal athletic opportunities for women and girls.

ADF attorneys representing the athletes formally requested the investigation.

Case Updates

Artistic Freedom Wins

ADF celebrated significant wins for artistic freedom in August and September, with victories in the Telescope Media Group and Brush & Nib Studio cases. Across the country, creative professionals are facing public accommodation laws that threaten their freedom to express messages consistent with personal convictions. The rulings could be the beginning of a trend in state and federal courts.

Telescope Media Group and Brush & Nib Studio were both pre-enforcement cases, in which ADF filed suit to protect the clients' freedoms before they were prosecuted.

Telescope Media

A federal appeals court delivered a win to Minnesota filmmakers who seek the right to create wedding films consistent with their religious beliefs about marriage.

ADF sued state officials in 2016 on behalf of Carl and Angel Larsen, owners of Telescope Media Group in St. Cloud. The lawsuit challenged Minnesota's claim that it can compel speech by forcing creative professionals, including filmmakers, to produce custom work promoting messages that contradict their core beliefs.

A federal judge dismissed the case in 2017. But in August, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 8th Circuit reversed that decision, reinstating the case and ruling that the state cannot force the Larsens to create films that violate their religious convictions.

Brush & Nib Studio

The Arizona Supreme Court ruled in September that the city of Phoenix cannot use a criminal law to force two artists to design and create custom wedding invitations expressing messages that conflict with their core beliefs.

Such coercion, the court held, would violate the fundamental principle that "an individual has autonomy over his or her speech and thus may not be forced to speak a message he or she does not wish to say."

Recognizing fundamental principles of freedom of speech and religion, the court ruled in favor of artists Joanna Duka and Breanna Koski. The artists own Brush & Nib Studio, which specializes in creating custom artwork celebrating special events. Duka and Koski had faced up to six months of jail time, \$2,500 in fines, and three years of probation for each day the city might find them in violation of the law.

London

In August, the Court of Appeal of England and Wales upheld restrictions that **criminalize all pro-life activities – including offers of help and silent prayer – outside an abortion facility** in Ealing, West London.

Ealing Council was the first in the country to create a "censorship zone" limiting pro-life activities in the public space outside an abortion facility. The ruling may now encourage other councils to create similar zones.

Alina Dulgheriu, a Christian mother, challenged a Public Spaces Protection Order around the facility shortly after the order was introduced in April 2018. She herself had received help from a pro-life group and argued that the order violates the fundamental rights to freedom of speech and assembly. Dulgheriu will now appeal to the UK Supreme Court.

Strasbourg

In September, Europe's top human rights court found that a **mother's rights were violated when Norway's child welfare agency removed her newborn son from her care**. In 2008, the mother's 3-week-old son was placed in foster care based on doubts about her parenting abilities. She was eventually allowed only eight hours of contact with her son per year, and the child was ultimately put up for adoption.

A previous ruling by a lower chamber of the court found no violation of Article 8 of the European Convention of Human Rights, which protects the right to family life. However, the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) agreed to review the decision, and ADF International intervened in the case.

The case is one of several appealed to the ECtHR in which parents complained that Norwegian authorities unlawfully removed their children from their custody.

Special Feature

Harris At The Supreme Court



John Bursch

On October 8, the U.S. Supreme Court heard oral arguments in the case of *R.G. & G.R. Harris Funeral Homes v. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission*.

In 2007, R.G. & G.R. Harris Funeral Homes hired a male employee as a funeral director. The employee agreed to follow all company policies, including the sex-specific dress code. But after nearly six years of employment, the employee announced a plan to begin dressing and presenting as a woman while interacting with grieving families.

Tom Rost, owner of the Michigan funeral home, took two weeks to consider the impact this would have on his other

employees and grieving families. He decided he couldn't agree. The employee then filed a complaint with the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), which sued Rost and Harris Funeral Homes for sex discrimination.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the 6th Circuit ruled against Harris under Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which prohibits sex discrimination. To do that, the court redefined "sex" to include "gender identity." The federal government has since reversed course, but the ACLU has continued to push this case forward in an effort to rewrite federal law.

ADF is asking the Supreme Court to uphold the law as it is written.

"Redefining 'sex' to mean 'gender identity' creates chaos, is unfair to women and girls, and puts employers in difficult situations," says John Bursch, Alliance Defending Freedom vice president of appellate advocacy and senior counsel, who argued on behalf of Harris in the case.

The Supreme Court will issue its ruling by the end of the term in June 2020.

WATCH: Hear Tom Rost share his story at ADFlegal.org/fj-Harris

Redefining 'sex' to mean 'gender identity' creates chaos.

“

John Bursch, ADF Vice President
of Appellate Advocacy and Senior Counsel

Below: Tom Rost and his wife, Nancy (front right) descend the steps of the Supreme Court with the ADF legal team.

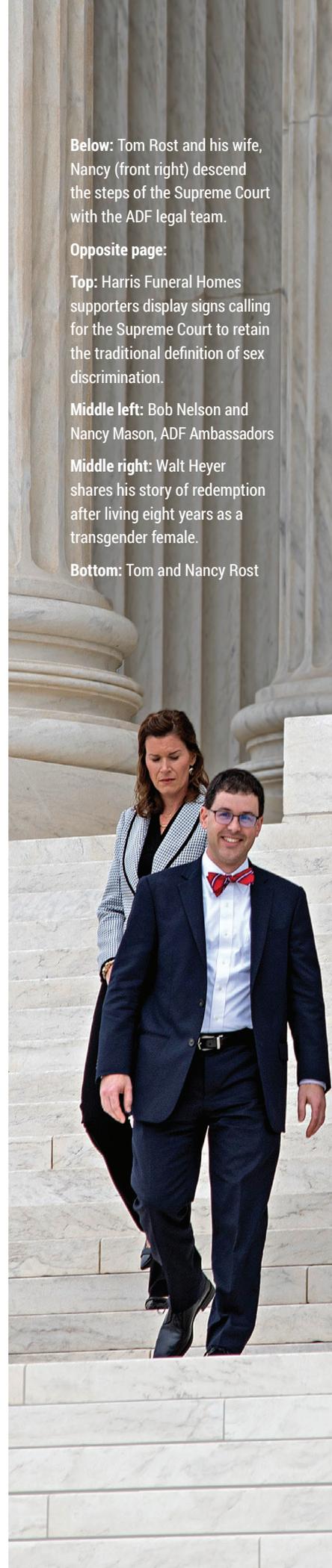
Opposite page:

Top: Harris Funeral Homes supporters display signs calling for the Supreme Court to retain the traditional definition of sex discrimination.

Middle left: Bob Nelson and Nancy Mason, ADF Ambassadors

Middle right: Walt Heyer shares his story of redemption after living eight years as a transgender female.

Bottom: Tom and Nancy Rost





Why The Harris Case Matters

The Harris Funeral Homes case is about much more than a dress code.

Redefining “sex” to include “gender identity” in federal law could have widespread consequences for women and girls. It could:

- Deny equal opportunities in women’s sports
- Silence viewpoints about gender identity issues
- Threaten all sex-specific policies, including male and female restrooms, locker rooms, and other private spaces

The ADF cases summarized below illustrate what is at stake in the push to redefine “sex.”

Dr. Allan Josephson was demoted, harassed, and then effectively fired as chief of the Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Psychology at the University of Louisville after expressing his views on the treatment of youth experiencing gender dysphoria. He urged caution about rushing those children into life-altering medical treatments before exploring the psychological issues that often contribute to this confusion.

Selina Soule, a Connecticut high school runner, is being forced to compete against boys in regional track and field events. Despite vigorous training, she knows she has little chance of winning events where two male athletes who identify as female now dominate the field.

VISIT: Sign the petition to support athletes like Selina at ADFLegal.org/fairplay

Alexis Lightcap unexpectedly encountered a boy in the girls’ restroom while she was a student at Boyertown High School in Pennsylvania. Later, she learned that the school had implemented a policy that opened locker rooms and restrooms to students of the opposite sex based on those students’ beliefs about their own gender, and that the school made that policy change without telling students or parents.

Only Congress has the authority to redefine “sex” in federal law. Unelected officials, including judges, don’t have that power. The Harris case asks the U.S. Supreme Court to make this clear. **A**

Top: Allan Josephson **Middle:** Signs featuring Selina Soule call for fairness in women’s sports. **Bottom:** Alexis Lightcap



Alliance Profile

David Valerio

By Charles Snow

David Valerio has always taken on cases that other lawyers wouldn't. And year after year, he has joined his clients in reaping the rewards.

Not long after becoming an attorney, he began representing clients who could not find private legal assistance. Many were young people with criminal charges such as theft offenses, drug-related charges, and family law matters. He offered his services at no charge, many times paying filing fees.

"If they had committed an offense, wanted to take responsibility for their wrongdoing, and tell the truth, I would represent them for free," he says.

His passion for underserved clients grew, and his *pro bono* work eventually become his main trade. Valerio formed 3R Ministries (repentance, reconciliation, and restitution) in 2009, then partnered with Adult & Teen Challenge in 2018 to address the legal needs of "students" recovering from addiction.

An international program, Adult & Teen Challenge offers faith-based services at over 200 recovery centers worldwide. Participants are called "students," according to the program's website, "because they learn a new way of living." Valerio serves as a legal ministry advisor at three northern California locations.

Often, the students have legal consequences such as outstanding arrest warrants and felony or misdemeanor charges. "They can do everything right — from graduating the [recovery] program to getting a job — only to have their legal past catch up with them," Valerio says. "They can then end up back on the streets or in jail, and easily fall back into addiction."

A Christ-centered approach is key, Valerio says. Before he takes a case, he considers whether the student has a growing faith in Christ and is following a life of

submission to Him. "I tell them that God is the best defense attorney they could have, and all their matters are in His control ... especially the outcome." Sometimes that outcome is an unexpected legal win. But it's the spiritual victories that bring Valerio the most joy.

"My wife and I pray daily for the students, that their salvation is true and their repentance is lifelong," he says. "The personal satisfaction is overwhelming. God has blessed this ministry and me personally."

In the years to come, Valerio hopes to expand 3R to involve other attorneys across the country who want to make a difference in cooperation with Adult & Teen Challenge. The need is great, he says — but so is the opportunity to make a difference. He knows from experience that faithful attorneys can help students escape the cycle of addiction and crime.

An Alliance Defending Freedom Allied Attorney, Valerio credits ADF helping him more fully understand the legal rights of the young people he serves. "Their training enhanced my ability to help protect these rights for the underserved."

I tell them that
God is the best
defense attorney
they could have.

“

David Valerio



In addition to his work with students, he has also used the training to aid numerous churches and religious nonprofits — helping with a broad range of legal matters including bylaws, tax issues, lease agreements, and employment policies.

"I count it a privilege to help others whenever and however I can," he says. "As I've told my wife many times, 'I never promised you we'd be rich, but we have been made rich through serving our Lord.'" 

Cover Story

Life Affirming

Defending Life Comes Easily For A Church That Nurtures It Everywhere

By Chris Potts

Word caught up with Jay Smith that he was wanted on the phone. The 18-year-old was leading worship at a church camp, and not really expecting a call. He made his way to the phone, delighted to find that the voice on the line belonged to his girlfriend, Sandy Fuiten.

Just graduated from high school, Jay was headed for college in the fall. It was summer, and he was on the road, making God's own music, hanging with his buddies, enjoying being young and free and in love. He offered the prettiest girl he knew a sunny hello.

"I'm pregnant," she told him.

The world went black. His ears began to ring.

"What?" he stammered. "Wow! Why?"

Sandy had been asking those questions for two long days, through 10 separate pregnancy tests ... praying, praying, praying that something would change. That it wouldn't be true. That God would make the baby magically, mercifully go away and let her sweet, happy life go on as it had.

Both of their minds raced with the thought of all the people they would have to tell.

"What are we going to do?" each kept asking.

"What are people going to say?"

Finally, they hung up — both terribly afraid, both stunned that their one-time indiscretion could put all of their youthful happiness, all of their dreams and plans at risk.

"God allowed us to walk that path," Sandy says now, looking back. But in that moment, she sorely dreaded the next few steps down the road.

"There was no hiding it," Sandy says. Her father pastored Cedar Park Church in Bothell, Washington, where she and Jay attended. Their families were close. She and Jay had met as toddlers in the church nursery. They were the golden couple of their youth group, leaders among their church peers, thoroughly versed in the Bible and their faith. They both even sported purity rings.

For one fleeting moment, the idea of abortion flitted through her mind. But she and Jay had heard too many testimonials, through the years, from women who'd made that choice and been haunted by it for the rest of their lives. "I knew it wasn't an option for me," Sandy says.

She thought of putting the child up for adoption. But before that idea took root, Sandy's father came into her bedroom one night to talk. "What do you want to do?" he asked. She told him she thought it might be easier for everyone just to give the child away. He looked her in the eye. She sensed his disappointment, but he'd never lost his calm, loving tone with her or with Jay.

"That baby is your responsibility," he said.

"And at that moment, it became my baby," Sandy says, tears in her eyes. "I knew that, 'If my dad thinks I can do this, I can do this.'" That left a third option: "I want to get married."

We want people to know
there is a choice ... to support life.

“

Pastor Jay Smith



Jay and Sandy Smith

WATCH:

Hear Jay and Sandy share their story

ADFLegal.org/fj-CedarPark

Jay wanted to, also, but had to face his own tough, back-porch conversation with his pastor. “I love your daughter,” he told him. “And if you would bless it, we desire to get married.”

“Just because there’s a child on the way?” Pastor Fuiten asked, telling Jay the family would take care of Sandy and the baby; the only reason the two should marry was for love. Jay assured him that was the motivation — he and Sandy had already been making plans. The pastor gave his blessing, and something more. Hope.

Jay had always felt a strong sense of God’s calling on his life, and was planning to enter the ministry after college. “That’s the end of that,” he thought, when he learned of Sandy’s pregnancy. “There’s no way. Those aren’t the types of people God uses.”

Pastor Fuiten had a different theory. God uses all kinds of imperfect people, he told him, and it wasn’t up to Jay to put limits on how He might work in this situation.

“He was the person in that circumstance who probably risked the most by encouraging me in that,” Jay marvels. “The pastor of a prominent church ... for him to show and extend grace and love and support to us ... it spoke volumes to us. But it also spoke volumes to the church.”

To Jay and Sandy’s amazement, family and friends didn’t pile on the shame or shun or condemn them — showering them instead with love, support, encouragement. They came around them for a small wedding a few weeks later, and for the birth of their little girl that next spring. The people who had taught her and Jay about grace, Sandy remembers, “definitely lived out what they said.”

It was — it continues to be — a hallmark of Cedar Park Church.

Not only did Jay continue in ministry, but he continued in it at Cedar Park. He’s been on staff there for the last 22 years — the last three as senior pastor, succeeding his father-in-law. He and Sandy, who serves with him as worship leader and head of the church’s music program, in time had three more daughters, who are now in college and high school.

The congregation they shepherd is one with a reputation for both compassionate service to its

community, and a willingness to take strong stands on important issues in and out of the church. In particular, Cedar Park is known for its commitment to the sanctity of human life. Not a “tip of the hat” acknowledgment of the idea, but a pervasive involvement in every aspect of preserving, enhancing, and celebrating life at every stage, from the womb to the grave.

The opportunities are everywhere. With a thousand members and five campuses (including one led in Farsi), the church is one of the largest in the Seattle area. Along with its weekly services, Cedar Park staffs a five-campus Christian school, a funeral home, programs for single parents, foster parents, and embryo adoption, and helps sponsor the only pregnancy center in the county.

Each year, the church hosts a “Presentation Sunday” that draws infertile couples from all over the world to a time of prayer and dedication. Women who came to past services and then became pregnant come back to share their stories and encourage those still hoping for that blessing.

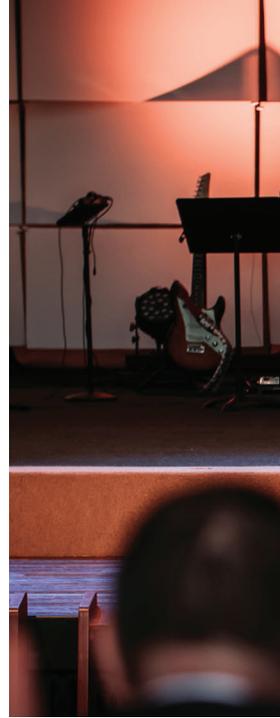
None of that, Jay says, is “a PR stunt — something we do to be recognized by others. It’s really just serving the needs around us in a way that we know Jesus is calling us to do. It’s so infused into the culture of our church — people, families, members of our church are so passionate about some of these things — that they’re the ones who bring opportunities up.

“We’re aware of these needs,” Jay says, “and as a church, we’ve decided to say ‘yes.’ It may lead us into some uncomfortable or challenging or difficult scenarios, but following God’s opportunities always leads us to greatness.”

A bend in that road, though, recently put the church on a collision course with state leaders who are ramping up the uncomfortable, challenging, and difficult scenarios.



A young couple prays at “Presentation Sunday,” an annual Cedar Park event that draws infertile couples from around the world.





Left: Jay Smith delivers a Sunday morning message to his Cedar Park congregation. **Right:** Sandy Smith leads worship with the church's music team.

We're aware of these needs, and as a church, we've decided to say 'yes.'



Pastor Jay Smith

Jay was on his way to a meeting with other pastors when he first heard word, on the radio, about Washington State Senate Bill 6219, which would require health plans in the state to cover abortions. There were no exceptions for churches. He asked the other pastors about it, and most were as surprised as he was to learn not only that such a bill existed, but that it was well on its way to passing. All agreed that something should be done to block the bill ... but no one seemed especially eager to take on state officials.

A former member of Cedar Park works for Alliance Defending Freedom, and the church is a member of ADF's Church Alliance. Jay was able to put his questions to attorneys there. "Have you heard of anybody doing anything on this?" In fact, he learned, similar government initiatives were underway in California and Iowa.

"The Washington state government at this point is very hostile toward churches and religious organizations," says Kevin Theriot, vice president of the ADF Center for Life, "because they fail to appreciate that religious liberty is foundational to all other freedoms."

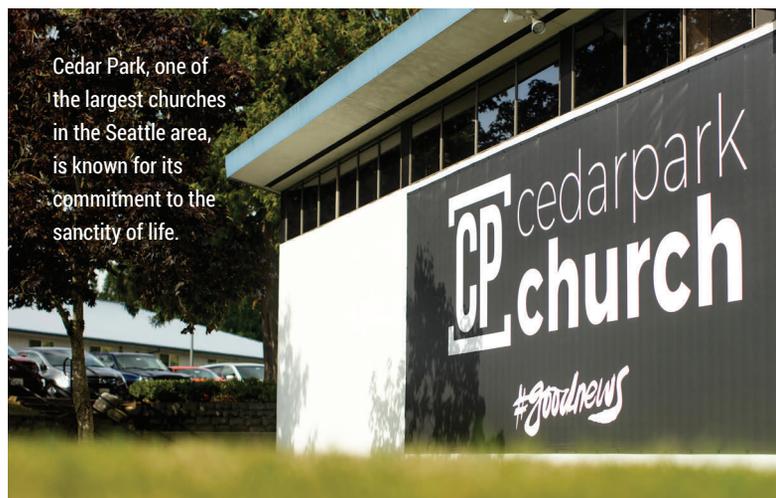
The state has bought into the idea that the right to an abortion is a moral imperative, Theriot says, and "instead of just *allowing* people to participate in insurance programs that cover abortions, they're *requiring* people

to actually participate and be complicit in it through their tithes." Those who don't, he says, are being threatened with civil and criminal penalties.

For Pastor Jay Smith and the other 185 employees of Cedar Park, that's unthinkable. The church's opposition to abortion and support for life are spelled out in its bylaws and the employee handbook, and all staff sign a statement of faith embracing that conviction.

"We don't want to have a part in funding or condoning or being a part of taking a life, especially of the unborn," Jay says. Upon becoming law, he realized, the state's bill "would be compelling us to violate not just our conscience, but the rich tradition and history of our Christian faith."

That was not "something that we wanted to wait around for somebody else to take action on," Jay says. Cedar Park's leaders decided "Somebody needs to do something.' And, well, 'Maybe that somebody is us.'"



Cedar Park, one of the largest churches in the Seattle area, is known for its commitment to the sanctity of life.

We're not here to stage any kind of mutiny or demonstration, but to advocate for what the Bible tells us as believers to advocate.

“

Pastor Jay Smith

Earlier this year, when SB 6219 became law, ADF attorneys filed a lawsuit on behalf of Cedar Park, and asked for a preliminary injunction to keep the state from enforcing the new law until a court can rule on its constitutionality. The lawsuit is still ongoing.

“Cedar Park’s stand is unusual for several reasons,” says Theriot, who finds many churches reluctant to take on government officials or push back against a culture increasingly hostile to people of faith.

“We’re not here to stage any kind of mutiny or demonstration,” Jay says, but “to advocate for what the Bible tells us as believers to advocate. If that puts us at odds with the leadership of our state,” he says, it’s a conflict born of “supporting the Scriptures and supporting righteousness.”

Still, “as we look at a law that would potentially force us to violate our conscience, it causes us to ask questions ... are we bolstering what we believe? In our teaching — in our practices — how are we informing people about what’s real? That this is who we are?”

A few years ago, retiree Ben Edwards decided he had too much time on his hands. He volunteered to help a local pro-life ministry by repairing cribs for new moms, and began hearing “amazing stories” about women the group was helping through their unplanned pregnancies.

His involvement grew with his enthusiasm, and he soon found himself director of development for another pro-life group, Care Net of Puget Sound. His job: making connections with local churches. His biggest challenge? “Finding churches that are life-affirming.”

“Sadly, in this area, there are so many that are not,” Ben says. “Many have made the issue of abortion political — and it’s not. It’s biblical. I’ve had pastors tell me, ‘I believe in what you do, but my congregation does not. We don’t want to offend anybody in our pews. If we bring this up, people will leave.’ And I think, ‘What are you teaching your congregation?’”

Which is why he says he feels blessed to have partnered for a number of years with Cedar Park, “a church where the pastor can share openly with his

congregation about the sanctity of human life, and what that means.” Cedar Park not only provides a regular stream of volunteers, Ben says, but generously supports Care Net financially — recently underwriting the cost of a second mobile unit that offers women free screening, pregnancy tests, and ultrasounds.

That’s a crucial alternative in a county where abortion providers outnumber pregnancy centers 13:1. Last year, Care Net served more than 15,000 women in two counties, in a state that Ben says may be the easiest in the country in which to get an abortion. “A 16-year-old needs her parents’ permission to have her ears pierced — get a tan in a tanning salon — get an aspirin from her school nurse,” he says. “But she can get an abortion without her parents knowing about it.”



Teneka White and Ben Edwards work for Care Net pregnancy care centers that benefit from Cedar Park’s financial and volunteer support.



Marlene Shirley displays photos of her children, two of whom she and her husband adopted after caring for them as foster parents.

On the other hand, 97% of the women who see their baby through an ultrasound choose to bring that child to term, says Teneka White, who directs the Care Net center in Tacoma, Washington. Care Net offers those ultrasounds, along with parenting classes, newborn supplies, and support for dads as well as moms — free of charge. Cedar Park, she says, pays for a great deal of that.

“Without the church, I really don’t believe that Care Net would be possible,” she says. “We have amazing people who believe in what we do, and those people are usually in the pews.”

“If every church was like this church,” Ben says, “my job would be a cakewalk.”

Although they had two biological children of their own, Marlene Shirley and her husband, Jason, had always nurtured an interest in adopting children, once their own were a little bit older.

“We weren’t really interested in foster care,” she says, but the state requires prospective adopters to go through foster training and keep the children they’re looking to adopt in their home for six months. In going through the process of adopting two children themselves, Marlene and Jason soon began to realize “how many unwanted kids are in the foster care system, especially older kids.”

Convinced she and Jason could help, Marlene approached Cedar Park’s then-pastor Joe Fuiten about starting a foster care ministry at the church. She hosted a meeting for interested families. Out of that came several whose commitment to fostering has endured for most of a dozen years.

**We have amazing people who believe
in what we do, and those people
are usually in the pews.**

“

Teneka White

Marlene has a front-row seat for all of Cedar Park’s ministries — she’s the office coordinator and Pastor Jay Smith’s administrative right hand. She delights at how “our church just really rallies around” people in need. Many in the congregation and with the Cedar Park schools, for instance, lend support to Royal Family KIDS Camp, a summer ministry to foster children. Parents and students serve as volunteers and counselors, she says, and “we raise all of the money for the kids to be able to go, so that the state’s not paying for the camp.”

“The community here at Cedar Park Church and the school is incredible,” Marlene says. “The way they have rallied, not just around our family, but the other foster families here and the children. Those kids are just floundering. They need a home ... to know that they are wanted and they are loved. I feel like that’s what we do here.”

Nancy Morales was 25 when she first walked through the doors of Cedar Park. She was pregnant, frightened, and deserted by a man who'd told her she could get an abortion or raise their child alone. "Well, then ... I will have it on my own," she decided.

She moved in with her grandfather, a member of Cedar Park. "Want to come to church with me?" he asked. "I think it's time for you to go and see what you get out of it." So she did.

What she got out of it, she says now, was "courage." And a job. She met Pastor Jay and Sandy, who offered her not only moral support and fellowship, but a position with the church's counseling network and, later, its finance office. The job comes with a discount for tuition at the Cedar Park school, where her 10-year-old son enjoys math, reading, piano, and football.

But Nancy's gotten a lot more than that from Cedar Park. Her parents — estranged for 15 years — began to see a difference in their daughter. They soon joined her at church, and in time rebuilt their marriage. Members of the congregation also helped her homeless brother get crucial medical help and find a life off the streets. Through Royal Rangers, a church program that helps Christian men bond with fatherless boys, Nancy's son has found healthy role models.

"Every morning when I get up, the first thing I do ... I get down on my knees, and I give thanks," Nancy says. She smiles down at the child who changed everything. "He's a happy boy."



Nancy Morales
and her son, David



Maria Lancaster
and her daughter,
Elisha

Maria Lancaster was 46 when the pastor of her home church sent her to Cedar Park. After five miscarriages, Maria was too old now, doctors said, to have a baby — the one thing she wanted most of all.

But her pastor had heard of Cedar Park's Presentation Sunday services — of the testimonies, of the pastors who pray for those still without babies, that God will work a miracle. And how, time after time, He does.

"I came in despair," Maria remembers, "and left with hope. Hope changed everything."

Her husband, Jeff, heard on the radio about something called "embryo adoption." They decided to take a chance. They adopted a two-cell embryo frozen four years before. The frozen cells were FedExed from North Carolina, to Maria's doctor's office, where they were thawed out and transferred to her womb. Then — at nearly 48 — Maria gave birth to a little girl, Elisha.

"We think she's pretty special," she says.

"It feels pretty cool," Elisha, now 16, admits. "It's always interesting to tell people, and watch their reaction. It reminds me that God has a purpose for me." Sometimes, she wonders if that purpose may be to one day take over her mother's business: Embryo Adoption Services.

Maria has often returned to the Presentation Day services to share her testimony. One day, she asked then-Pastor Fuiten: "Why don't you start an embryo adoption program, and I'll run it?" A veteran of the commercial shipping industry, Maria was sure she was up for the challenge.

So was Pastor Fuiten. A decade later, Maria has helped connect more than 125 mothers with the frozen embryo that became the child they'd always wanted. She's not the only provider, but the only one "not subsidized by the federal government" — and with the lowest fees in



I came in despair, and left with hope.
Hope changed everything.

“

Maria Lancaster

the nation, to boot. If a woman doesn't get pregnant, Maria rematches them with another embryo, at no charge. And at the moment, she has a lot more embryos available than families willing to take them.

“We're the only *church*, worldwide, that does this,” Maria says. She looks over at the miracle she prayed so hard for. To this day, when she shares Elisha's story, people often tell her they feel chills. “It's a witness to the power of God,” she says. “And that life is a gift from God.”

Theriot expects a ruling on Cedar Park's lawsuit by Christmas. Meanwhile, he marvels at what “pro-life” means in a congregation that overflows with outreaches to those grappling with broken hearts, broken relationships, broken hope.

“Where many might say, ‘We're pro-life, *but ...*’ Cedar Park says, ‘We support you. We love you. This is the moral standard — but we're all fallen. And we're here to help you.’

“We want people to know that there is a choice ... to support life,” Pastor Jay says. “That this church is a place — that this church is a people — who want to be a part of bringing about this beauty and this miracle and this support in their lives.

“Jesus comes to bring life, hope, peace,” Sandy says. “That's the message that we want to speak in this world that feels so hostile. We want to speak the truth. We want to show the love of Christ in our actions, in our words ... with everything that we do.”

“We're 100%, when it comes to life,” Jay says. “We're all in. And that's why we're walking down this road.” 

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Europe has a free speech problem that should serve as a warning for the United States.

When I visit the U.S., I often see and hear discussions on hate speech in the media and in the public square. Tech companies including Facebook, Google, and Twitter face increasing pressure to stem the spread of messages that are considered by some to be offensive. And a growing number of college students believe that hate speech should not be protected under the First Amendment.

Americans often point to European countries as a potential model for regulating speech. They say, “Europe has gone down this route, so why don’t we?” But the reality is that our experience with hate speech laws in Europe is an unmitigated disaster.

Europe now has hundreds of hate speech laws, and each year we see these restrictions grow.

Some of our cases are utterly ridiculous:

In Austria, a man was charged for “disparagement of religious symbols.” His offence was yodeling in his garden — an act his Muslim neighbors claimed was an attempt to mock the call to prayer.

Opinion

The Rise Of Hate Speech Policing In Europe

And What It Means For The U.S.

By Paul Coleman

In the UK, a church evangelist was handing out leaflets to promote the church’s upcoming Easter services. Three police officers arrived in full body armor, informing him that a member of the community was offended that the church was distributing literature in a part of town where there was “obviously a sizeable gay community.” Nothing in the leaflets mentioned homosexuality.

One of the biggest problems with hate speech laws is we’re trying to criminalize something that we can’t even define. If you look at the various laws, many different terms are used: insult, offense, dignity, disrespect, hostility. With such a vague definition, the “hate speech” label can be used by those in power to stop speech with which they disagree. So much speech is offensive to someone. And with no real standard to determine what constitutes hate speech, it is left up to the government to decide. In Europe, the result has been at least threefold:

VISIT: Learn how ADF International is advocating for religious freedom across Europe at ADFIInternational.org/regions/europe



Paul Coleman, executive director of ADF International, participates in a panel discussion, “Will We Ban Hate Speech? Lessons from Europe and the Threat of Big Tech,” presented by The Heritage Foundation in June 2018.

So much speech is offensive to someone.

“

Paul Coleman

1. Censorship leads to more censorship.

We're seeing the scope of hate speech laws growing all the time. What began as restrictions on the most extreme forms of speech now includes criminal law addressing Islamic hate speech, homophobic hate speech, transphobic hate speech, and the list goes on. Now there are moves in several countries to outlaw silent prayer outside abortion facilities. And more and more speech continues to be lumped in under "hate speech."

2. Censorship leads to self-censorship.

Hate speech laws have resulted in a "you can't say that" culture in Europe. Rather than face criminal penalties or have the police come knocking at their doors, people avoid voicing viewpoints that might be labeled as "hateful." They self-censor. By criminalizing certain viewpoints, those ideas are stamped out. It becomes not only a "you can't say that" culture, but also a "you can't think that" culture.

3. Censorship leads to more division and polarization.

Proponents of hate speech laws claim that these laws promote peace and harmony. But the opposite has actually been true: Some of the greatest political and societal tensions that we see in Europe are in the countries that have the strictest speech laws. Instead of promoting peace, these laws are used as a weapon to shut down debate — especially on "hot topics" such as immigration, sexuality, gender identity, and religion.

Could it happen in America?

As I look at growing support of censorship in the States, I worry that we will see increasing attempts to regulate hate speech in the U.S. Although U.S. courts consistently protect offensive speech under the First Amendment, their commitment to that principle could wane. And if that happens, I hope Americans will look to Europe's experience as a cautionary tale.

Because if you examine the result of hate speech laws in Europe, it's impossible to say, "These laws are working." At the very least, these laws are ineffective. And they're actually playing a role in fostering some of the division and polarization we see, because they remove a voice from citizens and cause people to feel disenfranchised.

"Europeans have given up some of their liberty in order to be more civil to one another," some supporters of censorship reason. But going down the road to censorship has not made us more civil. There's plenty of evidence to the contrary. That would be my warning to the U.S. 🇺🇸

Paul Coleman serves as executive director of ADF International from its headquarters in Vienna. He has written widely on the subject of hate speech and is the author of Censored: How European "Hate Speech" Laws are Threatening Freedom of Speech.



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My View

Pardon My French

How The Wrong Pronoun Cost Me My Job

By Peter Vlaming

You know the old line about arguments that basically come down to “he said / she said?” Well, the disagreement that cost me my teaching position was a little different from that ... more of a “said ‘he’ / said ‘she.’”

For seven years, I taught French at West Point High in West Point, Virginia. I’m passionate about my subject, and like many teachers, I also did a lot of other things: coached sports, sponsored clubs, drove a school bus ... even managed special funds for my fellow teachers. I received strong evaluations for my work, but more than that, I developed a solid rapport with many of my students. I enjoyed my job.

Last year, a favorite student of mine (yes, we all have favorites) told me she had come to a major decision: she wanted to start identifying as a boy. She also wanted to adopt a masculine name. In my French class, I invite students to choose a French name, so she asked permission to adopt a new, masculine name there, too.

I agreed to let her do so. I even gave all my other students a chance to choose new French names, so she wouldn’t be singled out. She would have preferred that I refer to her by masculine pronouns, too — whether she was present or not — but I chose not to do that. Instead, I endeavored to avoid pronouns altogether for this student, which isn’t usually hard to do (or even noticeable) in the classroom.

But her decision concerned me, and my decision about the pronouns reflected that. As a language teacher, I think pronouns mean something. We are born male or female, and our biology makes the distinction easy to

identify. Whatever we feel — however strongly we feel it — does not change our objectively identifiable gender. To pretend otherwise, even in something like the pronouns we use, is to live, or indulge, a lie. That goes against my training as a teacher and my deepest beliefs as a Christian.

Still, the compromise worked well enough until the day a class activity took us into the hallways outside my classroom. I paired off my students; one would wear a pair of virtual reality goggles, and the other would guide their partner around any obstacles in the hallway.

One guide let her attention lag for a moment, and I looked up to see her goggle-wearing partner — the student now going by the masculine name — veering toward a wall.

“Don’t let her hit the wall!” I yelled.

The girl stopped. But she had heard my “her.”

I reported the incident to school administrators immediately after class, explaining that it had been an accident. But the student told her mother, the mother complained to the principal, and by the end of the day, I was placed on administrative leave ... despite my assurances that I really was going out of my way to avoid offending this girl or any others who might make similar choices.

But I also explained my point of view on the whole pronouns issue — why I was deliberately avoiding using those terms in my classroom. Requiring me to refer to her with male pronouns was a way of trying to force me and others to think of her as a boy — of compelling us to embrace her self-image and ignore what we knew to be

**If I bowed to the administrators’ wishes,
I’d be letting them violate my freedom of speech.**

“

Peter Vlaming

Whatever we feel – however strongly we feel it – does not change our objectively identifiable gender.

“

Peter Vlaming



true. The administrators didn't care about that. Start using the pronouns the student wants to hear, they insisted — or else lose my job.

That, for me, took the conflict to a whole new level. Not only was I being told to deny objective reality — to ignore scientific truth — but I was being required to forfeit my freedom of conscience, as well. And if I bowed to the administrators' wishes, I'd be letting them violate my freedom of speech, by forcing me to express ideas with which I don't agree.

I told them I couldn't do that. And they fired me.

There was a public meeting, at which many of my students and their families showed up to support me. A large group of those students and others walked out of their classes the next day to communicate their respect for me and offer solidarity with my position.

None of that seemed to matter very much. My excellent work record, my willingness to accommodate this one student, and my considerable efforts to avoid offending her just didn't count for much against the fact that I didn't blindly obey the wishes of this girl and her mother, and sacrifice my civil liberties on the altar of political correctness.

Alliance Defending Freedom has filed suit on my behalf against the school district in state court. They will

**As a language teacher,
I think pronouns mean something.**

“

Peter Vlaming

argue that I am not trying to force anyone to share my point of view on transgenderism or traditional pronouns. I'm only asking for the freedom to honor my personal religious beliefs, and to be excused from communicating a message I don't believe.

I'm far from the only teacher in the country who's facing this issue. Administrators in other states are also pressuring instructors over the use of preferred pronouns, choosing to indulge those who think that gender is variable and that reality is ... whatever a student wants it to be.

For teachers like me, it's a question of defending our constitutionally protected freedoms of speech and conscience. But for the students ... it's a matter of what we're teaching about the most fundamental truths of human existence. And about the costs of teaching — or not teaching — those truths correctly. **A**

Q & A

Edwin Meese and Michael Mukasey

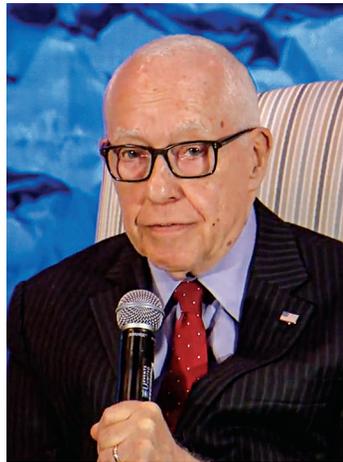
Former AGs On Supreme Court Surprises And Predictions

By Karen Kurtz

The Honorable Edwin Meese III served as the 75th attorney general of the United States from 1985-1988, under President Ronald Reagan. During Reagan's earlier California governorship, he served as legal affairs secretary from 1967-1968 and as executive assistant and chief of staff from 1969-1974. He also worked in private practice, as well as other areas of government and politics. He currently serves with The Heritage Foundation as Ronald Reagan Distinguished Fellow Emeritus. In October, Meese was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom.



The Honorable Michael B. Mukasey served as the 81st attorney general of the United States from 2007-2009, under President George W. Bush. From 1988-2006, he served as a district judge in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York, becoming chief judge in 2000. Among the cases he presided over was the trial of those accused in the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center, and a later plot to blow up New York landmarks. Mukasey is currently in private practice in New York City.



Alliance Defending Freedom was honored to host Meese and Mukasey for a question-and-answer session during an August team meeting.

ADF: What changes — either in the legal system itself or in the decisions that you see from the Supreme Court — have most surprised you since leaving office?

MM: It was the Obergefell decision [to legalize same-sex marriage] that snapped my head back. It's a primary example of judges reading their policy preferences and views into the Constitution. It stands out as an isolated event, given the fact that we've since had at least two justices appointed who read the Constitution as it's written. My fondest hope is that we won't see a repetition of anything like that.

EM: [Obergefell] really violated the Constitution in two ways. One, there's nothing in the Constitution that gives a basis for the Supreme Court to make such a declaration about marriage. The second thing is that under the Constitution, family matters and domestic matters have always been left to the states. The

whole idea of the national government was to do those things which the states could not do, like defending the country and providing for interstate commerce.

Neither of us thought, 15 years ago, we would ever see same-sex marriage.

“

Edwin Meese III

ADF: Obergefell opened the door of expanding the definition of marriage beyond “one man and one woman.” Where does it stop? Could marriages involving multiple partners become legal?

EM: I don’t see it changing much in terms of those aspects, because I don’t see much public advocacy for expanding that. But it is certainly possible. Neither of us thought, 15 years ago, we would ever see same-sex marriage. If you had a change in the Supreme Court and a disastrous departure from fidelity to the Constitution in several future appointments, then it’s possible. But I don’t see it happening in the foreseeable future.

MM: I agree that the logic of Obergefell could open the door to polygamous relationships being authorized and sanctified. On the other hand, a condition for admitting the state of Utah into the Union was that they abandon legalized polygamy. So I think we will draw the line at Obergefell, if not eventually returning [the authority to define marriage] to the states.

ADF: What is your prediction about the future of *Roe vs. Wade*?

MM: Even the supporters of that decision have acknowledged that it was badly constructed.

And advances in medical science have shown that what proponents of abortion insist on referring to as a fetus is actually a human being. There is growing support for protection of life in this country. And the more this takes hold, gradually that decision is going to be pared back.

ADF: Mr. Meese, you are rightly credited with reviving the principle of interpreting the Constitution by its original meaning. Why is that so important?

EM: The Constitution ought to be interpreted as it actually reads and not be manipulated according to a judge’s policy preferences, political views, or personal biases. Once you depart from what the Constitution actually says, you have courts — which are unelected officials in the federal system — essentially usurping the people’s representatives in Congress.

ADF: Should the Supreme Court be influenced by decisions made by courts in other countries?

EM: International decisions should have no impact whatsoever on the Supreme Court or any other court in the United States. The Supreme Court has only one basis on which they can legitimately decide cases, and that is the Constitution of the United States.

MM: One of the arguments for considering the views of courts in other countries is based on a misreading of the Declaration of Independence, which refers to “a decent respect for the opinions of mankind.” This required the founders to set forth the reasons why we were separating ourselves from England. If a decent respect for the opinions of mankind meant that we were taking into account the views of other countries, then the head of the U.S. government would be the head of the House of Windsor, not the president of the United States.

ADF: Alliance Defending Freedom has been accused of being a “hate group.” Do you think these allegations will impact how ADF cases and attorneys’ arguments are received at the Supreme Court?

MM: Absolutely not. The accusations of this or that group being a hate group have lost their meaning. It now means anybody I disagree with. And the way to respond to that is to keep doing what you’re doing, and remain consistent to your views.

EM: The principal body that has been accusing ADF and other organizations of a similar constitutional fidelity view is the Southern Poverty Law Center — which is a misnomer, since it has nothing to do with the South, nothing to do with poverty, and nothing to do with the law. The only people on its hate map are people that disagree with their very left-wing views, and fortunately that word is getting around now. More and more organizations are finding out that this group is not one to be relied on for an evaluation of other organizations. 🦋



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