



# a newsletter for members of the Communio Internationalis Benedictinarum

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Feast of St. Scholastica  
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## From the desk of Sr. Lynn McKenzie 2022 CIB Conference of Delegates Meeting in Rome

It was 2019 in Mexico when the CIB Conference of Delegates last met in person. Then the pandemic interrupted everything in the world. Finally in September 2022, we were able to gather again as a conference, this time hosted by the Tutzing Missionary Benedictine Sisters at Casa Spirito Santo in Rome. M. Maoro Sye, prioress general of the Missionary Benedictine Sisters, and her community in Rome were extraordinarily warm and hospitable to all of us women who arrived at their house from various parts of the globe. We couldn't have asked for more! We had 25 sisters come in person and another 15 from various time zones who attended virtually via Zoom.



*CIB Conference of Delegates 2022 –  
those attending in person*



*Aquinata Böckmann (center) with  
Lynn McKenzie (left) and Maoro Sye (right)*

We were blessed to have Sister Aquinata Böckmann of the Tutzing sisters with us. She gave us a summary of the earliest history of the formation of the CIB which began with meetings at Casa Spirito Santo in Rome. She also provided her presentation in written form to be preserved in the CIB archives. Having Sister Aquinata with us, with her radiant face and joyful good zeal clearly evident, was a privilege for us. Thank you, Sister Aquinata, for your years of service in our Benedictine world! Your scholarship on the Rule of Benedict is known throughout the world, but just as importantly, we know, too, the breadth and depth of your commitment to living monastic good zeal among your sisters which touches everyone you meet. Sister Scholastika Häring gave a summary of earlier presentations about the existing structure of the CIB with ideas for future CIB structure to be developed by a study committee. It was done in Scholastika's characteristic clear presentation, always open to questions and others' ideas.



*CIB Conference of Delegates  
attending Mass with the Tutzing Missionary Benedictines,  
with Abbot Primate Gregory Polan, president*

A highlight of the meeting was when Klara Świdarska, OSB of Ukraine spoke to the Conference via Zoom (through an interpreter). She shared with the Conference the experiences in her monastery and beyond of the terrible war in her country as a result of a Russian invasion. She inspired and moved us all with the stories she shared of how people's lives have been completely changed by the war and stories of courage and faith. Sr. Klara expressed her gratitude for the outpouring of support they have received from Benedictines. She said that she and her sisters now realize more clearly they are part of a large Benedictine family.



*M. Klara of Ukraine with interpreter, Fr Jarak*



*Newly re-elected Moderator  
receiving blessing from online participants of  
2022 CIB Conference of Delegates*

Two days were dedicated to the election of moderator and council. The facilitator for the election was Brother Emili Turú, former Superior General of the Marist Brothers and executive director of USG in Rome. Brother Emili's vast experience as a facilitator among religious is well known, and we were fortunate to have him with us to assist us as we elected leadership for the next four years. ([See the article about the CIB leadership team included](#)).



*Br. Emili Turu*





Meeting room at Casa Spirito Santo



Interpreters Monica Alonso Amman, Marie-Cecile Dassoneville and Sr. Maria Clemens Laguardia

The experience of the days together in Rome were rich, and we all left with full hearts, grateful for the sisterhood we share, and with much to bring home to our own monasteries.

*\*Please note that on the [CIB website](#) there are items posted about this 2022 meeting in Rome.*

Lynn McKenzie, OSB (Region 9, USA)

## REGIONS PRAYING FOR EACH OTHER

At the September 2022 CIB Conference of Delegates meeting, we came up with this list as further way of communion. Let us pray for one another. Please make note of which region your region is praying for.

### Region

- 1 Italy
- 2 Spain & Portugal
- 3 France & Israel
- 4 Great Britain & Ireland
- 5 Benelux
- 6 GASS\*
- 7 Poland/Ukraine/Lithuania
- 8 Croatia
- 9 USA/Canada
- 10 ABECCA\*\*
- 11 Brazil
- 12 Cono-Sur\*\*\*
- 13 Korea/Japan/Taiwan/Vietnam
- 14 Philippines
- 15 Oceania
- 16 East Africa
- 17 Central/West Africa/Madagascar
- 18 South Africa, Namibia
- 19 India, Sri Lanka

### Praying for region

- 9 USA/Canada
- 1 Italy
- 5 Benelux
- 19 India, Sri Lanka
- 13 Korea/Japan/Taiwan/Vietnam
- 11 Brazil
- 6 GASS\*
- 14 Philippines
- 8 Croatia
- 2 Spain & Portugal
- 15 Oceania
- 3 France & Israel
- 10 ABECCA\*\*
- 16 East Africa
- 12 Cono-Sur\*\*\*
- 17 Central/West Africa/Madagascar
- 7 Poland/Ukraine/Lithuania
- 4 Great Britain & Ireland
- 18 South Africa, Namibia



\*GASS = Germany/Austria/Switzerland/Scandinavia

\*\*ABECCA = Benedictine & Cistercian Association of the Caribbean & the Andes/ Costa Rica/ Guatemala/ Nicaragua/ Mexico/ Colombia/ Ecuador/ Peru/ Bahamas/ Cuba/ Martinique/ Puerto Rico/ St. Lucia/ Bolivia/ Venezuela

\*\*\*Cono-Sur = Argentina/Chile/Paraguay/Uruguay

## Introduction to the CIB Ad Team 2022



Moderator

Lynn McKenzie, OSB

Cullman, Alabama, USA



As a member of Sacred Heart Monastery in Cullman, Alabama USA and president of the Monastic Congregation of St. Scholastica (representing 17 member monasteries in the USA and Mexico), I was first elected as Moderator in 2018 and then again in 2022. I cannot say that I knew, 42 years ago when I became a Benedictine Sister, the extent to which I would be encouraged to grow as a person in my search for God. Yet that is who I am -- a seeker of God in the monastic way of life, together with my Sisters in community and with my Sisters around the world. Having the opportunity to become a part of CIB some years ago, when I first came to a CIB Symposium, was a life-changing experience for me. I knew of the richness and fullness of monastic life but I didn't realize the depth of such until I began meeting Benedictine women from around the world and sharing together how and why we live our lives as Benedictines. As we continue to grow and develop as a still young international organization, it is my sincere hope that CIB will be a source of witness in the Church and in the world and also a source of strength and inspiration for all of us as we continue to live and grow in the school of the Lord's service.



Assistant Moderator

Äbtissin Franziska Lukas, OSB

Region 06 Delegate Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Scandinavia



I am Sr. Franziska Lukas and I have been living in the monastery at St. Scholastika Abbey in Dinklage, Germany, since 1974. Our community is still quite young, based on the fact that St Benedict was born in the 5th century. We were founded after the Second World War from the community in Alexanderdorf in 1949. Before my sisters elected me abbess in 2007, I worked in different areas as prioress and novice mistress, as guest mistress and cantor. All these tasks are about listening, which is so important to Benedict. Thus, it runs like a thread through my life as a Benedictine. So too it will be for me now as a delegate from CIB Region 6, having been re-elected to the CIB Council, to work with the Moderator Sr Lynn McKenzie, the other Council members and the Delegate Conference to seek and find answers to how we as Benedictine women can best be there in the Church and for people in our times. I am grateful that we can work together on this, looking forward to discover where the Holy Spirit will lead us.

## Administrative Council



Abbess Anna Brennan, OSB

Region 4 Delegate - Great Britain & Ireland



I entered Stanbrook Abbey, England, in 1992, aged 36, after a rather varied 'career'. For some years I was a member of an apostolic congregation, which at that time focused on teaching. After leaving, I became a police officer, but left after five years to look after my dying mother. While caring for her I did a law conversion course, with the intention of becoming a solicitor (a lawyer). But God had other plans. After my mother died, I kept remembering a quotation I picked up as a teenager: 'there is much love in your heart, dear child. Else why would God so relentlessly pursue his fleeing servant?' (from the 1950s book *The Cardinal* by H.M. Robinson). God did finally catch up with me – or I stopped running away. Since entering Stanbrook I have been laundress, kitchener and cellarer. In 2009 I went to Jamberoo Abbey, Australia, for two wonderful years; then, in 2012, I was sent as pontifical commissar to a monastery in Nigeria for two years. On my return from Africa, before the election, I was reappointed cellarer. I have followed CIB since my early days in the monastery, largely because a previous Stanbrook abbess, D. Joanna Jamieson, worked with Abbess Maire Hickey, the first Moderator of the CIB. Monasticism is organic: communities support and enable each other by 'being connected,' sharing life and energy, wisdom and ideas across boundaries. Our communities would wither and die if we tried to 'go it alone'. So, I am honoured and privileged to be working now so closely with the CIB.



M. Cecile Lañas, OSB

Region 14 Delegate, Philippines

I joined the Congregation of Benedictine Sisters of the Eucharistic King after three years of working in the Population Commission Office, my first job after my Baccalaureate studies. The simplicity of life lived by the Benedictines in our place, attracted me to join them. After finishing other courses during my juniorate and as a young perpetually professed sister, I was assigned in various ministries: Catechetical, Liturgical, Biblical and Pastoral. In 1995- 2005; 2011- 2017, I was appointed and then elected Prioress of St. Benedict Priory, Vigan City, one of the four priories of our Congregation and at the same time the Dean of Studies of our small College in the same place. In 2017, I was elected Prioress General of our small Congregation with four priories with only 152 members in the Philippines, Germany, Israel and Indonesia. I came to know about CIB through my predecessors who used to gather us as a Region after every CIB happening. In 2018, two of us from our Region were invited to be the facilitators during the CIB symposium. I was so impressed by the camaraderie of the delegates despite the language barriers. The desire of each one to reach out to the other by trying to learn important words and phrases of the language outside of her own is a very touching scenario for me. Yes, at the CIB we go beyond the boundaries of language and culture. We create a common language of CHRISTIAN LOVE and BENEDICTINE CULTURE.



Abbess Hilda Scott

Region 15 Substitute, Oceania

My name is Hilda Scott, from the Benedictine Abbey Jamberoo Australia having joined monastic life in 1991. Prior to this I was a member of an active religious Congregation involved in education, retreat giving and pastoral work of every description. My journey to monastic life is a song of joy that always echoes in my heart. That He chose the Benedictine way of life for me is still a wonder and a gift, ever new every day. I have filled various roles of service in the community, Guest Mistress, Cottage mistress, Novice Mistress, Prioress and now Abbess. I believe in Benedictine monastic life, in the enduring capacity, within that life, to give oneself completely to God, on God's terms, not on one's own and I believe in the transforming power of this way of life to assist God in bringing and revealing all that is good into the world. The same can be said of the CIB. I believe that in the commitment of the individual members, their unity and shared vision. It has a real voice for the future of Monastic women and the wider Church and world as well. I count myself blessed to be a small part of this mighty ship, sailing as it is right now through uncharted waters, yet sure of its destination.



M. María del Mar Albajar i Viñas

Montserrat (Barcelona)

I am the abbess of the Monastery of Sant Benet de Montserrat, Spain, since 2015 and member of the Administrative Council of the CIB since 2018. Although my vocation has not been an easy one, I feel very fortunate with the monastic path that God has given me. It is the best expression of who I am and who I want to be. As Benedictine women of the 21st century I believe we are called to share our vocation with other women and to share its wisdom with our wounded world. To this end the CIB is key. The CIB as the body that gathers the voices of all Benedictine women of the world in the richness of their diversity and the strength of their unity and is a voice in our Church and help and support for our shared journey.



Executive secretary

Sister Mary Luke Jones, OSB

Beech Grove, Indiana, USA

When I was in the first grade, I fell in love with my teacher. She was a Benedictine sister and the love affair continues to this day. Born in Seymour Indiana, I led a charmed life! My grandparents owned a drugstore, complete with soda fountain, and their grandchildren were welcome to have whatever they wanted. The sisters had a great influence on me so after High School I entered Our Lady of Grace Monastery. For over 50 years, the sisters have educated me (Bachelors from the University of Indianapolis; Masters from the University of Notre Dame), given me worthwhile work to do, supported me and loved me into maturity. I have taught in grade schools, was a principal, started the monastery's development office and administrated our retreat center. The bulk (30+ years) has been in fundraising in support of our ministries and our lives of prayer and work. It is my great pleasure to work with moderator Sr. Lynn McKenzie and serve the Communio Internationalis Benedictinarum. Realizing firsthand the scope and breath of the work of Benedictine women across the globe fills me with pride and hope.





## 2022 CIB Conference of Delegates Meeting

### Reflections on 2022 CIB Conference of Delegates meeting in Rome

I can't begin to describe the richness of the leadership for the CIB. The sisters who gather for our meetings are either Prioresses or nominated by their community. They are wise women who have lived this life for many years. They display not only brilliance but delight. These women love their Benedictine vocations and their communities. Our meals together were filled with depth and humor.

The mixture of cultures and languages didn't seem to get in the way. We have Benedictine sisters from all over the globe. Each woman offering her concerns and desire to serve the Church, the people of God, and the needs of our Benedictine family.

Lynn McKenzie, the president for the CIB, is an accomplished Canon/Civil Lawyer, who brings to the table a listening heart and expertise needed in these changing times for Benedictines. I was so impressed with her generosity of time, and clarity expressed over the given issues we face.

It was an amazing privilege to be a part of our Benedictine story.

*CLARE CARR, OSB  
(Benet Hill Monastery, Colorado USA)*



At the CIB Delegates' Conference of September 2022, I received signs of life and hope again: Through the testimony of M Klara, our Ukrainian sister, I learned:

- a new way of seeing the humanizing and life-giving power of our way of being as Benedictine women.
- the faithful ringing of the bell, summoning the community to prayer, brought the gentle healing power of PEACE.
- the service and welcome to all without exception given to the refugees in Ukraine strengthened the suffering.

I was able to experience again in the presence of each and every one, the call of the Spirit to build a more defined, light and respectful network, which gives us face and word in the midst of the Church.

I contemplated in the discernment accompanied by Brother Emili Turú, the greatness of humility, the breath of the Spirit that counts on each person.

And in the blessing, offered and received, a deepened and shared joy before our God.

May all this life continue to grow and reach more and more people. THANK YOU.



*Rosario del Camino  
Region 2 Delegate*

I was very happy to participate in the delegates' convention in Rome. Certainly the presence in person offers an all-around experience; the chance to live together for a few days, exchange ideas and experiences, talk to each other even during meals and in the hallways enriches the experience and especially the communion!



*Noemi Scarpa, OSB  
Region 1 (Italy)*

The topics covered were very interesting and the group work was fundamental, enabling us to dig in and discover together where to go.

Although it was a hybrid conference it did not limit the work and the results achieved especially on the unanimity of choosing the moderator!!! A sign that over these years, Sister Lynn has worked well and created communion and interest among us Benedictines in the world.

I am grateful to all for the mutual esteem and for knowing how to overcome together not only language barriers but also cultural ones. It was/is an excellent choice to have, in this sense, such a diverse council!

I am also happy to be able to continue my service to women's monasticism through the committee studying the possible structure of the CIB in the future. This experience broadens the horizons and opens the mind and the gaze towards the future. I perceive a wide breath that is good for our small, sometimes closed, and isolated, worlds.

## The history moves forward.

Being a part of *Communio Internationalis Benedictinarum* has been a life transforming experience! I first attended a CIB Symposium at Sant' Anselmo Abbey on the Aventine Hill in Rome in 2014, just a few months after I was first elected president of the Monastic Congregation of St. Scholastica. I had gone to Rome in 1994 with my graduating canon law class from Catholic University of America and never expected to travel to Rome again. Now, I am not sure how many times I have been! It has been a privilege.

At that Symposium I met Benedictine women from around the world. Fortunately for me, the primary language of CIB is English, but I heard many languages spoken there – the expected European and Central and South American languages, but also African and Asian languages. What an incredible experience for this small-town Alabama girl!

Especially in our ancient Benedictine world, the CIB is quite young – technically only founded in 2001, though its roots of being an international organization for Benedictine women reach back to 1965. In the introduction to her seminal work, The Founding of the *Communio Internationalis Benedictinarum* 1965-2009, Sister Scholastika Häring quoted the CIB statutes which give an important context for understanding CIB:

The one common charism, embraced by those who have lived according to the Rule of St. Benedict for 15 centuries, has been implanted and enculturated in all parts of the world to this day. This revered and ancient tradition continues to flourish and be a source of vitality in the church.

Sister Scholastika's doctoral dissertation in this important work contains "the canonical development of the relationships among communities of Benedictine women as well as their relationship to the Benedictine Confederation (of men) and thus traces the steps that over the years led to the foundation of the CIB in its current canonical form."

Sister Scholastika's dissertation was first published in her native German tongue. Not long afterward it was translated into English by American Benedictine Marianne Burkhard (Rock Island, Illinois, USA).

Last year this same work was translated into French and published for the many French speaking Benedictines by Sister Christine Conrath of Jouarre Abbey in France who currently serves as the executive secretary of the Alliance for International Monasticism (AIM) located in Paris. This year it was translated into Spanish by M. Concha Galán de Mera of Monasterio de la Ascensión in Zamora Spain, the editor of the Spanish language scholarly monastic journal, *Nova et Vetera*. The Spanish language translation was only recently published for the many Spanish speaking benedictinas.



*These two languages of French and Spanish account for the languages of many countries and many monasteries in various parts of the world.*

These translations are an important way for the story of CIB to be known, not only among Benedictine women themselves but also for all those who are connected to Benedictine monastic life around the globe. We hope that in the future this seminal work will also find its way into other languages – perhaps, for example, Korean. In the small country of South Korea there are over 1,000 Benedictine women!

This history is important, but so is all that has happened since 2009 when Sister Scholastika's research ended. It is important at the current time as the CIB is looking closely at its current non-juridic structure and begins to make decisions about how to make CIB even more accessible and serviceable to all Benedictine women. We shall see whether the CIB might become a parallel structure to the Benedictine Confederation of men, which is led by the abbot primate. While the abbot primate technically does not have jurisdiction over Benedictine men's monasteries, he does serve as an important link for Benedictine monks with the Holy See. Perhaps in the future the elected leader of the CIB will also become such a recognized important link of communication between Benedictine women and the Vatican.

Stay on the lookout to see in what other languages the historical-canonical development of the CIB will be published.



Lynn McKenzie, OSB  
Sacred Heart Monastery  
Cullman, Alabama, USA

A.D. 2022



**Dear Sister Lynn Maria McKenzie, members of CIB International,  
and all the good people of this organization,**

Christmas is approaching and we celebrate it for the first time in the realities of war. It is truly a special and moving time when we contemplate the mysteries of God becoming flesh in the humbleness of current history, amid the coldness of human cruelty and animalistic aggression.

When half of our country is left without electricity and heat, without means of livelihood, and sometimes without hope. When almost every family has already been touched by the grief of losing someone in the war, when many are crying, and their grief cannot be consoled...

On this Holy Eve, we first of all want to remember those who caused the war crisis to affect us as little as possible, and those whom we welcomed through the gates of our monasteries. Because of you, we have warmth and food, we can also give warmth to others. Thousands of such persons have passed through the doors of our monastery, to whom we provide shelter and simple necessities: humanitarian, legal, or psychological assistance.

All this became possible thanks to the constant help that the Lord sends to us, particularly through you. Help that we often did not even expect and did not know where it will come from, help that we didn't have time to request, but you had already sent. We also discovered the great family of the Church, where brotherhood and fellowship are concrete realities, not abstract. We realized that we have many sisters and mothers all over the world who are concerned for us, write to us, inquired about us...

We are incredibly grateful and astounded by the openness of your hearts to the needs of those who suffer from the aggression, terror and destruction that this unjust war brings.

This is a unique time for heroic virtues, when everyone can give more than what they thought was possible. When everyone has the opportunity to become more than they were, when the heart expands, new powers and previously unknown possibilities appear. And you have gone the extra mile for us; we are truly overwhelmed by your support. It gives us not only resources but hope that goodness will prevail and that we are not alone in this fight against the forces of darkness.

Thank you for your mission and coordination.

May the Lord reward you and your families with generous blessings and fill you with Himself. May the long-awaited peace and strength be yours and in your ministry.

*In Christ,  
Benedictine sisters of Ukraine*



## CIB Study committee has started work!



*Sister Scholastika Häring*

After the CIB Delegates Conference in September 2022, it took a few more weeks before the members of the Study Committee for re-organising the CIB were finalised.

- **M. Noemi Scarpa** from the monastery Saint Anna in Bastia, Italy, who is also the Italian Delegate to the CIB Conference
- **Sr. Nancy Bauer** from the Monastery of Saint Joseph, Minnesota and since 2022 President of the Congregation of Saint Benedict and an accomplished canonist
- **Sr. Patricia Henry** from the Monastery Pan de Vida in Torreon, Mexico, who was a Delegate on the CIB – Conference some years ago
- **Sr. Scholastika Häring** from the Monastery of St. Scholastica, Dinklage, Germany, canon Lawyer, author of the book on the CIB

We are four people from four different countries and with varied experiences in the Benedictine World. Fortunately, we only have two time zones to consider for our meetings, which take place via Zoom. That makes planning a lot easier!

So far, we have met three times. The first meeting in November served to get to know each other and to become aware of the common ground for our work. At the next two meetings in December and at the end of January, we started to look at the possibilities of reorganising the CIB step by step. We started by collecting ideas and possibilities under the keywords *purpose of the CIB, role and task of the moderator*. We also looked at a possible readjustment of *representation on the CIB Conference of Delegates*. We are in the process of collecting suggestions and realistic possibilities and it will take some time get to the point when can formulate concrete proposals. A next meeting of the committee is planned for the beginning of March.

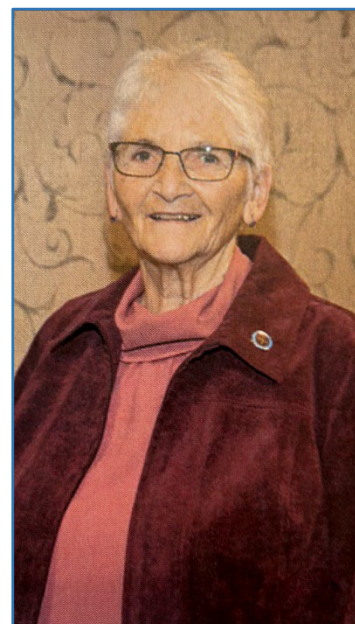
*Sr. Scholastika Häring*  
02/02/2023

## NEW TREASURER FOR CIB in USA

We are most grateful for the selfless service of Sister Linda Romey, OSB of Mount St Benedict Monastery in Erie, Pennsylvania, USA who has served as the treasurer for CIB for many years. She has worked in collaboration with Sister Caterina Goergen, OSB of Engelthal Monastery in Germany. Sister Linda informed us that she would no longer be able to continue to serve after the September 2022 CIB meeting was held in Rome. Nevertheless, she stayed on until late 2022 in order to finish the bookkeeping for the September 2022 meeting. Thank you, Sister Linda!

Thank you, too, Sister Caterina, for continuing your service even now. She has done so much for us, particularly in sending donations for the Benedictines helping those suffering from the war in Ukraine.

Now, Sister Helen Jilek, OSB of Sacred Heart Monastery in Lisle, Illinois, USA has stepped in to serve as our CIB treasurer here in the USA. We are most grateful to Sister Helen and to her monastic community for their generosity to CIB. (Sister Judith Ann Heble, immediate past CIB Moderator is also from that same monastery, so they have been exceedingly generous in sharing personnel with CIB!)



*Welcome to CIB, Sister Helen!*



### CIB Conference of Delegates Meeting September 2023 in USA

The next meeting of the CIB Conference of Delegates will be held 4-8 September 2023 in Cullman, Alabama USA at [Sacred Heart Monastery](#), the home of our CIB Moderator. The Cullman sisters are eager to host the CIB meeting.

At that meeting, we hope to have a report from the CIB Study Committee, chaired by Sr. Scholastika Häring of Germany. ([Please see the other short report from Sr. Scholastika in this newsletter](#)). This committee is studying other possible ways to structure our international organization of Benedictine women. We are grateful for their work together on behalf of all of us.



**BENEDICTINE  
SISTERS** SACRED HEART MONASTERY  
in CULLMAN, ALABAMA



## **CIB Administrative Council to meet in March 2023 in Montserrat**

The first meeting of the new CIB Administrative Council will be held in March 2023 at [Sant Benet Monastery](#) in Montserrat, Spain, the home of Council member Sr. Maria del Mar Albajar i Viñas. We thank her and her community in advance for their hospitality.

We look forward to this opportunity to be together again in person, after the last few years of meeting only virtually via Zoom. We hope to follow up on matters from the 2022 CIB Conference of Delegates meeting, et al.



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