SIGNPOST



Rooted in God's love Growing together with Jesus Branching out in the Power of the Holy Spirit

The tip of the iceberg...

I'm often asked what I do through the week (sometimes via the joke that never gets old that as a priest we only work on Sundays), so I thought I would share some reflections on this. In truth, Sundays are just the tip of the iceberg, and there is a lot more to it than preparing and delivering services, and providing pastoral care to the parishes, as the image below suggests. Now, not all of these things happen every week, the list is certainly far from exhaustive, and there are many others in the churches across the group who help with (and in some cases, do the bulk of) some of these activities, and there are things like churchyard admin that don't really apply as much in our context as the only churchyard we have (Stranton) is closed and maintained by the council. Omissions from the 'iceberg' are writing articles for the parish magazines (thankfully someone else pulls the magazines themselves together); leading and managing different projects and initiatives; the preparation that goes alongside baptisms, weddings and funerals; reviewing and refreshing liturgy; overseeing the music we use in church; and of course, the need for rest, relaxation, and refreshment - recharging of the batteries if you like, so that we can keep on serving God, and serving you, his people.

The work of a priest is one of a never empty 'to do list' but it's also one that comes with the tremendous privilege of being able to draw alongside so many different people, walking with them and hearing their stories, sharing in their joys and pains, their highs and their lows. It's a role which hopefully encourages and enables the God given gifts of others (including you!) to step out and serve the Lord – in whatever way he is equipping you to do. And it's a role which (hopefully) helps to bring the light of Christ into the lives of those who don't yet know Him, sowing seeds (as we all try to do) that will eventually bear fruit whether we get to see it or not.



2

It's a role I love and it's a role that wouldn't be possible without the help of so many others, and this week, one of the highlights of the week was being there to support my Church Wardens - your Church Wardens - at the Archdeacon's Visitation, a service held each year, which formally commissions our Church Wardens, giving thanks for all the hard work that they do in helping and serving our Churches, our PCCs, our Congregations and our Communities. They ensure that our services run well, that our buildings are looked after, and that the mission of the church remains intact. They are often the first to arrive and the last to leave, and many of the things in the iceberg above apply just as much to our Church Wardens too. On top of that, they help to keep me grounded when I have wild and wacky ideas, and help me to think outside the box when we do need to do something a bit more radical, or we need to consider changing some of the ways we do things. Our Church Wardens are often the first point of contact for many of the things that go on around us, they are often there coordinating things in the background, things we don't often hear about but are key to keeping the church going. The contributions of our church wardens are invaluable and can't be overstated, so spare a thought for them as they play a vital part in shaping the destiny of our congregations, and work to see our churches flourish for generations to come.

So when you next see your Church Warden – why not say thank you... or even ask them how you might be able to help... without them, I wouldn't be able to do half of the things that I currently do.

Grace and Peace **Revd John**



From the Home Front

Life can be very challenging, you are just going about your everyday business of sleeping, eating, working, loving. But then from nowhere something incredibly threatening bursts into our lives.



Moments before this photograph was taken the birdfeeders around this bush were being visited by over forty birds. They had not noticed what was hovering above them. But as the sparrow hawk dived down the birds rapidly fled. What you cannot see are the 2 or 3 tiny birds hiding in the bush.

The sparrow hawk could see them, but due to the multitude of interwoven branches it could not reach them. The hawk jumped up and down and flapped its wings, but all to no avail. The birds sat tight and made no attempt to leave the protection of the bush. They knew they were safe inside its protecting arch. The hawk made several attempts to frighten the birds into leaving, but they stood firm.



It seems that in life we are often unaware of hovering danger – temptations to sin or to go against our Christian beliefs. But suddenly we can find ourselves caught up in the danger, seemingly with no escape. But if we stand on our faith in God, the belief that He will protect us, then we will be safe.

If you feel threatened – turn to God, ask for His protection, His love and His forgiveness. Your life is safe in His hands

J.A.R.

Praying for the Discernment Process

Please continue to pray for the discernment process for the next Bishop of Durham. Canon Charlie Allen has written a Diocesan Prayer which complements the prayer written by our Children's Council.

We hope that parishes, chaplaincies and schools will particularly use these prayers in worship and at other helpful occasions so that we are joining together across the whole Diocese. Please do write and use your own prayers as well, to add to the diocesan prayers.

Praying for the discernment is a key way in which we can all be involved. We are intending to hold a 24-hour prayer vigil by invitation of the Dean at Durham Cathedral complemented by parish events during the period that the interviews are being held. As the shape of this becomes clearer we will be in touch.

The prayers are:

A Diocesan Vacancy Prayer from our Children's Council Dear God,

As we look for a new Bishop of Durham, we pray that you would help us find someone who can lead our Diocese and help people get closer to God. We pray for a new Bishop who is caring, kind and a good listener. We give thanks for everyone in our Diocese of Durham and pray you will help us to trust in your plan for our future together.

Amen

A Diocesan Vacancy Prayer written by Canon Charlie Allen

Almighty God, as we journey through this vacancy grant us joy in all that has been and hope for all that is to come. Inspired by the deep faith of the northern saints, may we prepare the way well for a new Bishop of Durham, and delight in our call to bear your light from the Tyne to the Tees and from the Dales to the Sea, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Important dates to hold in prayer for the appointment of new Bishop of Durham

Friday 11th October Shortlisting of candidates
26th /27th November Interviews of candidates

Opportunities to Serve

If you would like to help with our Children's and Youth work, with our Music Group, or in any other way, please have a chat with Revd John as we look to grow these and other areas of our ministry.

We are also proposing to run a Children's Club in the Summer Holidays, 6th-9th August and 13th-16th August at St Matthew's Community Centre: If you would like to volunteer to help on one or more days, contact Hayley (hayley@hartlepoolcoh.co.uk) or Revd John.

Central Hartlepool Group Mission Activities

(Help needed: speak to Revd John to find out how you can support us)

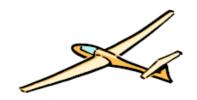
- Stranton Toddlers (Term time only) Tuesday 9:00 am-11:00 am at St Matthew's
- A Bit of God Time Tuesday 1:00 pm-2:30 pm at St Aidan's
- Friday Drop-In Cafe Friday 10:00 am-12:00 pm at St Aidan's

Training Opportunities

If anyone is interested in training for Lay Ministry as Licensed Lay Readers (initial 2 years plus 2 years further training/experience to gain full licence), Authorised Lay Ministers of the Word (ALMOW) (1 year), Lay Chaplaincy (1 year), and Lay Pastoral Ministry (1 year), please contact Revd John's to arrange an initial conversation about this.

Revd Becky Reeve

Rev Becky and husband Patrick will be moving to Hartlepool during August and Revd Becky will be licenced to at St Aidan's and St Columba's Church on Monday 2nd September at 7.00pm. More information will follow.



Wings for Worship

What is it?

A short course to enable lay members of the Church to be able to lead part or all of a service. We will have 6 evenings together. We'll start with the basics of Reading the Bible and Leading the Intercessions, all the way through to leading a service on our own! The course is delivered by members of the diocesan Mission, Discipleship and Ministry Team and local clergy.

Who is it for?

Someone who feels drawn to helping with the public worship of their church and has the formal backing of their incumbent or area dean.

Where is it?

St Luke's Parish Centre, Tunstall Avenue, Hartlepool, TS26 8NF.

When is it?

Thursday evenings from 6.30pm for coffee, starting at 7.00pm till approx. 9.00pm on 12th, 19th, & 26th September and 3rd, 10th and 24th October.

What if I have some questions?

Contact your incumbent or the diocesan Ministry Development Advisor, Alan Bartlett, on alan.bartlett@durham.anglican.org or 07384 214 576

How do I book in?

Please check with your incumbent and then book in with Lizzie Helmsley in Cuthbert House. Lizzie.Hemsley@durham.anglican.org [We have limited spaces so book early !]



Wings for Worship

What we will cover...

Week 1 Preparing for take-off: what is worship and the practicalities of leading parts of a service

Week 2 Getting airborne: the opportunities offered by Common Worship

Week 3 Being the co-pilot: assisting in the running of a whole service

Week 4 Flying solo: leading an entire act of worship

Week 5 Breaking the sound barrier:

ways of handling 'the Word'

Week 6 Communion by Extension:

Communion by Extension is a ministry governed by Bishop's Regulations so particular care is taken about how this is done and who by... we will explain this in the session but permission rests with the Bishop.

Why?

Our hope is to equip a small team of people within our churches who will bring a range of skills and talents to further broaden our styles of worship and create a mixed economy of opportunities for people to be church. Completing this course will give you the confidence to lead worship and improve your skills.

General Election Quiz

- G What **G** did Samson take from Gaza?
- Ε Which **E** the first Garden?
- Ν Which **N** was a prophet at the time of David?
- Ε What **E** is a form of letter?
- R Which **R** is the last book in the Bible?
- Which **A** was Britain's first Christian Martyr? Α
- Which L is Jacob's first wife? L
- Ε In which **E** would you read about the Valley of Bones?
- L Which La book describes the destruction of Jerusalem?
- E In which **E** (Chapter 3) would you find a passage about time?
- Which **C** where people first called in Antioch?
- T What T happened when Jesus Moses and Elijah met?
- Which I is a colour of the rainbow? ı
- 0 Which O comes after this line For there's no other way To be happy in Jesus, But to trust and . .
- N Which N had a son called Ham?

St Matthew's Community Centre Elwick Road



Coffee or Tea, Cake and Company 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Saturday 6th July 2024

A time to spend together, meet new people, make new friends

Visit by one of our CMS partners Sunday 9th June

Owing to the sensitive nature of our Christian Missionary Society partner's work names and places are not mentioned.

Our visitor is an advocate with concern for the Middle East and their role is to support and equip the persecuted church; to allow people to live out faith and worship unimpeded.

They had a background as a criminal lawyer but they were so affected by the persecution of those in the Middle East and North Africa that they wanted to use their skills to help these people.

Through the use of International Diplomacy ways can be found to help those persecuted for their faith, often on trumped up charges, or for apostatising, or for converting to Christianity.

The advocate collects information and supporting documents to send to people of influence, politicians etc. Countries such as USA, Canada, Switzerland, Ireland and Latin America can use their positions of influence. Reports can be forwarded to the United Nations drawing attention to violations and there are many successful results.

Those escaping persecution can be relocated to another city or country. Help can be given in the form of financial funding to set up in a new place, health care and fees, language lessons, food and legal fees.

Our visitor feels that their work has brought them closer to God as they witness the faith of persecuted brothers and sisters in Christ.

Hebrews 13 v3

Remember those who are in prison as in though in prison with them; and those who are ill-treated, since you are in the body.

Please remember in prayer this vital work of CMS to free those persecuted for their faith. Our visitor thanked all in Stranton for their ongoing support of their mission.

J.A.R.

Ward Jackson Cof E Primary Update

Some of our Year 6 children had a brilliant morning at a UV light dodgeball tournament. It was great experience getting to play one of their favourite activities in such a fun way!





Wow! What a fantastic time Blanchland class had at Flamingo Land. They took part in a workshop, saw some amazing animals, had lunch alfresco with peacocks and every single person pushed themselves to experience a rollercoaster of some type pushing themselves out of their comfort zones. Well done Blanchland! #wardjacksonway

Wow! What more can be said about Wingfield and Aurora class in their performance of 'A Midsummer Nights Dream'. The acting, singing and dancing skills on show were all incredible. Well done to all of the children and staff who have worked so hard to bring it all together. I'm certain we have some future West End stars at Ward Jackson! *#wardjacksonway*









Aurora class had a great time at @rspb_saltholme. They took part in so many activities including, investigating minibeasts, looking at living things and their habitats and discovering birds.

The class favourite was the pond dipping and finding different pond minibeasts.





Our final enrichment activities for this school year began today. Since September, the children have experienced a wide range of activities all helping to enhance personal development whilst learning a range of new skills. We are so proud of the children giving new experiences a try and pushing themselves out of their comfort zone. #wardjacksonway







Wow! What a superb effort to commemorate D Day. Just a few snaps of some of our war time fashions today. #wardjacksonway









Congratulations on your Leavers' Service, Year 6. A beautiful service at @durhamcathedral







Oh, we do like to be beside the seaside! Just a few snaps of our brilliant whole school trip to the beach! Great day had by all. We'll all sleep well tonight after all that excitement.

#wardjacksonway







Are you planning a special celebration or party and looking for a venue?

Have you thought about St Matthew's Community Centre?

We have 2 large halls which can accommodate up to 140 persons as well as 1 large and 2 small kitchens for your catering needs.

One hall is even big enough to house a bouncy castle – ideal for children's parties.

We also have our own private car park and some outdoor space if you fancy al fresco fun for your guests.

If you would like further information please call: Trish Playfor (01429 894006) or 07305 550009 during office hours, and we will be happy to help.

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Walking Unhindered

I am sure like me you've had the experience of walking and realising that there's something in your shoe. If like me you don't wear socks with your shoes, it becomes very evident quite quickly! You may try and overlook that there is something in your shoe. You keep walking, trying to ignore it, but your foot starts to become increasingly sore. Soon it is all you can think about, you can no longer enjoy the beautiful creation around you or the lovely company you are with!

The only thing that will help your walk is to stop, sit down, take off your shoe and shake the stone out. When you do this, you look at the very tiny stone and think that stone is so small and yet it felt huge!

As disciples of Jesus we are to follow in his footsteps. We are too live the way that Jesus lived and yet living in this world where there is so much temptation and so many distractions we can easily allow the devil and his little demons to sneak in. The devil wants nothing more to affect and infect our relationship with Jesus. He will do it any which way he can. It's so easy for us to let that happen, without us even realising.

Just like a little stone in our shoe, we can let things come into our lives like unforgiveness, self-loathing, bitterness, doubt, worry, fear. These things take over our 'thought' lives and become bigger and bigger, till it's all we ever think about. We focus on that rather than on God.

The devil has come to steal (your peace), kill (your hope), destroy (your faith), but Jesus has come to bring us life in all its fullness. (John 10:10)

"You must catch the troubling foxes, those sly little foxes that hinder our relationship. For they raid our budding vineyard of love to ruin what I've planted within you. Will you catch them and remove them for me? We will do it together."

Song of Songs 2:15 TPT

Let's stop and take a minute to check our hearts. What little fox or little stone have we let affect or infect our relationship with God? Ask the Holy Spirit to show you what it is that you have allowed in.

Jesus thank you that you want a living relationship with us.

Forgive me for allowing things to come into my life that infect or affect our relationship.

I bring it before you now - self-loathing, critical spirit, unforgiveness, worry......

Thank you that you have forgiven me and I now walk in the freedom that you bring.

Amen

Ang Hall

Gardening News - 'Summer'

At the time of writing (mid-June), Summer seems to be a distant dream, with seemingly endless cold winds, grey clouds, heavy showers and a continuation of the waterlogged gardens and fields of spring. So much for "flaming June". *

The constant rain has resulted in a backlog of gardening jobs and I am still trying to catch up. It is too late now to do the pruning that should have been done in Autumn (when it was too wet) and Spring (still too wet). Consequently, the climbing rose bushes that I couldn't get to because the ground was too waterlogged to walk on look bare and "leggy" (a specialist gardening term) with fewer flowers than usual. The hydrangeas, however, are looking splendid because they thrive on lots of water, so at least someone's happy!

The first major tidy up after winter is always like trying to tame a jungle as the weeds have done their best to take over whilst I have been waiting for the spring plants to die back. The church borders are no exception to this, with a proliferation of all the usual culprits (mostly dandelions and couch grass), not to mention the sea holly that is springing up everywhere!

Of course, gardens are constantly changing – from season to season, year to year, even day to day. Some plants do well, competing with others for space (you win some; you lose some), others fail and get replaced, parts of the garden may be given a new look or purpose. We are guardians of our gardens for only a part of their lifetime; they become part of our life story and we theirs. Some plants are special because they have been gifted or even grown by someone we love. There are several plants in our garden that are permanent reminders of loved ones who are no longer with us and it seems strange to think of others inhabiting our garden long after **we** are gone. I hope they look after it.

Now, on to the wildlife section – the blackbirds are back, following me around when I am gardening, in hope of a juicy worm. We have some tiny fledgling sparrows, which are beautiful. Something keeps knocking the bird feeder off its hook – it's a bit of a mystery. There have been no hedgehog sightings so far, but they have been leaving tell-tale signs (I'll leave you to work it out). Last year, we spotted a real hedgehog sitting right next to our ornamental hedgehog!

Finally, however much I may complain about our British weather (I know, I know!), I try to remember that it is what provides us with not only our very varied garden plant life, but also our beautiful, green countryside, which is something to be truly thankful for.

Pam Stockton

*Another not very useful fact I have discovered, during my usual in-depth research to guard against disinformation: the term 'Flaming June' is in fact the name of a painting of a sleeping woman in a flame-coloured dress produced by Sir Frederic Leighton in 1895 and was not originally intended as a weather reference. So, now you know!

Answers General Election Quiz

GENERAL	What G did Samson take from Gaza? Which E the first Garden? Which N was a prophet at the time of David? What E is a form of letter? Which R is the last book in the Bible? Which A was Britain's first Christian Martyr? Which L is Jacob's first wife?	Gates Eden Nathan Epistle Revelation Alban Leah	
E L	In which E would you read about the Valley of Bones? Which L book describes the destruction of Jerusalem?	Ezekiel	
E	In which E (Chapter 3) would you find a passage about ti	Lamentations ime?	
С	Which C where people first called in Antioch?	Ecclesiastics Christian	
T	What T happened when Jesus Moses and Elijah met?		
1	Which I is a colour of the rainbow?	Transfiguration Indigo	
0	Which O comes after this line For there's no other way To be happy in Jesus, But to trust and . Obey		
N	Which N had a son called Ham?	Noah	





BB May 17th Open Evening



We had a brilliant open night last Friday. Well done to everyone who took part!









Blue Lagoon BBQs

Both the Juniors and Company Lads have enjoyed an evening at the beach including a bonfire, football, adventures and food with the extra added flavour of sand!!

A fantastic experience for all the Lads.





Blue Lagoon BBQ with Company Section is always a popular night $\stackrel{\bullet}{\wedge}$



d 60 Years Service for Mr B d At our annual open night last Friday, Mr B was presented with a commemorative timepiece and photoframe by Revd John for completing an amazing 60 years at the 4th Hartlepool.

Well done Mr B, and thanks for all you do ₩



The battle of St.Matthews





On Monday 10th June we had a NERF gun night and many battles were fought and flags captured. A great time was had by all. Many thanks go to Joseph Wilson who organised the night.

Summer Camp

This year we are staying at Helsey Woods Scout Centre in South Yorkshire and at the moment there are sixteen Lads hoping to attend. Activities, including a visit to the Yorkshire Air Museum, axe throwing and a water day are being planned. This year's devotions will be based on the story of David. Our Camp Commandant is Jack Hanlon who is busy bringing together all the final plans.

St Matthew's - the Big Tidy Up is on June 29th will have taken place after the Signpost has gone to press. We are hoping that with enough help plus the correct gear the weeds will have lost the battle this summer and the paths and carpark will look good into the Autumn.

Other Summer Activities include Church visits, trips out and a Superheroes night for the Anchor Boys.

If you would like to see us in action please visit our Facebook page.

Boys Brigade Breaking News ***Boys Brigade Breaking News



Our Summer Fayre Latest Total £1042.00 - many thanks for everyone's support.

Breaking News *

The Fayre total now stands at a fantastic £1070.00. Once again thanks for your support.

Final Wonderful Marvellous Fantastic Breaking News

The final amount raised from the Summer Fayre was £1106.41 Thanks to all who supported us.



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Andrew Rogers

Recycling – some thoughts on hymn tunes

General William Booth is said to have commented regarding his use of popular music hall songs thus; "Why should the Devil have all the best tunes?" His choice of such tunes, alongside those of Sankey and Moody was reputed to have generated the comment that "they reduced the population of Hell by a million souls", thanks to their hymns.

But it is not just the Salvation Army who have "changed or recycled " tunes for their particular hymns and I have no doubt that discussions, sometimes perhaps somewhat heated, about which tune is "the proper one" for a particular hymn, will continue.

And of course we can add to that in trying to take on board the seeming plethora of new hymns and songs together with tunes of varying styles with which we have been bombarded over the past thirty or forty years.

Once again I am dipping into my library of songs from the Salvation Army stable. It may seem unusual to have a predilection for their music but my varied ancestral background includes, on both sides of my family a strong Salvationist influence, albeit I am a converted Anglican to Methodism!

The piece which I have chosen to share is entitled "The well is deep", with numerous analogous links to scripture and The Water of Life.

The music is a re-arrangement of a 1930s ballad "The Voice in the Old Village Choir" by Harry Woods. This featured Eddy Arnold in a solo vocal version, and also one by Ambrose and his Orchestra, a well known 1930s ensemble.

The Salvation Army version is set to music by Lieut. Col Norman Bearcroft, a prolific S A musician, who at one time was the Music Director of the Canadian Salvation Army Staff Band. The words were written by Albert Orsborn who at one time following the Second World war, was The S A General.

The words.(v 1) (Salvationist Publishing and Supplies)

Life is a journey, long is the road, and when the noontide is high

Souls that are weary, faint neath their load,

Long for the waters and cry.

Chorus

The well is deep and I require, a draught of the water of life,

But none can quench my soul's desire, for a draught of the water of life,

Till one draws near who the cry will heed

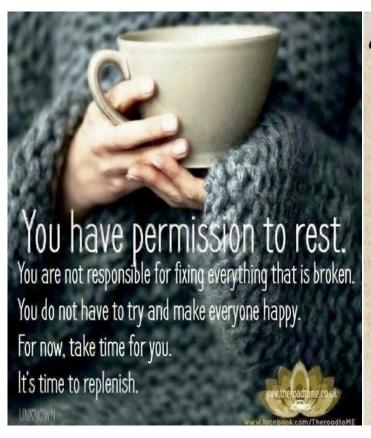
Helper of man in their time of need,

And I, believing, find indeed, that CHRIST is the water of life.

Some may say or feel that the words are somewhat old fashioned and perhaps a little sentimental, but I feel that they convey a particular meaning and a source of strength in times of stress and difficulty.

Why don't you have a look on YouTube for the original Ambrose version, and for a rendition of The Well is Deep a recording by the International Staff Band Singers of the SA.

Jeff Parsons 2024, as recounted to J Cornelius Starbuck.



"Do all the good you can,
By all the means you can,
In all the ways you can,
In all the places you can,
At all the times you can,
To all the people you can,
As long as ever you can."

~John Wesley



Election Prayers

The C of E have released a series of Daily Prayers for the upcoming elections. You can sign up for these at https://www.churchofengland.org/ about/topics/pray-your-part-general-election-2024. I urge you to play your part both in praying for the General Election on July 4th, and in exercising your democratic opportunity to have your say in how our country will be governed over the next few years.



CELEBRATES

HAPPY BIRTHDAY! to

July

Maureen Anderson

Faith Barton

Ronnie Barton

Josh Bruce

Jean Connell

Daniel Grosvenor

Natalie Proffitt

Mary Robinson

Max Spoors

Jenny Tones

Geoffrey Webster

Diana Wanduragala



Wedding Anniversary July

Ken & Sylvia Shepherd Andrew & Elspeth Craig Bill & Diane Greenwood Faith & Adam Barton Malinee & Aga



If you have something to celebrate we would love to share it - email admin@stranton-church.org.uk or phone 894006.

All entries to be in by the 16th of the month.

Dates for the Diary

<u>July</u>

Sat 6 th	Cuppa, Cake & Company, St Matthew's CC	2.00-4.00pm
Sat 6 th	St Luke's Summer Fayre	2.00-4.00pm
Mon 8 th	Blue Rose Summer Concert at St Aidan's	10.30-12noon
Sat 13 th	Hartlepool Ladies Choir Concert, Stranton	7.00pm
	(Please see notice sheet for more details)	•

Looking Ahead into September

Sun 1 st	Joint Service at St Aidan's for their patronal service	10.45am
Mon 2 nd	Rev Becky Reeve's Licencing in St Aidan's	7.00pm
Fri 20 th	Curry Night St Luke's - tickets will be available from I	ate August.
Sun 29 th	Harvest Festival at Stranton	11.00am



Who's Who

Church Office

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Arncliffe Gardens TS26 9JF

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Web Site: www.stranton-church.org.uk

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