

# Nativity News



## March 2020





HARVEST THANKSGIVING AT NATIVITY — DECORATIONS BY NATIVITY FLOWER GUILD

#### **HARVEST PRAYER**

God of Harvest, Gardener Supreme, You place us at the centre, feed us, equip us and, having provided for us, look for a different harvest, a

fruitfulness of lives in service for you, and others. God of harvest, feed us, prune us, harvest us, that our lives might bring glory to you.





Jesus told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest." Luke 10:2

ISSUE 14 / MAR 2020

#### **EDITORIAL**

#### TO EVERYTHING THERE IS A SEASON

#### **ROSE FRANCIS**



As we give thanks to God for the generous harvest He has provided for us, we prepare for the colder season ahead. We turn our eyes from the bounty of creation and walk together through Lent, in the Shadow of the Cross, and to Jesus' supreme sacrifice for us on Good Friday.

Change in our lives is inevitable; nothing on earth stays the same. Here at Nativity we are in a season of change as we face the need to strengthen our church to withstand future earthquakes. There is also discussion about modernizing the hall and adding another building alongside our church for future community outreach. Potential plans can be viewed in the hall. Let us all consider prayerfully Nativity's role in years to come. *There is a time to demolish, and a time to rebuild. (Ecclesiastes 3:3)* 

We are also bidding farewell to Kaye and Richard Dyer, who have been leading us these last twelve months while we seek a new vicar. They have guided, encouraged and helped us with cheerfulness and wisdom. Richard and Kay have moved us forward and offered exciting and bold teaching. They have challenged us to think deeply on Scripture and have pushed us out of our comfort zone to be participants rather than spectators in our worship, work and witness for our Lord. (Many elderly, creaking joints joined in the children's energetic action songs of Scripture in the Family Services!) We have appreciated Richard's guitar-lead teaching. At this time of change, Richard and Kaye, may God continue to bless you both as you serve Him in the work He has prepared for you. God doesn't have a 'retirement plan,' we serve Him until He calls us home! God sets the time for finding and the time for losing. (Ecc. 3:6)

Another change happening within our church is the replacement of our beautiful old organ, (due to its age and the expensive repairs needed) with a fine modern one. There will be sadness and nostalgia among some who loved the glorious richness of the pipes. But we understand that the new organ is similar to the one that fills Nelson Cathedral with magnificent tones. May our faithful organists also enjoy the challenge of glorifying God through music on the new organ.

He sets the time for sorrow and the time for joy, the time for mourning and the time for dancing. (Ecc. 3:4)

Change is not always welcome. We know that in an instant, lives can change for ever. We think of the trauma and destruction of earthquakes and volcano, floods and fires, which have rocked our country in recent years. We grieve with our Muslim community following the terror attacks on their Mosques last March. But we also see how such disasters bring courage, compassion and generosity to our society as we respond to such tragedies. And, as Anzac Day is commemorated in April, we recall the devastation of wars and loss of life and limb suffered. Such 'changes' we dread; but let us remember that God is on His throne, and we are safe in His care at all times and in all places. He changes not, and He has commanded us to 'fear not.' This is written 366 times in our Bible; one for every day of the year, and one to spare!

We have included a story of hope as we think of our changing world. Coventry Cathedral was destroyed by bombs in WW2 and a new cathedral has been built alongside it to the glory of God and as a testimony of hope, peace, forgiveness and love. Our God is the one constant in our shifting lives and uncertain times. He changes not, His standards and instructions are for all time. And we know that He can bring good things out of whatever mankind plans with evil intent.

There is a time for breaking and a time for mending; a time for war and a time for peace (Ecc. 3:7-8)

As we focus on the Cross, the international symbol of our faith, may we renew our minds, and open them to the possibilities which change could bring. Let us seek God's wisdom in moving forward.

'Easter Blessings' to you all, from the Nativity News Team: Rose Francis, Heather Murchison, Miriam Taylor



#### A MESSAGE FROM RICHARD DYER

As I write this I am aware that in a few weeks two things will happen, one is Easter – the great celebration of the church and upon which our faith depends for if there was no resurrection our faith comes crashing down. If there is any proof of the truth of Jesus it lies in the fact that his resurrection has never been disproved, Yes Jesus is very much alive and the more we listen to him and talk with him the more certain this truth becomes.

The second event is my last Sunday with you as Priest in Charge is 19 April. Sadly we don't yet know who will be your next vicar/priest-in

charge but I am fully confident in your staff team and wardens to be able to coordinate and run the parish along with any diocesan assistance that they may be able to provide. So, in one sense, this is goodbye from me, but we will still be around the corner. Kaye will continue to be available, especially to assist with the family services and I will be about.

What does one say when goodbye is coming? We read in Acts: And now I entrust you to God and the message of his grace that is able to build you up and give you an inheritance with all those he has set apart for himself." Acts 20:32 (NLT)

Paul was saying goodbye to his friends, the leaders of the church in Ephesus. He was on his way to Jerusalem, not knowing what was ahead, but conscious of the fact that he would never see these Ephesian believers again (Acts 20:25). How would they fare? Would they make it without him? This must have made it very difficult for Paul to trust them into God's care and get on that boat! However, he was able to say, "And now I entrust you to God and the message of his grace."

How do you trust God when it's time to say goodbye? How do you move on to another ministry and pass the baton to other leaders who you feel are not quite ready? The secret is to realize that you are trusting God and his grace, not any earthly man or woman, to keep and watch over these precious people! They are safe in his care. When you know that it is time to say goodbye, put your work, your family, your church family, and/or your parents into God's safekeeping. Pray that his grace will be their keeper and sustainer while you are away. Trust God to do the rest.

Nativity is a great church and you are an awesome team of people. Trust the call God has placed on each of

your lives, pursue the dreams God has placed within you. It is together you can achieve great things for God's kingdom. Believe this because it is true.

So have a great Easter, if you are travelling and spending time with family – enjoy and travel safely. Be mindful of Covid-19 and the recommended personal care but not anxious, keep informed but don't over think it or be overwhelmed by the media reports. (Guidelines from the Ministry of Health website: <a href="https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus">https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus</a>. Or you can ring the Covid-19 information phone 0800 358 545



FROM NATIVITY FAMILY!!





#### THE THREE TREES - A modern day parable

Once upon a mountaintop, three trees dreamed of what they wanted to become when they grew up.

"I want to hold treasure," the first tree said. "I will be the most beautiful treasure chest in the whole world!"

"I want to be a strong sailing ship," the second tree said. "I will be the strongest ship in the world"

"I don't want to leave this mountain-top at all," the third tree said. "I want to grow so tall that when people look at me they will raise their eyes to heaven and think of God. I will be the tallest tree in the world!"

One day three woodcutters climbed the mountain. With a swoop of the first man's axe, the first tree fell.

With a swish of the second man's axe, the second tree fell.

With a slash of the third man's axe, the third tree fell.

The first tree rejoiced when the woodcutter brought him to the carpenter's shop, but the busy carpenter was not thinking about treasure chests. Instead his work-worn hands fashioned the tree into a feed box for animals.

The second tree smiled when the woodcutter took him to a shipyard, but no mighty sailing ships were built that day. Instead the once strong tree was made into a simple fishing boat.

The third tree was confused when the woodcutter cut her into strong beams and left her in a lumberyard. "What happened?" the once-tall tree wondered. "All I ever wanted to do was to point to God."

Many, many days and nights passed. The trees nearly forgot their dreams. But one night golden starlight poured over the first tree as a young woman placed her new-born baby in the feed box. And suddenly the first tree knew he was holding the greatest treasure in the world.

One evening a tired traveller and his friends crowded into an old fishing boat. When a storm arose, the second tree shuddered. But when the traveller stretched out his hand, and said, "Peace," the storm stopped. And suddenly the second tree knew he was carrying the King of heaven and earth.

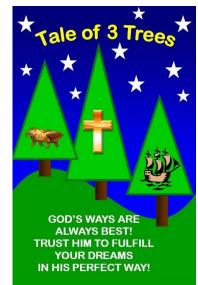
On Friday morning, the third tree was startled when her beams were yanked from the woodpile. She shivered when she was dragged through an angry crowd. She shuddered when soldiers nailed a man's hands to her. She felt ugly and harsh and cruel.

But on Sunday morning when the sun rose and the earth trembled with joy beneath her, the third tree knew God's love had changed everything.

It had made the first tree beautiful. It had made the second tree strong.

And every time people thought of the third tree, they would think of God. That was better than being the tallest tree in the world.

A Traditional Folktale retold by Angela Elwell Hunt



#### RESURRECTION THROUGH SACRIFICE

Out of brokenness and loss came new harmony and new life!

On November 14, 1940 on a clear starry night with a bright 'bombers moon', 440 bombers dropped 500 tons of high explosive and more than 40,000 fire-bombs on the industrial city of Coventry in England. The beautiful cathedral which was built in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries was burnt to the ground with just skeleton walls standing, and glassless window frames.





From the smouldering ruins three fourteenth century handmade nails were picked up and two charred oak beams. These were fashioned into two of the most famous crosses in the world today.

The Cross of Nails Ministry was born out of these ruins. It has an international network of partners, each committed to a shared ministry of love, prayer and reconciliation.



The Charred Cross stands upon an altar of stones in the cathedral ruins. On the wall behind are written two words – FATHER FORGIVE.

To walk through the now peaceful ruins with its flower beds of red geraniums and reflect on war and peace, hatred and love, and God's forgiveness and reconciliation is a truly moving experience.

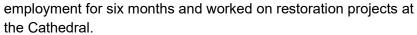
But the ruins of Coventry are only half the story. The rebirth of the new cathedral that stands alongside the old has been described as a modern day parable. Its building after the war demonstrated that **after death comes resurrection**.

Countries from all over the world contributed in a variety of ways to the building of a magnificent modern day cathedral, so it became an international effort symbolizing unity. Everything about the cathedral speaks of love and the need for forgiveness.



On entering the Cathedral one is immediately challenged by the figure of Christ in Glory, on a huge tapestry (23 x12 metres, and weighing over one tonne!), designed by English artist, Graham Sutherland, and woven by French weavers using a 500 year old loom.

Gifts arrived from near and far, such as: A black ebony crucifix from Tanganyika; a three ton boulder from Bethlehem, which is the cathedral baptismal font; from Sweden the marble mosaic floor of the Chapel of Unity; from Germany generous gifts towards windows in the Chapel of Unity. The Bishop of Berlin also opened the International Centre attached to the Cathedral which was furnished from an anonymous donor in Berlin who had lost all his family in an air raid on Berlin. In 1961-62 a team of young Christians from Germany under the title 'Action Reconciliation' gave up their paid



A sculpture – Christ Crucified - fashioned from a crashed motor car was given from USA; a reminder that daily crucifixions of human by human, like those in war, can only be redeemed by love.



A vast wall of clear glass panels was engraved with heavenly figures of angels, saints, apostles and prophets, by New Zealander, John Hutton.

\*\*Miriam Taylor\*\*

#### 'SOUND' BREAKING NEWS!

#### A NEW ORGAN FOR NATIVITY



Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet,
praise him with the harp and lyre,
praise him with timbrel and dancing,
praise him with the strings and pipe,
praise him with the clash of cymbals,
praise him with resounding cymbals.
Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Psalm 150

A new organ with similar features to the one at the Nelson Cathedral will soon be installed at Nativity.

Much research has been carried out and advice sought on the new electronic organs that are replacing aging pipe organs throughout New Zealand. The present organ requires maintenance and constant retuning. A major overhaul costing many thousands of dollars is on the horizon. The organ to be installed became available in Sydney at very short notice and at a very favourable price. It is brand new and carries a ten-year warranty with no annual tuning costs. It is moveable and so does not pose a problem when there are future changes to the building.

It will enable the future Nativity Church to be used by local music and choral groups, visiting musicians and for Civic events; something a future parish must address – the multiple use of buildings.

The new organ is a MAKIN WINDERMERE, three manual. The speaker cabinets, (now installed where the original organ was originally placed) have been made and placed by voluntary effort and the materials by donation. Sound checks by the organ supplier indicated an exciting possibility for future congregational and community use.



Because they

While this project has come as startling news to many be assured it has been very well considered and researched, providing a positive basis for the required repairs and modifications to parish buildings and an exciting use of those buildings for community outreach. Placement of the new organ is expected to be only weeks away. *Alistair Elliot* 



THE CHURCH ORGANIST



Thy cant

Skeletons Play Church Music

#### MISSION FOCUS - BEVERLEY CROSS AND WILLIAM OFF ON ANOTHER ADVENTURE

In November 2016 Nativity News reported on Beverley's adventure to India with the Leprosy Mission, accompanied by Teddy Bear William. As a result of that journey Beverley wrote a book, 'William's Story', to raise awareness of leprosy and to encourage children to have a dream that God will use them as part of his plan, as Beverley did when she was young.

Three years later, in November 2019 Beverley and William went on another adventure to support the Leprosy mission – this time to Nepal.









Beverley and William visited Anandaban Hospital, around 16 km from Kathmandu city, where a holistic approach is taken to cure and care for people affected by leprosy.

Tucked away in the forest - Anandaban is Nepali for "forest of joy" - the hospital operates as a haven of peace and tranquility for people recovering from leprosy and its complications.

The Leprosy Mission New Zealand is a Christian development organization that works with leprosy-affected families and their communities.

Established in 1912, it is one of the oldest and most trusted charities in New Zealand.

Following Jesus Christ, The Leprosy Mission strives to break the chains of leprosy, empowering people to attain healing, dignity and life in all its fullness.

Its aim is to eradicate leprosy from the face of the earth.





theWAYof BLESSING

During Lent, a group of Nativity women have gathered on Thursday evenings, enriching our lives with God's Word. We have studied how God has poured out His blessing on us. But we are not to hold on to that blessing selfishly, like stagnant water. We are to be channels through which God's blessings flow as we become a people of blessing. God breaking into our lives is not a one-time event. It is a call to live differently, because God has broken into time and space, through Jesus. He has introduced His reign of power into our everyday lives and communities.

Joe Keighley, Vicar of Wairau Valley Parish, introduced each

session. We would then watch Roy Godwin's video from the Ffald y-Brenin Christian Retreat Centre in Wales. (Chapel pictured on right). This teaching series, complete with workbook, is based on Roy's book, 'THE WAY OF BLESSING.' It begins in Genesis with God speaking blessings over all His creations. It then moves through Scripture, revealing how parents bless their children. By the book of Numbers, God commissions Moses to declare blessings over the people.

Christians are not mere purveyors of ideas - we are also to be bringers of life. God equips us to be carriers of His love (Col 1 v 20) as He longs to reconcile all

things to Himself. As a people of blessing, we are part of a rich tapestry of rich colours, diverse patterns and different threads based on God's plan for our lives. His generosity and activity is only limited by our imagination and faith. As we honour God in obedience, and share his love, part of the blessing remains with us.

Post Script: The 'Welsh Connection.' I have spent much time in Wales (the land of many great Christian Revivals) where my late husband was born and raised. One of my sons and my eldest granddaughter have recently studied at The Bible College of Wales which is now run by their Cornerstone Christian Fellowship in Singapore. Another granddaughter is currently studying in BC Wales also.

May we pray for a mighty move of God here in New Zealand as we become channels of God's blessings to the least, the last and the lost.

\*Rose Francis\*\*





Every Sunday, almost without fail, Ken and Marion Preston can be seen arriving at the 8.00am service carrying a little fold-up table. The big trolley is rolled down from the kitchen and immediately the service concludes Ken and Marion are in business; the small table is set up with tempting biscuits and coffees and teas are served to the thirsty and hungry, who have come to partake of Holy Communion having fasted from breakfast. Ken and Marion are so familiar with people's preferences that they have mine poured and waiting for me before I even get there!

Theirs is one of the many important ministries carried out at Nativity. This time after the service, is a time not only for eating and drinking,

but for chatting with friends we have usually not seen all week. It is a time for meeting new members and visitors to Nativity. Thank you Marion and Ken for blessing us. You are truly appreciated!

Miriam Taylor



#### LET'S MAKE AN EASTER GARDEN

Children grow in faith with 'hands on' activities. Every Christmas, I've helped my four children create a Nativity Scene with dolls decked out as shepherds, kings and the holy family. They placed their toy animals around a cardboard box laid on its side and transformed into a manger. The doll chosen to represent baby Jesus was tenderly placed in a feeding trough made of sticks tied together and filled with dry grass. My 11 grandchildren have also participated in these Christmas displays, and are free to tell out the story, moving props around the Nativity

Likewise, we enrich our journey through Holy Week by creating an Easter Garden. It costs nothing, but lifts Jesus high as we focus on His sacrifice, His love, His death and resurrection. Move over, Easter bunny and chocolate eggs. This is Jesus victory we're celebrating!

A simple tray is a good base for the garden, and several small plastic planter pots. One can hold a small fern-like plant, one filled with soil or stones will represent Calvary Hill. The third, laid on its side, represents the tomb in which Jesus was laid. Little boxes can be used instead of pots. Sacking, crumpled paper, or paint can enhance the scene. Stones or bark chips can fill the tray. Find suitable sticks and bind them into 3 simple crosses. 'Plant' these on the 'Calvary Hill' pot on Good Friday and make a 'crown of thorns' by plaiting flexible branches into a circular shape and sticking small sharp twigs into the plaiting. Hook this over Jesus' central cross.



On Saturday, find a smooth rounded stone large enough to cover the 'tomb' entrance.

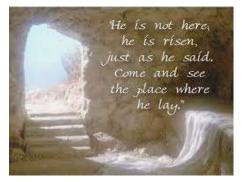
On Easter morning, roll back the stone to reveal a winding cloth in an empty tomb. (a bandage or tissue rolled around a finger is suitable.) Write with a marking pen on the rolled away stone "HE IS RISEN!

Each day, as you gather around the garden, read the scriptures pertaining to that day. Give thanks, and each find some simple flowers to decorate the garden as we rejoice at Jesus' victory.



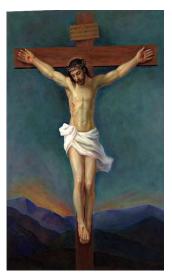
Rosemary Francis







THE GARDEN TOMB IN JERUSALEM



#### THE CROSS - THE WORLDWIDE SYMBOL OF CHRISTIANITY

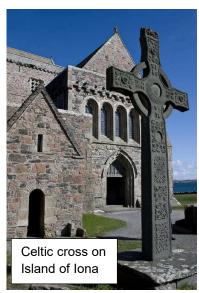
Jesus' death on the cross was central to his mission. He was totally resolved to do his Father's will and finish his Father's work. He said:

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world but to save the world through him". John 3:16-17

Peter says, "Christ died for our sins once and for all – the righteous for the unrighteous – to bring us to God." 1 Peter 3:18

The cross symbolizes love, sacrifice, forgiveness and reconciliation. It reminds the world of God's rescue mission for humanity; for each individual.

#### MANY DIFFERENT CROSSES - SAME MESSAGE





Palm Cross at Coptic Monastery Church in Egyptian desert, across the Nile from Luxor City.





Painted Cross El Salvador



Comfort Cross



Anglican Church in Aotearoa



A Deacon from Ethiopian Orthodox Church in Christchurch.

#### THE FARMER AND HIS BAMBOO - Rose Francis

The farmer was sad to see all his plants were wilting away down on the terraces. Their tender green shoots were burnt and dry, leaves crackling and brown. No rain had fallen in a long season. The farmer leaned wearily on the door of his humble home and looked up at his pride and joy. It was his beautiful, lush giant bamboo which stretched long wavy leaves high above his house.

"O noble Bamboo," he whispered. "You are my prized possession. Do you trust me with your life? "The great bamboo bowed his mane of brilliant, sharp green leaves, and rustled his assent. "O noble Bamboo, if I cut you down would you still trust me?"

The majestic plant quivered with fearful anticipation, so the farmer, gently stroking his smooth creamy-green shafts went on hesitantly "You are the King of all plants. But a loyal king will lay down his life for his people. Are you willing to sacrifice yourself, my royal Bamboo?" The great plant creaked as he slowly nodded his green feathery crown.

"After I cut you down, my mighty Bamboo, I am going to slice you in two."

Pain! thought Bamboo in panic. Pride will be sliced down, for I will be humbled, broken and very ugly. "When you are sliced in two, I must remove all your lovely leaves, for they will hinder my plans for you. This is a sacrifice for my garden – your kingdom", muttered the farmer sadly.

Stripped naked of his verdant costume, exposed to the indignity of his heart being sliced open. Was his master's trust worth so much agony? wondered the anxious Bamboo clump.

"You have served me well in my lifetime, oh lovely Bamboo." The farmer answered his unspoken feelings. "Of all the plants in the garden, you grew so fast, so tall and strong. Your stalks have provided my house supports, my furniture, my utensils. Your leafy green umbrella has sheltered my home from the burning sun's rays and fierce storms. Your beauty is unmistakeable. But, to me, as you fall in the sacrifice of service- though you be stripped and hewn - I will see in you an unmatched beauty of love."

Thus saying, the farmer took his sharp instrument and hacked down stem after stem of his beloved, quivering bamboo. As each enormous cane came crashing down, the echo sounded a death knell way down the valley. Finally, only a great, forlorn clump of stubble remained, oozing it's life's liquid.

Next, the farmer sharpened his blade and stripped the leaves off each giant cane. He sliced each long, hollow stem down the middle and joined them end to end. From the mountain top down to the valley below, his lovely bamboo stretched straight and smooth, raw and open to his master's needs. As the last pieces were lovingly fastened, lashed on with woven vines, the master spoke to his broken, obedient bamboo.

"O mighty one – the beauty I see in you is obedience, service, submission and sacrifice. Now the abundant water high on our mountain - the water that nourished your roots - can be channelled down your wounded, hollow heart." So a stream of living water flowed through the first bamboo channel sunk in the well. It coursed freely down the split bamboo pipe, soothing and cool and healing for the damaged bamboo.

Far below, as the fields sprouted forth with fresh greenery, the old bamboo was content. In service he gave up his beauty and was willing to lose his life. His personal loss was the master's gain. His sacrifice brought food to the hungry and life-giving water to the thirsty. And, slowly, the cut stalks were replaced by new growth as fresh leaves and tender young canes sprouted forth from the old root and stubble. That glorious green bamboo symbolises the true meaning of Easter – the spirit of sacrificial giving.

"There is hope for a plant that is cut down. It can come back to life and sprout, even though its roots grow old and its stump dies in the ground. With water it will sprout like a young plant". (Job 14, v 7-9)



### THE CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY, 76 ALFRED STREET BLENHEIM

Office: PHONE 03-5783909 Email: info@nativity.org.nz Website: www.nativity.org.nz

#### **REGULAR SUNDAY SERVICES:**

8.00 AM - Traditional Eucharist Service 10.00 AM - Worship Service with children exiting to programmes FAMILY SERVICE - First Sunday of month 5.30 PM - Canvas - Informal Service in hall - All Age/Youth

THURSDAY 10am - Eucharist Service in Barnies FRIDAY 9.30 AM - TUNES FOR TOTS - in recess

#### CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EASTER SERVICES AND OTHER EVENTS

March 23<sup>rd</sup> Mon Nativity A.G.M. Church 7pm 28<sup>th</sup> Sat Men's Breakfast The Foundry 8am APRIL

8am & 10am 5th Sun Bishop Steve **Palm Sunday CANVAS Shared Meal** Church grounds 5:30pm 9<sup>th</sup> Thurs Tenebrae Service Church 7pm

10<sup>th</sup> Fri TBC. **Good Friday** 

12<sup>th</sup> Sun **Easter Sunday** Celebration services 8am & 10am

MAY 30<sup>th</sup> Sat Prayer Breakfast Lounge 8am

JUNE 20th Sat Fund Raising Dinner with entertainment

Church Hall

6pm Seniors' Luncheon Church Hall Noon Please note all events are subject to change due to extra precautions being taken in light of COVID-19. Please watch out for updates!





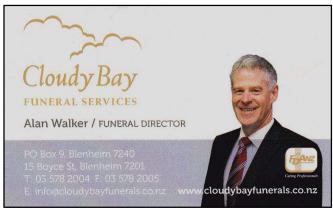
27<sup>th</sup> Sat

## Proud to be associated with the Church of the Nativity

Caring for the Marlborough community for generations.

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