Zion Ev. Lutheran Church
Prairie Whispers Newsletter

November 2026
Volume 6, Issue 11



Those connected to Christ live a life of real repentance

MVL, after 40+ years of operating, is now, believe it or not, welcoming its third generation of students. So, let me introduce you to the imaginary Charger Family of Courtland, MN. The first Charger at MVL was Joe Charger, class of '83. The yearbook shows Joe in his classic '80s mullet and moustache, wearing his Levi's acid-washed jeans and his letterman's jacket. The school is so small in those days, that Joe is in everything – from Chargaliers to Football. In many pictures there a girl on Joe's arm, Jill, who will one day be his wife of 40 years, but now is pretty girl from St. James who must have burned a hole in the ozone layer with the amount of hairspray she used to hold up those bangs.

Curiosity gets the best of you, so now you grab the 2006 yearbook to check out Joe's and Jill's son – Jim. You can hardly believe these two are father and son. Jim's class photo shows him in all is Goth glory. But there is something else. In the few pictures that Jim is in, he seems to glower and groan with anger and disappointment.

Jim graduates, but almost as soon as he tossed his mortarboard in the air, he tossed off the lessons he learned here. Sadly, now Jim Charger lives in a 8 X10 cell St. Cloud for a 5-10 stretch for armed robbe**ry.**

Now it's 2026, and John Charger is here at MVL, the son of Jim and the grandson of Joe, the class of 2030. John sees his grandfather's life and his father's life, and chooses wisely. He listens to the Word of God. He is involved, and he has plenty of friends, and even a serious girlfriend. He is excited to go to college, but he soaks up every wonderful minute of his time at MVL. Soon it's his day to walk across the stage and receive his diploma. The future looks bright.

But then the sky seems to fall on him. He finds his college campus that is downright hostile to the faith he loves. Many of his MVL friends go the way of his father Jim. He longtime girlfriend breaks up with him for someone with more popularity and money. Then Grandpa Joe dies. Worse, Grandpa Joe never changed his will and Jim, has taken a large portion of the estate and now is squandering it.

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Daylight Savings Time

It was a big topic in the news: do we make Daylight Savings Time permanent or not… The discussion continues each year, but we are still on the current schedule, so remember to turn your clocks back one hour on October 31 and enjoy your extra hour of sleep!



Thanksgiving Services

All are invited to the special Thanksgiving services planned for two locations.

Hosting Thanksgiving at your home? Bring your already arrived guests to Penn Church on Thanksgiving Eve, November 25 at 7 pm. The church is located at 16104 20th ST, Brownton, MN.

At 9 am on November 26, will be the Zion Thanksgiving Service with Choir and Handbells performing.

For any questions, contact Pastor Meitner.

Grandma Jill, desperately begs John to come home, or she is going to lose the farm. And one day, when the rain has yet again delayed a harvest he needs to get in, in order to stay ahead of the bank, he calls you, a classmate, to meet him at the Crowbar in Courtland.

There, over a drink and mozzarella sticks, he pours out his guts, "It's just not fair! How could Grandpa Joe be so stupid not to catch this? Why did I have to have such a worthless father who turns everything he touches into garbage? Where in the world is God, this God who is supposed to love and care for me? All I ever seem to get from him is stuck with the bill of my dad's wickedness and my grandpa's foolishness!"

Now I ask you, if you are the one talking to John Charger, "What are you going to say to him?" It would be easy to join him, wouldn't it? Since time in memoriam, young people blame the generation that came before them for the world they have inherited. This type of complaining is addictive, because it makes us feel righteous as innocent victims of circumstances beyond our control. It is the complaining that the Children of Israel did in Babylon, after being carted off into exile.

There is only one problem: Its dead wrong! The Lord, through his prophet Ezekiel, asks each individual who complains at their lot in life: Is it my way that is not fair? Is it not your ways that are not fair? I graduated from West Lutheran High School 32 years ago, and I noticed almost immediately that my life was getting harder and more complicated daily. I blamed my dad and mom, I blamed my teachers, I even got political and blamed the state and federal leaders of my country. But, then God brought me to St. Paul's in North Mankato, and good old Pastor Liggett set me right when he said, "If God feels distant in your life, guess who moved? And when you have answered that question, now answer this one: Guess who is now moving heaven and earth to get you back?"

Inside of all of you is a little, complaining, voice that is longing to take control of your heart and your mind. It is called the sinful flesh. And if you live by complaints and scapegoating others, soon, your flesh is going to get its wish. It will blind you to YOUR sin with the sins of others. It will justify your sins with the sins of others. Well, Christ Jesus loves you too much for that. So each day Christ sends you the cross to pull you back on that narrow path that leads to salvation, the path of repentance that kills that little voice each day, and allows the new you, the you created in Christ's own image at baptism, to rise and live before God.

It is a painful path. It may reduce you to rags. It may leave you in a position where you, like the prodigal son, are starving to death and longing to eat what the pigs are eating. But if we take it, if we accept it what shall we find at the end of this road of is not mocking laughter, or an endless case of humiliating "How could you" or "I told you so," but this : a father who sees us while we are still far off, rushes to us, wraps his arms around us, kisses us and declares, 'rejoice with me, this son of mine who was dead is now alive again."

The generations that came before us are to neither be glorified with false nostalgia nor blamed as the source of all the trouble I have. That is the way

of the world. The way of repentance teaches me to stand before God's Word and accept whatever comes from his hand, gratefully knowing that in love, he is leading me to salvation.

A reading from Ezekiel 18:25-32: *But you say, "The Lord's way is not fair." Listen now, house of Israel. Is it my way that is not fair? Is it not your ways that are not fair? If a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and practices unrighteousness, he will die because of it. Because of the unrighteousness that he has practiced, he will die. But if a wicked man turns from his wickedness that he has done and practices justice and righteousness, he will preserve his life. Because he has seen and turned away from all the rebellious acts that he had committed, he will surely live, and he will not die. But the house of Israel says, "The Lord's way is not fair." Is it really my ways that are not fair, O house of Israel? Is it not your ways that are not fair? Therefore, I will judge each one of you according to his ways, O house of Israel, declares the Lord God. Repent and turn away from all your rebellious acts, so that you will not set out a stumbling block that makes you guilty. Throw off from yourselves all your rebellious actions by which you have rebelled, and obtain a new heart and a new spirit for yourselves. Why should you die, O house of Israel? For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies, declares the Lord God. So repent and live!*

Amen.

Prairie Lutheran School update

"I am the vine; you are the branches; if you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." — John 15:5

CONNECTED TO CHRIST

Autumn has surely been beautiful! We have been blessed with some amazing days to enjoy! October has been a very busy month! We have many wonderful things happening at PLS!

Let's start off with the front door renovations at both sites! The Fairfax Site not only had sewer systems fixed, but new front doors replaced. The Gibbon Site also had the doors replaced which meant that the stained glass window needed to be removed and repaired. The window was in good shape, but some leading needed repair from time, and there was also some damage to the child's foot that is being fixed after many (about six) decades. If you haven't seen the videos of the remodels, go to the PLS Facebook page and see the workers in action!

PLS also is very thankful for a very generous donation of a vehicle. The van to transport meals from Fairfax to Gibbon decided it had done its duty and just quit working. It was more expensive to fix than the van was worth. We now have a wonderful vehicle that will help us out for years to come. Thank you!

Pork Chop Fundraiser

God's Treasures Childcare Learning Center is again sponsoring the ever popular Pork Chop Fundraiser on Sunday, November 8 from 11 am to 12:30 pm in the Fellowship Hall of Zion.

Menu includes Bone-In Grilled Pork Chops, Scalloped Potatoes, Baked Beans, Coleslaw, Rye Bread, Cake and Beverages.

Prices are $15 per person with 5 and under free. All are invited!

Greeters Needed

Called the most fun volunteer job by one parishioner, Zion church has a list of volunteers that assist people coming to church by opening doors, having a smiling face and generally making people feel welcome each Sunday and holidays.

If this sounds like something you would enjoy doing, with the side benefit from getting to know people better and welcoming visitors, contact Louise in the office. She is putting together the Greeters List for 2027. Current volunteers have around 10 times per year they serve. The more people we have, the merrier!

MVL Vets Day Program

All are invited to MVL annual Veteran's Day Recognition Program, Wed., Nov. 4 at the fieldhouse at 10 am.

A complete breakfast for veterans and their guest will be at 8:30 in the Fine Arts Center. RSVP at **mvl.org** or call 507-354-6851.

We thank you for your service!

PTF Meeting

The Parent-Teacher-Friends of Prairie Lutheran School will be holding their quarterly meeting in the Zion Fellowship Hall on Thursday, November 5 from 6-8 pm. All are invited to attend and support our school.

Sermon Copies

Several copies of Pastor's sermon is available on the white table in the Narthex on Sunday mornings.

He does not promise to follow it word by word, but the general meaning that he preaches can be found in the copy.

Volley ball and soccer seasons have come to an end. Each of the teams competed heard against their opponents, and there were many successes during their season. The kids played together well as a team and represented our congregations, communities and school well.

Alumni represented PLS well at GFW's and MVL's Homecomings. Savannah Sweeley was MVL's homecoming queen and Avery Hahn was part of the MVL court, Chloe Hendricks, and Jacob Kramer were part of the homecoming court for GFW. Congratulations to all!

NWEA testing was completed by students in grades 3 - 8.The students completed the nationally standardized test in Reading and Math. The students worked to do their best. These tests will give the teachers data to help guide their teaching.

October also hosted fire prevention week. The Gibbon Fire Department came to school and spent time talking to the students about the dangers of charging electronics. 4th grade students were able to race to put on all the firefighter's gear. This is always fun for the students, but they find out very quickly that the gear is heavy and hot! The fire department also brought fire trucks and rescue vehicles to the school for the students to enjoy loo

king at and climbing on. Earlier in the week, PreK and Kindergarten students were able to walk to the firebarn and tour the building. Having the fire department come to visit is always enjoyed and appreciated!

Teacher convention was held on October 15-16 at St. Croix Lutheran. The teachers enjoyed their time being able to attend chapel and a variety of workshops. It is always nice to get together with teachers from other schools and learn from one another.

Students in grades K - 4 were able to enjoy a field trip to Fall Harvest Orchard in Delano. There were many activities for the kids to enjoy! The three hours of being outdoors and activities flew by quickly, and we were definitely tired on the trip home.

Students in grades 5 - 8 had a field trip to Jeffers Petroglyphs and Pipestone National Monument. The students were able to learn about some history of the Indigenous People of Minnesota.

PLS Gibbon Site has a great abundance of walnuts!! The trees are full and they have been dropping like crazy! The students have been very helpful in cleaning them up! The winter sleds and shovels were put to use! Teachers raked the walnuts into piles and the students used the shovel to load up the sleds and drag them across the back road to the ditch. Clean-up will continue for a few more weeks.

It is hard to believe, but the end of the quarter is coming up quickly! Parent teacher conferences are coming up on November 11 and 12.

All of the activities and learning is God given. We have been blessed in so many ways!

Submitted by Ardie Seehafer, 3 & 4 Grade Teacher, Gibbon Campus

God's Treasures Report

Director's Report – October 8, 2026

We finally have a plan for the sink drain repair in the preschool transition room. The work is scheduled for October 15 during our planned two-day closure. A grant we have already received will cover about 50% of the $3,800 cost. We have also submitted two additional grant applications to proactively repair eight similar sink drains, all located in the east wing that was built around 1964. During the repair, the preschool classroom will temporarily move into the school age room. We will return to the preschool room before October 30, when the school age room will be needed all day for school age students.

On the morning of September 23, staff arrived to find water covering the floors in the central part of the building, four of the five classrooms, the staff lounge and the storage rooms. A broken water line to a toilet was the cause. Because of the amazing work of close to 30 people, the hallways were drying and the water had been extracted from the carpeted rooms after about four hours. Many Zion members and community supporters dropped off shop vacs and fans of various sizes including barn fans. We closed for two weekdays and used the weekend to continue blowing fans across the floors. Despite our efforts, excess moisture was found in the walls of many affected rooms and hallways. Two contractors are preparing bids to repair the damaged walls, and we have notified our property insurance carrier. We hope to use October 15 and 16, like the drain project, to remove and repair impacted walls in our high-traffic areas.

A joint committee with members from the Board of Education and God's Treasures' Board of Directors met for this first time with the intention of creating a Zion scholarship fund for God's Treasures families who attend Bible Information Class with Pastor. The scholarship details and a funding source need to be worked out yet. The Church Council and Zion's voters need to approve the scholarship before it can be communicated to families.

We're trialing paid advertising on Facebook and Instagram over a two-week period to promote our center's open slots in the infant, toddler, and preschool classrooms. Advertising we've done to this point has been free. We've lost more students than projected over the past two months due to families relocating out of the area, losing childcare assistance funding, and having instability in the work force and home environments.

Thank you for your continuous support of this ministry.

Enrollment:
45 total enrolled (includes drop-ins)
35 PT/FT/B&A care enrolled
10 prospects

Looking ahead:
Continued focus on grant applications this month.
Develop 2027 budget

Blessings in Christ,
Adam Schmidt, God's Treasures Director

MLC Wind Symphony Concert

The world around us is always changing. This program explores these changing landscapes through the expressive power of the wind band. We also note a significant change for three individuals — from the role of student to the role of conductor. Naomi Kassulke, Eric Smith, and Ella Wurster will take to the podium as part of their conductor training.

Please join us on Sunday, November 22, at 3 pm in the MLC Auditorium for "**In Every Season,**" a celebration of the experiences that shape us and the music that gives them voice. Whatever season we find ourselves in, there is something to hear, something to feel, and something worth celebrating.

Sibley Co. Food Shelf

An annual project of the Zion Ladies Guild has dedicated the month of October to be Food Shelf Month.

This year a table was set up in the east entrance. The collection will be taken Nov. 2 to Sibley Co. Food Shelf.

Greeting Cards for all seasons

Zion Ladies Guild offers boxes (marked with prices) and individual greeting cards ($1 each) for your needs for each season in the northeast corner of the Fellowship Hall.

Money is to be placed in the wooden box mounted on the wall. Checks can be made out to Zion Ladies Guild.

There are individual Thanksgiving cards, and there will be Christmas cards coming soon along with the current birthday, sympathy, thank you, anniversary, wedding, new arrivals, baptism, all occasion, get well cards, plus free postcards and a selection of free-will offering DVDs.



September Council Meeting

Zion Lutheran Church Council Meeting October 15, 2026

Meeting called to order by Ken Opitz

Secretary's Minutes

- September minutes approved as written

Pastor's Report

- God's Treasures scholarship committee met and discussed establishing a scholarship to aid prospective members that send their children to GT.
- Parents who attend three hours of bible information classes from Pastor could receive one week of tuition
- Possible fundraising events next year, if approved by voters to create endowment fund that interest could be used each year to award scholarships
- Details are still a work in progress and a proposal will be presented at annual meeting for voters to approve in order to proceed
- Heidi Meilke (maiden name Steinhaus had a connection to Zion in the past), a lady currently living in Tennessee has been watching our services online, she contacted Pastor about membership classes, because she is planning to relocate to the Winthrop area in the next year or so. Pastor will take her through Bible information Classes remotely.
- Pastor will be taking off Nov 13-16 to attend Choral Fest in Wisconsin. He will also take vacation December 26 thru Jan 3.

Treasurer's Report

- MVL, PLS, and CMO are currently paid up to date
- Motion to donate $50 to Winthrop Fire Dept. Motion carried
- Report approved subject to audit

Elders Report

- Membership/Transfers: Motion to transfer Grant and Danielle Christiansen family to St. Paul's New Ulm. Motion carried
- Releases: Motion to release Jasper Kruggel, Joleen Moske, Galen and Renae Peterson, Diana Jacobsen, Jillian Majeski, Lonnie Streseman. Motion carried

Board of Education

- PLS: A vehicle was donated from the Don Ohland estate to be used as a lunch transfer vehicle
- God's Treasures: Working on scholarship details. Zion Board of Education controls awarding scholarships and managing funds. Flooding damage is being repaired.

Trustee's Report

- Install new dishwasher in parsonage Oct 17
- Computer tower in office is failing. Motion to take up to $700 Ed Woller money to purchase new tower
- Swap refrigerators during workday on Saturday
- Sign letters and numbers arrived
- Stihl electric weed eater was purchased
- Glaeser Painting North windows next spring

- Fall cleanup on Sat 8:30 AM

Old Business

- New laptop for administrative assistant was purchased. It was paid for by a Zion member and therefore did not use Ed Woller's donation money, which then was available to purchase new tower in office for accounting software

New Business

- Nominating Committee: Arvid Werner, Tyler Weber, Charles Hoffman
- Next Meeting Thursday, November 19

Lindsey Johnson, Council Secretary

September Profit and Loss

Revenue	
General Fund Income	**$24,477.90**
Expenditures	
Building Upkeep:	
Electricity	446.42
Heat	83.44
Insurance	1,518.80
Umbrella Insurance	50.00
Total Building Upkeep	**$2,098.66**
Christian Education:	
Catechism	10.99
Confirmation	123.06
MVLHS	1,275.00
Prairie Lutheran School	17,416.63
Sunday School	371.70
Total Christian Education	**$19,197.38**
Facilities Expenses:	
Copier, Cmptr purch/Maint (2 mo.)	652.60
Loan Interest	44.00
Miscellaneous	100.00
Office Supplies	36.89
Telephone, Internet	81.18
Waste Disposal	65.20
Total Facilities Expense	**$979.87**
For Our Worship:	
Guest Organist	103.50
Offering Envelopes & Fees	36.35
Total For Our Worship	**$139.85**
Missions	
CMO	**$1,667.00**
Those Who Serve Us:	
Janitorial fees	100.00
Organist fees	285.00
Secretary's wage	913.50
Housing	1,153.84
Pastor Housing Equity	90.30
Pastor Health Insurance	3,094.00

Fellowship Hall Rental

To rent the Fellowship Hall and kitchen for family events, please contact Louise at the office for availability. It is on a first-come, first-serve basis, with church events, like funerals taking precedence. Cost is $35/day for members. Non-members require council approval.

OWLS Meeting

The local MN Valley Chapter 13 OWLS (Organization of Wels Lutheran Seniors) will be meeting at St. John's Lutheran Church, 627 S. Washington St. New Ulm on Monday, November 10. Fellowship begins at 11:30 AM with a Subway meal to follow at noon, costs covered by Thrivent Action Team moneys. For those planning to attend, contact Myron Fluegge at phone, 507-359-2424 or email, flueggemtj@hotmail.com by Wed. noon, Nov. 5, for a meal count. After the meal, Tim Reinke from Thrivent will present "Longevity Planning."

Meditations

The Daily Devotional, *Meditations*, that is dated August 30 to November 28, 2026 is available on the Ushers Table in the Narthex. Both regular and large-print versions are available. A new *Meditations*, dated Nov. 29, 2026 to Feb. 27, 2027 will be out the week of Nov. 8.

We learned that the books are around $4.75 for the regular version and $5.75 for the Large Print. If you would consider helping defray the cost, a $5 bill in the offering plate would be appreciated.

As seen on Church Signs

Pumpkin spice and a whole latte Jesus

If the devil offers you a treat, it's a trick!

America: The donkey & the elephant won't help. We must turn back to the lamb

Boo! This is a scary as we get.

Heaven is no trick, hell ain't no treat

Pastor Mileage	467.62
Pastor Salary with SECA Reim.	3,332.56
Payroll Expenses	134.13
Workman's Comp.	$122.79
Total Those Who Serve Us	**$9,693.74**
Total General Expenses:	**$33,776.50**
Operating Revenue	**-$9,298.60**
Trust Fund Quarterly Transfer	**$9,887.97**
Net Operating Revenue	**$589.37**

November Events

Nov. 1– Daylight Savings Ends
Reformation Sunday
Handbell Choir 11:15 am Handbell Choir Practice
Nov. 2—4-5 pm Bible Information Class (BIC)
6 pm Organ tuning
Nov. 3—8:20 am Pastor at Prairie Lutheran School (PLS) with Grades 5-6 Catechism
10 am God's Treasures (GT) Chapel
Nov. 4—10 am Veteran's Day Program at MVL Fieldhouse
6-7 pm Public School (PS) Catechism
6:30 pm Adult Choir Practice
7 pm MVL Fall Concert
Nov. 5—8:20 am Pastor at PLS with Grades 5-6 Catechism
6-8 pm Parent-Teacher-Friends meeting at Zion
Nov. 6—8:20 am Pastor at PLS with Grades 5-8 Hymnology
Nov. 8-- 11-12:30 GT Pork Chop Fundraiser
11:15 am Handbell Choir Practice
Nov. 9—11:30 am OWLS meet at St. John's, New Ulm
4-5 pm BIC
Nov. 10- 8:20 am Pastor at PLS with Grades 5-6 Catechism.
10 am GT Chapel
Nov. 11– 6-7 pm Public School (PS) Catechism.
6:30 pm Adult Choir Practice
Nov. 12 – 8:20 am Pastor at PLS with Grades 5-6 Catechism
6:30 pm GT Board Meeting
Nov. 13—8:20 am Pastor at PLS with Grades 5-8 Hymnology
Nov. 13-15—Pastor at Choral Fest
Nov. 15— 11:15 am Handbell Choir Practice
Nov. 16—4-5 pm BIC
Nov. 17– 8:20 am Pastor at PLS with Grades 5-6 Catechism
10 am GT Chapel
Nov. 18—10:30 am The Lodge service with Communion
6-7 pm PS Catechism
6:30 pm Adult Choir Practice
Nov. 19--8:20 am Pastor at PLS with Grades 5-6 Catechism
6 pm Elders Meeting

7 pm Council Meeting
Nov. 20—8:20 am Pastor at PLS with Grades 5-8 Hymnology
Noon deadline for Dec. & Jan. Calendars/Newsletter
Nov. 22—11:15 am Handbell Choir Practice
2 pm Martin Luther College Wind Symphony Concert at MLC Auditorium
Nov. 23—4-5 pm BIC
Nov. 24– 8:20 am Pastor at PLS with Grades 5-6 Catechism
10 am GT Chapel
Nov. 25-29 No school at PLS or MVL
Nov. 25– Treasure Haus-Volunteers needed!
7 pm Thanksgiving Eve service at Penn Church
Nov. 26—9 am Thanksgiving Service
Nov. 29—First Sunday of Advent—Beginning of new church year
11:15 am Handbell Choir practice
Nov. 30—4-5 pm BIC

OWLS dissolves corporation

"Closing down [an] organization isn't failure; it is just a symptom of the laws of organizations. Organizations have a life span."

Retired Pastor Mark Jeske passed along that observation in his sermon at the opening worship service of the 2026 Convention of the Organization of WELS Lutheran Seniors (OWLS) held in Brookfield, Wis., October 13-15, 2026.

This year's convention had a familiar-looking schedule of keynote speakers and breakout presentations, but the business meeting agenda listed an unprecedented item: a board recommendation to dissolve the corporation. Of the delegates present, 89 percent subsequently voted in favor of the recommendation.

Mike Thom, OWLS executive director, explains what led to the recommendation and the endorsing vote: "The numbers tell the story. Back in 2004, we had around 1,700 members, and now we're down to a little more than 550." The number of local OWLS chapters similarly has decreased from 80 to 25. Having fewer members in the organization has made it increasingly difficult to fill leadership positions on the national board.

But while the OWLS corporation is being dissolved**, local OWLS chapters are encouraged to continue to function.** That is an important legacy for Gerald Steffen, OWLS president. He notes, "If we accomplished nothing else than to get senior groups started in congregations, it was worth it."

Linda Liesener, a member at David's Star, Jackson, Wis., is president of her regional OWLS chapter. She views the future of OWLS this way: "Senior members want a place to continue meeting to share their faith through friendship—sometimes with a speaker, potlucks, tours, or playing games and cards. The dissolution of the national organization is not the end of friendships or ministry support; it is an opportunity to evaluate and expand our local efforts."'

That's the prayer of Joel Gaertner, director of WELS Special Ministries. "OWLS has given many [people] opportunities to serve and enjoy fellowship over the years," he says. "We pray that this continues with senior groups on a local level across the country."

Moving? College Student? In the Military?

We at Zion are trying to keep an up-to-date accounting of our member's addresses, phone numbers and emails. This includes all our college students, young members out on their own, and military addresses.



If you have moved, gotten a new phone number or a new email address you wish to share, we would appreciate knowing about it. Feel free to email zionwinthrop@gmail.com with the updated information, call the office at 507-647-5582 (leave a message if there is no answer), text Louise (Zion Administrative Assistant) at 507-828-2756, or leave a note with Pastor.

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