

Parish Engagement Resource for Social and Ecological Justice

Let there be greening!

Introduction: Invitation to Discernment and Action

In July 2023, the Anglican Church of Canada (ACC) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) gather for Assembly 2023. The theme is *Let there be Greening*, based on Revelation 22:1–2: ...the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

The purpose of this resource is to support discernment for, and engagement in, social and ecological justice by local faith communities, parishes, and congregations. It is an invitation for you and your faith community to prayerfully consider God's call to engage in God's mission to love and heal the world. This tool goes home with Assembly delegates and is available across the church through the *In Full Communion* website: www.anglicanlutheran.ca.

Gathered for Assembly, the church feels called to engage in many priorities. As local communities engage in discernment for action, it may be useful to keep in mind these principles:

- Social and ecological justice are integral parts of God's mission.
- God's ongoing formation and transformation is part of the life of discipleship.
- Every disciple and every community can do something.
- All communities have limits. No one can follow up on every priority.
- Local wisdom, awareness and presence are valuable, important, and essential.
- Listening and building relationships are key elements in following God's call to seek justice.

When possible, consider meeting as Lutherans and Anglicans together to do this discernment.

It is understood that local leaders will choose which sections of this resource are appropriate and helpful in their contexts. While the sections of this resource are numbered, do not feel obligated to do them in order or to do all of them. Learning and discerning are lifelong journeys, with different paths for everyone. Discernment is an ongoing process:

- Prav
- Listen: & learn.
- Discern a next step.
- Act.
- Reflect.
- Repeat.

Additional information and resources available at: www.anglicanlutheran.ca.

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1. Dwelling in the word: Let there be greening.

In this exercise, you are invited to encounter the Biblical text that inspired the theme for Assembly 2023: *Let there be greening*. The invitation is to read the text three times. Depending on circumstances, you may wish to do the sharing in pairs, in small groups and/or as a whole group.

Pray: (Prayer of the Day used July 8, 2001)

Loving Source of all creation, in Jesus Christ you have united heaven and earth. Grant that we who share in the first fruits of that union may work for its fulfillment in the power of the Holy Spirit. We ask this in the name of the Incarnate Word, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns now and for ever. Amen.

Read: Revelation 22:1-2

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month, and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

Listen: What word(s), idea(s), or sentence(s) stand out for you today? What catches your attention or gives you pause?

Read: Revelation 22:1-2 a second time.

Listen: What questions does this reading raise for you?

Read: Revelation 22:1-2 a third time.

Listen: What does it mean for you/us today? What is God saying to you/us today?

Pray: Give thanks for each other and for what you have heard from each other.

2. Called to seek justice.

In this exercise, you are reminded of God's call to seek justice and to reflect on your community.

Remember:

Social and ecological justice are integral parts of God's mission.

In Genesis, God creates a world that is good and invites human beings to be partners in love, respect, and care for the whole creation. In Exodus, God hears the cries of God's people and leads enslaved people to freedom. The prophet Micah boldly reminds us of God's calling: What does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8) Jesus understood his own calling to be intertwined with the work of freeing the oppressed: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because God has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. God has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. (Luke 4:18-19) Jesus critiques the proudly religious for neglecting justice: you tithe mint, dill, and cumin and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. It is these you ought to have practiced without neglecting the others. (Matthew 23:23)

Through baptism, God calls us to be disciples and sends us to let God's light shine through us by engaging in good works. Liturgies of Affirmation of Baptism remind us of the call to strive for justice and peace in all the earth and to respect the dignity of every human being. God's ongoing formation and transformation move us to deeper understanding of God's world and supports us in discerning new opportunities to engage in God's mission.

A Biblical understanding of justice is about more than laws and rules. Based on God's gracious love for all people and for the whole creation, we feel called to form relationship, communities, societies, and systems that generate fairness for all. Listening and building relationships are key elements in following God's call to seek justice. The image of the tree of life – with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month, and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations – is an image of year-round sustenance for all and along with the medicine for healing that is needed.

Reflect on your community:

Reflect: What greening is happening in your parish/community?

Where is greening needed in your parish/community?

What gifts for justice and ministry does your community have?

Who might you talk with to learn more about your community, context, and neighbourhood?

Act: Write down hopes and opportunities for the greening of your community. Be content with what comes to mind today.

Share with another person, a small group and/or the community gathered for worship your experience of *Let there be greening...*

What opportunities do you see in your context?

Pray: For the greening of your community, the greening of Full Communion relationships, and the well-being of your neighbours.

3. Discerned priorities for Anglicans and Lutherans working together

In preparing for Assembly 2023, Anglican and Lutheran leaders prayerfully discussed what priorities are shaping our shared work as we journey through Assembly and beyond. These priorities are the product of many conversations in many settings: local communities share concerns and callings with national leadership circles; ecumenical conversations lead to discernment of common concerns;, global communions & church bodies contribute theological and ministry insights; and conversations in the public square provoke faithful disciples to repentance, greening, growth, and reformation.

Reflection, conversation, and discernment have identified the following priorities for Anglicans and Lutherans working together:

- a. Framework of reconciliation between Indigenous non-Indigenous Peoples
- b. Addressing the Climate Crisis
- c. Dismantling Racism
- d. Addressing Human Trafficking
- e. Poverty and Housing
- f. Peace in Palestine and Israel

3-a. Framework of Reconciliation between Indigenous – non-Indigenous Peoples

The call to reconciliation and renewed relationships between Indigenous – non-Indigenous Peoples is a fundamental element of work for social and ecological justice in the Canadian context today. This work of reconciliation is directly and indirectly related to other priorities and is a framework for seeking justice in the Canadian context today. God is calling on the church to decolonize its life and work. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Calls to Action and the Calls for Justice in the Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls identify abundant opportunities for action for all Canadians. The TRC identifies the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as the framework for reconciliation. Indigenous Ministries and the Self-Determining Indigenous church are a vital element of reconciliation. At the heart of this work is building relationships with neighbours.

3-b. Addressing the Climate Crisis

We are all called to live in healthy relationship with the Earth. There is an urgent need to limit global temperature increases to below 1.5° C above preindustrial levels, as outlined in the Paris Agreement (COP 21). Climate change disproportionately impacts Indigenous communities and people living in poverty around the world. Indigenous wisdom and relationships with the land need to inform individual, community and social choices.

3-c. Dismantling Racism

Each person is created in the image of God and is imbued with dignity; however our human institutions and systems continue to divide God's people and work to oppress those in our communities who are Black, Indigenous, or People of Colour. Racism and white supremacy deny the full participation and development of all members of our communities, reinforce power and privilege, and are sins against God and each other. Dismantling racism requires a transformation of our hearts and of the structures and systems within which we live and worship.

Since 2019, Anglicans and Lutherans have each had a national task force working dismantle racism. The COVID pandemic revealed and exaggerated existing equities. The murder of George Floyd led to demonstrations and to an increased urgency to antiracism work in the public square.

3-d. Addressing Human Trafficking

Throughout the world today, people are exploited through human trafficking and modern slavery, held in bondage for the profit of others. Canada is both a sending and receiving country for human trafficking - through, for example, some forms of migrant labour and sex trafficking. Indigenous People, those without legal status, and youth in care of child

welfare are made especially vulnerable to these crimes. Jesus promises liberation to the captives, and so we are called as the church to work towards safety and dignity for all persons.

3-e. Poverty and Housing

The call to address poverty through compassion, charity, and justice, have long been central to work of the church and of most faith communities. Through food banks, soup kitchens, hampers, and a grate variety of caring ministries, faith communities are often known to be living out the call to care for neighbours. Through PWRDF and CLWR, this caring is expressed around the world. In 2013, Anglicans and Lutherans identified *Homelessness and Affordable Housing and Responsible Resource Extraction* as central to our shared work. We recognize that these are long-term challenges that will require time, patience, persistence, and commitment on our part. The work is ongoing.

3-f. Solidarity for Peace in Palestine Israel

Both the ACC and ELCIC have long-standing relationships with partner churches is Palestine Israel: the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land. Both partner churches have shown remarkable resilience in the context of extended conflict, and inspirational leadership in showing love for their communities through various projects, enterprises, and ministries.

Remember our calling

Every disciple and every community can do something. All communities have limits. No one can do everything; this is one reason that discernment is important. The particular ways you faithfully respond to God's call is what makes your community special.

Pray:

Take a moment in quiet prayer.

Remember all who are impacted by injustice and oppression.

Remember the deep inequities in the magnitude of harms experienced.

Remember God's promises to bring justice, to transform, to heal, to renew, to love.

Remember God's call to you and your community.

Hear what the spirit is saying to the church.

Reflect on your community:

What stands out for you in what you heard about the work of Anglicans and Lutherans today?

What questions does it generate for you?

If you were to choose one priority to engage with more deeply, which one would it be? Why?

What possibilities do you carry with you today?

4. First steps for engagement

In this section, select resources are identified for as first steps for engagement in each of the discerned priorities. This includes possible actions, a list of partners engaged in this work, a Biblical text, reflection questions, and a prayer.

When reading the Biblical texts, some people find it helpful to ask:

What grabs you attention or causes you to pause in this reading?

What questions does it raise for you?

What is God's message for your community today?

4-a. Framework of Reconciliation between Indigenous – non-Indigenous Peoples

Pray: Rule of life¹

Creator God, we acknowledge and give thanks that:

In Jesus we know we belong to a Sacred Circle with the Gospel and Baptismal

Covenant in the centre. In this Sacred Circle:

We are all related;

We live a compassionate and generous life; We respect all life, traditions, and resources.

We commit ourselves to spiritual growth, discipleship, and consensus.

Read: John 1:1-18 – reading for National Indigenous Day of Prayer (June 21)

Learn:

Doctrine of Discovery: Stolen Lands, Strong Hearts

Award winning video produced by Anglican Indigenous Ministries. A good introduction to the Doctrine of Discovery. A Study Guide is also available.

KAIROS Banket Exercise (KBE)

The KBE is built on the foundation of long standing, collaborative initiatives and relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to raise awareness of continuing injustices and impacts of colonization, and to promote further learning. The KBE uses a script and movement by participants to review reflect on history. The script has been updated numerous times to reflect current events, including most recently the final reports of the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* and the *National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*.

Learn more about Free, Prior and Informed consent

Read: the <u>United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples</u>

Read: the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Calls to Action

Read: the <u>Calls for Justice</u> in Reclaiming Power and Place: <u>The Final Report</u> of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG)

Reflect: What experiences do you bring to Indigenous – non-Indigenous relationships?

What opportunities do you have for deeper and expanded relationships?

What does it mean to decolonize church? To decolonize society?

What opportunities do you see in your context?

 $^{1\} From\ Gospel\ Based\ Disciples hip, Indigenous\ Ministries; \underline{www.anglican.ca/im/introgbd/Lander}$

Act: Attend a local reconciliation event.

Practice acknowledging traditional Indigenous Territory at all gatherings.

Partners:

Indigenous Ministries supports the Indigenous Peoples of Canada (First Nations, Inuit, and Métis) spiritually, socially, economically and politically. We recognize that the purity of the land base provides for all our needs. As active participants in the life of the church, we strive for reconciliation with the Anglican Communion and work towards Indigenous self-determination.

KAIROS is committed to a new relationship with Indigenous peoples in Canada and around the globe, a relationship based on mutual respect, equity and the full realization of Indigenous peoples' rights.

<u>Faith in the Declaration</u> is a coalition of faith houses in support of The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

4-b. Addressing the Climate Crisis

Pray: By awesome deeds you answer us with deliverance,

O God of our salvation; you are the hope of all the ends of the earth and the farthest seas. (Psalm 65:5)

Read: Job 12:7-10 – Ask the animals, and they will teach you;

Learn:

<u>For the Love of Creation (FLC)</u> is an ecumenical and interfaith coalition providing resources for local engagement, theological reflection and advocacy. A great place to start is Faith Climate Conversations, which includes a session on discernment for action.

Reflect: What does "living in a healthy relationship with the Earth" mean to you?

What environmental issues are present in your context? How does your community address the climate crisis?

Act: Celebrate the Season of Creation

Evaluate your congregation's carbon footprint and develop a plan to reduce this impact.

Attend a local climate strike and/or a learning event on environmental care, concerns and/or sustainability.

Seek out reports and testimony from our international partners on the impact of climate change to their communities.

Reduce consumption of single use plastic.

Partners:

<u>For the Love of Creation (FLC)</u> is an ecumenical and interfaith coalition providing resources for local engagement, theological reflection and advocacy.

Zero Emission Churches is dedicated to taking action to reduce the greenhouse gases church buildings emit.

KAIROS is committed to a <u>vision of ecological justice</u> where humanity lives within natural limits, in connected relation to all of creation. We are not truly human without a communion with the rest of life.

<u>Green Churches Network</u> equips faith communities to opt for better ecological practices while educating members to live in a way that stewards creation.

<u>Faith and the Common Good</u> (FCG) is a national, interfaith charitable network founded in 2000 on the belief that our diverse faith congregations and spiritual communities can be powerful role models for the common good. FCG supports diverse faith and spiritual communities to contribute towards greener, healthier, more resilient neighbourhoods.

World Council of Churches (WCC) <u>Care for creation and climate justice</u> are at the centre of WCC work on climate change. The Bible teaches the wholeness of creation and calls human beings to take care of the garden of Eden (Gen 2:15).

<u>Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ)</u> is a national, progressive organization of members who are inspired by faith to act for social and environmental justice in Canadian public policy.

4-c. Dismantling Racism

Pray: God of all, form us into churches beyond borders.

When we feel stuck, amplify the prophet's word.

When we are distracted by privilege, put us in the wilderness.

When we need a new way, dunk us in the river.

When we are wrong, move us down the path of truth-telling and repentance.

When we need healing, sustain us with your love and hope.

When we cannot see beyond ourselves, move us beyond arbitrary borders. Bless us with the Holy Spirit, that the good news may be for us a beginning.

Amen.2

Read: Revelation 7:9 – a great multitude... from every nation, tribe, people and language

Learn:

Sacred Teachings Podcast – The Pain of Racism https://www.anglican.ca/im/podcasts/

Participate in anti-racism training to understand the history of racism and white supremacy in Canada and/or in the church.

Report of the ACC Dismantling Racism Task Force

Report of the ELCIC Task Force Addressing Racism, White Supremacy and Issues of Racial Injustice

Visit the ELCIC <u>Diversity</u>, <u>Equity and Inclusion webpage</u>

Reflect: How does our parish work at dismantling racism?

How is racism reflected and perpetuated in the life of our congregation?

Act: Participate in anti-racism training to understand the history of racism and white supremacy in Canada and in the church

² Churches Beyond Borders Advent Call to address racism and white supremacy 2020 Nov 30

Partners:

Black Anglicans of Canada declaration: We as people of African Descent are commissioned and called to be ambassadors of reconciliation. We are called to create opportunities and space for courage building, healing, fellowship and empowerment. This special calling is both a reminder and a challenge to ourselves and to the whole church that we are no longer destined to just obey, suffer and witness; but to disrupt, heal and lead.

Forum for Intercultural Leadership and Learning (FILL) Canadian churches working together toward intercultural leadership development and ministry learning.

<u>Canadian Ecumenical Anti-Racism Network (CEARN)</u> Canadian churches working together to support anti-racism programs and educators who are working in their churches, sharing resources and learning among anti-racism educators, and supporting long-term change in Canadian churches and church organizations.

World Council of Churches work on overcoming racism focuses on the theological and ecclesial challenges faced by the churches in dealing with racial injustice in society.

United Church of Canada antiracism resources

4-d. Addressing Human Trafficking

Pray: Lord of the lost, we pray today for all those who are victims of human trafficking: people lured from their homes and families; people deceived while trying to find a better life; people who are desperate to trust anyone. Help us to be more vigilant and watchful; to be aware of those who may need our help, and those who do not know where help may lie. Amen³

Read: Exodus 3:7-8 – I have heard the cries of my people

Learn:

<u>More Precious – National Youth Project</u> Join youth and leaders across the country in learning about the issues of human trafficking.

<u>Stolen People – Sacred Teaching Podcast</u> "We have been separated from our Spirit". Murdered and Missing - how it must stop.

Anglican Church of Canada resources on addressing human trafficking

Reflect: How does our parish prevent human trafficking? How does our parish encourage and support healthy relationships?

Act:

Learn the signs of human trafficking.

Advertise the Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline in your congregation and throughout the community

Purchase ethically sourced products and services for your parish. Fair Trade coffee and tea are a great place to start

Support local organizations and networks engaged with populations made vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation.

³ Clewer Initiative Prayer Resource

Partners:

<u>More Precious – National Youth Project</u> Join youth and leaders across the country in learning about the issues of human trafficking.

<u>The Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking</u> is a national charity dedicated to ending all types of human trafficking in Canada

KAIROS is committed to work <u>addressing the causes of forced migration</u>, while promoting a climate of dignity and welcome for uprooted people.

<u>Sexual Exploitation Working Group</u> of the Canadian Council of Churches. As people of faith we believe in the human rights and the emancipation of persons everywhere.

4-e. Poverty and Housing

Pray: Creator God, You have provided all that we need to care for one another. Help us to

recognize our responsibility to all our neighbours and to work toward an end to homelessness and housing need in our communities. Empower us to walk together with those experiencing poverty, homelessness, and housing insecurity toward creative solutions in these difficult times. Embolden us to make our faith tangible by calling for justice and dignity for all your children. Through your son, Jesus Christ, Amen.

Read: Matthew 14:13-21 – *feeding of the 5,000*

Learn:

Citizens for Public Justice 2022 Poverty Trends update

Built for Zero Canada: beginning the end of homelessness in Canada

Healing Poverty a Reflection from the Commission on Justice and Peace of the Canadian Council of Churches.

Reflect: How do we address poverty locally and globally?

Act: Work with partners to address poverty in your context.

Support the work of partners in Canada and around the world.

Investigate the root causes of poverty.

Partners:

<u>Canadian Lutheran World Relief (CLWR)</u> is an international relief and development agency of the Lutheran communities including the ELCIC. *Inspired by God's love for the world, CLWR challenges and responds to the injustice which causes human suffering and poverty.*

<u>Primate's World Relief and Development Fund (PWRDF)</u> is the Anglican Church of Canada's agency for sustainable development and relief. *Working towards a truly just, healthy and peaceful world*.

<u>Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ)</u> is a national, progressive organization of members who are inspired by faith to act for social and environmental justice in Canadian public policy.

<u>Commission on Justice and Peace</u> of the Canadian Council of Churches. *Addressing poverty has long been a priority of Canadian churches*.

3-f. Solidarity for Peace in Palestine Israel

Pray: God of Peace, we pray for our partner churches, the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem and the Evangelical Lutheran

Church in Jordan and the Holy Land. Bless their ministry and their work for peace and justice in the region. Help us to remember the living stones, our siblings in Christ, that still live and worship in the land we call holy. Amen.

Read: Isaiah 2:3-4 – *Swords into ploughshares*

Learn:

Read: about church leaders' advocacy for peace in Palestine and Israel.

View church leaders' panel on New Developments in Israel-Palestine and the Role of the Churches

Reflect: How do we promote peace in the Holy Land?

Act: Participate in Jerusalem and the Holy Land Sunday

Partners:

Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL)

Companions of the Diocese of Jerusalem.

5. Additional Discernment tools

This section provides some additional discernment tools. It is acknowledged that parishes, congregations, dioceses, and synods use a variety of tools and practices as part of ongoing discernment for discipleship and participation in God's mission. You are invited to share resources you have found effective in your context. [online or email]

The Arusha Call to Discipleship.

The World Council of Churches' Conference on World Mission and Evangelism met in Arusha, Tanzania, from 8-13 March 2018. More than one thousand participants—all of whom are engaged in mission and evangelism—gathered from many different Christian traditions and from every part of the world. The theme focus was *Moving in the Spirit: Called to Transforming Discipleship*.

Those gathered issued The Arusha Call to Discipleship.

www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/the-arusha-call-to-discipleship

It connects faith practices, witness, the issues of our time, and discipleship. It emerges from more than one thousand diverse Christians engaging in Bible study, common prayer and worship, sharing stories, and discernment. You are invited to have your faith community enriched, challenged, and inspired by these words.

Lutheran World Federation WF SDG study guide

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has published a manual for trainers to help churches increase their participation in implementing the United Nations (UN) Agenda 2030 for sustainable development. It includes self-assessment tools that show the link between the

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the mission of the church.

https://www.lutheranworld.org/news/new-sdgs-training-manual-faith-based-actors

A Changing Church. A Searching World. A Faithful God.

https://changingchurch.anglican.ca/

Five transformational aspirations have emerged from the work of the [ACC] Strategic Planning Working Group, intended to direct and inform the future mission of the church. Each aspiration is presented on this website, accompanied by separate videos and Bible studies for deeper learning and reflection. The aspirations were affirmed by the Council of General Synod in March 2022, and will be presented to the gathering of General Synod in 2023. You are invited to share the videos and materials on this site with others in your parishes, communities and dioceses; feedback is welcome and encouraged.

Gospel based discipleship

Developed for use in Indigenous communities this resource has significantly shaped formation and discipleship across the Anglican Sacred Circle. It has also been used for over a decade by the Anglican House of Bishops in its semi-annual gatherings.

https://www.anglican.ca/im/introgbd/

Moravian Congregational Mission Discernment

This packet of materials is designed for congregational use to assist in the beginning stages of discernment of a step "out" in missions. These materials can be used to help those interested to look "in" to determine how they are being called to use their gifts in service to the world.

https://www.moravian.org/mission/wp-content/uploads/sites/12/2020/11/Discerment-Pack.pdf

6. Prayer and Worship for Healing, Justice and Peace

This section acknowledges the ongoing prayer, worship and spiritual care practices in local faith communities that contribute to the journey toward healing, justice and peace. You are invited to resources you have found effective in your context. [online or email]

Pray:

Holy One, whose fingers sculpted sun and moon; Holy Spirit, who brooded over the waters of creation; Holy Word, who lives in us; may we share in your grace, love and communion, so that we may live in your likeness; for you live in unity and diversity, one God, now and for ever. Amen.⁴

Read: 1 Thessalonians 5:15-21, James 5:13-16

Reflect: How do we practice our commitment to pray for healing? How might "Let there be greening" inform our worship?

What helps create a healing space?

Act: Be committed, creative and courageous in your worship and prayer.

Attend a National Worship Conference www.worship.ca

Common Ground, Holy Ground, Common Good features elements from key moments in our shared history together: the Eucharistic Celebration of the Waterloo Declaration on July 8, 2001, a joint day of celebration held in 2007, and a 10th anniversary celebration, held along with the Episcopal Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in July 2011.Common Ground, Holy Ground: https://www.anglicanlutheran.ca/waterloo/.

7. Thank you

Thank you for you interest in this resource.

May God bless you and your community, in your discernment, learning, action, and all expressions of your ministry and discipleship.

If you have questions about social and ecological justice work, or if you would like to share your experience of engagement, contact

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