

News & Information from the Unitarian Universalist Church of Canton

March 2016



A MONTH OF SUNDAYS

Worship services and religious education for children and youth begin at 10:30 a.m.

March 6

Playful Curiosity – Rev. Joel Miller and Director of Religious Education Carol Zimmerman Children are naturally curious and playful. During this multigenerational service, we will explore ways to connect with these attitudes and what it might mean for filling our souls.

Greeters: Sheila Cerwonka, Barbara & Pete Beekman Council Welcomers: Katherine Brown, Heather Rousell

Kitchen Cabinet Advisor: Pat Alden Social Hour: Everybody's Birthday Party

Worship Associate: Robin Collen RE Ambassador: Esther Katz

Collection Counters: Ruth Baltus, Valerie Ingram

March 13 - Daylight Saving Time begins!

An Unhip Love of Hip Hop – Rev. Joel Miller What this art of music and poetry offers us in resilience, adaptability, and hope.

Greeters: Heather & Jeff Rousell, Maria Dickinson

Council Welcomer: John Danis RE Ambassador: Maria Dickinson Worship Associate: Doug Rubio

Social Hour: Robin Collen, Duncan & Lois Cutter Collection Counters: Pat Gengo, Tim Opdyke

March 20

Kristin Esterberg, Pulpit Guest.

Kristin Esterberg is the president of SUNY Potsdam. Trained as a sociologist, she is the author of three books and numerous articles and publications on qualitative research methodology, gender, and sexuality. Her most recent book (with co-author John Wooding) is *Divided Conversations: Identity, Leadership, and Change in Public Higher Education.* She lives in Potsdam with her spouse, Dr. Sue Bergmeier and their two daughters, Katherine and Lin (Qiong Qiong).

Greeters: Sarah Bentley-Garfinkel & Ryan Hicks,

Dan Kuelgen

Council Welcomer: Julie Van Duyne RE Ambassador: Dave Bradford Worship Associate: Robin Collen

Social Hour: Maggie Hockett, Linda Kenny, Claire &

Brian Gardam

Collection Counters: Jon Montan, Lorraine Olendzenski

Library Table: Miles Manchester

March 27

Easter - Rev. Joel Miller

Celebrating the beautiful UU traditions of joy, renewal, and the promise of life's return.

Greeters: Jason Shirtz, Joel Foisy & Gretchen Koehler,

Lonie Bogett

Council Welcomer: Todd Moe RE Ambassador: Wil Rivers

Worship Associate: Valerie Ingram

Social Hour: Janet Green, Kathy Montan, Lorraine

Olendzenski & Tim Nolan

Collection Counters: Lonie Bogett, Will Siegfried

Library Table: Pat Dunkelberg



DON'T FORGET~ Sunday, March 13 Set your clocks forward!

IN THE INTERIM - REV. JOEL REPORTS

Watching the news about the primaries is like watching a vast train wreck happening in slow motion. We live in anxious times, with so much uncertainty, and endure the shadowy political perversions of secret money as it poisons our national political conversation. You, as a congregation, voted at the last Congregational Meeting to take a stand against the Supreme Court's ruling that gave special privileges to a very small group of people with extreme wealth. Your decision as a congregation to support the overturn of "Citizens United" ruling will help everyone in our country – conservative and liberal, progressive and libertarian, socialist and none-of-the above – claim back a small part of their rightful part in our national political conversation. And your stand as a congregation gives your next settled minister permission to speak on your behalf for a restoration of our country's healthy political dialogue. That does make a huge difference – I've experienced it when advocating in Albany and in Washington, D.C.

Yet the effects of building a movement against secret money and the "weaponized" politics it buys will take time and continued attention. It takes courage and endurance to do this. I find myself turning to the treasures of our Black, African American tradition of art and survival, especially in this poem, "Paul Robeson," by the poet Gwendolyn Brooks. Robeson was a wonderful singer and performer with a rich, deep voice. Brooks is referencing Robeson's well-known rendition of "Shenandoah" in her poem:

Paul Robeson

That time cool and clear, cutting across the hot grit of the day. The major Voice. The adult Voice forgoing Rolling River, forgoing tearful tale of bale and barge and other symptoms of an old despond. Warning, in music-words devout and large, that we are each other's harvest: we are each other's business: we are each other's magnitude and bond. - Gwendolyn Brooks

Rev. Joel, Interim Minister

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

An important denominational meeting is being held in April to determine if a proposed regional restructuring of UUA districts will be finalized. Church Council has voted to endorse this restructuring and our delegates to the meeting will vote accordingly.

Some history: Following the 1961 merger of the American Unitarian Association and the Universalist Church of America, the Universalist theology school at St. Lawrence University was closed. The rapid closure of this school was a surprise to many and was perhaps a final blow to a number of small Universalist

congregations in Northern New York. It was a decision that was not popular, and was especially disappointing to our local congregation with its deep ties to the school at SLU. What followed were many years of what I would call an "arms length" relationship with the UUA.

After they arrived in 1993, ministers emeriti Anne Marsh and Wade Wheelock prodded the congregation to reconsider their relationship to the UUA, and encouraged us to become a "Fair Share" congregation. By the late 1990s our congregation was making a full Fair Share contribution, and have maintained that status ever since.

We have benefitted from this relationship in a variety of ways. The UUA provides specialized consultants to assist congregations in areas such as finance, church governance, and conflict management. Currently we are getting considerable UUA assistance with our settled minister search.

Specifically, the reorganization involves the dissolution of districts into a larger region. In our case, the St. Lawrence district will become part of the Central East Region or CER. Combining the resources of the districts increases operational efficiency and provides access to a more diverse array of expertise. This map shows the new region.

Today, it seems more important than ever to be connected to the wider UU world. We can see how important it is to connect with one another so our voice is united and strong, a voice loud enough to speak up on the important issues of the day.

Many thanks to our delegates, Margaret and Bart Harloe, for representing us at the District Assembly meeting in Syracuse on April 2nd.

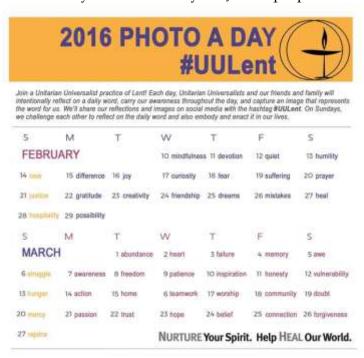
Barbara Beekman, Church Council President

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PONDERINGS

As I write this, we have just experienced the biggest snowfall of the year along with an ice storm. But with the coming of March, I am imagining the warmth of the sun and seeing green ground (I can imagine, right!). This also is the time of year for many spiritual celebrations like Ostara, the spring equinox in the Pagan tradition; the Fast of Esther, commemorating the three-day fast observed by the Jewish people in the

story of Purim; Holi, a spring festival also known as the festival of colors or the festival of sharing love in the Hindu tradition; and in the Christian tradition, Easter.

Our UU values and principles are rooted in Christian theology along with other sources. Right now in preparation for Easter, many in the Christian faith are also observing Lent, a time from Ash Wednesday till Easter when personal sacrifice is made as a way of getting closer to God, and as a reminder of the sacrifices that Jesus and his followers made. Growing up in a Catholic household, I used to observe Lent.



Seeking a more UU practice, I came across <u>#UULent</u>. As stated by one of its founders, Barb Greve, interim director of Lifespan Religious Education for First Unitarian Society in Newton, MA, "rather than a practice of self-denial, we offer this opportunity to spend the Season of Lent engaged in a spiritual discipline of deep intention and appreciation of our world, our place in it, and an openness to Grace in our daily lives."

This practice offers an opportunity to focus on a word of the day and share a picture, on your favorite social media platform, you have taken that represents that word for you. On Sundays throughout Lent, we are encouraged to not only reflect on that word but enact it in our lives. Please visit the <u>link</u> to learn more and see the calendar above or at the link for the word for the day. May this season of embracing the coming of spring provide you opportunities to deepen your spiritual practices.

Carol Zimmerman, Director of Religious Education

What's Coming Up in March in Religious Education?

Sunday, March 6 – Multigenerational Worship Service Sunday, March 6 – Everybody's Birthday Party Sunday, March 13 – Coffee, Conversation and More with the RE Program Tuesday, March 8 – Second Tuesday Chalice Circle Gathering Wednesday, March 16 – RE Committee Meeting Sunday, March 27 – RE Fun Day

EVERYBODY'S BIRTHDAY

On Sunday, March 6, following the intergenerational service we will celebrate everybody's birthday! Seating will be determined by your birth year animal on the Chinese Zodiac calendar. Charts will be available to help find yours. As in the past, there will be a sign up sheet posted in the social room for cake donations.

THANK YOU THANK YOU...

- * Kate Whitehorn, David Bradford, Pete Beekman, and Christian Beekman for helping with set up and clean up; Margaret Harloe and Eileen Raymond for making soup; Esther Katz and Pat Alden for making our guests feel at home at the Homeless Open House in February.
- † Stevie and Jim Michaelson for opening their home, Carol and Tom Pynchon for making room at their winter potluck table, and Mark Berninghausen for livery services during Rev. Rebekah Montgomery's recent visit.
- † Maria Dickinson and Wil Rivers for helping out with the final two LOVED programs.
- † Julie VanDuyne and Dwight Stevenson for chaperoning the Youth Group sleepover.
- † David Bradford for bringing hot drinks and cookies to the sledding party.
- → Wil Rivers and Sally Hoose for overseeing the February RE Fun Day.
- † Youth Group for organizing and presenting a wonderful worship service.
- † Jean Williams-Bergen, Kate Whitehorne, Joan Kepes, Debs Kalicin, Linda Kenny, Natalie Panshin, and Fred Glover for volunteering for the blood drive in February.

JOYS & SORROWS

- + Pete Beekman is pleased to be back with his UU family and appreciates all the support, prayers, and encouragement. He's doing great and is looking forward to starting his chemo maintenance program.
- + Our hearts go out to Carol Pynchon, whose father passed away February 9. He had suffered from Parkinson's in recent years. He died peacefully following a day spent surrounded by family.
- After a period of declining health, Marvin Edwards passed away on January 31 at the age of 101. His memorial service is planned for Sunday, February 28, at 3 p.m. If you would like to share your condolences with his wife, Marga, and daughter, Audray, cards can be sent to the home address found in the church directory.
- + We were saddened to hear about the death of Bob Luftburrow (first husband of Nancy Eldblom) in
- † December. Our hearts go out to Bob and Nancy's three children, Bob, Betsy and Deborah.
- † Our most heartfelt condolences to Kim Bouchard, whose father died on February 23.



UPDATE FROM THE SEARCH COMMITTEE

Pre-Candidating

After interviewing a number of ministers on Skype (see <u>our last newsletter article</u> for more information about this process), we selected four ministers to become "pre-candidates," and they all enthusiastically agreed! Kim, as our arranger, began the second series of "arrangements," which involved hotels and/or B&B's for the pre-candidates and the search committee members, meals, meeting locations, and

transportation. The first series of arrangements included finding four neutral pulpits from which the precandidates would preach. Concurrently, Rajiv and Jenn began a series of calls to the pre-candidates' references. The UUA also sent us summaries about each pre-candidate.

We've had two pre-candidating weekends so far, and they were both very successful. These are exciting times for the search committee!

Our "local" meals during the above process are being provided by members of our church, with the organization and delivery done by Carol Pynchon and Natalie Panshin. With two pre-candidating weekends finished as I (Theresa) write this and the meals literally under our belts, we feel very fortunate to be among such wonderful cooks! Our huge thanks for main dishes, salads, bread, and desserts so far go to Natalie Panshin, Jan DeWaters, Stefan Grimberg, Ruth Baltus, Becky Van de Water, Margaret Harloe, and Katherine Brown.

The Search Process

To see where we are in the process, you have several options: (1) you can look at the huge timeline on the wall in the Social Room at church; (2) you can check out the (slightly fancier) timeline online; (3) you can view the entire search process, which began in November 2014, here; and/or (4) you can take copies of our latest updates from the document box next to our bulletin board in the Social Room.

Please contact the Search Committee at search@uucantonny.org if you have questions.

Jon Montan (chair), Erika Barthelmess, Kim Bouchard, Rajiv Narula, Jenn Whittaker, Theresa Witmer, Pete Wyckoff

SOCIAL JUSTICE NEWS

Our Social Action Committee has been busy over the past two months. Here's what we have been up to.

Support for Move to Amend

Since November, we have been conducting educational events in support of the growing movement to amend our US Constitution to undo the damaging effects of the Citizens United decision on our electoral processes. We hope all members and friends have learned more about the impact of this decision as it plays out in our current election season. This work culminated on January 31 with a congregational vote on a motion to support the Move to Amend effort as a congregation. The support motion passed overwhelmingly with 70 ayes, 1 nay, and 1 abstention. This vote of support allows our church organizations to speak publically about the need to reverse the effects of Citizens United.

Now we encourage everyone continue learning about this issue and taking your concerns forward, through letters to local newspapers and to US senators and representatives and by talking with our friends and family. As negative ads funded largely by super PACS and big money increase during this election season, the damage of unaccountable money will become ever clearer. Now is the time to keep focused on the solution!

Homelessness Open House

On January 26, working with the Points North Housing Coalition in Watertown and the <u>Massena Independent Living Center</u>, we hosted an open house for folks in our area who are struggling with housing insecurity. In addition to hot soup and coffee, the 15 individuals who attended were able to get valuable information about local assistance options from the Independent Living Center, Renewal House, St. Lawrence Social Services, and others. They also completed surveys about their experiences, information that will be critical to these organizations as they seek grants for local housing initiatives.

As we extended the hand of welcome to our space, we appreciated the opportunity to meet folks who represented the diversity of homelessness in our region. We greeted families with young children, single parents, and single adults, all of whom had a common need that is often invisible in our cold climate. They are folks who lack a place to call their own, are doubling up with family or friends in places that are too small, or who have lost their housing due to illness, unemployment, or disability. We hope everyone will consider what it is like to not have secure housing in this cold season, and then get to work locally and in the wider world to support housing security as a right for all.

Guest at Your Table

For the past month in collaboration with the Religious Education Committee, the Social Action Committee has been participating in the <u>Guest at Your Table</u> program of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee. This year's program has focused on the stories of migrants and refugees. Many of our families took GAYT boxes home and shared the stories of hope about our "guests" that we welcomed this year. Our church families considered a variety of ways we might respond to the needs of refugees and migrants locally. The funds we raised through this program will support the <u>UUSC</u>'s much needed collaborative work with other groups on the ground in refugee camps and migrant centers.

Shared Offering for the Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

On January 24, Carol Gable and Rev. Joel shared their thoughts about mental wellness and the challenges posed by mental illness in our families and communities. In response, our Social Action Shared Offering (SASO) for January was received in support of the work of our St. Lawrence Valley chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). Our local NAMI chapter provides support to families coping with mental illness and advocates for improved local services for persons with mental illness. Our donations totaled \$690.50 and will help them help our North Country friends and neighbors who are impacted by mental illness. We encourage anyone facing mental health challenges in their family to be in touch with our local NAMI chapter.

Blood Drive

Did you know that one of our continuing local ministries is the hosting of <u>American Red Cross</u> blood drives? Our most recent drive was held on Tuesday, February 9, providing much needed replenishment of blood supplies. Donations generally drop off during the winter months due to our hostile climate, but those who made it out to donate truly gave the gift of life from warm hearts. We encourage everyone who is able to do so to consider donating during the next drive on April 5, or to sign up to volunteer to help on the day of the drive by emailing <u>socialaction@uucantonny.org</u>. This helps assure that when you or someone you love needs it, the blood needed will be available.

Eileen Raymond, Co-chair, Social Action Committee

COFFEE, CONVERSATION, & MORE!

Have you been noticing the lively group discussions in the Romer Room before church over the last six weeks? Have you wondered what was going on? Well, those folks were participating in the launch of our new adult discussion program, Coffee, Conversation & More, held on the second and fourth Sundays of each month from 9:15-10:15 a.m. The topics vary each time, but the discussion is always lively, the coffee (and goodies) hot ... and child care is available!

The idea behind this initiative is to provide adult members and friends with the opportunity to explore a variety of religious and social justice topics with fellow UUs on a regular basis. Five church committees have taken on the planning responsibilities on a rotating basis: Environmental Action, Library, Religious Education, Social Action, and Welcoming Committees. As you can see, no two Sundays will ever be the same. For example, 10-12 folks have attended the each of following discussions:

- Refugees and Migrants (Guest at Your Table) with Eileen Raymond (Social Action)
- International Year of the Pulse The what??? ethical and sustainable eating with Sue Powers (Environmental Action)
- *Justice for North Country Farm Workers*, facilitated by a representative of the Workers' Justice Center of Central New York, discussing the problems faced by some workers on area dairy farms

We hope you will be intrigued by one, some, or all of the announced topics, that you will be interested in checking us out, and that a wide and diverse group representing our whole congregation will join in on the discussions from time to time. These Sunday activities allow us all to get to know each other more easily and also help bring new folks into the family more quickly. It is a great way to meet others in the congregation who you might not otherwise have the opportunity to get to know outside the worship hour. Coffee, Conversation, & More will continue through May on a pilot basis. If interest continues, we will resume meetings in September.

Mark your calendars and join us as we host discussions on the following topics:

March 13: *Spirit in Practice:* Carol Zimmerman will be our guide in considering the topic of spiritual development for adults, through the "Eight Spheres of Spiritual Growth" model used in the UUA Tapestry of Faith program. Together we will explore the value and challenges faced by adults in defining and understanding spiritual practice.

March 27: Wrestling with Easter? We will consider what Easter means – or doesn't mean! — to us as Unitarian Universalists. While our Canton founders in 1825 found meaning in the Easter story, it often falls short today. Doug Muder's <u>article</u> in the UU World addresses this dilemma. Come share our exploration of an Easter story with meaning today.

April 10: *Solar Energy and Community Net Metering.* Carol Gable and others will share their experience with Solarize Canton and the Phase 2 Community Net Metering project. Want to know more, check here.

April 24: What makes our church a welcoming space? Stevie Michaelson and the Welcoming Committee will guide us in answering this question. Newcomers and "old timers" alike have much to share on this topic as we look forward to the transitions ahead.

We also hope some of you might have a topic to propose for a future Sunday. Each Sunday is part of the series, but the series will include a wide variety of topics related to our UU values. Please contact us with your questions or suggestions: Environmental Action: Sue Powers; Library: Lorraine Olendzenski; Religious Education: Esther Katz; Social Action: Eileen Raymond; Welcoming: Stevie Michaelson; Staff: Carol Zimmerman.

ANNUAL CHURCH COMMITTEE FAIR

Curious about who runs this place? Interested in finding out more about our church committees? Eager to join a committee? Then stick around after the worship service on Sunday, March 13, for the annual Church Committee Fair. Grab a cup of coffee and then browse through the Social Room and visit tables filled with information about all our committees -- visit with long-term committee members and find a place for your talents! Help us expand the "ownership" of our congregation!

OUTREACH REMINDERS

The Outreach Committee is still available to make house calls! It's often easier to learn to navigate new websites and functions at your own computer, so we'll come to you! If you'd like company taking a quick spin around the church website, contact Carol Pynchon or any member of the Outreach Committee.

Church Directory Online

Please be aware that church policy is to NOT include any personal information – email addresses, phone numbers, addresses in the e-news, newsletter, and website. Contact information for church members and friends is available in the Church Directory, which you can access from the Our Church or Get Involved tabs on the website. The directory is password protected for everyone's safety; for first-time access contact the church office or a member of the Outreach Committee for the password.

Carol Pynchon, Chair, Outreach Committee

CHURCH & COMMUNITY PROGRAM NEWS

The Canton Rotary Club is hosting its annual "Food for Food" dinner to benefit the Church and Community Program food pantry. The buffet dinner will be held at The Club on Wednesday, March 9; a cash bar will be available, and guests should arrive between 6 and 7 p.m. for the buffet, which will include roast beef, garlic herb chicken, and penne Alfredo. You are welcome to linger over dessert and coffee for as long as you wish. Reservations can be made by calling 714-3333. If you call on or before Monday, March 7, each dinner will be \$30 a person. After that date or at the door, \$35. PLEASE COME! This is a great opportunity to socialize with friends, have a good dinner, and support the Church and Community Program!

The Canton Chamber of Commerce recently honored the Church and Community Program with its annual Recognition Award for C&CP's "invaluable work in supporting the less fortunate in our community." The Chamber particularly mentioned food distribution, the thrift store, and the children-centered programs for school supplies and Giving Tree. The Chamber also noted the growing ties between the local colleges and C&CP, as well as "all the supporters and volunteers who make this program such an effective charity." Our church can be proud of its role in inaugurating this program in 1974 and its continuing support through the decades.

MUSIC POSITION POSTED

As Joel announced in the January newsletter, our long-time music director Nelly Case is retiring this summer. The search for a new director, led by the Music Staffing Team - Doug Rubio, Worship Committee; John Danis, Church Council; Carol Strome, staff; and Joel - has begun. Ads announcing the quarter-time position have been placed in local papers and the job description and application process are available on the church website. As a reminder, this is a one-year "acting" position, with the potential to be a long-term position; the final appointment will be made with our new settled minister. If you have questions, please speak with any member of the staffing team.

ONLINE MINDFUL MEDITATION CLASS

On Tuesday, March 15, Charlie Bradt will begin offering an eight-week, online course in Mindfulness and Mindful Meditation. Charlie has been teaching this for a few years now, though this is the first time he's opened it to a wider audience. He will be teaching the course "live" in Sarasota, FL, and making audio recordings available the same day. The recordings will appear on the blog he has established (cbradt.com) to support this teaching. In addition to the weekly classes, he will also offer daily email messages reinforcing the teaching and offering specific "assignments" designed to help in the establishment of a regular meditation practice.

Take a look at Charlie's <u>blog</u>, especially the menu item "Assumptions of Mindfulness," to see if this might be of interest to you. The course starts March 15, but online students can proceed at their own pace. Charlie will be available for individual questions via email or phone as well.

There is no charge for the course. Please call or <u>email</u> the church office for Charlie's contact information if you are interested.

If you would like to receive weekly electronic news updates, please email: office@uucantonny.org

Deadline for next newsletter:

Monday, March 21

ON THE CALENDAR

Tuesday, March 1

12:15 p.m., Personnel Committee meeting 1:30 p.m., Outreach Committee meeting

Wednesday, March 2

8:00 a.m., Building & Grounds Committee meeting 10:00 a.m., Library work day 6:30 p.m., Church Council meeting

Thursday, March 3

4:30p.m., Handbell Choir rehearsal

Friday, March 4

4:00 p.m., SAC Core Team meeting

Sunday, March 6

9:30am, UShare meeting 10:30 a.m., Intergenerational Service 11:30 a.m., Everybody's Birthday

Monday, March 7

Noon, Mindfulness Meditation

Tuesday, March 8

5:00 p.m., Welcoming Committee meeting 7:00 p.m., Chalice Circle

Wednesday, March 9

10:00 a.m., Library work day 4:00 p.m., Interim Shared Ministry meeting

Thursday, March 10

4:30pm, Handbell Choir rehearsal 7:00 p.m., Worship Committee meeting

Sunday, March 13 - Daylight Saving Time begins

9:15 a.m., Coffee, Conversation and More 10:30 a.m., Worship & Children's RE 11:30 a.m., Committee Fair

Monday, March 14

Noon, Mindfulness Meditation

Wednesday, March 16

10:00 a.m., Library work day 6:30 p.m., Religious Education Committee meeting 7:30 p.m., Chalice Circle

Thursday, March 17

4:30 p.m., Handbell Choir rehearsal 7:00 p.m., Budget & Finance Committee meeting

Sunday, March 20

10:30 a.m., Worship and RE Noon, Social Action Committee meeting

Monday, March 21

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE Noon, Mindfulness Meditation

Wednesday, March 23

10:00 a.m., Library work day

Thursday, March 24

4:30 p.m., Handbell Choir rehearsal

Sunday, March 27

9:15 a.m., Coffee, Conversation and More 10:30 a.m., Worship & RE 10:45 a.m., RE Fun Day

Monday, March 28

Noon, Mindfulness Meditation

Wednesday, March 30

10:00 a.m., Library work day

Thursday, March 31

4:30 p.m., Handbell Choir rehearsal



The Unitarian Universalist Church of Canton

Interim Minister, Rev. Joel Miller
Carol Zimmerman, Director of Religious Education
Nelly Case, Music Director Carol Strome, Choir Director
Gwen Cunningham, Congregational Administrator
The Reverends Anne Marsh and Wade Wheelock, Ministers Emeritus

Office hours: Monday - Friday, 1 to 4 p.m.

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