

CONTACT

introduces and welcomes
YOU
to

PENWORTHAM

UNITED REFORMED CHURCH



*Wishing you the Hope and
Expectation of Advent*



and God's Peace for 2023

DEC.2022-JAN.2023



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PURC E-mail: penworthamurc@gmail.com
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FELLOWSHIP FOREWORD

Dear Friends,

The Season of Advent is upon once more, and we again await the celebration of the birth of Jesus more than 2000 years ago.

In October I was fortunate enough to join our former minister Revd David C on a trip to the Holy Land. Included in this edition of Contact is David's reflection upon the most interesting time we spent there, and I hope this is a subject we can come back to and take action upon in the coming months.

Bethlehem is of course the place where the Christmas story is centred and it was fascinating to actually be there, albeit that the hilltop town itself has no doubt changed beyond all recognition. As you know, the Church of the Nativity is built over the cave which is believed to have been the stable where Jesus was born. Originally founded by Helena the mother of the Emperor Constantine in the 4th century and rebuilt by the Emperor Justinian in the 5th century, it is quite magnificent. We were lucky to visit the church in the late afternoon when it was quiet, and going down into what was the cave/stable I found quite moving.

We had earlier visited the fields where, since the 4th century, it is traditionally believed the shepherds were visited by the angels. A small, simple, but beautiful church occupies the site, with caves



below where shepherds had sheltered for centuries, and which still overlook the fields.

The past is a different place; and can we be certain that these sites are the actual ones? No, we cannot. But faith is greater than stones and we can believe that Jesus was born in this specific part of Palestine and that the good news of his birth was given first to some lowly shepherds. That something miraculous happened amidst ordinary, everyday events.

FELLOWSHIP FOREWORD continued

Bethlehem, as it was at the time of Jesus' birth, is in a troubled and divided land subjected to an occupying hostile force, now in the form of Israel's aggressive Apartheid policy towards the Palestinians. And yet it is a land filled with people who show tremendous hope for the future; determined to survive and not given to despair.

This is also true of the people of Ukraine, who continue to fight against an aggressor and who have witnessed and endured the most appalling situations. Perhaps shining examples to us all?

Christmas is a time for peace and goodwill to all people. I am sure that we all give thanks for everything that we enjoy in this country, regardless of current problems. But we must not be complacent or insular in our thoughts and deeds, for evil only exists when good people do nothing. This Christmas-time we will again pray for peace in the world and hear the Good News of Christ's birth; for the light continues to shine in the darkness, and the darkness has never put it out. Love, faith and hope always endure, no matter what.



On behalf of the Elders, may I wish every one of you a merry and peaceful Christmas and good health and happiness in the New Year.

Wishing you every blessing, *Robert*

PURC SERVICES DECEMBER 2022 - JANUARY 2023

4 th Dec.	Nativity Service	10.30am	Junior Church
11 th Dec.	Parade&Toy Service	10.30am	5 th Penwortham Scouts
18 th Dec.	Carol Service**	3.00pm	Robert Bulloch
25 th Dec.	Christmas Worship**	10.30am	Robert Bulloch
**Collections will go to the <i>Rosemere Cancer Foundation</i> .			
1 st Jan.	Holy Communion	10.30am	TBA
8 th Jan.	Parade Service	10.30am	Rev'd Angela Robinson
15 th Jan.	Family Worship	10.30am	TBA
22 nd Jan.	Family Worship	10.30am	Carol Rose
29 th Jan.	Family Worship	10.30am	TBA (<i>Brenda Kendall</i>)

FAMILY AND FRIENDS



It was good to see a smiling Joyce D enter church on armistice morning, recovering from a difficult hip operation. It made me think of the many of our congregation, who through illness and ageing, cannot join us on a Sunday morning. You are always in our thoughts and prayers.

We do wish Doreen B well following an operation in hospital and during her rehabilitation.

Please remember the family of our dear friend Nancy F who was called home on 10th November; particularly daughters Jessica and Rachael. Nancy contributed much to the fellowship over her years with us and she has been sorely missed since illness saw her leave to live close to her daughters in Leeds. The funeral will be in our church on Thursday 8th December at 11.40am followed by the committal at Accrington Crematorium at 1.40pm.

Remember too in your thoughts and prayers the families of: Trevor F who passed away on 31st October and who for many years was the organiser of the RVS Lunch Club. Trevor's funeral was held at Charnock Richard Crematorium at 10.30am on Tuesday 22nd November.

and of

Peggy A secretary of the 5th Penwortham Scout Group who recently passed away. A service at Charnock Richard Crematorium will be held on Thursday 8th December at 1230pm, no dark colours to be worn at Peggy's request.

Your elders are at present considering various options to try bringing in some of the younger element of the Penwortham population.

Times have changed, I remember Celia and I having to queue on a Sunday evening to enter our congregational church to join the multi-faith young community.

If you have any ideas to spread God's message, please speak to one of our Elders.

Every blessing

Bill McC



PURC FLOWER ROTA DECEMBER 2022 - JANUARY 2023

- 4th Dec Doris McC
11th Dec. Debra O
18th Dec. Robert B
25th Dec. Robert B
1st Jan. Bill & Sue B-W
8th Jan. Margaret & Alan E
15th Jan. Graham and Viv M
22nd Jan. Nigel & Anne L
29th Jan. Stewart T



(Jenny O)

THANK YOU

A message from Bev & Jen....

'Thank you' so much for the card and vouchers you gave us to mark our retirement from being secretaries, it was very kind and your lovely words in our cards meant a lot to both of us. We are both feeling much better since the responsibility has been lifted of our shoulders and we would like to thank Robert and all the Elders for taking on our jobs between them. With our Love & blessings x x

AN INVITATION

Coffee & Mince Pies

Wednesday 7th December

1 - 3pm in the Guild Room

Bev & Jenny will be your hosts.

Please come and join us if you can for some fellowship with friends.



PURC ECO CHURCH ARTICLE



For those of you who drink wine, keep the corks and make some cute reindeer decorations. Gather a few festive twigs and create your own festive reindeer. Add a few little bits of Christmas ribbon for a bit more colour.
(Gillian A)

OLIVE TREE TRIP REFLECTION

The last time I visited Israel/Palestine was over twenty years ago as I waited to hear whether I would be accepted into preparation for URC ministry. We visited the holy sites and Christian Aid projects, which gave me a sense of the Palestinian context, but my abiding memory is a sense of peace and affirmation sitting on the shore of Galilee after a boat trip across the lake.

After my visit this October, as part of an **Embrace** group from across the UK to pick olives with the East Jerusalem YMCA, I am left with different memories. There was joy there in the shared experience and the welcome we received from Palestinian families to assist with their harvest. We carried stepladders, tarpaulins and buckets up and down valleys. We heard the satisfying patter of olives falling onto the ground, and then filling sacks to the brim. We celebrated communion together in olive groves. And we shared stories with farmers, their families, Palestinian teenagers, and each other. There was light in those moments of solidarity and shared effort.

There were also shadows - as walls and fences were noticed, armed patrols passed by and, to our eyes the unassuming apartment blocks on the surrounding hills were pointed out as Israeli settlements. Over twenty years ago the situation was tense – it was shortly after the Oslo accords – but now what seemed temporary checkpoints are transformed into military outposts, the separation barrier looms around and through communities, settlements (better described as new towns) seem to be everywhere, new Israeli-only roads cut through the West Bank, and the more than seventy-year occupation to me, and more importantly: Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and B'Tselem among others, is more accurately described as **apartheid**.

We had talks from various organisations including Kairos Palestine, the Palestinian Museum of Natural History, and the YMCA's Rehabilitation Programme. We visited Bethlehem, Jerusalem and Hebron, visiting settlements and seized Palestinian homes, taking in the holy and tourist sites and enjoyed a farewell dinner with folk dancing.

After this visit my abiding memories are different. On my previous visit we also visited the al-Aqsa Mosque / Haram al-Sharif in Jerusalem. Then there was the expected security at the bottom of the slope before we entered, but that was all. This time armed Israeli security was also at the top of the slope within the Mosque compound, they were also patrolling the grounds and escorting settlers around it.

I was lost for words. Imagine police patrolling around a cathedral and escorting people around it who contest its sacredness?

We visited Hebron, in which the tourist traps of the glass and keffiyeh factories were in sharp contrast to the city centre where the main street lies abandoned, its former Palestinian occupants forced out, with shop doors welded shut, as a security precaution for the settlers who have made their homes there. It was incredibly eerie and unsettling to walk the deserted street with only teenage soldiers for company.

OLIVE TREE TRIP REFLECTION - continued

Yet within all this the Palestinians we met still had hope. There were diverse opinions about whether that hope lies in a one or two-state solution or by challenging the status quo as apartheid. There was pain in the stories of routine harassment, night-time arrests, imprisonment, loss of land and inequality. There was also compassion for their oppressors, wondering how they cope being fed a constant diet of fear. There was also joy in celebrating the everyday things of life.

Apart from a general sense of the Palestinian plight the only lasting legacy from my previous trip had been to always include prayers for Israel/Palestine in the intercessions I led. This time I made a list of things to do, questions to ask, times to share my experiences, a commitment to support Embrace, and an abiding affection for olive trees – especially when they are in need of picking!

This trip to pick olives was delayed by lockdowns, but before the pandemic I did put together an [Advent candle liturgy](#) to promote congregations purchasing olive trees. I offer it to you to encourage the same, and share the opening verse of the hymn:

The olive tree against the sky
strong and healthy as time goes by.
The olive tree means life and health
to those who tend and till the earth.
They connect us to ages gone,
and keep watch over ages to come.



(Sussex Carol, LM Irregular – *On Christmas night all Christians sing*)

Rev'd David C, United Reformed Church

(forwarded by Robert B)

DONATIONS

Community Social Afternoons: as a result of excellent turnouts for these events, ably organised by Anne H, a donation of **£300.00** has been made to the **Penwortham Foodbank** on behalf of PURC and all concerned. Well done Anne!

UNICEF Mites Scheme: although not the end of a quarter, your Mites (5p/10p) donations have realised **£28.55** for the period 1 Sep to 20 Nov 22 which will purchase a further **356 Oral Rehydration Sachets**. Just 5 sachets have the potential to save the life of a child suffering from dehydration, a common killer in children who are malnourished or suffering from diseases like cholera or dysentery. The value of your Mites is sent quarterly to the Mites Scheme at the end of Mar, Jun, Sep and Dec each year.

Carol Service/Christmas Day: The collections at both our Carol Service and Christmas Day Service are to be donated to the **Rosemere Cancer Foundation** based at Royal Preston Hospital.

URC COMMITMENT FOR LIFE ARTICLE

Supporting | our global partners | **FAIRTRADE EDITION**

Facts 'n' Figures on Fairtrade



Prayer for Fairtrade

God of Abundance, help our church to support Fairtrade. Put into leadership business leaders with a conscience. Help them place people before profit.

We pray for Fairtrade across the world but especially in Zimbabwe, Bangladesh, and Israel and Palestine.

Amen.

UK Retailers commit to Fairtrade

Commitment for Life supports The Fairtrade Foundation who work in partnership with 1.9 million farmers and workers globally to address the root causes of poverty. The good news is that more UK retailers are committed to Fairtrade. "It is inspiring to see that public trust in, and preference for, Fairtrade is at its highest ever," says Michael Gidney, chief Executive of Fairtrade Foundation.

Lidl is the biggest buyer of Fairtrade cocoa. It rolled out its 'Way 2 Go' chocolate across 400 stores. Aldi launched the Choco Changer, a new chocolate bar that commits to Fairtrade's Living Income Reference Price for cocoa. Aldi also provides opportunities for flower farm workers in Ethiopia to meet objectives on gender equity. Other Fairtrade cocoa conversions were made by SPAR. It introduced three new products on trial. Proper, building on their brand commitment as the 'only Fairtrade sweet popcorn' introduced two new Proper Chocolate Popcorn bars, while Asda launched a new FSI cocoa chocolate bar. 100 percent Fairtrade brand Tony's Chocolonely also launched in major retailers in 2021.

Since 2005, Greggs has sourced Fairtrade coffee beans for all its coffee products. It has since added bananas, apple juice, orange juice, sugar sticks, sugar syrup, hot chocolate, black tea, mint tea, and green tea as part of its Fairtrade commitments. In August 2021, Greggs announced a switch to using only Fairtrade chocolate in its own products, which include Milk Chocolate Cookies, Caramel Shortbread and Chocolate Brownies.

FAIRTRADE
CHOOSE THE WORLD
YOU WANT

FAIRTRADE FORTNIGHT 27th Feb – 12th Mar 2023

<http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/get-involved/Current-campaigns/Fairtrade-Fortnight/>

ADVANCE ARRANGEMENTS FOR FEBRUARY 2023

PURC SERVICES

5 th Feb.	Holy Communion	10.30am	Margery Pitcher
12 th Feb.	Parade Service	10.30am	TBA
19 th Feb.	Family Worship	10.30am	TBA
26 th Feb.	Family Worship	10.30am	Garry Hammond (Brenda K)

FLOWER ROTA

5 th Feb.	Marjorie S
12 th Feb.	Vacant
19 th Feb.	Ken R
29 th Feb.	Barbara D



(Jenny O)

PRESTON/PENWORTHAM AREA INFORMATION AND WEB LINKS

8th Dec: Three Victorian Christmases in Winckley Square 1860, 1865, 1880

Come to Central Methodist and enjoy a cosy Christmassy experience with the Friends of Winckley Square. Be greeted by Christmas Music whilst you enjoy a mince pie, mulled wine (0%) or hot chocolate, sitting in the very comfortable seats from the Odeon Cinema. The afternoon includes a Victorian Christmas slide show followed by the Victorian Christmas Talk by Susan Douglass. **Cost £5 2pm to 4pm. Book via Eventbrite:**

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/three-victorian-christmases-in-winckley-square-1860-1865-1880-tickets-409918355837>

10th Dec: 7.00pm Preston Orpheus Choir - A Festive Christmas

With Music Director Nathan Smith and featuring Freckleton Brass Band and St Pius X Catholic Preparatory School Choir. On Saturday 10th December at 7.00pm in St Aidan's church, Station Road, Bamber Bridge, PR5 6QL. Advance bookings: Adults £10, under 18s £4, family (2 adults + 2 under 18s) £25

11th Dec: Winckley Square Christmas Concert Don't miss this year's Christmas Concert in the heart of the Square, organised by the Friends of Winckley Square, on Sunday 11th December 3pm-5.30pm. Join in traditional Christmas Carols around the Christmas Tree with St Stephen's choir. The Inbetweeners, a local ukulele band, will be performing your favourite Christmas songs to sing along with. Our headline act SPARK! is back to WOW the whole family, returning because they were so great last year. And the wonderful sounds of Kenny on bagpipes will resound around the Square once more. A free event, just turn up and enjoy!

15th Dec. Lancashire Sings Christmas. Joe Wilson of Radio Lancashire advises that our County-wide Carol Service will be taking place on Thursday 15th December 7pm. Returning to the live broadcast from the Blackburn Studio accompanied by the combined Salvation Army Bands of Preston and Blackburn and the Peoples' Choir. **At Penwortham provisional details are 7.30pm at Kingsfold Community Centre - more details as soon as we have them will be announced in church.**

A CHRISTMAS REFLECTION

HE GAVE HIS MOST PRECIOUS POSSESSION

**“Thank God for His gift that is too wonderful for words”
2 Corinthians 9 : 15 (CEV)**



One afternoon a little girl stood outside Pete Richardson's antique shop studying the treasures in the window. Then she went in and asked to see a string of blue beads. When Pete set them on the counter, she said: They're perfect. Will you gift wrap them, please? They're for my sister. She takes care of me. This will be our first Christmas since Mum died, and I've been looking for the perfect present.' 'How much do you have?' asked Pete cautiously. Pouring a stack of coins on the counter, she said, 'I emptied my bank.' Pete picked up the necklace, the price tag visible to him and not her. 'What's your name?' he asked, walking into the back room. 'Jean Grace,' she replied. Pete returned with a beautifully wrapped package, and the little girl thanked him and left. On Christmas Eve when the last customer had left and he was locking up, a young woman rushed into the store and handed him a familiar package. 'Do you remember who you sold this to?' she asked. 'A girl called Jean bought them for her big sister,' he replied. 'How much are they worth?' she inquired. 'The price,' Pete replied, 'is always confidential between the seller and his customer.' Her sister asked, 'But how could she pay for them?' Carefully re-wrapping the present, Pete handed it back to her and said, 'She paid the biggest price anyone can ever pay. She gave everything she had.' When 'God sent forth his Son' (Galatians 4:4 KJV) to redeem us, He gave everything He had. 'Thank God for his gift that is too wonderful for words!

*above with permission United Christian Broadcasters, Westport Road,
Stoke-on-Trent, ST64JF. and taken from UCB 'Word for Today'
-free copies are available for the UK at this address or
online at www.ucb.co.uk/read (Margaret E)*

WORLD PRAYER NEWS

HORN OF AFRICA - HUNGER

In the Horn of Africa, a person is dying from hunger every 48 seconds. Rains have failed four years in a row and countries like Somalia, Kenya, Sudan and South Sudan are facing the worst droughts for 40 years. Livestock and livelihoods have perished, crops have failed, and people don't have enough to eat. Please pray that God would help people facing this hunger crisis and provide rain and food. Please pray he would help NGOs like Medair meet the urgent need for food, water and healthcare. *(Medair)*

LEBANON - STRUGGLING TO LIVE

Lebanese churches need our support as they distribute aid and come alongside struggling refugees and Lebanese people. Pray that the comfort and peace shared would continue to have an impact. Pray that the Lebanese people and world leaders will find ways to revitalise the economy so that the population will be lifted from poverty and be able to afford basic necessities. *(BMS World Mission)*

IRAN - OPPRESSION

John 15 v 15. Please pray for the peoples of Iran and for the many precious Iranians who have willingly migrated overseas; the many who have been forcefully removed from the country and for those who have experienced the heavy-handed oppression of the law. May the God of justice and peace bring down rulers from their thrones and lift up the humble. Pray AM would be used to strengthen the Iranian Church and help enable outreach and discipleship among Iranian seekers and that sharing the AM resources in Farsi would be a real encouragement. *(Al Massira -AM)*

GHANA - MULTI-PURPOSE POLES

In remote villages in Ghana, we are reaching people with the gospel by installing multi-purpose poles. These poles, using solar energy, batteries, and inverters, are lighting up dark streets at night and enabling villagers to charge their mobile phones. They also have loudspeakers for streaming Christian radio programmes and a free Wi-fi hub that contains downloadable Bibles, worship music, discipleship resources and materials on agriculture and community health. Pray that those who access these hubs will begin a journey with Christ, and that local believers will be strengthened *(Reach Beyond)*

above with permission of globalconnections.org.uk

CHANGES TO SOME PURC ROLES

“Contact”

During 2023 there will be a change to “Contact” administration. Brenda K has kindly offered to take the reins from 01 Jan 23 and “Contact” will be in a new format for the 12 month period. Thank you Brenda - we wish you well in your endeavours.

Buildings and Grounds Maintenance.

Similarly, during 2023, Jack T has offered to assume oversight of the Buildings and Grounds Maintenance from 01 Jan 23. Everyone can assist by letting him know if and when you spot a problem with any maintenance aspect (e.g. failed light bulbs, dripping taps, etc.). Thank you Jack for taking these on.

Margaret and Alan are very grateful to Brenda and Jack for volunteering their services for these tasks.

Ed.

MARGARET AND ALAN E

After 8 years of editing “Contact” and managing the web-site, and a good few years of property maintenance, Alan and Margaret are taking a sabbatical for the whole of 2023.

One sentence does not properly encompass all the miscellaneous jobs that they have taken on, and most of you won't have noticed unless you happened to be there when something was being done.

They will be in church sometimes, but strictly off-duty.

We send them our grateful thanks, and wish them a relaxed, and at the same time, electric (re-charging their batteries?) year.

Brenda

“CONTACT” IN 2023

For information, enquiries and contributions in 2023 please contact **Brenda K** at **z555brenda@gmail.com**

The next issue will be the **February 2023** edition.

The latest date for contributions will be **22 January 2023**

The planned issue date will be **29 January 2023**

Please be aware that “Contact” will be a slimline version for the coming year, the following are available online:

World Prayer Topics : <https://www.globalconnections.org.uk/>
Reflections from UCB: <https://www.ucb.co.uk/wordforyou>
Eco Church Information: <https://nwsynod.org.uk/eco-newsletter/>
Retreats online/in-person: <https://christianretreats.live>

A NEW YEAR REFLECTION

MEDITATE - PERCOLATE

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly”

Colossians 3:16 (NKJV)

Meditating in Scripture is one of the great keys to spiritual growth. In Psalm 1, David writes, ‘In His law he meditates day and night’ (Psalm 1:2 NKJV). But the word ‘meditation’ is not one that a text-and-Twitter generation relates to very well. We imagine sober-faced monks wearing hair shirts and chanting on bended knees as the sun comes up every morning. As a result, we want to run in the opposite direction. We admire such people, think God has to call us to such a thing, and conclude that He certainly hasn’t called us to do it. Or we think meditation is a discipline that requires hours of uninterrupted time, and time is the one thing we don’t have any more of. And the result? We live busy but spiritually barren lives. Some of us actually think meditation is a fine thing, but we believe that there are too many other areas of spiritual growth and character development we need to work on first. What’s the problem? We don’t understand what it means to meditate, or the rich benefits it will give us. A spoon of instant coffee is okay if you just want the basic taste of coffee. But if you want more - if you want to enjoy the flavours of the coffee in all their richness - you have to let it percolate. So, we could paraphrase the Scripture this way: ‘In His law he percolates day and night.’ That is what Paul meant here: ‘Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom.’ In 2023, enjoy the aroma, taste the flavour, experience the strength.



*above with permission United Christian Broadcasters, Westport Road, Stoke-on-Trent, ST64JF. and taken from UCB ‘Word for Today’
-free copies are available for the UK at this address or
online at www.ucb.co.uk/read (Margaret E)*

POETRY PIECE

The season of Christmas is with us again,
with a story of obedience and joy.
And a stable in Bethlehem,
Where Mary gave birth to a boy.



A boy born to save and to teach
that all sins can be forgiven;
He promises us eternal life,
And gives us glimpses of heaven.



In nearby fields nightwatching shepherds
were told by angels of the wonder.
They left their flock a child to see,
A miraculous sign to ponder.

Eastern wise men, star gazers,
Were led to the babe in the hay.
Leaving gifts, seeing greatness before them,
Returning east by a different way.



The baby grew and flourished,
In manhood he travelled and preached
of God's love and care for all people,
So many thousands he's reached.

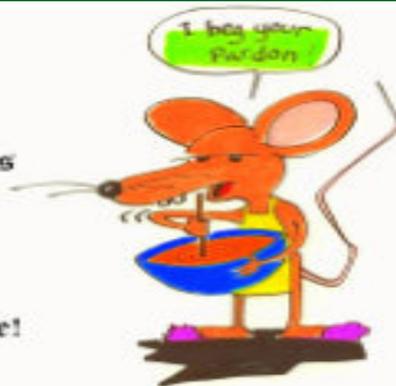


In this season of giving and and caring,
We remember this child in a stable,
Open our arms to the needy and poor,
Hear our Lord, do his will, serve as we are able.

Hylida H

CARTOON

'Twas the night
before Christmas
and all through
the house
Not a creature
was stirring
not even a mouse!



With permission Tim Walburg

CHRISTMAS WORDSEARCH



G
W I X
I O F N Q
H P R T L N Q
H I H S S T A R D
C H I L D
Q O I R V U F
S H E P H E R D S
D S A M X C A N J K X
T M A N G E R
M H A I G I J B Y
E E Y N B D I E Q J P
O V H C U A L Y S F F U O
E E E Y O E U L K
L H L W G J S I E A
S O H P S Z O X N U M X D
E Z S T O L S W G E J A X S W
E R E J O I C E R M
V Y B P G D S B A B Y G C
W W H S N T I H R R V D U Y
X F I Y B F A T H E R O D J A F U
W Y H
H Q N
F E G

angels	worship	king	child	Herod	myrrh
Father	Joseph	shepherds	gold	Mary	census
Jesus	rejoice	God	manger	star	
prophecy	Bethlehem	magi	stable	Emmanuel	
baby	gifts	Son	Christ	inn	

Words may be Horizontal, Diagonal, Vertical or Back to Front



God Bless You
this Christmas
& New Year

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