



# THE TORCH

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February 2026  
Sunday Worship  
9:00 AM

Trinity Lutheran Church • 18137 Criswell Street • Bettendorf, Iowa 52722 • 563-332-5188  
Pastor Stephen Nilsen 563-332-6432 (office) 319-540-1172 (cell) snilsen@trinitylcpv.com (email)

Greetings to all!

While I have written this before the parental leave has started for me, I am again expressing gratitude for the generous support of this congregation as I will by this time be tending to the work of bonding as a parent of Ida. Between the bottles, diapers, rocking to sleep for naps, and getting down on the floor for tummy time, I will also be doing some reading and watching some films that I have wanted to find time to consume.

One such book that I read last year as Lent was upon us was Christine Valters Painter's *A Different Kind of Fast: Feeding Our True Hungers in Lent*, which was a great little book to explore a few different spiritual practices that could help guide a journey through Lent, using some of the Scripture that often shows up in the lectionary in Lent. In the week after Ash Wednesday, for example, the author invites the reader into the practice of *lectio divina*, or sacred reading, using Jesus in the Desert from the Gospel of Matthew:

*"Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tested by the devil. He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterward he was famished. The tempter came and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.' But he answered, 'It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"* – Matthew 4:1-4, NRSV

Painter, goes on to describe the practice of *lectio divina*, where one would read this passage multiple times, slowly, intentionally, savoring the Scripture for "listening with your heart."

"Read the text through twice, slowly, listening for a word or phrase that shimmers. Read it again and allow the word or phrase to unfold in your imagination, welcoming images, feelings, and memories. Read the text a fourth time and listen for the invitation being offered to you in the midst of whatever life is bringing you. Then rest into silence for a few minutes to simply savor the gift of being in the presence of the Holy One." - Painter, p. 77.

Lent is often a time where we are reminded of the many temptations that people have in their lives and how God has walked alongside us through these temptations. Some can think of these as simple items like chocolate or other junk food, but I continue to dwell in my own life thinking of ways God shows me to slow down, avoid the busy "go! go! go!" reality that we are often sold as something we must do for us to be "successful" or find worth. God shows us through Bible passages familiar and new that we can slow down, cherish relationships, and learn from the very actions of an embodied, Incarnate Christ.

I hope that you have found time to relax, to dwell in God's word, to move through life, understanding that there is nothing that can separate you from the love of God.

Savoring God's love with you,  
Pastor Stephen Nilsen

**Trinity Office Hours Tues, Wed, Thurs - 9AM-1PM**  
**Pastor Stephen's Office Hours Mon, Tues, Wed, Thurs -10AM - 2PM**

From the President's Desk...

Brrrr.... As you read this, most are ready to begin thinking about Spring, however we have some important work to do. As Council and Committees have been preparing for the Annual Congregational Meeting, I would like to point out many of our accomplishments in the last year. Accomplishments are as follows: Per Mar Fire Alarm System Upgrade, Multiple Trees were removed for safety, Property/Liability Insurance changed, Fellowship Hall Front Wall Upgrade, Outside Front of the Church/Fellowship Hall Painted, and the Ravine/Drainage Project completed Phase 1. These things used some funds, but more importantly they used a unified volunteer force here at Trinity on these projects. It is the people who make Trinity successful, and I hope we can continue in Unity for 2026.

During the Annual Meeting, there is an important proposal to consider, a new position to be created called the Director of Engagement. I spent Sunday, January 18<sup>th</sup> presenting this idea in advance of the upcoming meeting. Please take note that this position is to Engage Adults, Families, and Children of all ages both inside the congregation and outside in the community. We called Pastor Stephen, and we gave him instructions that we as a congregation want to grow in faith formation and in our numbers. This isn't just hiring someone to lead youth programs; this is to bring in someone to directly market to and engage adults and children and increase visitor interest. We have had great success hiring temporary staff from EWALU for VBS.

It was brought to my attention that we need some kind of metrics to measure performance, the first ones are easy, successfully offer Sunday School and coordinate Youth and Family activities. We also plan to increase our social media presence. As for long-term metrics, that is something for Personnel and Council to discuss over the coming year as we learn more about something that is brand new to Trinity. I look to the Bible for a few metrics, such as being Fishers of Men, following the Great Commission, and imitating Christ's Shepherding and going after even 1 lost sheep. If we are doing these things, I firmly believe we will find some successes, but there may be some failures along the way, and that is ok as we will learn from them and adapt.

Many of you want to be great stewards of the finances here at Trinity. The BEST way to get our money's worth out of this position is for all of us to support it. We need to all be rowing the boat in the same direction. Encourage the new Director, volunteer when asked, offer positive ideas, and pray for God's continued support.

Warm Blessings,

Dane Crist

Trinity Council President

Things have truly been busy around TLC. Getting prepared for the Annual Report is always a challenge and stressful. With that being said, it is time for vacation. Yes, someplace warm. I hope all of you stay warm and I will be back in the office on February 3.

Paula



#### **WANT TO CONNECT THE WITH WEEKLY HAPPENINGS AT TRINITY?**

Sign up for our weekly email bulletin that will let you know what's happening in the week ahead and have other great upcoming announcements, as well as the weekly bulletin for worship. Call (332-5188) or email Paula (office@trinitylcpv.com) in the office to sign up!

#### **YEAR TO DATE FINANCIAL INFO THROUGH DECEMBER 2025**

|                                                                        |               |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| Collections to date                                                    | \$180,578.41  |
| Expenses to date                                                       | \$186, 835.07 |
| Net to date                                                            | (\$6,256.66)  |
| No funds have been transferred from Stewardship Reserves year to date. |               |

#### **ATTENDANCE TOTALS FOR JANUARY 2026**

|         |    |    |
|---------|----|----|
| January | 4  | 55 |
| January | 11 | 54 |
| January | 18 |    |
| January | 25 |    |

### BIRTHDAYS

3 Don Hogenson  
4 Ellen Opperman  
10 Aaron Trelstad  
13 Karen Romans  
16 Ridge Raddatz  
19 Lolita Baker  
26 Carol Kaufmann



February

### ANNIVERSARY

4 Joel & Judy Rutledge

## Worship & Fellowship Volunteers

|                                            | February 1                                | February 8   | February 15<br>Service<br>Calamus | February 18<br>Ash<br>Wednesday           | February 25                 |
|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Altar Guild                                | Mary Shelton                              |              | XXX                               | Diane Kaufmann                            |                             |
| Communion<br>Assistant                     | Marcia<br>Brunsvold                       | Diane Holst  | XXX                               | Sally Morrow                              | Claudia<br>Neumann          |
| Lector                                     | Henry<br>Marquard                         |              | XXX                               |                                           |                             |
| Usher<br>Greeter                           | Sharon<br>Marquard<br>Travis<br>Brunsvold |              | XXX                               |                                           |                             |
| Worship<br>Video<br>Livestream<br>Producer | <b>Volunteer<br/>Needed</b>               | Randy Goslin | XXX                               | Ron Morrow<br><b>Volunteer<br/>Needed</b> | <b>Volunteer<br/>Needed</b> |
| Fellowship                                 |                                           | Hot Team     | XXX                               |                                           | <b>Volunteer<br/>Needed</b> |

If you would like to help us in our Sunday Gathering by doing any of the above tasks, please contact the church office to be added to the list of volunteers.

If you are unable to fulfill your duties, please find a replacement and call or email the church office (332-5188 or office@trinitylcpv.com) with your replacement. Thank you.

### Pastor Stephen on Parental Leave through Mid-March

Pastor Stephen is very gracious for the generous parental leave that has been granted to him for bonding with his new daughter, Ida. For the first 10 weeks of 2026, Pastor Stephen will be at home with them, while the life of our congregation continues on. A few different pastors will fill in for Sunday morning worship, but in the event of an emergency, you can contact the office (563-332-5188) or any of the four pastors listed below:



**Pastor Stephanie Wood**, Grace Lutheran Church, Davenport  
402-659-3427

**Pastor Kirsten Lee**, Grace Lutheran Church, Davenport  
405-248-0586

**Pastor Art Blegen**, First Presbyterian Church, Le Claire  
910-354-8540

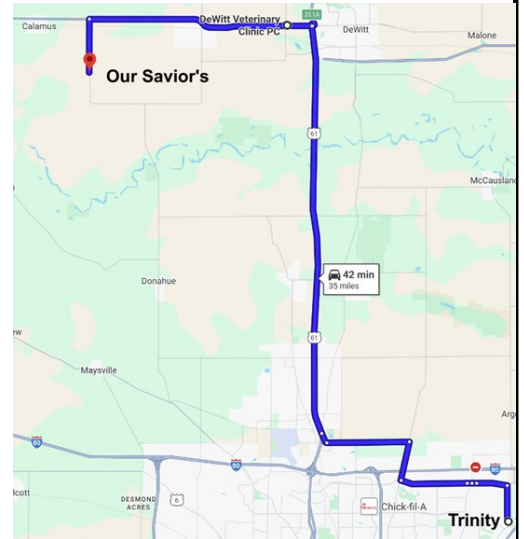
**Pastor Annabell Blegen**, First Presbyterian Church, Le Claire  
563-554-9160

### No Worship at Trinity on February 15 Joint Worship Service with Calamus Lutheran Parish



Sunday, February 15 at 10:30 AM  
Our Savior's Lutheran Church -  
2589 190th Avenue Calamus, IA  
The Worship & Music  
Committee is excited to invite you  
to a special joint worship service  
with our friends at Calamus  
Lutheran Parish,  
celebrating the baptism of Ida

Jane Nilsen. Pastor Stephen and Leah are thrilled to share this part of their family's story with their family from TLC, and you will be invited to join for refreshments following the service. The route to Our Savior's is fairly straightforward from Trinity: head north on Highway 61, take the exit for Highway 30 West (toward Cedar Rapids), after driving about 8 miles turn left on 190th Ave (which will also have a sign for Hwy Y52); the church will be down the road on the left. If you have any questions, contact the church office.



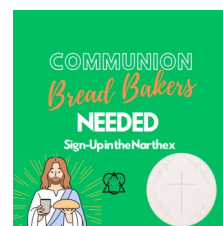
### Trinity Blood Pressure Ministry *After worship on February 1*

Trinity will be offering this ministry the first Sunday of each month by our qualified congregational nurse members. There are several stories of health monitoring, helping the lives of those who have joined in this ministry.



### What's Baking? Communion Bread *Sign-Up in the Narthex*

Each week's Communion Bread is baked by volunteers from around our congregation, bringing forth the bread of life from the shared community we have here at Trinity. If you'd like to sign-up to bake the bread, there is a sheet in the narthex, and a recipe available there as well as online.





### Ash Wednesday 2026

Ash Wednesday and Lent will be here before we know it, and we want to let you know what the plans are for TLC. There will be an Ash Wednesday worship service February 18 at 6 PM with the usual imposition of ashes. This year we will also have brief blessings and ashes available throughout the day from 11 AM onward, so if you have plans for something else happening February 18, you are welcome to stop by the church parking lot throughout the day for the imposition of ashes and a blessing.

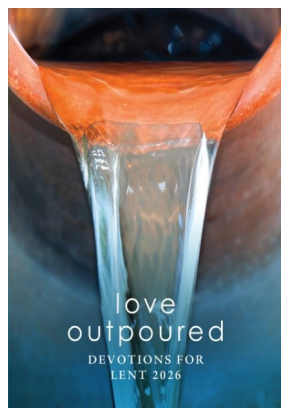
If you would like to assist in burning last year's palms from Palm Sunday to make the ashes for this year, please contact Pastor Stephen.

### Lenten Midweek Worship: Sing with All the Saints in Glory Wednesday's at 7 PM February 25 through March 25

Our Lenten Midweek Worship services will return this year: after beginning the Lenten journey on Ash Wednesday (February 18, worship at 7 PM), we will be reminded of the rich calendar of saints in the Lutheran tradition at brief services for prayer and reflection. This year's Lenten midweek series, Sing with All the Saints in Glory, honors the commemorations that occur during the weeks in Lent in 2026. Commemorating these individuals is a starting point for a deeper engagement with our Christian faith. The Worship & Music Committee would appreciate any help with readings, so if you've ever felt called to share some of your voice in worship, please reach out to someone from that committee.



### Lenten Devotional Booklets Available! *Love Outpoured*, from Augsburg Fortress, in Narthex Now



*Love Outpoured* focuses on portions of the Apostle Paul's letter to the Romans. In words that continue to speak to us today, Paul lays out foundational beliefs for a life of faith in Christian community.

The daily devotions for each day, from Ash Wednesday to the Resurrection of Our Lord / Vigil of Easter, begin with evocative images and brief scripture texts. The writers then bring their diverse voices and pastoral wisdom to the texts with quotations to ponder, reflections, and prayers.

### Winter Coat & Boot Drive Returns

Every year, there are some children or families that are still in need of winter clothing later in the year than expected.



Help our community by bringing any new or lightly used coats, jackets, boots, or shoes for people who are served by Trinity Food Pantry. Items may be dropped off at the table or shipping cart in the narthex. Hats, gloves and scarves are also appreciated!

### Trinity Food Pantry Continues Feeding Our Neighbors

**Pantry Hours: Mondays, 9-11 AM and Thursdays, 4-6 PM**

Our community food pantry continues to serve our neighbors, and we are blessed with many volunteers, but more are always welcome. We welcome volunteers for other aspects of the food pantry beyond the times when we are open, such as organizing the food in the pantry and sorting new donations. If you would like to help out, please reach out to Dane Crist or Pastor Stephen or email [pantry@trinitylcpv.com](mailto:pantry@trinitylcpv.com).

If you are looking to buy something in particular, our annual Lenten Gifts drive is starting soon. Share the good news of our Food Pantry with others in our community.

Thanks so much for your support!

Trinity Food Pantry Team  
[pantry@trinitylcpv.com](mailto:pantry@trinitylcpv.com). 563 332-6432



### Join Trinity Prayer Chain to Connect with Community



A community that prays for one another is transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit. We have been praying for and with each other for a long time here at Trinity Lutheran Church, but often we don't know exactly what we are praying for in those instances. If you would like to share in brief emails when there are prayer requests sent in to the office or to Pastor Stephen (at the times when permission is given), please email [Pastor](mailto:Pastor) or the [office](mailto:office) to be added to the Trinity Prayer Chain. These will likely be brief emails to provide a notice when an emergency has happened or when someone is requesting prayers for a family member. Prayer requests will be asked, whether they would like any details shared with the prayer chain, when they make those requests.

### Trinity Card Crafting Ministry Spreading Joy

**Thursday, February 12 1:00 - 3:00 PM**

Trinity's card ministry meets monthly on the second Thursday of the month at 1:00 pm in Fellowship Hall. The next meeting will be February 12 from 1:00-3:00 PM. All are welcome to join us with no experience necessary!

Each month we make and deliver cards to the residents of Aspire of Pleasant Valley Nursing and Rehab (Formerly River Manor). We also make and mail greetings to members and friends of Trinity. In addition, the committee has been working to replenish the supply of greeting cards for sale in the Fellowship Hall. All cards are \$2.00.

Thank you for your support of this ministry. If you have any questions, please contact Chris Kaul, Linda Busch, Claudia Neumann, Cathy Newman, Marcia Brunsvold or Pastor Stephen.



Trinity Card  
Crafting  
CRAFTED WITH LOVE



### Winter Scott County Library's Bookmobile Stops

The Scott County Library Bookmobile will be back again for you to stop by the church parking lot through the winter on Tuesday afternoons every three weeks. Anyone with a library card from a library in Scott

County can check out books and other media. We'll have snacks and drinks available in Fellowship Hall. More stops will be coming in the spring too!

We hope to see you there!

Tuesdays, February 3 and 24, 4:40-5:10 PM

For more info, visit: [Scottcountyiowa.gov/library/bookmobile](http://Scottcountyiowa.gov/library/bookmobile)

### Join the PPALs Bible Study

**Saturdays 8 AM**  
**Trinity Lutheran Church**

Join together in a new Bible Study with Christians from around the PV, Princeton, Argo, and Le Claire area that make up PPALs. We encourage you to grab a coffee or beverage and join in for readings and discussion of the Bible. For more information, see [Randy Goslin](#).



Living  
Lutheran

**OUR FREE GIFT TO YOU!**

The brand new [LivingLutheran.org](http://LivingLutheran.org) is now live!

### New Living Lutheran Website Launches

We're excited to pass along a little early good news this Advent season: the new [LivingLutheran.org](http://LivingLutheran.org) is live! Set up a **free digital membership** for perks like a personalized dashboard that prioritizes the stories that interest you, access to members-only content and the ability to save and "like" articles — all with a welcoming, easy-to-access format.

*Living Lutheran* tells the stories of the ELCA, bonding us as a church across congregations, synods, states, regions and countries. Get informed, inspired and equipped with perspectives to deepen your faith and connect with the broader Lutheran community!



### Crossroads Youth Ministry Heading to Le Claire

*Sundays, 5:00-7:00 PM January and February meetings  
at First Pres. Church in LeClaire*

TLC youth from 6th through 9th grades will be joining together with First Presbyterian Church's youth (and any friends that the youth would like to bring along) for a fun, faith-filled youth group meeting each Sunday through the school year. Each meeting will include a simple dinner, games, and discussion of the developing faith of the youth.

BIBLE  
Study

WEDNESDAYS AT 10 AM

Join us for a **weekly** Bible study centered around the texts for the upcoming week's worship service as we find what God is up to in the text and our lives this week

ALL ARE  
WELCOME

HOLY  
BIBLE

### WEEKLY READINGS

- 02/01** Micah 6:1-8, Psalm 15  
1 Corinthians 1:18-3, Mathew 5:1-12
- 02/08** Isaiah 58:1-9a [9b-12], Psalm 112:1-10  
1 Corinthians 2:1-16, Matthew 35:13-20
- 02/15** Exodus 24:12-18, Psalm 2,  
2 Peter! 16-21, Matthew 17:1-9
- 02/22** Joel 2:1-2, 12-17, Psalm 58:1-12,  
2 Corinthians 15:20b—6:10,  
Matthew 46:1-6, 16-21
- 02/25** Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7, Psalm 32,  
Romans 5:12-19, Matthew 4:1-11



Greetings,

As we step into a new year, we want to pause and simply say thank you. Your prayers generosity, and faithful partnership have made a meaningful difference through LSI. Because of your support, lives are being changed, hope is being restored, and communities across Iowa are being strengthened. We are deeply grateful for your commitment to this shared mission.

Looking ahead, we are excited about the opportunities this new year holds and the impact we can continue to have together. With your ongoing support, LSI will keep responding to needs, advocating for our neighbors, and living out Christ's love in tangible ways. We truly look forward to what God will do in the year ahead, together.

If you have any questions, please reply to this email or reach out to Andrea Maschka. LSI's Chief Development Officer at Andrea.Maschka@LSIowa.org.

We are so grateful for your partnership in sharing our mission!

## **CHURCH UPDATE FEBRUARY 2026**

*LSI proudly serves Iowans in all 99 counties through our services of Mental Health, Early Childhood, Foster Care & Adoption, Global Greens, People with Disabilities, and Immigrant & Refugee Community Services. We serve individuals of all ages, from families with newborns navigating the early stages of parenthood, to Refugee and Immigrant elders, as well as children at every stage of development. Our heart beats for the people we serve. We empower families and communities by recognizing and honoring the strengths and gifts of every individual.*

### **From Foster Care to the Classroom: A story of Resilience and Hope**

Below is the story of Megan\*, a young woman whose journey through foster care led her to a loving, permanent home with the Johnson\* family in Sioux City. Now, six years later, Megan is thriving, confidently sharing her story, and living proof of what is possible when a young person is given stability, encouragement, and someone who believes in them.

I entered foster care at just 17 days old. From the very beginning, my life was shaped by change, uncertainty, and trauma. Though I was adopted at age five, the years that followed were filled with strict rules and isolation. By age ten, I was told I was "too much" and was sent away, carrying unhealed wounds I didn't yet have the words to explain.

I spent the next several years moving through treatment facilities and foster placements. While those years were difficult, they also became a turning point. For the first time, I began to see my own potential. I discovered things I loved, committed myself to school, and watched my grades improve. Education became the one constant in my life, something I could rely on no matter where I was living.

At fourteen, I entered high school and moved into a foster home with people I barely knew. I arrived guarded and afraid to hope, but slowly, I began to open up. I joined cheer, choir, and theater, finding confidence and belonging through school activities. Even after everything I had been through, school never gave up on me, and I refused to give up on myself.

When I was fifteen, I began searching for a permanent home. After countless interviews, visits, and conversations, I met a family in April 2020. In the middle of an incredibly uncertain time, they took a chance on me, and changed my life. What started as a weekend visit turned into the place I finally called home.

Cont.

They believed in my dream of becoming a teacher. When I nervously asked if I could take college courses during high school, they didn't hesitate. Their belief in me made all the difference. Six years later, I am still student teaching at a local elementary school, a dream made possible because someone said, "Yes, *you can do this.*"

College wasn't easy. There were tears, late-night phone calls, and moments when I feared losing the home I had waited so long to find. But I never lost their support. Hearing the words "*We are proud of you*" reminded me how far I had come and gave me the strength to keep going.

To foster youth and foster families alike: don't give up. Fight for yourself. Let your voice be heard. Be who you are - the right family will love you for it.

And to my mom and dad: thank you for giving me the chance to be myself and helping me discover who I am. You gave me the opportunity of a lifetime, and I couldn't have done this without you.

\*Names have been changed to protect privacy.



### Join us for Lutheran Day on the Hill!

We are also pleased to share that **registration is now open for our annual Lutheran Day on the Hill at the Iowa Capital on February 26**. This is a wonderful opportunity to gather, learn, and advocate for the people and communities we serve. We invite you to **bring your friends and family** for a meaningful and engaging day of advocacy.

Thank you again for standing with LSI. Your partnership matters more than you know, and we are grateful to walk into this new year alongside you.

*LSI is an affiliated social ministry partner of the Iowa congregations of the ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) and a member of LSA (Lutheran Services in America). We proudly serve people of all ages, abilities, religions, sexes, gender identities, national origins, ethnicities, races, and sexual orientations. Learn more at [LSIowa.org](http://LSIowa.org) and [facebook.com/LSI.iowa](https://facebook.com/LSI.iowa).*

# February 2026

| Sun                                                                                                   | Mon                                                                      | Tue                                     | Wed                              | Thu                                                                              | Fri       | Sat                                   |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|---------------------------------------|
| <b>1</b><br>9 AM Worship<br>10 AM Property<br>10 AM <i>Blood Pressure Clinic</i><br>5-7 PM Crossroads | <b>2</b><br>9 - 11 AM<br>Food Pantry                                     | <b>3</b><br>4:40-5:10 PM<br>Bookmobile  | <b>4</b><br>3 PM Social Ministry | <b>5</b><br>1-3 PM Card Ministry<br>3:30 PM Education<br>4 - 6 PM<br>Food Pantry | <b>6</b>  | <b>7</b><br>8 AM - PPALS Bible Study  |
| <b>8</b><br>9 AM Worship<br>5-7 PM Crossroads                                                         | <b>9</b><br>9 - 11 AM<br>Food Pantry<br>5 PM Stewardship<br>6 PM Council | <b>10</b>                               | <b>11</b>                        | <b>12</b><br>4 - 6 PM<br>Food Pantry                                             | <b>13</b> | <b>14</b><br>8 AM - PPALS Bible Study |
| <b>15</b><br>9 AM Worship<br>10 AM Annual Meeting Info Session<br>5-7 Crossroads                      | <b>16</b><br>9 - 11 AM<br>Food Pantry                                    | <b>17</b>                               | <b>18</b>                        | <b>19</b><br>4 - 6 PM<br>Food Pantry                                             | <b>20</b> | <b>21</b><br>8 AM - PPALS Bible Study |
| <b>22</b><br>9 AM Worship<br>10 AM Annual Meeting<br>5-7 Crossroads                                   | <b>23</b><br>9 - 11 AM<br>Food Pantry                                    | <b>24</b><br>4:40-5:10 PM<br>Bookmobile | <b>25</b>                        | <b>26</b>                                                                        | <b>27</b> | <b>28</b>                             |
|                                                                                                       |                                                                          |                                         |                                  |                                                                                  |           |                                       |