The Beacon

A Beacon of Hope
East Granby Congregational Church

hello
January

Pastors Message

Dear Friends,

We are reminded by the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Romans that we are to “welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.” Romans 15:7 This beautiful poem by Mary Oliver speaks to me of the extravagant welcome that we as Christians are called to offer the world.

“Making the House Ready for the Lord” by Mary Oliver.

> Dear Lord, I have swept and I have washed but
> still nothing is as shining as it should be
> for you. Under the sink, for example, is an
> uproar of mice — it is the season of their
> many children. What shall I do? And under the eaves
> and through the walls the squirrels
> have gnawed their ragged entrances — but it is the season
> when they need shelter, so what shall I do? And
> the raccoon limps into the kitchen and opens the cupboard
> while the dog snores, the cat hugs the pillow;
> what shall I do? Beautiful is the new snow falling
> in the yard and the fox who is staring boldly
> up the path, to the door. And still I believe you will
> come, Lord: you will, when I speak to the fox,
> the sparrow, the lost dog, the shivering sea-goose, know
> that really I am speaking to you whenever I say,
> as I do all morning and afternoon: Come in, Come in.

In January, as we start anew, I hope you will recommit with me to embodying this welcome in as many ways as we can. This month EGCC will be hosting two guest ministers. Rev. Terry Schmitt will be providing pulpit supply on Jan. 7th. On Jan. 21, 2024, Rev. Marilyn Kendrix will be a guest preacher at the request of the EGCC Open & Affirming Exploratory Team. Please look to the informative article elsewhere in this edition of the Beacon to learn more about the upcoming schedule of events.

As we welcome new people and new ideas to our congregation, it is my ardent hope that renewed life of the Spirit, the presence of Christ, and the glory of God will be upon EGCC in the new year.

Blessings to overflow,
Rev. Sandra

Council Corner

Happy New Year! Welcome 2024!

A sincere thank you to all those that planned and organized all the wonderful events throughout the Advent Season. It was heartwarming to see so much participation.

We are beginning preparation for our 287th Annual Meeting scheduled for January 28 following worship service. Watch for the All-Church Warning with more details.

****Ministry Annual Reports are due to our Administrative Assistant no later than January 7, 2024. ****

In the Southern New England UCC, each congregation independently and autonomously runs its own affairs. The Annual Meeting in a congregational church is your opportunity, as a member, to review the finances of the church and review the activities of each of the ministries throughout the year. Churches plan annual meetings to reflect on events of the past year, to plan financially and programmatically for the year ahead, to elect leaders of our church, and to celebrate life together in community. I encourage you to mark your calendar and join the meeting.

At our December council meeting, some of the highlights included:

- Reminding everyone that while our monthly Beacon newsletter is a wonderful way to communicate with the congregation, we must all be aware of the deadline to submit an article to the church office. The monthly deadline is the **23rd of each month**.
- We are excited to see the upcoming calendar of events from our Open and Affirming Team. Please see more details in this Beacon. Thank you to Wayne Korhonen and his team.
- Our Abundant Life ministry is seeking those who would like to serve on a ministry team in 2024 and beyond. We are in search of a new volunteer to be our **Income Recorder** for 2024. Many thanks to Pam Turner for taking on this role for the past year. Please see Gayle Wilcox for more information and to let her know where your talents can best be utilized.
- The Physical Resources Ministry continues to research and gather quotes regarding the upgrade and replacement of our elevator and for options regarding the parsonage.

Please reach out to Joe Doering or me if you have any questions.

In His Steps,

Adah Dionne
EGCC Moderator

Worship & Caring Ministry

After a busy Advent season filled with joyous activities and events, we are moving into a new calendar year.

All services begin at 10:00 am for both in person and live stream except for Café Church Sunday, in-person only beginning at 9:50 am.

January 7: Worship and Communion with Rev. Terry Schmitt

January 14: Café Church at 9:50 am. The animate topic: Grace

January 21: Worship with Rev. Sandra
The sermon will be presented by Rev. Marilyn Kendrix: Systemic Racism
Question and Answer discussion time follows in Fellowship Hall
See the Open and Affirming article in this Beacon issue for more information.

January 28: Worship service will be followed by the Annual Meeting

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Some December ***"Thank Yous"*** from Thelma: to those who donated poinsettias – the foliage was vibrant in the Sanctuary; to SFM who gave us *Hanging of the Greens* and the *Children's Pageant* and all those who participated; to the readers each week as we lit the Advent Candles; to the vocal and bell choirs, led by Linda and Dave, who gave us beautiful seasonal music to lift our hearts, to the many who were lay leaders and greeters and ushers each week and with deep gratitude to the other members of Worship & Caring (and spouses) Linda Harrold, Kim Hecht, Betsy Mack and Carl Pitney who made sure that ALL the behind the scene details were done.

Meal Train and Meal Ambassadors….just a reminder for help with this "very appreciated" caring outreach.

W&C coordinates this outreach when a family has an emergency and needs our support.
But sometimes the need is less critical, some ongoing support is needed as recovery takes weeks, daily meals may not be needed, just every few days.
Often there are too few people able to prepare meals. So, what can we do?

Use the Meal Train Fund to purchase ready-made meals.

This **$750+ fund** was established with a bequest from the Bea Adams estate and a donation from Mission & Outreach.

How does it work: purchase the meal, submit the bill to Worship & Caring to be reimbursed.
Local markets with meals: Geissler's, Stop & Shop, Big Y and others. Or could you arrange a Grub Hub delivery?
What do we need: volunteer to contact the family, arrange a time, purchase the food, and deliver.

This is flexible. Would it fit your schedule; would it add to your feeling of helping others?
If several people volunteer it really makes this doable! Please contact Linda Harrold for info and to sign up.

An Update from the Treasurer

This morning I was reading a message from the CEO of the Insurance Board – the company that provides our insurance coverage for EGCC. I was struck by a couple of items in the message. First – we, the whole congregation, are charged with caring for our environment. Genesis describes the beginning and breadth of our responsibility. Secondly – global warming and climate change are a reality and we humans must protect our world for us and our offsprings. I found the message quite insightful and a challenge to us as we INSURE that we have been given. I used the word insure because of the source of the message and know that we must ENSURE we comply.

Financially Insurance is one of the significant line-item expenses included in our church budget. Salaries for our clergy and staff are other significant line-items as well. Insurance protects us against physical loss in addition to protection from legal actions. Our salaries provide the means to support the messages, love, and caring from the pulpit and the church school along with bulletins and communication from our incredible church office.

I ask each of you to look at your own life and the expenses you encounter each day. The Church has many of those hidden expenses as well. In previous updates I have included a listing of many of these items such as elevator maintenance, and lawn care. Did you know that if all our salaried positions (7) were filled, that the total of those line items would account for 59% of our current operations budget? That means that there is still 41% of the budget allocated to other expenses. At this time, we only have three positions covered regularly, one on a temporary basis, and three others being “covered” by volunteers.

To date our Current Operations income through November totals $169,500. Pledges and non-pledged donations account for $157,600. In 2022 at this same time these donations were $168,700. I anticipate that December totals will come close to 2023 budget levels. HOWEVER, I am asking each of you to think about 2024.

Preliminary budget requests show an increase. The requests are reasonable. PLEASE complete your 2024 Pledge commitments. Our 2024 pledge total does not show an increase currently.

There is still time for you to get your 2024 Pledge submitted.

See you in church!

Gene Wilmot, Treasurer

Abundant Life Ministry

Continue Gratitude…It Works!

Our **Season of Generosity** continues. In November we "offered" our pledge cards and spiritual gifts inventories to our God. If you did not mail your pledge to the church office, please do so. We are finalizing our exciting plans for 2024.

Continue to prayerfully explore who God wants you to be. What gifts can you share? Where is God leading you? How can I best share gifts of time, talent and treasure in 2024?

We need You and your unique gifts to be an essential part of the East Granby Congregational Church family! In this new year our church family, as one, can be closer than ever to each other and God as we move together in God's direction. We are ONE in the Spirit.

New Beginnings-More Gratitude Retreat

Fri, Jan 12th - Sat, Jan 13th, 2024

Come Join the Fun!!! Spend time with your church family and friends at our retreat during MLK weekend in January. Pastor Pam Vollinger will be leading us. Similar to our October retreat, we plan to have both in-person and Zoom options. This enables us to reach out to those out-of-state or those more comfortable with that approach.

We will gather on Friday evening for a 90-minute session followed by a full day on Saturday. As is our retreat tradition, there will be time for group discussion, introspection, fellowship, food (?!) and breaks.

Childcare can be available, but we'll need to know by Jan 1, 2024. Please sign-up on the sign-up sheet on the bulletin board outside the church office or contact the church office to have your name added. We are asking for a minimum offering of $45 to cover costs. Scholarships are also available contact Gayle Wilcox. Don't let $ stand in your way!

We will explore and question together, spending time in a large group, small groups, and individual reflection. We will have a chance to not only <u>think</u> about being connected in gratitude and love, but to actually be connected in gratitude and love.

"Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian Love"

Please consider giving yourself, or a loved one, this precious gift of time in 2024!

Lectio Divina

How about beginning a new spiritual practice in 2024?

Our group of believers would love to have you join us!

We meet the first Saturday of each month from 9:00 to 10:30 am via Zoom as we have some attending from a distance. You do not need to commit to every session, each meeting is a unique discussion. During the Lenten season we meet every Saturday in preparation for Easter.

We focus on the Scripture for the following Sunday worship (that makes it fun to compare the preacher's interpretation of the scripture to ours!).

Please email the office to be added to the Zoom invitation.

Upcoming Calendar dates: Sat., Jan 6th, Feb 3rd

"Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

2 Thessalonians 1:2

The Gatherers

Wrap Up for Annual Cookie Sale

Thank you from the Gatherers to everyone who helped in any way with the Annual Cookies-by-the-Pound Sale in December. That includes bakers, buyers, helpers with advertising, set-up, and clean-up. Everybody was a plus. We received a HUGE amount of cookies and candy gifts that disappeared quickly. We added just about $2,000.00 to the church coffers, which may be a record amount. We couldn't have done it without YOU!!!! See you next year.

Judy Goff for the Gatherers

An Update from the O&A Team

Vision, Identity and Mission Statement

East Granby Congregational Church, UCC, is called to nurture the joy and fullness of Creation with Encouragement, Inclusion and Compassion. Following the teachings of Jesus, we will demonstrate God's love and actively invite all to join us on this journey.
We are led by our core values of Faith, Acceptance, Community and Love.
We fulfill our calling through Prayer, Worship, Engagement and Service.

The above statement reflects the mission and vision of our church. It is who we say we are. It is in that spirit that the O&A (Open and Affirming) Team is pleased to bring you news of what we've been up to and what will be happening in 2024.

In terms of an historical recap, the following is an excerpt from the minutes of the 286th Annual Meeting of our church held January 29, 2023:

> *Wayne Korhonen asked the Council to investigate the process of EGCC becoming "Open and Affirming". Rev. Dr. Sandra Fischer responded that the UCC has a process to inform the congregation of what this would mean or change for EGCC. She asked anyone with private concerns about this topic to contact her directly.*

Subsequent to that, the team was named at the March 20, 2023 Council meeting, reporting to Worship and Caring with the first meeting tentatively scheduled for March 27, 2023. Since then, we have met more than ten times as a team and with others. We greatly appreciate the feedback from our church family that we have received as a team and as individual team members. Many thanks.

As we move into 2024 the O&A team is pleased and excited to share our schedule of events. Over the next few months, we ask that our church family join together in ***"Exploring the Breadth of God's Welcome."*** We will do this by having a series of speakers providing information on a variety of topics. Following each service there will be a Question-and-Answer session in Fellowship Hall. Childcare for the Q&A's is being developed and will be announced soon.

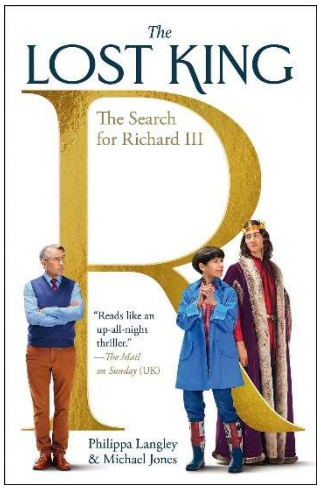
Exploring the Breadth of God's Welcome – 2024 Schedule

January 21, 2024 - Rev. Marilyn Kendrix (systemic racism)
February 25, 2024 - Elliot Altomare (LGBTQ+)
March 10, 2024 - Candace Low (disability community)
April 7, 2024 - Rev. Marilyn Sponzo (cognitive decline)
May 12, 2024 - Rev. Denny Moon (personal testimony)

Our team encourages you to save these dates, to be present, to question and to pray on all that we hear. These are important steps for our church as together we "***Explore the Breadth of God's Welcome."***

Your O&A Team – Wayne Korhonen (chair), Kate Boyer, Dave Houghton, Grace Kingsbury, Lennie Turner and Gayle Wilcox

Friday Night Book Group



The Friday Night Book Group is starting off the New Year with a fascinating story of historic discovery. We are reading ***The Lost King: The Search for Richard III*** by Philippa Langley and Michael Jones. This real-life account is an example of the familiar saying, "You can't make this stuff up". On August 22, 1485, Richard III was killed at Bosworth Field, the last king of England to die in battle. Fifty years later, the king's grave was lost and Richard III's reputation buried under a mound of Tudor propaganda. Philippa Langley reveals the remarkable story of her search for the lost king, leading to the incredible moment when the 500-year-old mystery was solved by Langley as his remains were uncovered beneath a car park in Leicester. The king was discovered in the exact location proposed by Langley's years of research and intuition. *The Lost King* is the astonishing true story of a woman who refused to be ignored and who took on the country's most eminent historians, forcing them to think again about one of the most controversial kings in England's history. Written in alternating chapters, Langley reveals her search for the king's grave, as military historian Michael Jones tells the fifteenth-century story of Richard's life and death. For all you history buffs out there, this is a gem!

Our next meeting is on **Friday January 12th at 7 pm via Zoom**. We welcome everyone to our meetings. If you'd like to join us, please send your email address so we can include you in the Zoom invitation. Contact the office with questions.

If you can't make it this month, maybe you can join us for our **annual February Poetry meeting**. We each bring one or two pieces of poetry to share aloud. It's a fun and relaxing time.

Hope to see you on Friday the 12th. In the meantime, as always, happy reading!

friend to friend
Food Pantry & Thrift Shop

The Food Pantry is currently in need of the following items: jelly, hearty soups, canned chicken, canned vegetables, rice sides, potato sides, pasta sides, tuna, cereal & pasta sauce. Thank you for all your help!
If you have any questions please feel free to contact Sandy Landolina our Friend to Friend liaison.

Spiritual Formation Ministry

What a wonderful tradition the **Hanging of the Greens** is! We would like to thank all who participated in making this years' Service so special. We had many members tell us how much they enjoyed watching as the church was prepared for Advent and the Christmas season. They especially loved watching the children placing the animals & figures at the creche & windows! Thank you Pam Turner for leading the service, Megan Gaskell & Linda Harrold for the beautiful music, Erin Lampron for helping distribute the baskets & watching to be sure everyone went up when they were supposed to, and the following participants: Carl Pitney & Shannon Stevens, McKenzie Cormier, The Dean Family, The Fortier Family, Gayle Wilcox, The Houghton Family, The Goff Family, The Preli Family, The Chmielinski/Gilmore Family, The Triblets Family, The Bortz Family, The Hecht Family, and The Boyer Family.

The Christmas Pageant was held during the church service on Sunday, December 17th. Most of our Sunday school children and youth participated in the pageant as readers, Mary, Joseph, Angels, Shepherds, cows, or sheep, and they all did a wonderful job retelling or recreating the story of Jesus' birth. Many thanks to the children and their parents during preparation and rehearsal for the pageant.

Sunday School Registration must be done annually to update emergency contact information. Please register your children for Sunday school if you have not already done so this year, using the following link or let our teacher Erin know:
https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/16emnQBb_u9beNDgX12HNCgPAp4xw9cCqZmyMou-JVjw/edit#gid=334851356

Safe Church Training: All shepherds and Sunday school teachers must be church members for six months, have completed a background check, and have viewed two 30-minute Safe Church Training modules in order to shepherd or teach. We appreciate your cooperation in helping to keep our children and Sunday school a safe environment. If you have any questions, please contact Adah Dionne. Adah will set you up to receive an email from Praesidium with a code to do the training.

Sign up to be a shepherd/helper!
https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10c0e4ca8ab2aa1ffc61-egcc#/

Thank you to the following people who volunteered to be shepherds and/or teachers for the month of December: Magdalena McKay, Kristy Preli, Judy Goff, Mike Boyer, Marge Korhonen, Pat Lang, Deb Paskiewicz, Kate Boyer and all the parents who assisted with the pageant! A special thanks to our newest helper Ryan Hecht. It's always good to have a strong back to haul our donkey!

Buttaro Room:

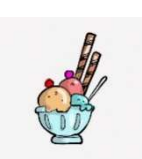
We understand that attending a worship service with young children can be challenging, which is why we have made every effort to make it easier for you. During our morning worship services, the Buttaro Room is available for families to use. The Buttaro room is situated at the top of the stairs and provides an excellent video feed of the service, comfortable chairs, and a relaxed environment to watch the service. (Just click on with the mouse). The Buttaro Room is equipped with two boxes of toys for different ages and a basket with art supplies for your children to use. This way, you can participate in the service while your children are engaged in fun and creative activities.

We encourage families to take advantage of the Buttaro Room during the morning worship services. It provides a perfect opportunity for parents to watch the service with their children while keeping them entertained. It's ok to go out the door in front of the pastor. She/he will not get upset. We invite you to stop by any Sunday morning to familiarize yourself with the room's layout.

Youth Group

Granby Congregational Church's combined youth programs of 6th-12th graders include East Granby Congregational Church. All kids from 6th – 12th grade are invited to <u>two events per month</u>. One event is always the 3rd Sunday of each month from 6:30-8 p.m. and the other event is always TBD and is community-service oriented. **3rd Sunday Youth Group** dates...please keep your eye on the bulletins and eblasts for specifics like location and if your youth need to bring anything.

January 21- Pizza Party
February 18- MYO Ice cream Sundaes
March 17- Movie Night w/ candy
April 21- Tie Dye Party
May 19 - Bonfire/Outdoor games

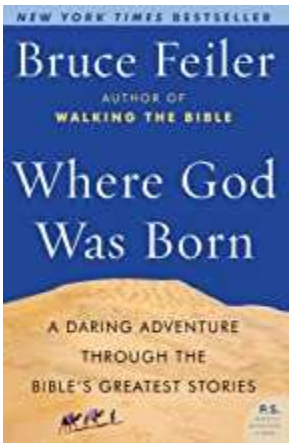


Look for additional emails from Sarah Pradhan for youth group events. Email Sara for any questions: sarahgranbyucc@gmail.com. If you bring a guest, please Email their contact information to Sarah.

Spiritual Formation Ministry: Marge Korhonen (Chair), Deb Paskewicz, and Pat Lang

The Bible Book Study Club

1:00 pm every Tuesday via ZOOM



ALL ARE WELCOME! No Knowledge of the bible needed, just a desire to get-to-know others, read, discuss, and learn about God and how He works in our lives by looking at how he has worked in others. We share doubts, challenges, faith, and friendship.

We are continuing our study of a book by the author Bruce Feilder, Where God Was Born: A Daring Adventure Through the Bible's Greatest Stories. We already know some about the author, but we will see what he has been doing since we last read *Walking the Bible.* We found him to be an interesting and provocative writer. No one needs to already have read the other book.

We started with the study of Joshua and the Israelites first venture into Caanan with the battle of Jericho. We looked at maps of Israel, pictures of Jericho, and talked about the archaeological evidence about the age of Jericho, how the walls could have tumbled down, and the numerous wars in the Old Testament as compared to Jesus' preachings in the New Testament.

Feiler now takes us to the study of David and the places where he lived, fought, and reigned. He raises the questions of the worse side of David's character as evidenced by some of the stories in the bible as opposed to the boy-hero fighting Goliath winning the war over the Philistines and the man he becomes -- God's chosen king of the Israelites.

As shown, his book has questions as well as answers and leads to some hardy discussions of the stories in the bible and the places where they occurred.

Join us in our journey at 1:00 PM every Tuesday via ZOOM. It is possible to start at any point in the book as we adventure through the Old Testament.

Contact the office to be added to the email.

Missions and Outreach

Hello from the Missions and Outreach Ministry! 2023 was an amazing year full of long-standing traditions and new opportunities. As we move forward into the new year, may we continue to find ways to grow in Faith and Love in both our individual journeys and as a community of faith.

Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!

Thank you to everyone that participated in the Christmas donation opportunities. Your gifts and prayers made a difference in many lives this Holiday Season through the below events:

Church World Services: The donations collected will support this organization based on the gifts chosen by the individual donors.

CWS Reverse Advent Calendar: Three bins of donations were collected over the course of the Christmas season by the congregation and donated to the friend-to-friend food pantry.

Giving Tree: Over 20 gifts were purchased and provided to children in need in East Granby.

Adopt-A-Family Program: EGCC sponsored the complete wish list for four children in need in Granby. Thank you to the four families that went shopping for these gifts on behalf of EGCC.

Volunteer Opportunity!

The **summer of 2024 mission trip** will be with the Indiana-Kentucky Conference UCC doing work in rural Kentucky, in conjunction with the Mayfield-Graves County Long-term Recovery Group. We will be traveling to Kentucky to help rebuild homes that have been devastated by tornados and flooding. Please see a member of Missions and Outreach for more details.

Donation Opportunity!

The clothing shed has arrived from St. Pauly Textile, Inc.! Please consider donating your no longer used clothes. EGCC will earn a profit based on the volume of clothes collected. Please share with your family, friends, and neighbors.

This month EGCC Mission funds was used to donate to the following organization:

- **The UCC Christmas Fund** is used to help support retired clergy and lay employees of the UCC. For over 100 years this fund has been used to provide emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums as well as help support lower-income retirees.

Don't forget, EGCC hosts a Red Cross Blood Drive once a month!
You can easily schedule an appointment by phone 800-RED CROSS (800 733-2767) or online https://www.redcrossblood.org/give.html/donation-time. No walk-ins allowed.
January 9th is the next scheduled Blood Drive.

EGCC Information

Staff

Pastor:	Rev. Dr. Sandra L Fischer
Christian Education Director:	TBD
Sunday School Teacher:	Erin Lampron
Music Director/Pianist	TBD
Administrative Assistant:	Karen Handville

Officers

Moderator, Council Chair:	Adah Dionne
Vice-Moderator:	Joe Doering
Treasurer:	Gene Wilmot
Income Recorder:	Pam Turner
Expense Recorder:	Dave Harrold

Ministry Chairpersons

Abundant Life:	Gayle Wilcox
Human Resources:	Rebecca Dean
Spiritual Formation:	Marge Korhonen
Worship & Caring:	Thelma Wilmot
Financial Resources:	Sybil Pokorny
Missions & Outreach:	Kathy Mock
Physical Resources:	Bill Hoerle

Key Church Communication Info

Office Hours: Tuesday - Friday 9:00 am – 2:00 pm Phone: 860-653-2987
Email Office@egchurch.necoxmail.com
Pastor@egchurch.necoxmail.com

Mailing Address:
East Granby Congregational Church, UCC
P.O. Box 390
East Granby, CT 06026

Web Site www.egchurch.org
For Donations: Mail checks, Donate on the Website or use QR Code:

Meeting Information

EGCC Ministry meetings are held as scheduled by the Ministry Chairperson.
EGCC Council meetings are held on the 3rd Monday of each month.
Contact the Council or Ministry Chairperson if you wish to attend.

Beacon Information

The Beacon is published on the 1st of each month. Beacon Deadline for articles is the 23rd of the month for next month's publication. A Word document is the preferred format for submitted articles and will be subject to editing/formatting. Articles should be sent to Karen at: Office@egchurch.necoxmail.com

Volunteer Opportunities Sign-up online at egchurch.org

Sunday Sanctuary Flowers: Or use the sign-up sheet on the bulletin Board across from the office or Contact Karen in the office.

Sunday Worship Teams need Lay Leaders, Ushers, Greeters. To sign up, go to: https://www.signupgenius.com/go/9040d4faca628abf49-worship#/ or Contact Linda Harrold

Sunday School Shepherds are needed. To sign up, go to: https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10c0e4ca8ab2aa1ffc61-egcc#/ or call Pat Lang