

# The Bethlehem Star

A PUBLICATION OF BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH AND CHILDREN'S CENTER



Volume 71, Issue 2

February 2021

## Stories of Faith in Action 2021

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed church and society in ways we still don't fully understand. As we consider our future ministry plans, some of us may be feeling anxious. We might be wondering how the church will survive this new wilderness into which we've been thrust.

Our ancestors in faith, the Israelites, faced similar challenges. Exiled in the desert, they struggled with thirst and hunger. They questioned whether Moses had led them to the wilderness to perish. But time and again, God provided.

God purified bitter water and made it sweet. God rained down sweet manna from heaven. God brought them out of exile to the promised land.

For us too, God not only fulfills our needs but provides relief.

I see it in these stories of faith in action that you made possible through your generous gifts of Mission Support:

I see God providing through ADORE LA, a digital ELCA faith community where Ed Ramirez found a church home that offered complete acceptance (page 12).

I see God providing through the 1,100 leaders formed in service through the ELCA's Young Adults in Global Mission program over its 20 years of ministry (page 20).

I see God providing in the courageous ministry of ELCA Chaplain Anthony Stephens, whose call brought him to the front lines of the pandemic in New York City (page 18).

There are countless other inspiring faith stories. Many bear witness to God's provision during the pandemic:

When we couldn't gather in person, we did it digitally, ministering to long-standing members and engaging new people through online worship, Bible studies and more.

Though economic disparities have increased, ELCA members are seeing needs and meeting them. One bishop described it as "people holding a cross in one hand and a bag of groceries in the other."

Beyond regular giving, people donated to the COVID-19 Response Fund, equipping the churchwide organization and associated ministries to serve those affected by this new disease.

I see God providing in a church that continues to show up for its neighbors. For giving generously of your time, talents and treasures, thank you.

We are living in uncertain times, but this has always been true. What's certain is that God is near, and God continues to provide sweet relief in the life, death and resurrection of his son, Jesus, the bread of life.

ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton

To read this year's edition of *Stories of Faith in Action*

visit: <https://www.livinglutheran.org/sofia/>

*Gathered to worship,  
Equipped by the Holy Spirit,  
Strengthened through community,  
Sent in peace to serve the Lord.*



On January 31st, members of Bethlehem Lutheran gathered for our annual meeting.

A budget of \$323,229 was passed, officers and commissioners were voted in, and reports from our different commissions were presented.

Thank you to the 2021 Bethlehem Children's Center school board members; Susan Jenkins, Demitri Esquivel, Anna Smith, Michael King and Sandra McConnell. We look forward to your new ideas, & appreciate your willingness to serve.

Blessings to our new and continuing officers, commissioners, and Endowment Committee Members, Jason Kracht, Janet Bertoli, Carolyn Cole-Schweizer, Beverly Schaap, Susan Jenkins, Laura Lightfoot, Michelle Thomson, Cal Eriksen, George Schweizer, Linda Knapp, Michelle Frabotta, Siri Fenson, Michael Jeye, Laura Knapp, Steve Jenkins & Brian Bertoli. Your dedication and caring are invaluable. Many thanks!

To request a paper copy of the Annual Report, please contact the office.

## Church Office

### Closed

The Church office will be closed on February 15th for President's Day.



## Offering Envelopes

If you have not yet picked up your offering envelopes, they are in the Church kitchen hoping to be picked up and taken to their home.

If you cannot pick up your envelopes by Friday, February 5th, please contact Susan Jenkins at [rvwhine@sbcglobal.net](mailto:rvwhine@sbcglobal.net) or the Church office to make arrangements. Please make plans to pick up your envelopes even if you do not use them every Sunday.

Thank You!

## The Love Fund

Did you know that Bethlehem Lutheran has a “Love Fund”? Once in a while folks notice the line item in the church budget entitled, “Love Fund” and wonder what it is and what it is for?

Bethlehem’s Love Fund is an account that is not funded by members’ regular offerings to the budget, but rather by individual contributions of members, specifically designated the Fund.

The Love Fund is a discretionary account used by the pastor to help people (sometimes members, sometimes non-members) who are in need of one-time, short term financial help. The Love Fund has been used to purchase groceries, provide temporary housing, assist with utility bills, and more.

Contributions to the Love Fund can be made through the regular Sunday offering, with “Love Fund” noted on the check memo line.

The Love Fund. Now you know!



## Second Mile Sunday

The second Sunday of each month, Bethlehem Lutheran Church along with the other churches in the Sierra Pacific Synod supports a special Lutheran program with a special offering, beyond your pledged offering. This month on February 14th, the focus is on Lutheran Social Services of Northern California.

Lutheran Social Services responds when people are vulnerable because of homelessness, mental illness, drug addiction or disaster. Providing support services and compassionate guidance, we help individuals and families to stabilize their lives and become self-sufficient.

LSS currently serves over 3000 clients in Sacramento, San Francisco, Contra Costa and San Joaquin Counties. Our programs include money management services, case management in transitional and permanent supportive housing sites, case management and housing services for emancipated former foster care youth, disaster preparedness training, and long-term disaster response services in the event of a local disaster.



Bethlehem Lutheran Church and Children’s Center  
1300 St. Francis Road, Santa Rosa, California 95409  
Sunday Zoom worship : 10:00 a.m.

Church Office: 707/539-5252, Hours: 9-3, W & F

Church Website: [www.blc-bcc.com](http://www.blc-bcc.com)

Church Email: [blc@sonic.net](mailto:blc@sonic.net)

Zoom Meeting ID: 889 9423 0337

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/BLCSantaRosa](http://www.facebook.com/BLCSantaRosa)

Password: church

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCA1g8W7SFMET386SfZBdwZQ>

Bridge Pastor:

Reverend Diane Bowers, Ph.D.

510-816-5765 (Pastor’s cell)

Email: [Revdrdiane@yahoo.com](mailto:Revdrdiane@yahoo.com)

Congregational Officers:

Jason Kracht, President

Janet Bertoli, Vice President

Carolyn Cole-Schweizer, Secretary

Beverly Schaap, Treasurer

Susan Jenkins, Financial Secretary

Council Commissioners:

Laura Lightfoot, Education

Cal Eriksen, Property

George Schweizer, Stewardship

Linda Knapp, Witness & Service

Michelle Frabotta, Worship

Michelle Thomson, Youth

Susan Jenkins, BCC Executive Board

Siri Fenson, Bethlehem WELCA President

Staff:

Michelle Frabotta, Parish Administrator

Janet Bertoli, Adult & Youth Choirs

Barbara Laferriere, Organist, Adult Choir,

Laura Lightfoot, Youth Choirs

# BLC Book Club picks for 2021

Join Zoom Meeting:

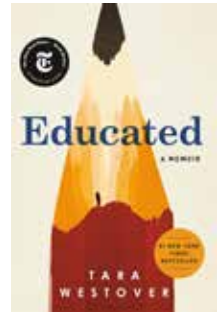
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81863339161?pwd=amE0L1A3K1ovVEpiQ0dxbGZsTzBaQT09>

Meeting ID: 818 6333 9161

Passcode: 495762

Dial In: 1-669-900-6833

Passcode: 495762#



 **Tuesday February 2-** *Educated* by Tara Westover

“Heart-wrenching . . . a beautiful testament to the power of education to open eyes and change lives.”—Amy Chua, *The New York Times Book Review*

 **Tuesday March 2-** *Small Great Things* by Jodi Picoult

“[Picoult] offers a thought-provoking examination of racism in America today, both overt and subtle. Her many readers will find much to discuss in the pages of this topical, moving book.”—Booklist (starred review)

 **Tuesday April 6-** *The Night Watchman* by Louise Erdrich

“National Book Award winner Erdrich once again calls upon her considerable storytelling skills to elucidate the struggles of generations of Native people to retain their cultural identity and their connection to the land.” -- *Library Journal*, Starred Review

 **Tuesday March 4-** *The Island of Sea Women* by Lisa See

“Lisa See is a *New York Times* bestselling author, a thorough researcher and a wonderful storyteller. In this novel, she seamlessly weaves history, tradition and culture into a heartfelt story about love and forgiveness. It’s an unforgettable read.”—*Toronto Star*

 **Tuesday June 1-** *Elizabeth Is Missing* by Emma Healey

“Part mystery, part meditation on memory, part Dickensian revelation of how apparent charity may hurt its recipients, this is altogether brilliant.” -- *Booklist* (starred review)

Meetings start at 7 p.m. All are welcome!

## Scout Sunday

February 7th is Scout Sunday. On Scout Sunday, we celebrate the 111th anniversary of Boy Scouts in the United States.



The mission of the Scouts BSA is to prepare young people to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetimes by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Law.

Scouting starts at age 5, or Kindergarten, boys and girls can join as Cub Scouts, and at age 11, become Scouts and at 14, can become Venturers. With an emphasis on the outdoors, they learn life skills, duty to God, leadership, teamwork, and service to others.

This year we recognize and celebrate Alexis Kracht as she receives her Jesus & Me Award. Congratulations Alexis!



# February

- 1 Karen Gundy
- 2 Paul Sengstock, Kayla Steindorf
- 3 Hunter Jacobson
- 5 Terry Newkirk
- 6 Samuel Bertoli
- 8 Helen Osborne, Kristina Pettersen
- 9 Michael Knudtzon
- 10 Lauren McCullough
- 12 Cara Green, George & Carolyn Schweizer (16)
- 13 Doug Campbell, Elaine Adams
- 14 Aloha Corning, Gale Muehlbauer
- 15 George & Mary Carson (35),  
Liz Ferrari
- 16 Riley Winn
- 17 Phyllis Hoover
- 20 Annette Daniele
- 23 Ryan Winn
- 24 Megan Steindorf, Carrie Winn
- 25 Lin Beck, Jeff Perry
- 26 Nancy Trbovich
- 27 Claire-Marie Krug

## Ruth Circle Meeting

### SAVE the DATE!

Ruth Circle members are invited to 'get back together' on Tuesday, March 9. With good spring weather, we will meet on the memorial patio. Bible study by Leslee Cramer and a chance to catch up on WELCA news and what is going at Bethlehem.

Call Elaine at 539.7831 with any questions or suggestions.

## Cinnamon Rolls (Kanel Bullar)

FIKA is the Swedish word for a 'coffee break'. It is listed in Sweden as one of five secret ways to a *healthier and happier life*. Here's a way to enjoy your FIKA: in an easy and fool-proof way, bake a Swedish Kanel Bulle to go with your cup of coffee.

1 refrigerated roll of PILLSBURY CRESCENTS dough

Melted Butter

3/4 C brown sugar

2 tbsp cinnamon

Pearl Sugar (or rock candy or sugar cubes crushed into small pieces)

2-3 tbsp milk

Icing: Confectioners' sugar and milk

Preheat oven to 350° Line baking sheet with parchment paper.

Unroll dough onto lightly floured work surface and with a rolling pin form a rectangle. Press perforations to smooth them out.

Brush melted butter onto dough. Mix sugar and cinnamon and sprinkle evenly on top.

Roll rectangle into a log, starting from the longer side, then cut into 3/4 inch thick slices. Arrange pieces close to one another on baking sheet and brush with milk and Pearl (or crushed) sugar.

Bake for 10-13 minutes until golden. Transfer to a plate, let cool for a minute and swirl icing over top.

Submitted by Siri Fenson 🇸🇪



## Donations Needed

Hello. With the New Year underway, just a reminder that WELCA is still collecting the following items for donation.

Eyeglasses and cases support the Lions Club "Recycle for Sight" program. Kenwood Hearing Centers are also happy to receive **hearing aids** to recycle to

hospice patients. If you have either

of these items, please drop your

donation off in the BLC kitchen (there's a basket on the counter for these items). Hours are 9-3, Wednesdays and Fridays or call the office for an appointment. I will be checking periodically and am happy to deliver them

as needed. [PS. Another reminder - BLC is no longer collecting box tops or stamps.] Thank you!

Liz Ferrari, *Stewardship Secretary, WELCA/BLC.*





**Sunday Morning Worship - 10 a.m.**

Meeting ID:  
889 9423 0337

Password:  
church

Dial In: 1-669-900-6833

Passcode: 970869#

**Christ in Our Home**

(February 2021)

**The whole city was gathered  
around the door. (Mark 1:33)**

Many in the church today are grappling with a sense of loss and disappointment about its decreased cultural influence. Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings are no longer left open for church participation, and many feel no need to be connected to a church. But this is reality at this time, and there is no easy way to reverse the trend.

Yet today's gospel tells of a "whole city" gathering to see Jesus. He has just cast out a demon while teaching in the synagogue; now crowds come to find him at a private home, seeking the healing he offers. Wherever Jesus goes, people follow; the location isn't the key.

Perhaps we emphasize getting people to a certain location—the church building—to hear about Jesus, instead of noticing other spaces where they might, or do, experience him. Where in your community do people yearn for Jesus' healing? How can you and your congregation "be Jesus" to them? And might you find Jesus already there, waiting to engage with you?

**Healing God, use us to reveal Jesus  
and help us to recognize Jesus,  
regardless of location. Amen.**

*Prayer Concern: Our local hospitals  
and other healthcare facilities*

**Marked by Ash Wednesday**

By: Karen G. Bockelman, (*Gather Magazine*, Jan.-Feb. 2021)

Ash Wednesday 2020 was an Ash Wednesday like many others, with communal worship, the substantial confession of personal and corporate sin, the imposition of ashes and communion. The next couple of Wednesday nights, also like many others, included, at my church, a soup supper, Bible study and contemplative worship.

None of us knew then that rather than following the predictable tracks of our usual Lenten journey, we were at the top of a steep hill, about to descend into what one Minnesota health executive called a "Covid-coaster."

Not only did we learn a whole new vocabulary (coronavirus, COVID-19, pandemic, flatten the curve, PPE, essential workers, underlying conditions, distance learning); we were called to practice a new civic liturgy (stay at home, wash hands often, wear a mask, maintain physical distance). Within weeks, around the world the church's liturgical life changed. Buildings closed. Staff began working from home. Sunday school, choir practice and coffee hour were canceled. We were fasting from communion.

Some of us were worshipping at a distance in parking lots. Congregational committee meetings, study groups and confirmation moved to online videoconferencing services. And perhaps most painful of all, worship was held not in our sanctuaries but over the radio, YouTube or livestreaming. Lent seemed almost unending, and Easter 2020 was not at all like many other Easters.

After Easter, the Covid-coaster only picked up speed. Our country's uneven health system was often short on supplies, with medical personnel overwhelmed. Infection rates soared. Death totals climbed. The sickest and most vulnerable among us were isolated from their family and friends. FaceTime substituted for hugs with grandchildren and physical presence with the dying. The workers we depended on (and all too often took for granted) - teachers, child-care providers, cafeteria workers, mail carriers, grocery store clerks, bus drivers - were overworked and often at risk. Guidelines and recommendations from local, state and national officials; public health organizations; infectious disease experts; congregations, synods and churchwide seemed to change daily and were often contradictory.

As the Covid-coaster seemed to go off the rails in many parts of the country, it was into the crevasses of national reckoning with racism, economic calamity, bitter political fights and seemingly unending natural disasters like wildfires, derechos, hurricanes and more. I'm guessing that this reminder of our lives during 2020 is no more encouraging to you than it is to me. No matter what normalcy or positive change we might long for, none of us can predict what will happen in 2021.

As I write this in fall 2020, I have no way of knowing if on Ash Wednesday 2021 I'll be at church or at home...isolated or able to join with others at least virtually...anxious about continuing crises or encouraged by even a glimmer of hope. (*Continued on page 6*)

## SHROVE TUESDAY BREAKFAST FOR DINNER

Tuesday, February 16, 7PM - 8PM

Every year, the Circle women have been serving a pancake breakfast on Shrove Tuesday - the day before Ash Wednesday.

This year the WELCA board is inviting you to take part in "Breakfast at 7PM" via Zoom. You will receive the details from the church office a few days prior. Feel free to come to the waiting room starting at 6:30PM.

After a 7PM welcome, Pastor Diane will give a devotion. We then bring out our plates of pancakes and enjoy eating them while listening to music by church members (New Orleans jazz, anyone?) and take a quiz about Lent. We will also have a chance to share what we plan to give up for Lent.

Feel free to make the gathering more festive by wearing something in gold, purple or green. And don't forget the Mardi Gras beads!

**ALL ARE WELCOME!**

*The WELCA Board*



## Marked by Ash

*(Continued from page 5)*

But here is what I do know.

On February 17, 2021, I will observe Ash Wednesday. I will hear and act upon the invitation into the disciplines of Lent.

I will engage in self-examination and repentance. I hope to face more honestly my complicity in racism. I do repent of times I did not speak up or act in the face of racial injustice. I hope I will acknowledge my own prejudices and my failure to honor the worth of others, especially people most different from me. I will ask for God's help as I seek to better recognize my self-indulgent ways and to amend my life.

I will engage in prayer and fasting. Whatever can be "given up for Lent" will be given, to make time and space for deeper prayer. I will shape my prayers toward the needs of a desperate world and learn to name specific needs in my own home, in my church family, in my community, in my nation and throughout the world. I will pray for specific people, even and especially for those with whom I most vehemently disagree. I hope one thing I can give up is the temptation to label others with easy and derogatory words.

I will engage in sacrificial giving and works of love. I will cultivate a hunger for justice and a willingness to pursue it personally and communally. I will make the effort to learn about the deep inequalities in my world - disparities in access to health care, housing, education, jobs and justice. I hope to move beyond yard signs to accompaniment with those who are Black, Indigenous or people of color. *(Continued on page 8)*

## Baby Shower Reimagined?

*Bethlehem Women of the ELCA*

For several years we have sponsored a congregational baby shower providing baby layette items to various charity groups throughout Santa Rosa. While we hope to return to this next year, we are "changing it up" for this year.

Instead of collecting layette items for community distribution, we are inviting you to make an individual contribution to a local group that helps children and families. We are suggesting The Living Room as one possibility. Thank you for your consideration.



The Living Room is the only Day Center in Sonoma County serving homeless and at-risk women and their children.

[thelivingroomsc.org](http://thelivingroomsc.org)

## 2021 WELCA Board Installation

The WELCA board was installed by Pastor Diane during the board's zoomed meeting on January 27.

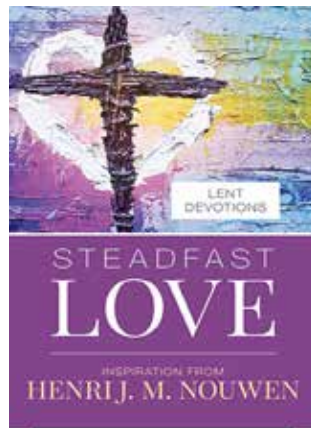


**Top row:** *2nd Vice President* Linda Widdiefield, *President* Siri Fenson, Pastor Diane  
**2nd row:** *Education Secretary* Lisa McIntyre, *Stewardship Secretary* Liz Ferrari, *Secretary* Janet Bergman  
**Bottom:** *1st Vice President* Phyllis Hoover, *Treasurer* Beverly Schaap

## Lenten Devotional

Our Lenten journey starts Wednesday, February 17-join us in reading *Steadfast Love*.

Henri J. M. Nouwen, one of the most beloved spiritual thinkers of the 20th Century, wrote passionately about the steadfast love of God in a way that has touched the hearts original reflections and prayers in this booklet for each day of Lent. Come to know more and more deeply the richness of the bond with our Savior that is never-changing.



## Online shopping benefits BLC

Many of you are shopping for Valentine's Day gifts online. Don't forget, if you are shopping at Amazon, you can shop instead at smile.amazon.com and increase donations for Bethlehem Lutheran Church. AmazonSmile is a simple and automatic way for you to support BLC every time you shop, at no cost to you. Amazon will donate a portion of the purchase price (.5%) To shop at AmazonSmile simply go to smile.amazon.com from the web browser on your computer or mobile device. You may also want to add a bookmark to smile.amazon.com to make it even easier to return and start your shopping.



*We pray today for loved ones and friends who are ill and recovering, especially Margaret Warrick, Don Hux, Dorothy Gullixson, Sharon Boschen, Gina Thompson, Janet Wolf, Brianne Konanz, Sue Barnard, Linda Wilkening, Tom Ziegler, Steve Sturgeon, Donald Schaap, Wyatt Hughes Graham, Judy & Paul Sengstock, Martin Curtis, Judy Warner, Elaine Gutsch, Liz Halburg, Angie Salado, Richard Doran, JoAnn Lockhard, Darci Raphael, Greg Talmadge, Jesse Halderman and Michael Ferri.*



## A word from Martin

“Our Lord has written the promise of resurrection, not in books alone, but in every leaf in springtime.”  
 -Martin Luther



## Office Hours

Starting February 15, the Church office and campus will be open on **Wednesdays and Fridays** from 9-3. Appointments can also be made by contacting the office.

I will continue working Monday through Friday answering calls and emails, but will be working primarily from home.

Thank you!

Michelle Frabotta  
*Parish Administrator*





# BLC High School and College Scholarships

The Education Commission administers the L.U.T.H.E.R. scholarship, a one time \$500 scholarship for high school graduating members (of at least 1 year) who will be attending a college or trade school.

**Due May 1, 2021.**

The Education Commission administers the congregational Lutheran Education Scholarship, an ongoing \$500 scholarship for those members (of at least 1 year) attending a Lutheran College, university or seminary.

**Due May 1, 2021.**

Eligible students will be contacted by Linda Knapp 539-8901.

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The Endowment Committee has funds available this year for Endowment Scholarships in varying amounts for applicants who will be fulltime sophomores, juniors, or seniors at an accredited college or university for the 2021-2022 school year. Preference will be given to a student who shows financial need. The application is available by contacting the Church office [blc@sonic.net](mailto:blc@sonic.net)

All applicants should send their applications to [lak9383@hotmail.com](mailto:lak9383@hotmail.com) in PDF format.

Questions- contact Laura Knapp at 761-4160.

# Marked

*(Continued from page 6)*

Although these disciplines are the work of a lifetime, I will live into them as deeply as I can throughout the weeks of Lent until the absolution granted on Maundy Thursday and the joy of rebirth at Easter.

On February 17, 2021, I will be marked with ashes.

I expect that I won't be able to feel the ashes without remembering the ash of what is left of forests in California, buildings in our cities and, in some cases, the bodies of those known and loved and of those who remain unknown. I will remember that in ancient times, in the absence of soap, ashes - both absorbent and antibacterial, like hand sanitizer - were used to cleanse. I will remember that gardeners use ashes, full of rich mineral content, to amend the soil

# Treasurer's Report

Beverly Schaap

## December 2020

	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Difference</b>
<b>Income</b>	<b>\$65,421</b>	<b>\$46,560</b>	<b>\$18,861</b>
<b>Expenses</b>	<b>\$37,322</b>	<b>\$34,684</b>	<b>\$2,638</b>
<b>Net</b>	<b>\$28,099</b>	<b>\$11,876</b>	<b>\$16,223</b>

## YTD 2020

	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Difference</b>
<b>Income</b>	<b>\$286,135</b>	<b>\$332,100</b>	<b>-\$45,965</b>
<b>Expenses</b>	<b>\$339,847</b>	<b>\$396,524</b>	<b>-\$56,677</b>
<b>Net</b>	<b>-\$53,712</b>	<b>-\$64,424</b>	<b>\$10,712</b>

**Amount needed to meet the budget \$7,625 per week  
December \$13,084**

and I will sing and pray, "Lord, let my heart be good soil" (*ELW 512*). I will remember how new life, new growth and new beauty can emerge from ashes.

On February 17, 2021, I will listen for the words "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

I hope I will not be tempted to shake off the dust or find it worthless. I seek to hold to the promise that God gives life to dust. God makes such amazing things out of dust - stars, planets, humans, and God continues to transform, create and re-create using that starry, earthy dust.

On February 17, 2021, I will acknowledge my longing for God's mercy and grace. And I hope that, whatever the setting - in church or at home, isolated or in the company of others - I will find once again the golden security of God's never-failing love, and will know that I - that we - are given places in God's heart. No matter what.

*The deadline for the next issue of The Bethlehem Star is February 19, 2021.*

*Please submit information and story ideas to the church office or email [blc@sonic.net](mailto:blc@sonic.net)*

*Should you have any comments or suggestions that will help improve The Star, we will be pleased to receive them.*

*Should you wish to discontinue your subscription to The Star please let us know via email.*