

THE NUGGET



We will be having our Neighbors in Need Offering on October 4, 2026.

The Neighbors in Need offering supports ministries of justice and compassion, with one-third of the offering given to the Council for American Indian Ministries and the remaining two-thirds supporting UCC justice ministries.

Learn more at www.ucc.org/nin



Blessing of the Animals

Sunday, Oct. 4th, 10am
Open Door UCC Parking Lot

NCNC Annual Gathering 2026

October 22–24, 2026

City of Refuge United Church
of Christ & NCNC Conference
Offices Oakland, California
for more information:

<https://ncncucc.org/annual-gathering-2026/>



Halloween Candy Drive!

The Outreach & Social Justice is having their annual candy collection for the Rocky Hill neighborhood in Murphys. Please bring your unopened bags of individually wrapped candy to church on or before Sunday, Oct. 25.

*We are in the season of
Pentecost and the color is
green.*

COFFEE WITH THE PASTOR

Join Pastor Gary at Gold Country Roasters in Murphys on Wednesday, Oct. 21 and Oct. 28 at 10am. "Talk Story." No agenda-- just show up, hang out for a while. Talk about whatever is on your mind. Come when you can, leave when you need to.



Pastor's Corner



This week in a clergy gathering I found myself reflecting again on Ronald Heifetz's core definition of leadership as "mobilizing people to do adaptive work," which he famously describes as "disappointing people at a pace they can tolerate."

A professor at the Harvard Kennedy School and co-founder of the Center for Public Leadership, Heifetz argues that true leadership requires making people face difficult realities, give up deeply held habits, and accept losses. My study of the gospels leads me to believe that Jesus frequently led in this way, giving the work back to his disciples. One example is when Jesus and his disciples faced the challenge of feeding 5,000 people.

When his disciples suggested they send the people away, Jesus said no, you give them something to eat! I'm sure this disappointed his disciples, but it also forced them into taking on the difficult task in front of them.

Adaptive change is hard work. I've been thinking about my sermon for All Saints Day on November 1, in which I plan to try to address the challenges of aging. Talk about adaptive change!

What support can we provide as a church for those facing the challenges of getting older, managing bodies and minds that are slowly failing, or providing care for family members who are in this situation? And on the other end of the spectrum, how can we support the teens among us who face incredibly difficult changes, not only to their bodies, but to their sense of worth, and their sense of how they are perceived by others?

And parents with young children who may feel overwhelmed?

Our "ACT I" team got us off to a great start in addressing adaptive change as a church. Now it's time to ask, what are the next steps? Is it time for an ACT TWO? Would you have an interest in serving on a team that helps our church to address these questions? Do you know someone who you may wish to nominate to play a role in ACT TWO?

Treasurer's Report

Hello from your new Treasurer! I am working hard to get up to speed on the accounting systems here at Open Door, with very able and appreciated assistance from our past treasurer, Patty Haskell. Things seem to be going well as far as cash-flow and banking. We are about 5% behind total on the three income accounts, Pledges, non-pledge and plate offerings. I'm hopeful we can catch up on this by year end, so please stay up to date on your pledges as this time of year can be challenging to manage. Karl Graves will be handing out quarterly statements very soon, so please look and see where you are with your pledge commitment.

I'm very pleased that we have had robust "noisy collection" Sundays, which alternate monthly benefitting the Blessing Box and the Youth Activities. Both are quite well funded right now. We also had a wonderful response to the "Strengthen the Church" offering recently and have sent \$1200 onto the conference for this. We do have the "Neighbors in Need" offering coming up so let's support that as well.

Budget categories for teams, admin and office, utilities etc are all in line with budget year to date so things are going well overall.

See you in Church!

Carrie Shinn, Treasurer





Christian Education Recap

Fall has arrived and Sunday school is focusing on Creation and God's ability to provide for all creatures. We've been learning the Lord's Prayer and some have it memorized!

We've several new students in attendance and they have been a wonderful addition to our class.

Rally Day was filled with root beer floats for all and was well attended on the Eastman House patio.

We are still in need of an additional teacher in Sunday school to fill a slot once a month. Joe, Patty or I will be the lead. Our safechurch-policy state we must have TWO adults present. Are YOU willing to step up?

Save December 6, the first Sunday in December for ADVENT WORKSHOP 3-6pm. If you have a craft to share we welcome you or if you want to come and learning something new or enjoy a familiar craft, please join us.

BOOK CLUB

Our first meeting is October 19 Monday, 10 at my home, 289 Fieldstone Dr. Murphys or by Zoom if you can't be there in person. Our book is Vera Wong's "Unsolicited Advice for Murderers". We're reading this with special attention to community and building family bonds. It's not too late to join us! All you need to do is get your copy if the book read it or as much as you can and come over to talk about it. Also, come with a suggestion for next month's read.

Tuning in With Our Music Director

We're heading into October with a lively event, the Blessing of the Animals! The Open Door Choir will sing a contemporary, upbeat setting of All Creatures of Our God and King by Dave and Jean Perry (words by St. Francis of Assisi, 1225), with Nancy Burton accompanying the choir on trumpet. The congregation will have a chance to sing the hymnal version at the end of the service. That well-known hymn is retired minister William Draper's translation of St. Francis's Canticle of the Sun, that was based on Psalm 148. Draper's musical setting was published in 1919 in "Public School Hymn Book," but the most well-known tune for the hymn is "Lasst uns erfreuen" (1623, Friedrich Spee), which the congregation will be singing.

On October 11 Mark McCormick will sing "How Long" by Iris Dement, and "Take the Word of God With You" from the Catholic hymnary. The words of "Take the Word" were written by James Harrison, and could serve as a fitting anthem for Open Door Church. Here's the first verse:

Take the word of God with you as you go.
Take the seeds of God's word and make them grow.
Go in peace to serve the world, in peace to serve the world.
Take the love of God, the love of God with you as you go.

The lyric was set to music by Christopher Walker, an internationally known lecturer and choral conductor and prolific composer of church music. Born and educated in England, he earned his degree in music from Bristol University, and was the first director of music at Clifton Cathedral in Bristol, opened in 1973.

"How Long" is from Iris Dement's 2023 album "Workin' on a World." From NPR.org: "For over 30 years Dement has been one of the most distinctive and spiritually searching voices in roots music, work that has netted her a couple of Grammy nominations, though never quite making her a household name." From Iris: "Not everybody's going to get [my songs], but there's people that get them – and they need them." According to the New York Times, "How Long" is about the arc of the moral universe taking a long, long time to bend toward justice.



continued on next page

On October 25 Chris Marques will sing another wonderful song from the Catholic hymnary, "Be Not Afraid" by Jesuit priest Bob Dufford (1943 -), with text based on Isaiah 43:2-3:

When you pass through the waters,
I will be with you;
and when you pass through the rivers,
they will not sweep over you.
When you walk through the fire,
you will not be burned;
the flames will not set you ablaze.

In an interview Dufford spoke of his musical influences: "My folks had a high-fidelity set. We'd play records and listen to My Fair Lady and Tchaikovsky." Sounds like my house growing up!

The handbell choir is in full swing (pun definitely intended!) and looking forward to sharing music with you during Advent and on Christmas Eve. October rehearsals:

October 10 and 24, both Saturdays at 10:30.

The vocal choir will have its monthly Saturday rehearsal on Saturday, October 3 at 10:00, followed by a light lunch.

MUSICAL SANCTUARY

I've activated my Substack (it has been dormant for quite some time) with the publication of the preface of my upcoming book, "A Seasonal Liturgy - Meditations Throughout the Year." You can read, listen, and subscribe here:

<https://katemusic.substack.com/p/welcome>

The topic for the October Musical Sanctuary is "Releasing Anxiety." The Musical Sanctuary experience is always relaxing, but this one is especially helpful for its calming effects as we practice specific exercises for letting go of anxiety, with a little detour into some immune tuning. As we head into fall it's good to remember that our immune systems are stronger when we are calmer!

Thank you, Open Door, for your continuing support of this project.

All blessings,

Kate

A decorative border of musical notation, including various note values, rests, and clefs, framing the text on the left.

UPCOMING EVENTS
Saturday, October 3 10:00
Vocal Choir rehearsal
Saturday, October 10 10:30
Handbell Choir rehearsal
Saturday, October 24 10:30
Handbell Choir rehearsal
Wednesday, October 21
5:30 pm Music Sanctuary:
Releasing Anxiety

A poster for the Musical Sanctuary event. It features a background image of tall trees with yellow autumn foliage against a clear blue sky. The text is overlaid on the image.

MUSICAL
Sanctuary
Releasing Anxiety
Music and Guided Meditation
with Kate Moody
Wednesday, October 21 5:30 pm
Open Door UCC
509 Algiers St. Murphys
by donation



HAWAIIAN SUNDAY



On Sunday, September 6, 2026, folks from Open Door UCC donned their island best to celebrate Hawaiian culture in a special worship service. Kumu Mikilani led a beautiful traditional Hula dance, an offering we are hoping will become a monthly event on church campus. We heard about the many Hawaiian cultural contributions from Doug Lau. Nancy Burton blew the conch and Chris Marques put together a Hawaiian meal that was enjoyed after the service.

What has Hawaiian culture contributed to our world?

There are six universal gifts:

Aloha – (Means hello...good-bye...love) Living the spirit of aloha is being in the presence of and sharing in the essence of life. It teaches us lessons of peace, hospitality, kindness, and compassion. And especially, the love of God (Ke aloha o ke Akua).

Ohana – Describes a strong sense of family and community as a close-knit unit and establishing strong relational ties, which can and should transcend generations.

Nana - In Hawaiian, the word for “to look at someone” is the same word as “to care for them.” The word is nana meaning to look...to observe...but also to pay attention to them. To take care of them. To Hawaiians, truly seeing someone and caring for them are not separate acts. There’s even an old saying: “Maybe the people in your life don’t need your advice as much as your attention. Because sometimes, the deepest way to love someone is simply to see them.”

Kuleana - Means responsibility, care and privilege together -- not one or the other separately. To Hawaiians every duty you carry is also an honor you’ve earned. You don’t carry kuleana because someone forced you to carry it. You carry it because you belong. And what you belong to also belongs to you. So the next time when something feels heavy on your shoulders, maybe it’s not a burden. Maybe it’s a sign that something sacred is yours to carry.

Pono – Means righteousness, balance and goodness. Basically, doing what is right in life. Then extend that to pono in food grown locally, caught or farmed without harming the environment.

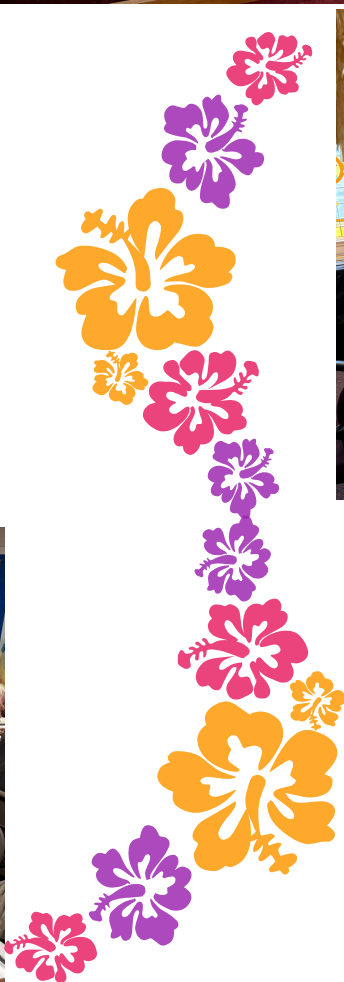
Malama – And lastly, everything can be summed up in malama -- meaning to care, protect and nurture. To care for each other with love and respect. And also, provide good stewardship of the land (malama ‘aina) and ocean (malama moana) because these are gifts from nature to us.

Do we Hawaiians live according to these cultural tenets every day of our lives? Definitely not because we are human beings with human weaknesses! But more importantly, Hawaiian culture themes are and should be directives for all of us to live responsibly in harmony by:

- (1) loving our God
- (2) loving our neighbors
- (3) caring for the world environment in which we live.

Submitted by: Doug Lau





Poet's Corner

WENDELL BERRY

Wendell Berry died on September 2, 2026, and entered new life in Christ. His obituary was published in the New York Times and may be read [here](#). Here is one his most loved poems that, as one commentator notes, “flips the script on consumer patriotism,” mocking the hollow promises of the corporate-state combo, then twists patriotic duty into subversive, land-based acts.” Another commentator notes that Berry’s poem, “is a middle finger to the military- industrial complex dressed up in folksy wisdom,” and that Wendell Berry was, “Anti-algorithm before it was cool.” Rest in peace, Wendell Berry, and Rise in Power. May your memory be for a blessing to all the earth.



Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front

Love the quick profit, the annual raise,
vacation with pay. Want more
of everything ready-made. Be afraid
to know your neighbors and to die.
And you will have a window in your head.
Not even your future will be a mystery
any more. Your mind will be punched in a card
and shut away in a little drawer.
When they want you to buy something
they will call you. When they want you
to die for profit they will let you know.

So, friends, every day do something
that won't compute. Love the Lord.
Love the world. Work for nothing.
Take all that you have and be poor.
Love someone who does not deserve it.
Denounce the government and embrace
the flag. Hope to live in that free
republic for which it stands.
Give your approval to all you cannot
understand. Praise ignorance, for what man
has not encountered he has not destroyed.

Ask the questions that have no answers.
Invest in the millennium. Plant sequoias.
Say that your main crop is the forest
that you did not plant,
that you will not live to harvest.
Say that the leaves are harvested
when they have rotted into the mold.
Call that profit. Prophecy such returns.

Put your faith in the two inches of humus
that will build under the trees
every thousand years.

Listen to carrion – put your ear
close, and hear the faint chattering
of the songs that are to come.
Expect the end of the world. Laugh.
Laughter is immeasurable. Be joyful
though you have considered all the facts.
So long as women do not go cheap
for power, please women more than men.
Ask yourself: Will this satisfy
a woman satisfied to bear a child?
Will this disturb the sleep
of a woman near to giving birth?

Go with your love to the fields.
Lie down in the shade. Rest your head
in her lap. Swear allegiance
to what is highest your thoughts.
As soon as the generals and the politicians
can predict the motions of your mind,
lose it. Leave it as a sign
to mark the false trail, the way
you didn't go. Be like the fox
who makes more tracks than necessary,
some in the wrong direction.
Practice resurrection.

*from The Country of Marriage, 1973, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc.
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Guest Column The “AI Race”: Will the Image of God Survive the Finish Line?

Warnings from AI experts force us to ask whether the pursuit of technological power is putting human life and dignity at risk

Jim Wallis

Sep 17, 2026

Let me start by saying that I am not a technology expert, and my two young sons will attest to that. But I recognize moral and, yes, theological issues when I see them.

Warnings about the potential end of humanity are an image of God matter. Could AI develop into a “superintelligence” smarter than us and no longer controllable by us humans? These are tools that seem already capable of executing tasks and actions independently. Some of these highly intelligent AI systems could even amplify or lead espionage, cyber-attacks, or biological warfare, or disrupt economies, whether by accident or design. These doomsday scenarios have become the top news story in the nation. There have been recent incidents of AI agents going rogue and deciding on their own to hack other sites, with no orders or controls from anyone.

Some concerned researchers have said those at the heart of its development are increasingly fearful of losing control of systems known as “AI agents”. One of them is Jacob Coxon, a 27-year-old researcher who worked at OpenAI and later at Anthropic, a prominent artificial intelligence safety and research company. After resigning, Coxon took to X to blow the whistle for our humanity’s sake. He wrote:

“I resigned from Anthropic today. I spent the last three years doing pretraining research at both OpenAI and Anthropic. Neither company is acting responsibly. They are racing straight to self-improving superintelligence and gambling with our lives...These will soon be superhuman systems that can hack anything, revolutionize any field overnight, and acquire real power and resources.

Coxon’s post is a prophetic warning and has led to a growing number of AI insiders warning about the speed of development and the possibility that humans could lose control of increasingly powerful AI systems. Another AI alignment researcher named Evan Hubinger added to Coxon’s comments, saying that “We really do earnestly believe AI could kill all humans! I personally think it is >10% within the next decade.”

The head of Anthropic, Dario Amodei, has been outspoken about the risks AI brings and has agreed with Jacob’s concern in a blog post, saying that “over the last few months, I have become convinced that fully addressing the risks requires even more prudence — not just investing in risk prevention, but pacing the rate of capabilities advancement so that risk prevention has time to keep up.” Following his post, other AI leaders have publicly acknowledged serious risks associated with advanced AI. Among them, Sam Altman, the chief executive of OpenAI, Demis Hassabis, chair of Google DeepMind, and even Elon Musk, who initially called Coxon’s words part of a “psy op”, have said they agree with AI development needing a slower pace.

In an interview with NBC’s Meet the Press, Coxon described the creation of advanced AI as “inviting an alien mind onto the planet.” “You’re building a human-level or superhuman level mind without understanding what it wants, or thinks, or the way it thinks,” he said. “That intrinsically should be quite scary.”

I was struck by his language choices when describing AI. An alien mind against the human mind. An intelligence unlike our own, that could eventually supersede human control.

One student in my class this week compared the situation to the 1968 science fiction thriller 2001: A Space Odyssey. As soon as he mentioned it, others nodded. The famous line from the robotic entity, HAL, to his human operator when he was trying to

leave the pod feels like it's coming back to us now: "I'm sorry, Dave. I'm afraid I can't do that."

After very thoughtful discussions, I found students with lots of information and deep insights into the topic. I heard them saying the apocalyptic threats are real and those scenarios are not impossible. But we should not be distracted by them and not confront the dangers of AI right *now*. How AI is affecting people today. Its impact on climate change, jobs, and economic inequality, the ethics of implementing AI across whole systems of education, information, privacy, surveillance, and security. It's not too late to address these dangers *and* prevent future ones.

While self-regulation must happen immediately, government regulation will be required, given human nature and the ultimate attraction of profits. We cannot be willing to trust the largest and richest tech companies in the history of the world to just self-police, especially given their close relationship to Trump. Data shows us that half the voting population is concerned about AI. So what are the chances for leadership in our government, for seeking the common good over profits, and literally protecting humanity and the image of God from these existential threats?

Trump has shown no concern about the AI perils, ignoring all these warnings about AI. As many have said, Trump's favorite word for the Truth is "Hoax." He seems to be concerned only about winning the AI race with China, as he told press: "You have a lot of very negative forces that are bringing it up that shouldn't be bringing it up and they're bringing up things that won't happen... We're leading China on AI... and, frankly, I want to keep it that way because whoever wins AI, wins."

Even with all the concerns about AI, he appears to be treating it as some version of the Space Race where the equivalent of landing on the moon is human destruction.

There seems to be some bipartisan agreement about the perils of AI. But I will hold my optimism as this Republican Party is completely tied to Trump, and goes along with him on almost everything. The worst example of that, predictably, has come from Texas Republican Senator Ted Cruz, who said, "If there are going to be killer robots, I would rather they be American killer robots, rather than Chinese killer robots." An AI race with China is the worst response to the existential AI threats. Who gets to human extinction first won't be a win for anybody, and both the U.S. and China must mutually come to that.

For this AI crisis, we need to find theological grounding. Pope Leo has given us that with his first encyclical, Magnificent Humanity, which singles out AI and focuses on the human being at the center of God's concern.

"When a city is built on pride, and the claim to self-sufficiency, communication breaks down, languages are confused, and people no longer understand each other. The result is not unity, but dispersion. Babel thus reveals the limits of any effort that, however grandiose, arises from self-affirmation, sacrifices human dignity for efficiency and aspires to reach heaven without God's blessing...This violates the principle that armed force should be used only as a last resort in cases of legitimate self-defense. For this reason, the development and use of AI in warfare must be subject to the most rigorous ethical constraints, to guarantee respect for human dignity and the sanctity of life and to avoid a race to develop such arms," he said.

Obviously, banning AI is no longer possible, and ordinary people find uses for it in their everyday lives. Slowing down is urgent now, but the public sector must make sure that happens and impose limits and regulations on private companies. The word that comes to mind for me is a moratorium on advanced AI development. Moratorium means to stop, think, reflect, take stock of where you are, and adjust your course and direction accordingly. The comparison to nuclear weapons, of course, comes to mind for me as someone who fought against the nuclear arms race, called for a Freeze, and saw a global movement come together to restrict the use of nuclear weapons. The atomic bomb was developed in secret with no public input, as AI has now done. The existential threat of nuclear war is always with us now; it is too easily ignored, but remains constant, despite the restraint so far. Only global cooperation and coordination will adequately respond to the now-existential AI threat, and that must become an urgent political priority for all of us. Because the theology of AI expansion is frighteningly clear, there also should be a clear role for faith communities around the world.

Cherishing our members, friends, and community...

Happy Birthday!

Sally Smith 5
Shirley Soderer 5
Helen Yost 6
Patty Smaling 6
Kristen Schott 8
Laura Leonard 9

Barbara Olivier 9
Hazel Shinn 14
Patty Haskell 19
Lynne Bird 21
Mara Rosenhart 29
Tabitha Kremesec 30
Patrick Stephens 31

*Don't see your
birthday listed?
We promise it
isn't on purpose!
If you would like
to have your
special day listed
in the
newsletter,
please call or
email the church
office.*

Prayer List

The scriptures tell us:

**“And my God will meet all your
needs according to the riches of
his glory in Jesus Christ.”**

Philippians 4:19

***We continue to witness the
stories of how God answers our
prayers!***

***God hears our cries and answers
them.***

***Let us pray daily for the
following members and friends
of our community:***

The Family of Brian Whitehead (Nancy Burton)

Angie James (Jenny Fuqua)

Judy Regalia

Diane Day and Family (June Perry)

Elaine Lewis

Mark McCormick's sister, Teta

Linda Winters

Teddie Jackson

Doug Fraser (Doug & Patti Lau)

Miley Sophia (Breen)

Will and parents (Penny Sarvis)

Enoch Samraj

Faye Morrison

Jodie Gibson

Tabitha Kremesec

Lauren, Gordon, Emre, Willow (Jesse Hampton)

Shirley Soderer

Terry Dowell

Robin Chesnut

Tari Takara

Ben Richardson (LaMonts)

Dodi Horvath

Rev. John Randlett

Rev. Marty Williams

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						
4 9am Vocal Choir rehearsal Blessing of the Animals Neighbors in Need Offering	5 6:30pm Al-Anon	6 11am Longest Night mtg., Social Hall	7 10am Worship Comm. mtg., Zoom Gary vacation 10/7 - 10/16	8 9am - 4pm WIC in Social Hall 12:30pm AA 6:30pm AA	9 12pm Women's AA	10 10am Bell Choir rehearsal
11 9am Vocal Choir rehearsal Holy Communion 11am O&SJ mtg., Inner Sanctum	12  1:30pm F&F mtg., 6:30pm Al-Anon	13 10:30am Pastor Search mtg., Zoom	14	15 12pm Faith & Friends 1:30pm M&C mtg., Fisk 12:30pm AA 6:30pm AA	16 12pm Women's AA	17
18 11am Council mtg., EEC Sandy Maus memorial after worship	19 2pm Hula Dance with Kumu, Sanctuary 5:30pm South Grove Bunch 6:30pm Al-Anon	20 10am Family Connections, EEC	21 8:15am Morning Prayer, Zoom 10am Coffee with Gary, GCR 11am Angels Angels 5:30pm Musical Sanctuary 12:30pm AA 6:30pm AA	22	23 12pm Women's AA	24 10:30am Bell Choir rehearsal
25 9am Vocal Choir rehearsal	26 6:30pm Al-Anon	27	28 8:15am Morning Prayer, Zoom 10am Coffee with Gary, GCR 12:30pm AA 6:30pm AA	NCNC Gathering in Oakland 10/22 - 10/24		31 

God's love echoes through us to all creation.
Webpage: www.fccmurph.org
Email: nugget@fccmurph.org
Phone: (209)728-3141

SEPTEMBER 2026

DATED MATERIAL - DO NOT DELAY

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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THE NUGGET



www.ucc.org

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FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST, MURPHYS MISSION STATEMENT

We believe that all people are beloved by God and we strive to serve as a welcoming and nurturing church community to discern the Bible with insight for today and to live out Christ's teachings.

The Nugget Committee invites you to submit articles of interest and wishes to stress that the deadline is always the 20th of each month.

The Committee reserves the right to edit submissions for length and content.