

Letter from the BUF Board

Dear BUF Members and Friends:

We, the Board of Trustees at BUF, extend a warm greeting to you.

As you are well aware, communication during a pandemic is a challenge. So, we're tagging onto the Stewardship mailing to offer you an update on the "State of the Beloved Community." We look forward to the day when we'll be able to safely gather in person and do such sharing face-to-face. Rest assured that we're working toward that goal.

Here is the update, divided into categories, with specific contacts suggested to obtain more information.

Financial: The evolving scenario of what is economically feasible makes it a difficult terrain to plan our budget. We've switched from an annual budgeting process to a six-month review to adjust to this new economic reality. The primary goal here is to ensure the well-being of our congregation, to be able to retain our salaried staff and to maintain our physical site so that we can quickly return to in-person fellowship when we reach the 'after time'.

We've eliminated much of the hourly staff expenses and shifted to volunteer effort. We've invested in a new technology, Zoom, and thereby adopted an effective means of remotely conducting the following activities: the Sunday service, Taize service, choir practice, chalice circles, book group, social justice work, and various committees. We're not able to raise revenue by renting our historic building to school groups, weddings, receptions, and festivals, except on a limited basis. But ours is a generous and committed congregation and we're thriving despite the budget reductions we've had to make.

Financial Questions? Contact Sky Hedman: Treasurer@buf.org

Worship: Some of you have described our recent Sunday services as "creative", "varied", and "simply amazing." We average about 100 Zoom connections on Sunday mornings, many of which are attended by more than one participant. We draw visitors from all over and are delighted to have many extended family and friends join us. The

monthly Taize services are also well attended and often draw a different appreciative crowd.

Worship Questions? Contact Paul Beckel: Paul@buf.org

Community: BUF provides many opportunities to connect and grow, the use of which depends on your passion and availability of time. Allow us to offer a few examples. Chalice Circles are small groups dedicated to an intimate exploration of spirituality and intention. Book groups select timely material and allow the participants to share their insights. Our outstanding music program not only enhances the worship service but provides a gathering place for those who love to sing. A study group entitled, "Widening the Circle" to broaden our engagement with a larger, diverse community is currently forming.

In our Religious Education department There have been weekly Children's Chapels on Wednesday nights involving an average of 8 children and some parents. We have strengthened our connection with a core group during the pandemic.

The Coming of Age program, from August through December, involved 6 youth and culminated in a youth service in December. The children and youth in our RE Program helped send out care packages and home made cards to some of our elderly members in December and February. And RE had Christmas and Valentine's "drive through" celebrations at our building, with mural making, treats and music.

Community at BUF Questions? Contact Genia Allen-Schmid: Genia@buf.org

Social & Environmental Justice: The SEJ Committee continues to coordinate our monthly Sunday collections to local justice organizations and sponsor many events and needs in our community, assisted by your purchases of their Fair Trade products. Its Ministry Action Teams, such as Black Lives Matter, Native American Connections, Family Promise, JUUstice Washington and Humanitas connect directly with diverse communities of local people; provide education and opportunities to the congregation via eracism minutes, programs, and forums on topics ranging from ending white supremacist culture to what BUF can do to combat climate change; and support our partnerships such as that with Community to Community Development which works for immigrant and farmworker justice.

SEJ Questions? Contact Kara Black.

COVID: A BUF task force tracks federal, state, and local phase requirements to guide us on setting appropriate parameters, be they building maintenance that might be required to fit the standards or in-person gatherings. What we know at present is that coronavirus is transmitted through respiratory droplets expelled when a person talks, sings, coughs, sneezes or shouts in an indoor environment. Bigger droplets fall to the ground, but smaller droplets can hang in the air for hours. We are considering how to upgrade our ventilation system to aid in removing the droplets. We're examining tasks and associated expenses for us to undertake this. We'll continue to ask that masks be worn in the foreseeable future. We're studying CDC and state guidelines to evaluate more effective cleaning and disinfecting processes for our space. This sums up ways we stay current and move forward, while making our space safe for all concerned.

BUF Covid Questions? Contact Murray Bennett.

Volunteers: BUF has a legion of talented volunteers too long to list by name. They continue to amplify BUF's mission, which is to make our world a better place. They expend hours of their personal time, which result in progress and joy for all. An example is the eclectic set of remote workshops they've offered during the building closure—from yoga to climate change to exploring the Unitarian Universalist faith. We hope to have a volunteer recognition ceremony in future.

Volunteer Questions? Contact Kathy Wahto: Admin@buf.org

If you'd like more regular updates, the BUF website (www.buf.org/news/communication sign ups) will get you added to some existing news lists.

Yours sincerely,

The BUF Board of Trustees for 2020-2021:

Murray Bennett

Melissa Swift

John Stewart

Bharti Kirchner

Rod Haynes

Henry Ohana

David Curley

Sarah Pearson

Debbie Boots

Even in darkness it is possible to create light. - Elie Wiesel