

# Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship

*Community, Compassion, Commitment*

December 20, 2023

## Attention in the Rich Darkness

A new film version of *The Color Purple* is coming out on December 25. I can't recall the book or original film without recalling Alice Walker's inspired words, "*I think it pisses God off if you walk by the color purple in a field somewhere and don't notice it.*"



This invites me to attend to my attention. Where will my focus be through these long nights on either side of solstice, with deep, rich, grey, and purply attendables I might casually by-pass in more light-filled days. So may the following insights arouse our curiosity and hope:

*Attention is the beginning of devotion.* Mary Oliver

*Your attention is like a combination spotlight and vacuum cleaner: It highlights what it lands on and then sucks it into your brain—for better or worse.* Rick Hanson

*I once had a garden filled with flowers that grew only on dark thoughts but they need constant attention & one day I decided I had better things to do.* Brian Andreas

*Real attention needs empathy; attention without feeling is just a report.* Mary Oliver

But seriously, Paul, do you think I'm going to attend even more deeply to everything when I can barely...?

Not a chance, no. It may mean attending to fewer things. Consider this: Would you be pleased if your gravestone read: *She attended well to a few worthy things.*

Peace in the Dark,  
*Paul*

## SUNDAY LOOK AHEAD

### December 24 Within the Shining of a Star

—A Christmas Eve Candlelight Service—7:00 PM

Join Rev. Paul and Affiliated minister Rev. Barbara ten Hove for a service of carols, readings, a brief message and, of course, candlelight! The choir will sing and the candle dancers are back! A special collection for the Interfaith Coalition will be received. Bring your friends!



NOTE, we will not have a Sunday morning service December 24.  
Our Christmas Eve service will be held at 7:00 PM SUNDAY NIGHT

## **Sunday, December 31**

### **What Tends Your Wholeness in These Divisive Times?**

For the last few years BUF's Sunday Service near the beginning of the new year has featured original works of art, music, poetry, and short essay by members of this congregation. It has been a heart-warming service with many participants who don't usually come to the front of the sanctuary. Su Livingston and Steffany Raynes want to continue that tradition and we invite you to participate. The topic is "wholeness in divisive times." You could be commenting on your own personal experience or what you observe in the culture. You could share your own work or a favorite from someone you want to introduce to us. You can share yourself or ask one of us to share it for you. Please contact Su Livingston via email [sulivingston@gmail.com](mailto:sulivingston@gmail.com) describing your contribution. Written and musical pieces need to be in the 3- to 5-minute range. Please help us welcome the new year by contributing your gifts to this service. Submissions due by Dec. 22.

## **CHILDREN'S RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

### **December 24**

We will **not** have a morning service this coming Sunday, December 24, but will have a special Christmas Eve service for all ages instead, at 7:00 PM. Children will sit with their families for what has become our traditional Christmas Eve music and candlelight service.

### **December 31**

The theme for December is the gift of Mystery. This Sunday we will explore how ordinary things turn into mysterious miracles with just a bit of noticing and mindfulness. To help us with the miracle making, we will make magic wands, and practice some moving meditation.

If you have any questions or concerns about our children's programming or want to volunteer, please contact me at [genia@BUF.org](mailto:genia@BUF.org).

## **December 30—TONIGHT!**

### **CHRISTMAS CAROLING, Holiday STORIES and COOKIES**



Help spread the joy of Christmas by caroling with BUFsters of all ages tonight, Wednesday, December 20. We'll start at 5:15PM at Columbia Place Assisted Living on 2315 Williams Street, and then return to BUF by 6:00 for our usual Wednesday Night Community dinner of soup and salad.

**After supper we invite children to stay for our Christmas party from 6:45-7:30.** We'll have people read their favorite seasonal stories while enjoying home-made cookies and hot chocolate! Please contact Genia if you can bring a plate of cookies or a seasonal story to share.

**Community Night Dinner**

Join us this Wednesday at 6:00 in the social hall for a variety of delicious soups, warm rolls and salad. Cost is \$5 per adult and children under 12 free! We'll have cookies, warm cider and hot chocolate to warm up the Christmas Carolers. Please bring some homemade cookies or breads if you can!



**Introducing Second Friday Fun (SFF) Nite!**

Starting Friday, January 12, BUF will host a variety of fun activities the second Friday of every month from 7:00 to 9:00 PM. Activities will rotate each month between a game night, movie night, and a TEDTalk with discussion. Our goal is to connect people through fun!

Our first SFF Nite, on January 12, will be a game night. A variety of adult board and card games will be provided, and we'll have a couple of childcare providers hosting a children's table so parents can play an adult game should they wish. Please bring a snack to share. People are invited to start socializing in the Social Hall at 6:30; games will start in earnest at 7:00.

**WINTER QUARTER ADULT RE PROGRAMS**

<b>DATE/TIME</b>	<b>COURSE TITLE / DESCRIPTION</b>
January 21, 28, February 4 12:00-1:30 Facilitators: Tom Nicholas Patricia Conover	<b>GRATITUDE</b> Recall those moments when you may have said, "Thanks to the universe, I got a parking place right in front." This facilitated conversation will explore the role of gratitude not just when life "goes our way," but for those inevitable times when it does not. We'll explore to whom and for what we're grateful. (3 sessions)
February	<b>BLACK LIVES MATTER SPECIAL PROGRAMMING</b>
March 2 10:00-2:00 Facilitator: Felice Davis	<b>*NEWCOMERS PATHWAYS:</b> Pathway sessions welcome new members, visitors, or anyone interested in knowing more about the UU tradition and BUF. These fun and informative sessions introduce participants to each other and to Unitarian Universalism.
March 3, 10, 17, 24 12:00-1:30 Facilitators: Natalie Johnson	<b>UU THEOLOGY:</b> How did Unitarian Universalism evolve into the liberal faith we know? What fundamental issues and individuals shaped our understanding of UUism from our earliest beginnings onward? Why do we not have a creed or dogma, but instead embrace our Principles and Sources? These and other questions are explored in this course. (4 sessions)

ADULT PROGRAMS, continued

We ask that folks register at the links below. A maximum \$10 donation is suggested towards the cost of materials each semester, but Pathways classes are free. If you need help registering, contact Genia and she will happily register for you!

Register here  
[wp.buf.org/learning/adult-programs/](http://wp.buf.org/learning/adult-programs/)  
 Register early! Space is limited.  
 Questions, please contact Director of Life Long Learning,  
 Genia Allen-Schmid. email: [Genia@buf.org](mailto:Genia@buf.org)

**TREASURER’S REPORT**

Below is the financial snapshot for the first 42% of BUF’s fiscal year (July ’23-November ‘23). BUF’s income is 46% of the forecast, and expense is 44% of the forecast. There are several income-related challenges, first that our Rental Income has not recovered post-COVID. Second, Stewardship Income (mostly pledges) are ahead of budget, but that is mostly a timing issue. BUF has also benefitted from federal COVID grant funds and should continue to do so this year. Operational and staff expenses are ahead of budget and will continue to be a challenge.

	<b>YTD 11/30/23</b>	<b>Fiscal Year Budget</b>	<b>% of Budget</b>
<b>Income</b>			
<b>FINANCING</b>	1,525	4,570	33%
<b>OPERATIONS INCOME</b>	34,569	72,867	47%
<b>STEWARDSHIP INCOME</b>	190,928	418,403	46%
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>227,022</b>	<b>495,840</b>	<b>46%</b>
<b>Gross Profit</b>	<b>227,022</b>	<b>495,840</b>	<b>46%</b>
<b>Expenses</b>			
<b>OPERATIONAL EXPENSES</b>	62,238	134,626	46%
<b>STAFFING EXPENSE</b>	139,214	308,143	45%
<b>STEWARDSHIP EXPENSES</b>	10,209	29,032	35%
<b>RESERVES</b>		14,320	0%
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>211,661</b>	<b>486,121</b>	<b>44%</b>
<b>Net Operating Income</b>	<b>15,361</b>	<b>9,719</b>	<b>158%</b>

John Stewart  
 BUF Treasurer

### **Coffee Hour Snacks**

It is lovely to find a bite of cake, a cookie, fruit or cracker on the treats table to have with coffee or tea after the Sunday service. But sometimes there is not enough for everyone to enjoy. The coffee hour snacks are provided by the community, for the community. Please consider occasionally bringing a snack to share. Simply deliver your ready-to-serve contribution to the kitchen before the service. It will be greatly appreciated!

~Judy Kasper, Hospitality Team

### **Christmas Day Potluck**

Mark Allyn will be hosting a Christmas Day Potluck Dinner on Christmas Day at 1:00 PM in the Social Hall. This will be a potluck (everyone brings a dish; we will not be cooking turkey as we did for Thanksgiving). Mark also plans to invite folks from the local LGBTQ community in addition to the BUF community. He is usually at coffee hour after the services. RSVP Mark Allyn [allyn@well.com](mailto:allyn@well.com). Please indicate how many people will be in your group and what you plan to bring.

### **Taize**

Taize is an evening of candlelight, prayer, meditation, and singing. Walt Ellis is taking the leadership for Taize services starting in January. **The January date for Taize has been changed to January 8.** Please join us at 7:00 PM in the sanctuary or on Zoom.

Join by Zoom:

<https://zoom.us/j/738363620?pwd=TmdwVjYyOXMrNU4ydFhaZXpEV1Urdz09>

Meeting ID: 974 5697 4163

Passcode: BUF

**NOTE: This is the same Zoom link and passcode as our regular Sunday service.**

### **Humanitas Ministry**

Hannah came in this week looking for help with heating oil. She'd recently been fired from her job, one which barely paid enough for her to get by on, much less allow for any type of savings. She would put as much oil as she could afford every couple of months, just enough to keep her family warm until she had the money to buy more. Now without income she was no longer able to buy any oil. She applied for energy assistance through Opportunity Council but will not qualify until February because her income over the past few months was too high. We, along with our partner churches, were able to give her money to buy enough oil to see her through until she's able to qualify for assistance to buy more. As we sit in our warm houses this season, let's remember those among us who are not able to do that.

**SEJC Collections Recipient for December 2023, Restorative CommUnity Coalition (RCC)**

*“Do we settle for the world as it is or, do we work for the world as it should be?”*  
 M. Obama.

When incarcerated people are released from prison, often they have no place to go or find employment. Irene Morgan, co-founder of the RCC described their plight:

Our neighbors and local citizens who find themselves involved in our “legal” system are “*silenced by shame.*” We have been “conditioned by our mainstream media” that folks in jail and prison are just “Bad folks.” I have found just the opposite—finding folks who mostly are traumatized by events and/or conditions in their lives thereby unable to navigate “the system.”

The founders of RCC accepted the challenge and initiated their project, the RCC, to restore the worth and dignity of people who went through the trauma of incarceration and its aftereffects to themselves and their families, to become productive members and taxpayers. Eighty percent of those imprisoned, this marginalized community, are non-violent and could be contributing to their families and the local economy.

Please make your contribution, if you have not made it yet, in the remaining half of this month.

**BUF Calendar**

<b>Date and Event</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Location</b>
<b>Wednesday, December 20, 2023</b>		
<u>Humanitas In Person</u>	9:30 AM	Sanctuary
<u>Christmas Caroling</u>	5:15 PM	Columbia Place
<u>BUF Night In/Community Night Dinner</u>	6:00 PM	Social Hall
<u>Choir Rehearsals</u>	6:45 PM	Sanctuary
<b>Thursday, December 21, 2023</b>		
<u>3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday Chalice Circle</u>	9:30 AM	Conference Room
<u>Mindfulness Meditation Group</u>	9:45 AM	Library
<u>Pastoral Care</u>	10:00 AM	Conference Room
<u>Flowering Cherry Meditation</u>	12:30 PM	Sanctuary
<u>Chair Committee</u>	1:00 PM	Conference Room
<b>Sunday, December 24 2023</b>		
<u>Sunday Service, in person and Zoom</u>	7:00 PM	Sanctuary/Zoom
<b>Monday, December 25, 2023</b>		
<u>Christmas Dinner Potluck</u>	1:00 PM	Social Hall
<b>Tuesday, December 19, 2023</b>		
<u>Buddhist study group via Zoom</u>	12:00 PM	via Zoom

**THE MID -WEEK UPDATE IS ON HOLIDAY NEXT WEEK (December 27)**

**How to Submit Content for the Mid-Week Update**

Content must be received on Monday by 10:00 AM. Submit via email and include an attached Word doc, single spaced, Times New Roman 12 font. Avoid any formatting, including bullets. Limit 200 words. If you have an item for the calendar, please put “Calendar”; if you are seeking Volunteers, please put “Volunteer” in the subject line. Submittals may be edited for space and clarity. Submit your content to [MWU@buf.org](mailto:MWU@buf.org)

**Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship**

360-733-3887 [Buf.org](http://Buf.org). [admin@buf.org](mailto:admin@buf.org) Sign up for the Mid-Week Update and/or the BUF News Digest at <https://wp.buf.org/news/communication-sign-ups/>