

Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship

Community, Compassion, Commitment

January 24, 2024



Sunday Services in person, and on Zoom, here:

Meeting ID 738 363 620

Worship starts at 10:20 AM

<https://zoom.us/j/73836362> Passcode: BUF

A Regular Spiritual Practice

Here's a wonderful piece by my colleague Rev. Tom Schade:

Let me explain my spiritual practice:

Periodically, I gather with a group of people who engage in the same practice as I do. My fellow practitioners and I come together in a large room which we have decorated with as much beauty as we can collectively afford, trying to create a space which both delights the eye wherever it falls and produces a sense of calm restfulness among each of us. After greeting each other warmly, we take up comfortable positions and enter into a state of relaxed well-being.

Beautiful music is played as a part of our practice. Practitioners both listen to and participate in the creation of the music. Some of the music is new and unfamiliar, to jar our minds from lazy torpor. Some is very familiar, ancient music which represents the long history of those who have followed this spiritual path. The body of practitioners then enact a series of rituals, designed to aid us in concentrating on the practice, and banishing the cares of our everyday lives from our busy and distracted minds.

If the practitioner or devotee is experienced enough at this form of devotional work, and has an open and trusting heart, he or she may become aware of the great energy force that lies at the heart of all creation. In response to our collective meditative power, that spiritual energy may choose to enter into the ritual space. The power of that energy force is invoked with ritual language and each devotee tries to personally connect with that force and bring it into their own consciousness, eventually seeking to submerge individual consciousness in the crowded and multi-faced void of this force. (I am aware that this part of the practice is very difficult to explain to outsiders; all I can do is invite the reader, if they are comfortable, to try it sometime in the company of others more experienced.)

When this collective sense has been attained, the spiritual leader of the group speaks to the group. The leader has been chosen by the group and is not thought to have any mystical powers, just wisdom and experience. The leader explains the many lessons of this spiritual path, or offers insights from the many ancestors and guides who have preceded us along this path, to guide practitioners in finding the pearls of wisdom from the tradition to apply to their daily lives. (Thus, the practice goes in a great circle: first we try to shut out ordinary life to access the wisdom of the path, and then we try to apply the wisdom of the path to everyday life.)

As the teacher or leader speaks, the other devotees engage in a difficult practice called "listening-without-planning-to-reply." We need this practice because our ego-driven minds constantly engage in a complex series of defenses, which make it difficult

for us to receive any wisdom from beyond our own distorted experiences. Only by practicing "listening-without-planning-to-reply" can the devotee be awakened.

When the period of shared practice is over, devotees who have had a good session arise feeling refreshed, rested, and energized. I find myself to be, at the same time, both more self-aware and conscious of my deep connection with others. I also feel more gratitude for my own life, despite all of its difficulties, and more compassion for others. In some way, I feel that I carry within me some tiny piece of the ultimate energy which was invoked.

When I first started this practice, I engaged it in a haphazard and irregular manner. The concerns and pleasures of my own life seemed to have a higher priority. But over time, I have come to see that this is a spiritual discipline; that I receive greater and greater benefits and insights from regular and sustained practice. The teachers of my practice wisely know that all disciplines must be self-discipline, and so they are content to let people find their own pace and schedule. Unfortunately, many people are too enmeshed in their own transient circumstances to ever commit sufficiently to the practice, and give it up before they can realize its potential for spiritual growth.

My spiritual practice is called congregational worship.

Anyone curious about this practice, and who wishes to experiment with following it, can contact me at church next Sunday morning.

Peace,
Paul

SUNDAY SERVICE - JANUARY 28

Sanctuary vs Fortress – Rev Paul Beckel

Vulnerability has its pros and cons. Boundaries have their pros and cons. Sanctuary, which is essential, can have a shadow side.

VOLUNTEER REQUESTS

We're looking for volunteers to manage the BUF website, assist with audio-visuals in the sanctuary on Sunday mornings, and also some non-technical aspects of engaging with and welcoming those who join us via Zoom. For more info on any of this, please contact Paul (minister@buf.org)

What We Appreciate About BUF

Hello, my name is Brian Quick, and my wife, Jill, and I have been members of BUF since 2016. First we appreciate the Rev Paul's dedication to the congregation and his wise messages, and the outstanding music program, and the warm and caring congregation.

We are both long retired and have spent time separately volunteering for the Membership and Finance committees as well as other activities. At this point, we are prioritizing our commitments and personal activities. This leads us to the second thing we truly appreciate, the great advances made in BUF's online activities from the weekly newsletter to the Zoom access to the Sunday services, to the internet access within the Fellowship to all guests, and to the individual member access to the BUF Member Directory. It has also facilitated two-way communications between the church staff and members about various adult and children's retreats as well as adult educational programs.

Also appreciated is the access BUF provides for the use of the Fellowship space for other religious or civil activities. I, for one, appreciate the multiple Buddhist groups who are able to privately meet to meditate and discuss the Buddhist way.

We have warmly admired the youth education offered by RE, for we have seen the positive results not only in our three Goggin granddaughters but have witnessed it in the graduates of other families here.

We are both proud to be members of BUF. Thank you to all.

IN MEMORY OF FRANK MORROW

Frank A. Morrow, a long-time member of the Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship going back to the turbulent Vietnam War years, died peacefully in his Bellingham home in the early morning hours of January 21. He turned 91 in December of last year. Frank was a retired attorney and WWU professor who served as the Whatcom County Juvenile Court Commissioner.

Frank is survived by his wife Elizabeth, "Liz," whom he met in college, and three adult children, all of whom were with him in his last weeks and days while under hospice care. For several years, up to this past one, Frank and Liz split their time between Bellingham and Honolulu, HI, where they lived car-free and made good use of the excellent public transit system to attend the First Unitarian Church of Honolulu.

2023 was a difficult year for Frank and Liz, as Frank had increasing difficulty walking and talking. In August of 2023, after developing aphasia, the inability to speak, an inoperable brain tumor was discovered. A course of radiation therapy to shrink the tumor and decrease his symptoms was ineffective. According to Liz, Frank will be cremated, and a celebration of his life will be held in Bellingham "when the weather warms up." Messages may be sent to Liz at their home address, 1467 Glencove Lane, Bellingham WA 98229.

—Ken Gass

LISTENING SESSIONS – Round 2

REGARDING 2024-25 BUDGET CHALLENGES

Over the last few years, BUF has received over \$100,000 in federal covid grants and payroll tax exemptions. We do not anticipate any of this for our next fiscal year, beginning in July. Also, over the last couple of years, we've become increasingly dependent on our Reserve Funds, and we're receiving less rental income. With no other changes to income or expenses, we anticipate a \$50,000 shortfall for our 2024-25 budget.

To make up for this solely in pledges, pledge income—which has not increased since 2019—will need to increase 15%. Other options include restructuring staffing, using reserve funds, and/or increasing rental income, fundraising, and volunteering.

We had a good turnout at our first Listening Session in December when individuals spoke in general terms about all of these options. In our upcoming sessions we'll be exploring very specific changes.

Why now?

- To support our Board volunteers.
- To avoid last minute, behind-closed-doors, uninformed decision making.
- So the Board can craft a draft budget for everyone to review and discuss before the final deadline in April (for presentation at the May 19 Congregational Meeting).
- *We can't begin to look at hiring for our music or religious education programs until we determine the long-term viability of these positions.*
- We'd do well to consider all of this in the context of a multi-year vision. That is: what efforts do we need to initiate NOW that will take a year or more to pay off?

To maximize participation:

- We will hold one listening session in person, Sunday, February 11 at noon in the social hall.
- We will hold one listening session on Zoom, Tuesday, February at 7pm.
- Non-members as well as members are welcome to attend listening sessions (just as all are to welcome at Congregational Meetings).

Making hard choices about our collective priorities takes a great deal of trust and collaboration. Thank you for being part of the conversation.

CHILDREN’S RELIGIOUS EDUCATION



This Sunday, we explore how love pulls us to accept ourselves, knowing that we will never be perfect. In our society, it can be easy to get stuck in the idea of perfectionism and the thought patterns of “I have to be perfect to be enough or for people to like me.” Our faith reminds us that self-love is like a magnet and pulls us back to a place of accepting ourselves, loving our imperfections, and, in doing so, creates space for us to love ourselves. We will engage with this theme through a story, some fun games, and an art activity.

Children will start in the sanctuary, as usual, where we have a child-friendly space with pillows, drawing supplies, fidget boxes, and a front row seat for the Story of All Ages or interactive song. After the Children’s Focus we will head upstairs where we will explore our theme through stories, activities, games, and art.

If you have any questions or concerns about our children’s programming or want to volunteer, please contact me at genia@BUF.org.



OUR WHOLE LIVES IS COMING THIS WINTER

Our Whole Lives, or OWL, for younger, and older elementary-age children is coming this winter. OWL is based on the philosophy that parents or guardians hold primary responsibility for the sexuality education of their children. Our Whole Lives is a positive, comprehensive, and age-appropriate educational program led by trained facilitators. For more information on OWL, please visit the UUA website at <https://www.uua.org/re/owl>. Details and registration will be out soon. If you are interested or want more information, contact Genia Allen-Schmid at genia@BUF.org.

COMMUNITY NIGHT DINNER



Join us this Wednesday at 6:00 PM in the social hall for a delightful choice of soups from the freezer (served hot of course!), such as Moroccan lentil, peanut, and Thai pumpkin coconut. If this sounds familiar, you are right! These were on offer last week, but due to the weather the soups were never defrosted! Our soups will be accompanied by an Indian salad (think spinach, peanuts, raisins and a sweet curried dressing), bread and dessert. Cost is \$5 per adult and children under 12 are free!

BUF'S MOST IMPORTANT FUNDRAISER OF THE YEAR!

We need your donations of Events, Experiences, Services, and Treasures.

Our new Auction Software goes live March 3 and is much more user-friendly.

Have ideas or want to volunteer? Contact Auction Planning Team Leader Barbara ten Hove at revbabs10@gmail.com or talk to another Planning Team member—Drew Betz, Judy Kasper or Annie Sorich.



MUSIC NEWS

BUF members were delighted to see and hear Andy Marshall sing in last Sunday's service.

Andy was the music director at BUF for 9 years, from 2006 until 2015. During that time he completed his music degree at WWU and directed choirs at Squalicum High School.

In 2015, he and his wife, DeeDee, and their two children, Addie and AJ, moved to Thailand, where Andy directed the choirs at International School Bangkok for 4 years. In 2019, they moved back to the States, and Andy started his current teaching position as middle and high school choir director in Blaine.

Addy, whom many remember from her elementary days, will graduate from Blaine HS this spring, after which she plans to attend WWU to study choral music education.



BUILDING RENTAL VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

A group of BUFsters is needed to help manage the rental of the BUF building, specifically determining and carrying out

- how we market,
- showing the space
- negotiating rentals
- arranging for the set up ahead of time and any clean up afterwards.

If you have skills and talents that you can offer this important effort, or would like to discuss it, please call John Stewart at 360-306-1183 or at treasurer@buf.org

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED TO HELP WITH PLEDGE DRIVE

Call or text Rick Steele (Vlad) at 360-319-7759 to volunteer or with any questions.

Activity	Estimated Time	Time Span	Total Needed
Canvass 3 to 5 households	2 hr./week	2/11/24 to 3/15/24	40 to 50
Recruit Canvassers	1 hr./week	11/15/23 to 2/1/24	10
Spreadsheet Analysis	5 hr. total	Mid-April	1
Write Inspiring Article for Brochure	5 to 10 hr. total	12/1/23 to 1/15/24	1
Desktop Publish Brochure	5 to 10 hr. total	1/15/24 to 2/1/24	1
Oversee Kickoff Breakfast	5 hr. total	1/15/24 to 2/10/24	1
Cook for Breakfast	3 hr. total	2/11/24	3 or 4
Setup for Breakfast	1 hr.	2/11/24	2
Cleanup/Breakdown Breakfast	2 hr. total	2/11/24	2
Stuff Envelopes for Mailing	2 hr. total	2/1/24	2

INTERWEAVE TO MEET FEBRUARY 4

On Sunday, February 4, 12:00-1:30 PM, there will be a meeting for Interweave, the UU program to fight the oppression of LGBTQIA2S+ people. We will be brainstorming in five areas (social programs, worship services, days of observance, youth activities, and community advocacy) to determine which activities to pursue. All those interested are encouraged to attend. You do not need to be LGBTQIA2S+ to participate. Allies are welcome! The meeting will be in the library, off the social hall.

HUMANITAS MINISTRY

We met an older man named Joe this past week. He was looking for help with gas. Living in a van full time would be hard for anyone. It's especially hard for Joe, who is on disability for congestive heart failure. He needs to go into the hospital quite often because of swelling in his legs. Each time he goes he knows he'll be admitted and stay for a week or more. He's distrustful of our local hospital and will only go to a hospital in Olympia. This will be his fifth admission this year. We asked him about the possibility of getting housing, but his check wouldn't even cover rent, much less leave him with anything extra to live on. This is a common theme we hear from many of those living in their cars/vans or on the street. It means so much to us knowing that we can help, even if it's a tank of gas allowing Joe to get the medical care he so badly needs. Thank you for your continued support.

REGIONAL ASSEMBLY 2024 REGISTRATION IS OPEN



Registration is open for our Pacific Western Regional Assembly this April 19 and 20. People can attend either in person, at First Universalist in Denver, or remotely. This is a family-friendly event, and children are welcome. This is a great chance to connect with our larger faith and connect with new and old friends. Stay up to date on all the [PWR RA Plans here](#).

WINTER QUARTER ADULT PROGRAMS

DATE/TIME	COURSE TITLE / DESCRIPTION
January 21, 28, February 4 12:00-1:30 Facilitators: Tom Nicholas Patricia Conover	GRATITUDE 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	BLACK LIVES MATTER SPECIAL PROGRAMMING
March 2 10:00-2:00 Facilitator: Felice Davis	*NEWCOMERS PATHWAYS: 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	UU THEOLOGY: 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)

Please 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!

[Pathways](#)

[Gratitude](#)

[UU Theology](#)

A Note from Rev Barbara Cheatham via Bev Smith

I received a Christmas letter from Barbara Cheatham, one of our BUF ministers in the 80s. Barbara worked very hard to help our growing church members to work together, in peace. Her husband was very helpful in the background. Barbara even danced on her last Sunday to express her good-bye feelings toward BUF! Barbara helped star our connection with our partner congregation in Transylvania. She wrote a letter to the Hungarian minister on how American ministers try to fill the needs of our churches. Here's her letter to us:

Much has changed for me since the start of 2023. Sadly, Dick died in early February, six months before our 70th wedding anniversary. With the loving support of my children and grandchildren, I've since been successfully adjusting to widowhood. My two-year-old great-granddaughter is the icing on the family cake. May this new year bring you health and happiness and may there truly be peace on earth. Most Warmly, Barbara (100 Timber Ridge Way NW, Apt 1206, Issaquah, WA 98027

FIND THE BUF CALENDAR ONLINE

The complete calendar of BUF events and building uses is available on our website under the News tab or by following this link

<https://73940468.view-events.com/calendar/73940468/month>

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

Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship

360-733-3887 Buf.org. 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/>