

Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship

Community, Compassion, Commitment

March 7, 2024

SUNDAY SERVICE ZOOM LINK

Meeting ID 738 363 620

Worship starts at 10:20 AM

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

Phone: (669)900-6833



Sunday, March 10

Keepers of the Flame- led by Daniel Kirkpatrick

A thousand thousand years ago, at the dawn of human history, our ancestors made fire their ally, using it for cooking, warmth, and light. Certain tribespeople emerged as keepers of the flame – those who reverently carried precious embers from one campsite to the next for the common welfare. All these millennia later, facing the sunset of modernity, we humans seem to be having difficulty recognizing our shared fate. Yet we are called to a new stewardship: A new sort of reverent care is needed to navigate this time between worlds. This talk will explore how to spread love and light and resilience and joy in an era when so much that is precious is at risk.

It Takes All of Us

In my welcome last Sunday I named 27 members, friends, and staff whose help that morning was vital to ensuring that all who arrived felt they belonged...and experienced a meaningful Sunday service.

Then, during the course of the service and mingling afterward, I realized that I'd left another 10 people out. Note that these 37 were ONLY people helping on that particular day. Collectively, there are many dozens who fill these roles (and especially to the volunteers who coordinate other volunteers and those who look for ways to help almost every week of the year). BUF is deeply grateful for your joyful service. And grateful to the family members who support the volunteers so they can do what they do.

When you catch someone in the act of building beloved community, be sure to thank them. And maybe ask them, "How can I help?"

Thanks,
Paul

Changes Coming to the MidWeek Update

Over the next few weeks we will be shifting our publication schedule from weekly to monthly. We'll continue to do our best to keep BUFsters informed and interconnected. This month, you'll receive a second newsletter on the 20th. After that, it will be published once at the beginning of each month. Publication dates and deadlines for submissions are still to come. In the meantime, if you're not on our email list-serv, go here to subscribe:

<https://wp.buf.org/news/communication-sign-ups/>

A New Name?

So what should we call it? Go to the link below by March 15 to suggest names. In the March 20 edition, we'll publish your suggestions and another link where you can vote for your preference.

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf2n6uNx-RpEnSZ076xti9BYK3IX27bVi260odJsDT8FX-_/w/viewform?usp=sf_link

Spring Canvass Progress

Our total number of pledges received so far is 58% of how many we received last year. We'll also report on the dollar numbers...but want to emphasize here that, this year, getting all of our pledges in *quickly* is of the essence—as we can't begin the process of creating job descriptions for new staff until we can estimate what percentage of full-time we'll be able to hire them for.

Additional Budget Planning Information

General Overview

In the best of times, the budgeting process is an effort at predicting the future: how much money we can expect to bring in, and how much money we expect to spend.

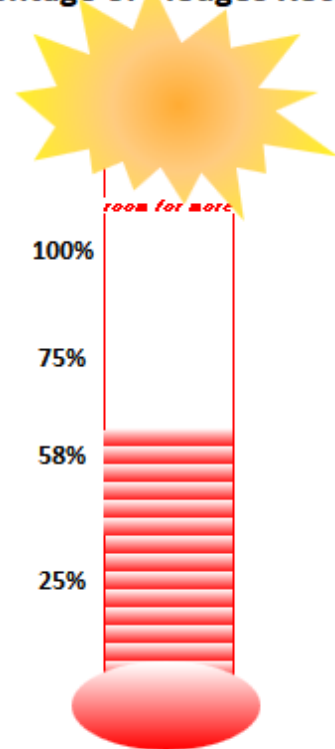
Income: what we know

- Pledges are our greatest source of income.
- Major gifts are unexpected and welcomed, but we cannot plan our budgets on them.
- Other sources of income are less predictable: auction and rental income.
- Covid grants helped in prior years, but have come to an end.
- We can't cover shortfalls by not funding reserves, as we did during the pandemic.

Expenses: what we know

- Payroll – the salaries for the minister, administrator, the RE director, the ½-time music director are the greatest proportion of our expenses.
 - We also have part-time positions – musicians, AV support, childcare, and building stewards.
- Operations – the cost of running and maintaining our building.
 - We have not adequately funded capital reserves during the pandemic.
 - We need more volunteer help with routine maintenance.

Percentage of Pledges Received



- Other expense considerations
 - We face changes in our staffing – in addition to bringing on Michelle as administrator, Genia and Kevin will be retiring in June.
 - The cost of staff has increased: we face higher costs with new hires for salaries and health insurance.
 - Changes in labor law that have created more stringent rules about overtime.

Budget Planning Listening Sessions

- The Board held congregational listening sessions in December and February – in person and on Zoom – to share this information and solicit feedback.
- We talked about our challenges ahead in 2024-2025:
 - If pledges remain flat and staffing continues as in 2023-2024, we face at minimum a \$50,000 shortfall.
 - We can't rely on reserve funds to cover budget shortfalls.
- The congregation brainstormed on ways to address this shortfall.
 - The congregation values the RE and music programs and would like to see them continue in some form. Childrens RE is especially important.
 - Suggested approaches to reducing costs centered on: Alternative approaches to staffing RE and music (reducing FTEs and recruiting more volunteers; possibly hire a volunteer coordinator).
 - Suggestions also focused on smaller opportunities for generating revenue: bake sale, plant sale, charging for participation in the choir, RE classes, SEJC events.
- Several members of the congregation have volunteered to serve on hiring committees.
- Regarding the many suggestions: it's likely that we won't be able to factor in the financial benefit of some activities without further analysis. These may not appear on the final budget, but will nonetheless be pursued in the next fiscal year.

What's Ahead

- Canvassing is underway to ask every member, friend, and known participant for a financial pledge.
- Canvassers are encouraging members to increase their pledges where possible, with an aspirational goal of increasing pledges overall by 15%
 - We need to complete canvassing by March 15 in order to begin preparing budget projections.
- The Financial Oversight Committee and the Board will develop a draft budget that considers
 - Alternative staffing scenarios for the RE and music positions
 - Feasibility of shifting some paid roles such as AV techs, childcare providers, and building stewards to volunteer roles.
- The first draft of the budget will be completed in late March and will be distributed to the congregation for another listening session in early April.
- The Board will deliver their final budget proposal to congregation by May 5.
- Our Congregational Meeting to approve the budget will be held Sunday, May 19.

Other Considerations

- Our Major Gift Fund has been used to supplement operating income during the pandemic, which isn't optimal. Major gifts are unpredictable.
- As we refine our budget and include additions to the emergency operating fund, building reserves, and capital reserves, the \$50,000 number will be higher.
- BUF membership dropped by almost 20% in the past three years and is currently 192.
- Budget discussions to-date have not included capital expenses or funding of capital reserves.
- Recruiting for RE and music directors will not begin until a final budget has been approved by the congregation.

CHILDREN'S RELIGIOUS EDUCATION



This month our theme is Transformation. It is also the beginning of the month of Ramadan. This Sunday we will learn about Ramadan and how this month of fasting transforms, or changes the focus of Muslims' attention, from everyday concerns to spiritual concerns, such as charity, empathy and Allah (God). By learning about Ramadan, we can be inspired to be more intentional ourselves, and put our attention on things that really matter.

To explore our topic, we will read a story about a young Muslim girl in the US, look at some video clips of Ramadan traditions and prayer, and play games and have an art activity centered on *intentional attention*.

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.

COMMUNITY NIGHT DINNER WEDNESDAYS AT 6:00

This week we are serving our "award winning" Thai coconut-pumpkin and Moroccan lentil soups, along with pita bread, salad and desert -- all for just \$5 per person and children under 12 free!

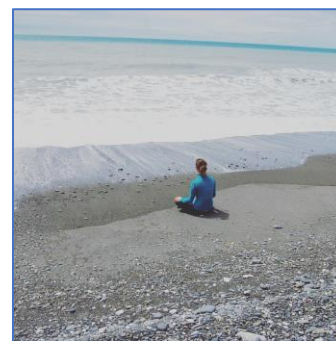


If you are interested in being a part of the dinner planning and leadership team, please let Genia or Jennifer Villalva know. We need more volunteers if our weekly dinners are going to continue next year. This is a worthwhile community endeavor, and a great way to meet people too!

REST, REJUVENATE, RESTORE AT THE BUF WOMEN’S RETREAT

Come join us at our annual Women’s Retreat at the day lodge at Semiahmoo on Saturday, March 23. Our theme is Rest, and we will explore and experience rest in myriad ways throughout the day. We will make meaningful connections with others, as well as have time for ourselves, in a beautiful beach setting. Registration details to come soon.

All who identify as women are welcome!



WHAT I APPRECIATE ABOUT BUF

My name is Scott Heise. My wife and I moved here from Indiana in 2017. I had done almost everything at one time or another in our UU congregation over the previous decade there. Here I had hoped to slow down a bit. And maybe I did. I got connected with junior high school OWL, adult RE, and the choirs, then the rework of the BUF website and stewardship. And though the pandemic has altered my pattern of physical participation, the website work goes on.

I appreciate that there are many opportunities at BUF through which I can feel I am being useful. I also appreciate the growth experience of the past four years plus in the Buddhist reading group. And I have not seen another congregation with Taizé services. That is special. I do miss singing in the choir, but that will return in time.

I cannot start naming names because the number of BUF members with whom I have closely collaborated and cooperated, learned and been useful, in just the past six years, easily exceeds 40 people. We are truly a beloved community.

HUMANITAS MINISTRY

We have our “regulars” who come in once a year like clockwork. That was the case this week with Fred. He’s been coming for his yearly help for 6 years now. His living situation hasn’t changed over time. He lives in his car and comes for a gas voucher. We’re happy to see him and happy to help. For some people nothing changes for various reasons. We don’t question them; we listen to them and then send them away with the help they ask for whenever possible. It makes me think about how we’re able to help Fred every year because of the consistency of those of you who give every month. Many of you joined the 10 bucks a month club when we first opened our doors and that money has come in month after month, year after year. Thank you.

MARCH IS DONATE TO THE AUCTION MONTH

If we are to raise \$22,000 on May 4, We need your donations of

Events, Experiences, Services and Treasures!

Need Ideas?

**Parties, Movie tickets,
Hikes, Handyperson skills,
Fine Jewelry, Gift Certificates
Other?**

We are particularly in need of High-End Items for the Live Auction:

**Vacation Getaways, Theatre Tickets with Dinner,
Framed Local Art**

Auction Team Members will be on site during Coffee Hour to help you donate. Find forms and info through this link: <https://fundraiser.bid/BUF>

Questions about the auction can be sent to Auction@buf.org.



TRIP FOR OUR WHOLE CONGREGATION TO THE UNITARIAN CHURCH VANCOUVER BC, SUNDAY, MARCH 24, 2024 ...AND DIM SUM RESTAURANT



The BUF Choir invites BUFsters, family and friends to join them in traveling to the Unitarian Church of Vancouver (UCV) on Sunday, March 24, 2024, to take part in their service at 11:00 AM, and then go out for Chinese dim sum lunch at 12:30 PM.

UCV, 6450 OAK STREET, VANCOUVER

A BUF Trip to Our Unitarian Neighbors Across the Border

BUF members, family and friends will enjoy a road trip to meet our closest Canadian Unitarian neighbours and attend a regular Sunday morning service, with special music by the combined BUF and UCV choirs.

After the service and coffee social at the church, we will head to a dim sum restaurant together with UCV. *(To clarify, BUF will still hold a regular service in Bellingham that Sunday for those staying home.)*



For information about the schedule, carpooling and lunch get a flyer from the bulletin board in the BUF narthex, or click

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1cDcEI6LNAcfnFKeg8atsEYgVssnaYgwD/view?usp=sharing>

Questions?

Contact choir president Carol Smith
or music director Kevin Allen-Schmid

smithcaroldavid@gmail.com
kevin@buf.org

360-592-5720
406-858-0142

WHATCOM PEACE AND JUSTICE CENTER - MARCH SEJC COLLECTION RECIPIENT

Executive Director Aline Prata describes Whatcom Peace and Justice Center (WPJC) as a community hub, library and resource for people of all ages, backgrounds, races and gender identities. Their rich history began twenty-three years ago after 9/11. In 2001, they joined Law Advocates' Whatcom Civil Rights Project, offering legal advice and support. In 2002, they opened a storefront, a popular meeting place for grassroots community groups and organizations where they host meetings, skill-building workshops and events, often collaborating with other organizations. In 2003, they began alternative military service information with tabling access in the schools, collaborating with Veterans for Peace. In 2004, they established the International Day of Peace, a popular event with BUFsters and a wide-range of religious communities. They advocate for peace through letter and phone campaigns and meetings with congressional representatives. They also promote and teach nonviolence, honoring direct action training as a strategic and lasting means toward peace and wellbeing. Free of charge, they provide a lending library with 900 books and DVDs as well as other resources such as tables, projector, peacekeeping vests, materials to create signs, and more. Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 12pm-4pm. To see the energetic team, click on this link:

<https://www.whatcompjc.org/who-we-are.html>

INVITE ORGANIZATION TO APPLY BY APRIL 12 FOR NEXT YEAR'S SUNDAY JUSTICE COLLECTIONS

You all have a role to play in helping the Collections Team follow our beloved community covenant. We ask BUF congregants to help undo racism by promoting inclusiveness in our collections process. We seek inclusion of community groups to which we are accountable, representing diverse ethnic, racial, national origin, and BIPOC (Black Indigenous people of color) backgrounds. Newly-established groups in the community are welcome to apply. The Team improved on this goal in 2023-24 thanks to your help in attracting a diverse pool of applicants. The Collections Team is looking to you, BUF congregants, to join our journey towards becoming an equitable/inclusive institution. We urge you to invite any not-for-profit organization in Whatcom County that meets our criteria to apply for a collection next year. The deadline for applications is earlier this year--April 12. The application link to share is: <https://wp.buf.org/justice/social-environmental-justice-committee/sejc-collection-guidelines-and-application/>

HOW TO SUBMIT CONTENT FOR THE MID-WEEK UPDATE

Content must be received on Monday by 10:00 AM before the distribution date March 18, for this month. 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/>

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>