

# Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship

*Community, Compassion, Commitment*

April 3, 2024



**This Sunday, April 7, 10:25 a.m.**

## ***Time Out***

Rev. Barbara Gilday

Have you ever felt stuck in a rut? By age, stage, job, family, or in other ways, we sometimes get into the same old, same old that robs us and everyone connected with us from being the loving, creative, delightful, talented people that we really are. A month on Bowen Island, NW of Vancouver, BC, dog sitting, fostered a restart for me. I'll share some of my adventures, surprised and reflections. Come prepared to create your own renewal!

**April 14**

## ***In Solidarity, Seeking Liberation***

Parents from our recent class, "Raising Kids in a Race-Conscious Society," and members of our Immigrant Resettlement Team will speak about how they have been inspired to continue their own learning by serving.

**All BUF services are accessible in-person or on Zoom use this link:**

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

Meeting ID 738 363 620

## **Final 2024-25 Budget Listening Sessions**

Tuesday, April 9 7PM

On Zoom – at the usual Sunday link: <https://zoom.us/j/738363620> Passcode BUF

Sunday, April 14 NOON

In person, with potluck lunch in the social hall

Please plan to attend the BUF Board's Final 2024-25 Budget Listening Sessions. This will be an opportunity for all of us to review our draft budget and consider together some significant changes to our programs and staffing.

The Canvass has been successful in gathering pledges from more than 90% of members and friends. This has made it possible to project our income for the 2024-25 fiscal year. Per-household pledging is up significantly, but membership is reduced from pre-covid levels, covid relief funds are no longer available, and our reserves are down, so we do not have the funds to maintain our 2023-24 budget.

Fortunately, since our previous listening sessions, several members and friends have created a team to assist with rental efforts; others have been meeting to develop alternative job descriptions for our changing RE and music positions.

Please join us at one or both listening sessions to learn more about the trade-offs we face and options we have to ensure that BUF maintains a solid financial footing during this time of change.

## **Budget Discussion**

by BUF Treasurer, John Stewart

### **How we got here, and where we are now:**

Over the past few years, we have benefitted from federal “COVID support.” We had anticipated a final \$27,000 grant this current year, but it has largely failed to materialize. At the same time, our congregation has shrunk by 18%, from 234 to 192 members. We also just received notice that a large, long-term renter is leaving at the end of this school year.

On the wonderful side, new members are joining our community, and per-household pledge giving has increased. We have much to celebrate. The upcoming retirement of Genia and Kevin creates an opportunity to consider the best paths forward. We need to evaluate where we are now and act accordingly.

### **Looking forward:**

In drafting the budget for the year ahead, the Board has made several assumptions. Our current best guess is that we will have income of about \$415,000 for next year (pledges plus rent, fundraising and miscellaneous income). That’s a reduction of our anticipated income of \$497,000 for the current year. We believe that our fellowship needs a full-time minister and a full-time administrator, and we want to provide them, all of our existing staff, and our new hires fair compensation.

We have certain unavoidable ongoing expenses (mortgage, utilities, maintenance, etc.) and certain foreseeable part-time staff expenses. When we remove these expenses and concentrate on those over which we have some discretion, we are left with difficult choices. Unfortunately, in order to balance this budget draft, we felt it necessary to suspend the Taize service as of the end of this current year (June 2024). This will leave us with approximately \$40,000 to cover the salaries of our RE and Music directors. The Board feels strongly that permanent staff positions like these must not be funded from our limited and shrinking reserves nor from short-term resources that we cannot rely on continuing.

[Here's a link to the current budget proposal.](#) Some of the numbers are still being fine-tuned, but we believe that most are pretty close. This is a DRAFT for discussion at our upcoming Listening Sessions. The Board will deliver a final budget proposal at the beginning of May for vote at the May 19 congregational meeting.

The Board very much appreciates you staying up to date on all of this, and your continued engagement with the process.



### **POTLUCK LUNCH**

Sunday, April 14, there will be a potluck and Listening Session after the service. Please bring some food to share and stay as we process this year’s budget and discuss priorities. This community effort is important and we appreciate your support and participation.

## **CONFLICT AND CAULIFLOWER (CONDENSED\*\*)**

There isn't anything I dislike more than conflict except maybe cauliflower. Unlike cauliflower, I can't take conflict off the menu. It keeps popping up in family, volunteer work, the news. I learned long ago that conflict doesn't go away just because I ignore it. When conflict sits unaddressed it causes withdrawal, resentment and, to continue the food metaphor, a bad taste in my mouth. However, if I acknowledge conflict, look at it as an opportunity to get to know people at a deeper level, I can move on with less stress in my life.

This second approach is much more difficult in less intimate relationships where it's easier to avoid the issue: friends, kids, chalice circle. I can swallow a small conflict, not even acknowledge it. But as with my any relationship, distance grows and eventually I either withdraw or decide to talk about it.

What does this have to do with BUF, my beloved community? I'm a member of the Board, and we've just put out a draft budget proposal. All of us at BUF aren't going to agree on the details. We all have BUF programs close to our hearts. Are we prioritizing some over others? Why can't we just go on as before? How will we, as individuals, in small groups and as a whole, deal with the inevitable conflicts? In my childhood loving Methodist fellowship. I watched conflicts develop and the choices people made. Individuals I loved left the congregation, and I mourned them. I don't want that for BUF. I encourage you to take time to think about how you want to respond, and then talk to somebody who appears to want something different than you. Ask questions, find out more about that person's needs. Share your needs, your wishes, and your BUF experiences. We need all of us to be in conversation about our overall vision for BUF's future.

Lin Skavdahl, Board Member (360) 873-4009

\*\*for the full version see BUF-news (subscribe to the BUF-news listserv here:

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

## **UBER-VOLUNTEERS AND MUTUAL-STEWARDS**

I say it a lot: we rely on many many volunteers to live out our mission. But to ensure these folks know what to do, and when, and how, we rely on uber-volunteers (for lack of a better word) who assemble, guide, and support other volunteers. Where we don't have these uber-volunteers—and in many areas of congregational life we do not—too many who would like to help are left spinning their wheels.

Some uber-volunteers manage programs and activities that go on year after year. Others take on short-term projects. They gather a cadre of the willing to take care of things behind the scenes or in front. Some pull together their chalice circles to help someone in need.

Uber-volunteering doesn't mean taking on enormous tasks. For example, we need a team to keep the sanctuary in order, another to keep the kitchen in order, another to clear out some closets. Contact our Administrator, Michelle ([admin@buf.org](mailto:admin@buf.org)) for info on any of these. We need a team to help optimize the experience of participating in services via Zoom (contact me, [minister@buf.org](mailto:minister@buf.org)). And (this will save us a LOT of money in the long-run) we need a team to oversee and do building maintenance. Contact Jim Reimer to offer to help with maintenance. Or, contact me, or Michelle, to find contact info for Jim, or some of the other uber-volunteers...or to let us know of your own particular areas of interest.\*

When congregational staff grow into their roles over the course of several years, they inevitably take on responsibilities once taken care of by volunteers. Also, the retirement of a long-term staff person means the loss of more than someone to accomplish a list of tasks. Staff have an overall consciousness of how all the pieces fit together – and awareness that if x and y happen, then a new opportunity arises for z ... or perhaps we need a new q.

We're entering a period of congregational life in which we'll be more interdependent, with new staff and volunteers in mutual stewardship. We have money, a building, a reputation, momentum, new people bursting with creativity...and walls buzzing with generations of passion and compassion. And we have you—but you can't do it alone—so gather a team.

Thank you so much,  
Paul

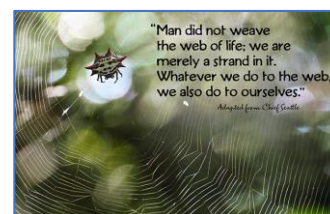
\*Another important project would be organizing keys and developing key controls. This might take one or two months for one or two volunteers, with Michelle's oversight.

## **MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID AND DE-ESCALATION WORKSHOP APRIL 7, 1:00 – 3:00 PM**

Local National Association on Mental Illness (NAMI) educators will address what you can do when a loved one, friend, or BUF congregant experiences a mental health crisis. You will learn how to recognize when someone is exhibiting troubled or disruptive behavior, what to do to assess risks, and how to apply de-escalation strategies including when to call for assistance while maintaining safety for the person and yourself. Contact Elie Friedlob for more information: [Eliana.steele@gmail.com](mailto:Eliana.steele@gmail.com) 360-510-0843

## **CHILDREN'S RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

The theme for April is *Interdependence*, focusing on the many dimensions of our 7<sup>th</sup> Principal. This week, we explore what interdependence means for us as Unitarian Universalists, the



difference between independence and interdependence, and how our faith lifts up the idea that we are all connected.

We will explore this theme of interdependence with the book “The Invisible String”, making human knots, and playing some balloon games.

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](mailto:genia@BUF.org).

### NO COMMUNITY NIGHT DINNER TONIGHT

Wednesday, April 3.

Next week’s dinner will be 6 PM in the Social Hall



### Are You Ready for a Great Party?

It’s the BUF Auction!

Your \$25 ticket includes extraordinary food, a costume parade, fun with friends and the chance to support BUF.

Enter the Costume Parade and Get a Free Raffle Ticket.  
Winner Receives ten tickets!

The auction site is available for viewing. <https://fundraiser.bid/BUF>

Here’s a sample of the amazing things on offer:

**Events:** High Tea, Dinner and a Movie, Games and Tacos

**Items:** Fancy Cupcakes, Fresh Summer Flowers, Pet Portrait

**Services:** Tarot Reading, Pet Sitting, Childcare

**And the Live Auction Will Include:**

Samish Island Sojourn, Arizona Homestay, and more!

*This is BUF’s biggest Fundraiser and we need you to attend. Bring your Friends!*

We need volunteers! To learn more or to offer to help - email [Auction@buf.org](mailto:Auction@buf.org) or sign up at [Auction Sign Ups](#).

## **CHILDREN OF THE SETTING SUN PRODUCTIONS- April SEJC Collection Recipient**

**Children of the Setting Sun Productions** creates and shares Indigenous stories of gratitude, generosity, respect, and responsibility. We seek to empower the minds and hearts of future generations. **SALMON PEOPLE PROJECT:** We are embarking on a journey to tell the story of the ancient bond between the Native people and salmon. The research, gatherings and documentary series will help magnify Indigenous voices in the fight to reverse the devastating loss of salmon and protect Mother. **INDIGENOUS LED THINK TANK:** The mission of Setting Sun Institute is to put things back together. We endeavor to resolve human conflict and protect the natural environment by using the traditional wisdom of the Salish people in a new way: through a Native-led think tank grown in the home region of the Pacific salmon. **YOUNG TRIBAL LEADERSHIP:** This program creates opportunities for young people to embrace their culture and strengthen professional skills. **COMMUNITY PROJECTS:** We partner with community organizations and help capture meaningful moments through gatherings and interviews transformed into beautiful videos. Working together, we help shine the light on important work that is happening and messages that need to be heard. **BUF INVOLVEMENT:** Can provide handouts, links to videos, and invites to local events. The April 14 collection will go to **Children of the Setting Sun Productions.**

## **LAST CHANCE TO INVITE ORGANIZATION TO APPLY 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 meet our criteria to apply for a collection next year. The deadline for applications is earlier this year--April 12th. The application link to share is: <https://wp.buf.org/justice/social-environmental-justice-committee/sejc-collection-guidelines-and-application/>

## **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>

## **BELLINGHAM UNITARIAN FELLOWSHIP**

360-733-3887 [Buf.org](https://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/>