



# Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship

Community, Compassion, Commitment

Mid-Week Update: **September 10, 2025**

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## Upcoming Services

All BUF services are accessible in person or on Zoom.

Use this link: <https://zoom.us/j/738363620>

Passcode = BUF / Meeting ID 738 363 620

**Sunday, September 14, 10:30am - We Begin Again, in Love - Rev. Barbara with Tom Nicholas, celebrant**

As we face the blessings and challenges of change moving into the fall, can we ask “what’s possible?” rather than “what’s wrong?” The Choir will sing.

**Sunday, September 21, 10:30am - Good Grief: Embracing Grief and the Trouble with Not Doing So - Rev. Duane Fickheisen with Marsha Vollkommer, celebrant**

The cultural pressures to quickly get over grief and to move on do not serve us. We’ll examine where they came from and how to counter them as we consider the importance of grieving well.

Duane Fickeisen is a retired Unitarian Universalist Minister living in Portland where he facilitates grief groups.

**Taize - Monday, October 6, 7:00pm**

*Carrie Koehnline and Steffany Raynes coordinate these services in BUF's Sanctuary and on Zoom.*

We are committed to continuing to bring Taize to this community and are hoping we will find just the right musician soon. In the meantime, we are cancelling Taize for September ONLY. Thank you for your support of this ministry.

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## Minister Updates

### Meet Our New Contract Minister: Sunny Joy McMillan

The BUF Board is happy to announce the appointment of Sunny Joy McMillan as our new minister. Beginning October 1, Sunny (she/her) will serve as our contract minister for one year with the possibility of extending into a second year.

Sunny is a recent graduate of Yale Divinity School. She is in the process of seeking fellowship with the UUA which will be completed this month. She is a former attorney and a coach with certification from Dr. Martha Beck. Sunny found Unitarian Universalism while in law school, joining First Unitarian Universalist of Austin in 2005. She brings with her two years of meaningful experience as the intern minister at

Unitarian Society of New Haven where she engaged deeply in all aspects of congregational life from worship, pastoral care, and religious education to social justice and administration.

Sunny hails from Seattle where she lives with her partner Chase (he/him) and their two animal companions, Action Jackson the tabby cat, and Mojave (aka Movy), the German Shepherd rescued from the Mojave Desert. After spending three years on the East Coast for divinity school, Sunny is thrilled to be back in the Pacific Northwest. She will live four days a week in Bellingham and the rest of the week at her home in the Columbia City neighborhood of Seattle where she will be available for our urgent needs.

Sunny says, “I am incredibly honored to become BUF’s contract minister. I look forward to supporting the work of your congregation and I cannot wait to hit the ground running with you on October 1st.”

Please watch the mail for a letter announcing Sunny’s appointment with a few more details.

Thank you for your incredible support during this long process. We’re off to a great beginning of the church year.

Sincerely,  
—Lin Skavdahl, BUF Board President

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## Religious Education

### Children’s Religious Education



Children who wish to attend Sunday School start in the Sanctuary with their families then go up together to their classes. Caregivers pick them up at 11:45am. Classes are most closely geared to children K-7th grade; preschool-aged supervised care is also available.



Photo by Drew Betz, from September 7 Sunday Service

## Family Camp-Out

**September 13-14, Katrina & Abe Lloyd-Poppe's Place**



Save the Date: the Family Camp-Out is happening September 13-14! This event is for families of all kinds with children and teens. There will be a camp lantern craft, a potluck, and a "campfire" circle with songs and stories. Contact Lis at [RE@buf.org](mailto:RE@buf.org) for more information, and look out for an email with more details including a suggested packing list!

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## Adult Religious Education

### From Jesus to Christ: The First Christians - Jim Reimer

**4 sessions - Sundays, September 7-28, 12:15-1:45pm, Flex Room**

From Jesus to Christ traces the rise of Christianity, explore the life and death of Jesus, and the men and women whose conviction and martyrdom created the religion we now know as Christianity. Archaeological finds have yielded new understandings of Jesus' class and social status. Fresh interpretations offer new perspectives on the identity of

the early Christian communities. Drawing upon historical evidence, the series challenges assumptions about Christian origins.

This course will shed light on one of the historical sources of our Unitarian Universalist faith, which began as a liberal Christian denomination several hundred years ago. Four video sessions with facilitated discussion. Feel free to bring a snack. Scholarships are available.

[Register](#)

## The Great Questions - Bonnie Phinney & Emmie Schohohm

*5 sessions - Sundays, October 5-November 2, 12:15-2:00pm, Flex Room*

This five-week course will explore our varied answers to some of religion's biggest questions: What does religion mean to you? Who or what is in charge? What happens when we die? What is the nature of evil? What does it mean to be human? With an emphasis on discussion, we will make use of provocative questions, quotations, music and art to stimulate your thinking. Some (minor) preparation and journaling will be expected of participants.

[Register](#)

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## Events

### Potluck Sunday

**Sunday, September 21, noon, Social Hall**

Third Sunday Potlucks are back! Let's all get together to enjoy a delicious meal and conversation after the service on September 21. Please bring your contribution downstairs and place it on the serving table or in the kitchen before the service. Hope to see you there! And if you can stay a while after eating to help put tables and chairs away, it will be appreciated. More volunteers are needed.

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## Community Night Dinners Begin

**Wednesday, October 1, 5:45pm**

It's soup, salad, and bread on most Wednesdays beginning October 1 at 5:45pm. Come join us Wednesday nights in the social hall. If you are interested in being a part of the dinner planning and leadership team, please let Jane Ronca or Jennifer Villalva know. We need more volunteers if our weekly dinners are going to continue. This is a worthwhile community endeavor, and a great way to meet people too!

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## BUF Auction

**Saturday, October 4, 4:30-7:30pm**



The BUF Auction is less than one month away on Saturday, October 4 and tickets are on sale now! Thank you to those of you who have generously donated auction items! **The last day to donate an item will be this Sunday, September 14.** [Donate items, browse the catalog, and purchase tickets on the auction website.](#)

[Donate, Browse Catalog & Buy Tickets](#)

We need your help to pull off this fantastic event! Our planning team is looking for a **Decorations Lead** to plan decor for the event. We will also need many volunteers to help with crafting decorations, event set-up, food service, Auctria technical help, and more!

If you're interested in getting involved, please chat with an auction team lead: Brenda Goebel, Drew Betz, Annie Sorich, Vanessa Lott. Find us in the social hall after Sunday services.

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## News

### Volunteers Needed for Potluck Sundays

The Potluck Crew needs a few more volunteers to help set up before the service. The job involves getting to BUF by 9:30 am, putting out tables and chairs, setting out silverware, plates and utensils on the serving table, and water pitchers and glasses on a side table. A small team can easily be finished in time for the service. We also need two more people to help take things down after the meal, including cleaning the tables, putting tables and chairs away, wiping up spills, and assisting the Steward with kitchen clean up as needed.

Do you enjoy our Sunday potlucks? Will you volunteer an hour or two of your time once a month so they can continue?

If so, please contact Judy Kasper, at [Kasper.jm828@gmail.com](mailto:Kasper.jm828@gmail.com) or text 563-271-9221 to volunteer.

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### Join the BUF Chalice Choir

**Wednesdays, 6:30-7:45pm**

The Choir Committee encourages anyone who sings or who has ever wanted to try out being in a choir to take up our director Ben Workman Smith's warm invitation to join the BUF Chalice Choir! We have lots of time to learn our pieces and extra help is available. Learning our songs deepens our connection to each other and the music.

We understand that you may not make every rehearsal or our monthly opportunity to be part of the church service. We would love to see people who are still working or with children at home to be able to come. Let us know what we can do to help. We would work to provide childcare if that is a barrier. We meet every Wednesday evening from 6:30-7:45pm. Come check us out!

—Carol Smith Committee Co-Chair

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## Alohas: Hellos and Goodbyes

### Highlighting BUF Members

*Meet, greet, and bid adieu to BUF Members in this recurring MWU section*

## Celebration of Life of Susie Walker

**Saturday, September 27, 2:00pm, Birch Bay Village Clubhouse**

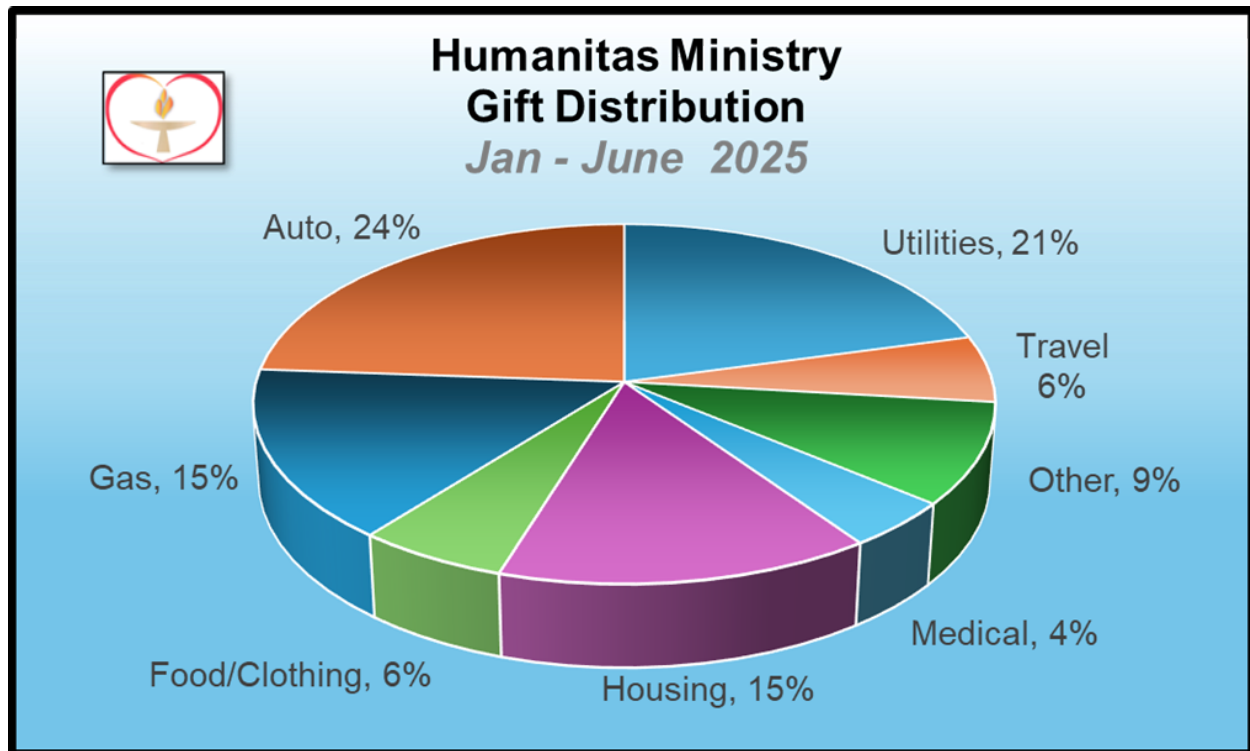


Longtime member Susie Walker passed on August 7, 2025. She was always a strong advocate for music here at BUF and beyond. A celebration of her life will be held Saturday, September 27 at 2:00pm at the Birch Bay Village Clubhouse.

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## Humanitas

# Gift Distribution Report, January-June 2025



## Factoids:

- Guests Served - 147
- Total \$\$\$ Gifted - \$10,87
- Av Gift/Guest - \$74.00

Due to changing political and economic conditions, our Humanitas outreach is seeing more requests for help from local families, especially those in the Latin community. With many facing financial stress or emergencies, our faith network (St Paul's Church, Humanitas, Hillcrest, St Vincent de Paul, Interfaith Coalition) is doing its best to respond, but Humanitas need your support now more than ever.

Thirty-one families who donated to Humanitas in 2024 have not donated in 2025. If this was intentional, we appreciate your past support. However, you may not be aware that changes in BUF's donation platform in January did not carry over your ongoing 2024 commitment into 2025. **If you wish to continue supporting Humanitas, please see below for donation options:**

- Obtain a donation form for automatic withdrawal, from the Administrator
- [Sign up for ACH withdrawal with Breeze](#)
- Text to give at (360) 345-3933, "\$10.00 Humanitas" – indicate the desired dollar amount you would like to donate.

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## Social and Environmental Justice

### SEJC's September Special Collections Recipient *CAST - Coffee and Sandwiches Together*



[Coffee and Sandwiches Together \(CAST\)](#) is the recipient of SEJC's Justice Collection for September. Since 1999 CAST has helped those in need of a simple meal and community connection. This volunteer run organization serves a simple meal of sandwiches, soup, fruit/snack, and beverages to anyone that shows up. There are no qualifications needed to receive this meal, and it is served non-judgmentally with kindness.

CAST sets up four nights a week, rain or shine, outside at the Arch of Healing and Reconciliation behind the library from 6:00 to 7:00 pm. In 2024, BUF donations helped provide supplies for the 20,000 sandwiches served. With sufficient funding, CAST hopes to serve five days a week. Most donations go towards food supplies but may also go towards such purchases as socks, hand sanitizers, and toiletries when additional funds are available.

Besides monetary contributions, hands-on volunteers are needed to help prepare and transport meals; and set-up, serve, and clean up at the Arch. Thanks to the many BUF volunteers who contribute their time and commitment to CAST.

The Interfaith Council of Whatcom County is the fiscal agent for CAST. Contributions need to be made to IFC and designated for CAST.

[Learn More](#)

# UPLIFT

## UPLIFT Update: Uplifting Queer Voices Within BUF and Beyond

1. **The UPLIFT Committee** had its first meeting of the year on Sept 7. We meet on the **first Sunday of every month in the Board room at noon**. Please come. All are welcome.

2. **Look for Rainbow ribbons attached to name tags**. These folks want you to come ask questions. These volunteers are up for telling you about networking with the queer folx in our congregation and will help you meet people. Friendly and welcoming is our goal.

3. **Second Sunday of every month** - brown bag lunch with LGBTQIA+. We will gather after coffee hour for socializing and getting to know each other better. Bring food and food to share if feeling inspired. 12:30-2:00pm-ish.

We have some social activity each month. Check here in MWU. We will let you know. If you want to help organize an event please let us know. We welcome new energy and want to get to know you.

Please reach out to our co-chair Grace Nyblade. [Gnyblade@gmail.com](mailto:Gnyblade@gmail.com) or 360-545-3265 (cell).

—Grace Nyblade, Co-chair

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## Engagement & Support

### Help Restore Melanie Rieck's Beloved Piano



[Help restore Melanie Rieck's beloved piano and continue her passion for music!](#) Melanie Rieck's beloved Yamaha U-3 upright piano

has suffered unrepairable water damage, leaving her in a heartbreaking situation. This instrument has been her lifeline, allowing her to teach and inspire others at the Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship.

Recently, a leak from the laundry area ruined her piano, and a technician found black mold and an unstable pin-block inside. While Allstate initially assured Melanie of coverage, they later revealed that only \$1,000 would be reimbursed due to policy limitations.

Now, with the cost of a quality replacement nearing \$10,000, she's reaching out for support. Every contribution brings her closer to acquiring a new piano, allowing her to continue sharing her passion for music and enriching our community. Please consider donating to help Melanie restore this vital part of her life. Your generosity means the world.

Thank you for your kindness.

[Donate Here](#)

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## Join a Chalice Circle

**Need to feel more connected at BUF?** If you are new to BUF or just want to feel more deeply connected, consider joining a [Chalice Circle](#)—small groups designed to help participants deepen connection and expand personal and spiritual growth. We will be placing people into existing groups or new chalice circles early in September. If you are interested, please contact Kathryn Allen at [kasavelie@aol.com](mailto:kasavelie@aol.com) or Bonnie Phinney at [bonnie\\_phinney@hotmail.com](mailto:bonnie_phinney@hotmail.com).

[Learn More](#)

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## Lunch for All

**Tuesdays, noon, Social Hall**

Join fellow BUFsters **for a "Lunch for All"** hosted by Mark Allyn. Please join us at noon in the social hall for food and conversation. This will still be a bring-your-own lunch as it was with Lunch with Paul. We hope this will be the beginning of a new tradition.

Questions? Contact Mark Allyn at [allyn@well.com](mailto:allyn@well.com).

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## BUF Text to Give

You can donate to BUF from your phone by sending a text message to 360-345-3933. There are a few different options for designating your gift:

- Text "\$10" to donate \$10 to the collection basket
- Text "\$10" to "Humanitas" to support the community in need
- Text "\$10 SEJC" to send your contribution to this month's SEJC recipient
- Text "\$10 Taize" to support BUF's Taizé ministry
- Text "\$10 CND" for Community Night Dinners
- Text "\$10 Fair" for purchases of fair trade products at the church (coffee, chocolate bars, etc.)



You'll need to do a little setup and provide your account information the first time you do this, but after that, it's just a text message.

You can even scan the QR code to access the phone number.

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### How To Submit Content For The Mid-Week Update

Content must be received by *10:00am on the Monday before the distribution date*.

Submit via an email single spaced; no Word doc attachment needed. Avoid any formatting, including bullets. Limit: 200 words. Submissions may be edited for space and clarity. Submit your content to [MWU@buf.org](mailto:MWU@buf.org).

### Find the BUF Calendar Online

Visit [buf.org](http://buf.org) for the [complete calendar of BUF events](#) (found on our website under the News tab).

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**Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship**

Office phone: 360-733-3887

[buf.org](http://buf.org) | [admin@buf.org](mailto:admin@buf.org)

*Handy Links:* [Calendar](#) | [Choir Updates](#)

[Sign up for the Mid-Week Update and/or the BUF News Digest.](#)