



Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship

Community, Compassion, Commitment

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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 7, 10:30am - The Shining Sea: BUF's Annual Water Communion Service - Rev. Dr. Barbara Wells ten Hove with Carrie Koehnlne, celebrant, and Lis Epperson, RE Coordinator

On this annual All Ages service of return, we share brief reflections by collecting water from our summer. We will also take part in a backpack blessing for our young people.

Please bring a vial of water to share in this meaningful ritual. (There will be extra water for those who forget)

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 Koehnlne 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.

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

Summer Service Thanks from Rev. Barbara ten Hove, Transitional Support Minister

It's been a wonderful summer at BUF with meaningful services, excellent activities for kids and great attendance. Here's a thanks to most everyone (and forgive me if I've forgotten some)!

First, I can't say enough about the amazing Celebrant Team: Carrie Koehline, Steffany Raynes, Tom Nicholas, Marsha Vollkommer, Su Livingston, and Patricia Conover. They brought incredible energy and creativity to services as planners, participants, leaders, and supporters of others. I absolutely couldn't have done it without them!

Our musicians, as usual, did stellar work. Our regular keyboard artists, Melanie Rieck and Andrea Rackl played beautifully and often supported invited musicians to participate. Karen FitzGerald also offered her skills along with Su Livingston and Jaco ten Hove. Many other musicians stepped forward – too many to list here!

Alongside the celebrants and my offerings in the pulpit, we also welcomed Jaco ten Hove, Erika & Rebecca Crichton, Judith Kaftan, Peter Luton, Alan Friedlob, Jane Lowery, Andrea Rackl, Eleanor Burke, Wendy Howard, Tessie Mandeville, Walt Ellis, Vanessa Lott, and others to share wisdom among us.

Many thanks to the BUF staff, in particular administrator Michelle Fox, for providing support throughout the summer. Special appreciation to Lucy Major and the Childcare staff and volunteers who made sure our young people (and there were lots who came this summer – yay!) were well taken care of.

It's been a privilege and pleasure to serve as Transitional Support Minister while providing leadership for our summer service for the third year in a row. Thanks for trusting me with this important ministry.

—Rev. Barbara ten Hove, Transitional Support Minister

Religious Education

Children's Religious Education

School Year Kick-Off

Sunday, September 7



The regular school year begins for the BUF Religious Explorers Sunday, September 7. We will kick off the new school year with three exciting events happening that day - an open house, backpack blessing, and water communion!

9:15am - Open House in the Flex Room - You and your family are invited to say hello to familiar faces and meet our new Child/Youth Religious Explorer volunteers at our Open House! We will do introductions, you will get to see the curriculum and the space, and have coffee/tea and pastries.

Backpack Blessing (kids, bring your backpacks!) + **Water Communion** during the service on September 7

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 for more information, and look out for an email with more details including a suggested packing list!



–Lis Epperson, RE Coordinator: RE@BUF.org

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](#)

Events

Volunteer Sunday

Sunday, September 7

Volunteer Sunday is September 7. After the service, sign up for a wide variety of volunteer work. This is an opportunity for us to show our support for BUF, acknowledge our ongoing need for volunteers, and demonstrate that “service gives (BUF) life.” On September 7, look for staffed tables in the Narthex and Social Hall where you can register for your chosen volunteer work. We’re using hand-written forms and online registration through Breeze. Volunteering is flexible; we can accommodate your schedules.

Please pitch in and do your part. We’re all in this together!

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!

BUF Auction

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



Our auction is Saturday, October 4 and we need your donations and we need your help! The value of items donated so far is about \$15,300. For last year's event, you donated over \$27,000 in auction items. **We can still accept your generous items. We are looking for a diverse range of items, including:**

- **Gatherings:** Host a tea party, instructional class, wine tasting, or themed dinner. It doesn't need to be fancy, and you don't have to host a lot of people! Some of the most popular events have been small, simple meals.
- **Tours:** Offer tours of interesting locations, a guided mushroom hunt, or hike with a picnic.
- **Services:** Provide services such as portrait photography, childcare, music lessons, yard work, pet-sitting, or IT assistance.
- **Meals:** Donate a dining experience at a restaurant, a home-cooked meal, or a monthly pie subscription.
- **Trips:** Contribute travel packages, weekend getaways, house swaps, or other unique experiences.
- **Fine Crafted Items:** Are you a woodworker, fiber artist, jewelry maker? Share your handmade, high-quality crafted goods.

Submit donation offerings, purchase your tickets, and start browsing the catalog [here](#).

[Learn More](#)

We need your help! Our auction team needs a leader to take on setting up the tables and settings for the catered dinner. We will recruit volunteers but we need someone to take charge. We also need a leader to plan, and with help, decorate the social hall.

If you are unsure about what to give or how to participate, please chat with an auction team lead: Brenda Goebel, Drew Betz, Annie Sorich, Vanessa Lott. Find us in the social hall after Sunday services.

News

Join the BUF Chalice Choir

Beginning September 3, 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

Seeking MWU Volunteer

The Mid-Week Update (MWU) team is seeking another volunteer. Volunteers need to be comfortable with and have access to Google Docs (must have a gmail account to access). MWU volunteers receive, compile, edit, and format all submitted content. Light proofreading and editing is involved. Look for sign-up information on Volunteer Sunday, September 7 or email mwu@buf.org.

Also, we're back to our weekly schedule. Have something to share? Submit content to MWU by Mondays at 10:00am; the MWU is distributed on Wednesdays. Submit your

content in the body of an email to mwu@buf.org. *Note: late submissions create late distribution and may be missed.*

[Submit to MWU](#)

Alohas: Hellos and Goodbyes

Highlighting BUF Members

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

Farewell Note from Andrea Rackl

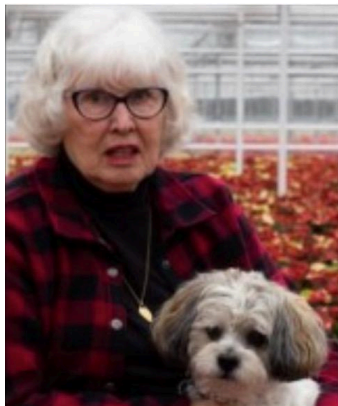
Dear Bufsters,

Thank you for the beautiful send-off on Sunday. I'm grateful for the hugs, the cards, the words of affirmation, the generous gift card, and the overwhelming feeling of love. And since so many people asked, let me clarify that I'm not moving away. Just making more space for my teaching and my house concert series! (Email BellinghamHouseConcerts@gmail.com to hear about upcoming performances) You all hold a special place in my heart!

—Andrea Rackl, retired keyboard artist

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.

Humanitas

[Humanitas](#) is a ministry action team supported by individual contributions from members of the BUF congregation. The program provides financial assistance as an expression of community service and operates in alignment with our Covenant:

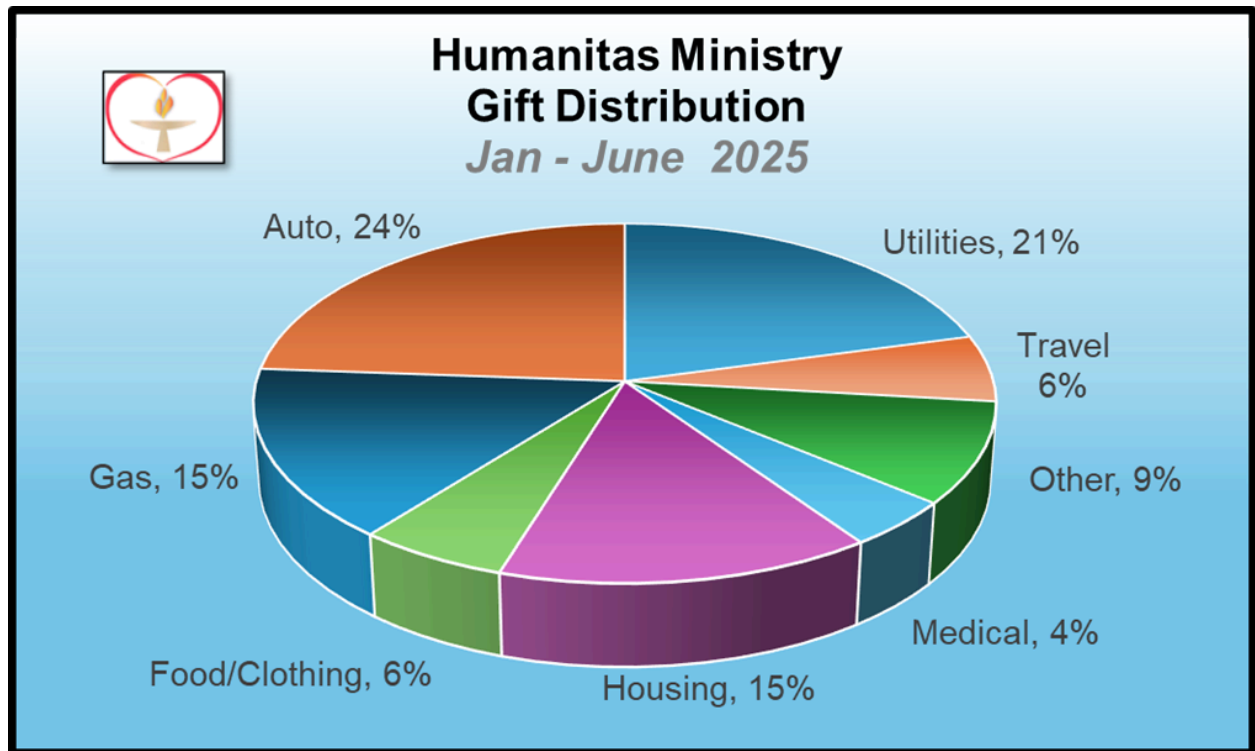
“Love is the spirit of this fellowship and service gives it life.”

Humanitas operates on a weekly basis to assist individuals experiencing financial difficulties, whether these challenges stem from unforeseen circumstances, prior decisions, or struggles to meet essential expenses. Recent economic and political developments have contributed to increased demand.

Humanitas volunteers listen, offer a safe, non-judgmental environment, and provide limited emergency support when possible. When needs exceed available funds, guests are referred to our comprehensive support network that includes St. Paul’s Alms Ministry, St. Vincent de Paul Society at Sacred Heart, Hillcrest Chapel, and Interfaith Coalition. Pledges are then combined to address these larger needs. Through the generosity of donors and volunteers in 2024, this network provided around \$100,000 in support to the Community.

Services are available to guests on Wednesdays from 10:00 to 11:00am.

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.

Seeking Spanish-Speaking Volunteers

URGENT REQUEST: Humanitas urgently needs volunteers who can leverage their Spanish-speaking abilities to connect with and serve our vastly increasing non-English-speaking clients, more effectively. We are experiencing a surplus of clients who desperately need assistance, and we only have one Spanish-speaking volunteer, who can't be here every Wednesday. If you can help, please contact Henry Ohana.

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. **Uplift Committee's first meeting of the year** is at noon in the Conference Room on September 7. We meet the first Sunday of every month. We will be going over goals and looking for volunteers. Please come. All are welcome.
2. Ongoing updates and information can be found throughout the year by looking for **Rainbow ribbons attached to name tags**. These folks want you to come ask questions. Friendly and welcoming is our goal.
3. 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 your ideas.

—Grace Nyblade, Co-chair

Please reach out to Gnyblade@gmail.com or 360-545-3265 (cell)

Engagement & Support

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 or Bonnie Phinney at bonnie_phinney@hotmail.com.

[Learn More](#)

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.

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.

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.

Find the BUF Calendar Online

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

Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship

Office phone: 360-733-3887

buf.org | admin@buf.org

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

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