



Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship

Community, Compassion, Commitment

Mid-Week Update: **October 22, 2025**

Upcoming Services

Sunny Notes

Religious Education

- [Children's Religious Education](#)
- [Adult Education](#)
 - [The Thomas Jefferson Bible](#) - November 16

Events

- [Halloween Potluck/Movie Night](#) - October 25
- [Community Night Dinners](#) - restarting October 29
- [Community Forum on Immigrants in Whatcom County](#) - November 6
- [NAMI De-Escalation Training Workshop](#) - November 9
- [Endowment Committee Workshop](#) - November 15
- [Intruder Response Training](#) - November 16
- [Hosted Events Sign-Ups](#) (BUF Auction)

News

- [Endowment Committee Update](#)
- [Dining With Friends](#)

Building and Grounds

- [BUF Grounds Clean Up and Leaf Raking](#) - November 15
- [BUF Building and Grounds Need Short-Term Help](#)
- [We Can See the Light Update](#)
- [Parking Lot/Potholes Update](#)

Operations

- [Seeking Two Office Chairs](#)
- [BUF Operations Team Update: Organization Chart & Lists](#)
- [IT Update](#)

Social and Environmental Justice

- [SEJC's October Special Collections Recipient - Whiteswan Environmental \(WE\)](#)

UPLIFT

- [UPLIFT Update: Uplifting Queer Voices Within BUF and Beyond](#)

Engagement & Support

- [Lunch for All](#) - most Tuesdays
- [Interfaith Coalition's Winter Coat Drive](#)
- [BUF Text to Give](#)

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, October 26, 10:30am - Changes in Perspective, Possibilities of Hope

-Tom Nicholas, celebrant and Sunny McMillan, minister

Theologian Reinhold Niebuhr once wrote, “Nothing that is worth doing can be achieved in our lifetime; therefore we must be saved by hope.” In chaotic and challenging times such as these, however, hope can be hard to come by. Today, we will explore how changes in perspective can open up the possibility of hope.

It's Almost Halloween – Wear Your Costume! Halloween is fast approaching! In celebration, we invite all, young and old, to wear your Halloween costume to the Sunday service on October 26.

Taize - Monday, November 3, 7:00pm

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

The theme for this service is “Finding Beauty in the Fragility of Life.” In this season of change and turmoil in the world, we come together for a reminder of what it means to be resilient, centered, and open-hearted in community. Taize is an hour-long service of candlelight, prayer, meditation, and singing.

Sunny Notes



Earlier this month, I had the incredible opportunity to hear Gloria J. Browne-Marshall speak in an intimate, small-group setting. Among many other accolades, Browne-Marshall is an American civil rights attorney and a professor of constitutional law. Her most recent book, “A Protest History of the United States,” explores 500 years of protest and resistance in U.S. history. Our small group asked Browne-Marshall what we most need to take from our protest history that we can carry forward and apply in our current moment—a moment that can feel pretty challenging

and discouraging.

One of the things she told us was that people need empowerment right now—they need to know their voice can be heard. This past weekend, voices were heard across

our nation as millions came together for No Kings rallies that took place from coast-to-coast. My partner, Chase, and I joined a lively group that left from BUF, marching from the congregation to join a crowd of approximately 5,000 in Maritime Heritage Park. It was empowering to look across the sea of signs and faces (and a few frog costumes!), uniting with BUFsters and members of the larger Bellingham community to make our voices heard.

It also is empowering to know that despite the chaos and unknowns of the larger world, within BUF, we have a place to come together with those who share our values and will continue to fight for truth, equality, and justice for all. On that note, I have so enjoyed coming together with you all for the "Getting to Know You" small-group meetings I've been holding. If we have not yet met, please feel free to use the link below to sign up for one of these meetings (and if the October slots did not work for you, I now have opened up a few new days and times in November).

<https://sunnyjoycmillanscheduling.as.me/?appointmentType=83784886>

I'm happy to be making protest and resistance history with you all—what we are doing today will be written into the books of tomorrow.

— Sunny Joy McMillan, J.D., M.Div.

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.

Adult Education

The Thomas Jefferson Bible – Rod Haynes

Sunday, November 16, 12:15–2:00 pm, Flex Room (Top Floor)

Through guided discussions and examining Jefferson's annotated Bible, participants will explore Jefferson's rational approach to Christian principles — emphasizing Jesus's morality while removing supernatural elements of Christ's biblical life.

We will review Jefferson's groundbreaking work in establishing religious freedom in colonial Virginia's government. This was a precursor to the Constitution's 1st Amendment.

We will ask, how does the Jefferson Bible touch our lives today?

[Register](#)

Events

Halloween Potluck/Movie Night

Saturday, October 25, 5:00-7:00pm, Social Hall



Come join a family-friendly and all-ages gathering for all BUFsters to celebrate the fun that can be had around Halloween. We'll have a potluck dinner (bring a dish to share) from 5:00 to 7:00pm with a showing of the movie *It's the Great Pumpkin, Charlie Brown* and other kid-friendly Halloween shows ("Sesame Street"). Costumes encouraged.

If you can help set up and clean up (30 minutes before and after), please contact maryannwelch33@gmail.com.

Community Night Dinners Need Your Help

Next Dinner Date: *hopefully* Wednesday, October 29, 5:45pm

Community Night Dinner is on hiatus until we can get some dishwashers hired. We look forward to starting back up once this critical role is filled. Additionally, we are still looking for two to three folks to help oversee/lead the dinner; these are the leads in the kitchen following the recipe, making sure everyone has a task, and the dinner is served on time. This is a once every couple of weeks commitment. Shadowing opportunities will be available before being asked to lead solo. 😊

You can also volunteer with helping to put on the CND weekly: [here's the weekly sign up for various roles](#). You can sign-up by putting your name on the sign-sheet found on the clipboard in the Narthex at BUF or online at [Sign-Up Genius](#) for the Option 2 helping.

For any questions: email jennifermvillalva@hotmail.com or text or call 360-202-7866.

[Sign Up to Volunteer](#)

Community Forum on Immigrants in Whatcom County

Thursday, November 6, 7:00-8:30pm, Social Hall

When I, David Curley, spoke to BUF on September 14, I said that listening to and speaking the truth with each other is the best way I know to discover our next step in difficult times. The increased presence of ICE in Whatcom County poses difficult challenges that need a common effort from



WHATCOM
RACIAL EQUITY
COMMISSION

us. This Community Forum is how we can start. The Community Forum will be co-hosted by BUF BLM and by the Whatcom Racial Equity Commission (WREC).

We will have a panel of 10 people who have lived experience and expertise, a moderator from WREC, and time for questions and comments from the audience. For everyone's safety, and to help us decide what we can do together we are inviting in to the audience only members and friends of BUF.

Why?

- **To hear** about ongoing issues faced by immigrants and the increased presence of ICE in Whatcom County

- **To learn** what local governments and police can and cannot do, and what non-governmental organizations have been doing, how they have succeeded, and where they need help.
- **To share** our own feelings about what we have learned, about our values and moral commitments as Unitarians, and what hinders and helps us to take action.
- **To decide and act** — Later we will schedule a meeting to review common interests and to make decisions for collective actions by us as BUF members.

For questions or to volunteer, please contact David Curley at dlcurley1945@gmail.com or 360) 739-6292.

[Register to Attend](#)

NAMI De-Escalation Training Workshop (FREE)

Sunday, November 9, 1:00-2:30pm, Social Hall

BUF has rescheduled the de-escalation training for the congregation that was first initiated last year and was originally set for September 28 but had to be cancelled last minute.

The course will be taught by Deana Ottum, an instructor from [Whatcom County National Alliance on Mental Illness \(NAMI\)](#). This course will increase our awareness of how to offer effective support, demonstrate compassion, and communicate to a person who is overtly troubled or anxious during a service or other BUF sponsored event at the church or in our community.

Please contact Elie Friedlob if you have any questions: 360-510-0843

Endowment Committee Workshop

Saturday, November 15, 9:30am-12:30pm, Social Hall

The BUF Endowment Committee will host a half-day workshop. Committee Chair John Stewart will provide an update on current value and use of the BUF Endowment Fund begun in 2012. We invite you to learn more about and discuss leaving a financial legacy to BUF and planning lifetime gifts, with Rick Steele presenting tax planning for

charitable giving and Brian Hansen presenting planned giving through Estate Plans and simple wills. Rod Haynes will discuss Medicare and other health insurance options for retirement and Ken Gass will discuss support for wellness as you age into and through retirement and the importance of end-of-life planning and discussions with your loved ones.

Presentation outlines and resources will be provided on all topics and there will be time for questions. **RSVP to Ken Gass at kbgass@gmail.com subject line “BUF EC Workshop”** if you plan to attend, either alone or with a partner, to aid space and food planning; however, last-minute arrivals without an RSVP will not be turned away. The refreshment break will divide the presentations into the first three of interest to all adult BUF members and last two for those close to retirement.

[RSVP](#)

Intruder Response Training

Sunday, November 16, 12:45pm, Sanctuary

Please join us for the Safety and Security Team’s upcoming training series – an intruder response training on Sunday, November 16 at 12:45pm in the Sanctuary, presented by the Bellingham Police Department Community Engagement Officer. The more of us who feel up to speed on these topics, the better; please come!

For more information, contact admin@buf.org.

Sign Up for a Hosted Event to Raise Money for BUF!

Several of the events that were up for bidding during the auction still have space remaining. Check out the list below and use the auction website to sign up for an event.



November 1, 10:30am
[Cemetery Tour](#) with Drew Betz



November 8, 12:00pm
[Cheap Wine, Good Lunch, Great Company](#) with Linda Twitchell



January 31
[Spaghetti Factory Dinner](#) with Grace and Beth Nyblade



February 28, 7:00pm
[Rocky Horror Picture Show Sing-Along](#) with Jim Reimer

Check out the [auction website](#) to browse more 2026 events including a gardening workshop, Beatles-themed party, and, of course, the annual Barbaras' Garden Party!

[Sign Up & View Catalog](#)

News

Endowment Committee Update: Planning for Legacy Giving and Retirement Years

In 2012 BUF established a permanent Endowment Committee with the aim of encouraging BUF members and friends to donate money and other saleable property to fund expenses outside of the annual budget. Why do we need an Endowment Fund? We know that to sustain BUF for future generations, having a fund that generates interest income to help support BUF's facility and programs in good and bad financial times is prudent.

For members, donations to the endowment embody their hope that BUF will continue to thrive into the future as an important, nurturing, and safe place for liberal religious people in our community after they are long gone.

To date, 14 unique individuals and estates have donated to create a permanent, untouched fund corpus of \$223,484, currently valued at close to \$250,000 and managed in the UUA Common Endowment Fund following responsible investing principles. Others have indicated in writing their intent to donate a certain amount of money or saleable assets to the fund when they die and their assets are distributed. By year end, income from the BUF Endowment Fund will have been used to purchase an Automated External Defibrillator, two Audio-Visual upgrades for the sanctuary, and a building-wide WiFi upgrade, totaling \$29,500.

Want to know more? A half-day workshop will be held at BUF on Saturday, November 15, 2025.

[Learn More & Sign Up](#)

Dining With Friends

Dining with Friends, a great way to meet and get to know fellow BUFsters, will start in November. Families, singles, couples and people of all ages are encouraged to sign up and join. You can learn more and sign up by clicking the button below.

Did you participate last year and LOVE it? Sign up again and encourage other BUFsters to join as well.

Paper forms will also be available at coffee hour.

[Learn More & Sign Up](#)

Building and Grounds

BUF Grounds Clean-Up and Leaf Raking

Saturday, November 15, 9am-done

Happy Autumn from BUF Buildings and Grounds!

It's leaf raking time and we have some free mulch for your gardens! If you're excited in nature's bounty relating to leaf mulch you can 'Rake and Take' at anytime or look to the right of the parking area along the wooden fence and see if a pile of leaves are already waiting to go home with you (bring your own bags). The benefit to BUF is that we will be walking and driving on fewer wet slippery leaves.

A more formal all over clean-up will be on November 15.

Buildings & Grounds Needs Short-Term Help

1. Do you like to organize?
2. Share your home repair skills now and then?

If so, please contact Ahwren at 360-312-1244.

We Can See The Light Update

Our ceiling globe lights were cleaned, all new bulbs installed, and the broken ceiling fan replaced. Quinn Williams was the lead on October 14 picking up the "lift" and doing all the work up in the Sanctuary ceiling. Quinn also installed new lights, camera, and a long "to do" list for AV.



Jeff Copeland, Jim Reimers, and Lena Mason-Zollfrank were the ground crew, supporting Quinn's aerial work up in the lift. Jim put together the new ceiling fan, and Jeff was involved in figuring measurements and more to help the project move along. David Shirey, Cindy Denchfield, Mark Allyn, and Ahwren Ayers helped with prep work earlier in the day. Doug Branson moved all the seating and pews aside to clear the floor for the lift, and put them all back in place again when the project was finished.

It was a big job and a great team effort in which everyone worked well together. We even learned some new jokes like: "How many 'blank' does it take to screw in a light bulb?"

Quinn, Jeff, Jim, Doug, Lena, David, Cindy, and Mark: your help was greatly appreciated. BUF THANKS YOU!

- Ahwren

Parking Lot/Pot Holes Update



We left the entrances to the BUF parking lot better than how we found them. Pickaxes and shovels and delicious apple cider.

Thank you: Murray Bennett, Cindy Denchfield, Frank Klassen, Lin Skavdhal, Dick Casper, Haven Silver, Chris Sorich, Jim Riemer, and Ahwren Ayers.

Operations

Seeking Two Office Chairs

The Operations Team is in need of two good quality used office chairs to replace the ones that are falling apart in the BUF Office. Please contact us if you have one or two you can donate: dougebranson1@gmail.com

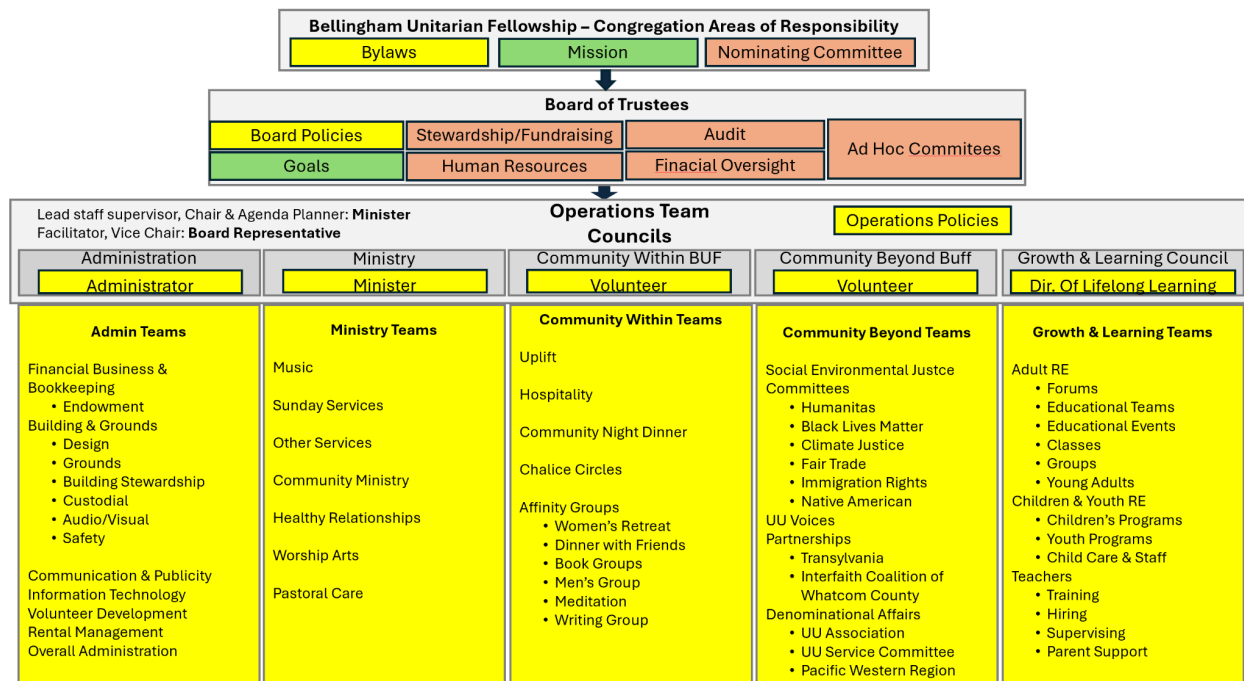
BUF Operations Team Update

Your BUF Operations Team has been working hard, meeting two times monthly over the summer updating BUF Community Information and getting organized – see our BUF Organization Chart below as well as our lists of the Board of Trustees and BUF Operations Teams Councils.

Below is the flowsheet we created to understand how we're organized.

Questions? Ask Cindy Denchfield (cdenchfield@yahoo.com) or Ahwren Ayers (ahwrenayers@gmail.com).

Organization Chart



BUF Operations Team Council Update

(last updated: 10/19/2025)

Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship Board of Trustees:

- Lin Skavdahl, President
- Natalie Johnson, Vice President
- Claire Lending, Secretary
- Patricia Conover, Treasurer
- Tom Nicholas, Trustee
- Gayle Tillis, Trustee
- Jim Shaver, Trustee
- Ahwren Ayers, Trustee

Admin Team:

- Administration Council – Michelle Fox, Lead
 - Administration – Cindy Denchfield
- Financial Business & Bookkeeping - Patricia Conover, Treasurer
 - Endowment - John Stewart
- Building & Grounds - Ahwren Ayers
 - Design – **(open)**
 - Grounds – Todd Jones
 - Building Stewardship - Michelle Fox, Administrator
 - Custodial - Michelle Fox, Administrator
 - Audio/Visual - Jeff Copeland
 - Safety - Michael Berres
- Communications & Publicity - Doug Branson
 - Mid-Week Update – Heather Higgins, Clare Garvin, Maryann Welch
- Information Technology - Jed Reynolds, Mike Betz, Rory McLeod (email lists)
- Website Design and Content Manager - Annie Sorich
- Rental Management - **(open)**
- Overall Administration - Michelle Fox, Administrator

Ministry Teams:

- Ministry Council – Sunny McMillan, Minister; Michelle Fox, Liaison
 - Sunday Services
 - Other Services
 - Community Ministry
 - Healthy Relationships
 - Worship Arts

- Music - Ben Workman Smith
- Pastoral Care - Rick Steele, Carolla Tosetti, Tom Klein

Community Within Teams:

- Community Within BUF Council – David Shirey-Lead
- UPLIFT - Grace Nyblade, Pam Hayer
- Hospitality - Judy Kasper
- Congregational Engagement - Rina Jurceka
- Volunteerism - Operations Team
- Community Night Dinner - Jennifer Villalva-Cheap
- Chalice Circles - Kathryn Allen, Bonnie Phiney
- Affinity Groups
 - Women's Retreat - Claire Lending, Sarah Pearson
 - Dining with Friends - Heather Higgins, Murray Bennet
 - Book Groups - Murray Bennett
 - Men's Group - Jeff Copeland
 - Meditation - Cynthia Bauman
 - Writers Group - Sky Hedman

Community Beyond Teams:

- Community Beyond BUF Council - Todd Jones, Lead
- Social & Environmental Justice
 - Humanitas - Rob Vollkommer
 - Black Lives Matter - David Curley
 - Climate Justice - Deb Cruz
 - Fair Trade - Susan Thurn
 - Immigrant Rights - Ann Stevenson
 - Native American Connections - Deb Cruz
 - SEJC Monthly Collections - Kara Black
 - JUUstice Washington - Deb Cruz
- Partnerships
 - Transylvania Partner Church - Kevin Allen-Schmid
 - Interfaith Coalition of Whatcom County - Rose Edington
- Denominational Affairs
 - UU Association - Debb Cruz
 - UU Service Committee - Todd Jones
 - Pacific Western Region - Debb Cruz

Growth and Learning Teams:

- Growth and Learning Council - Natalie Johnson, Lead
- Adult Religious Education (RE) - Natalie Johnson

- Forums
- Educational Teams
- Educational Events
- Classes
- Groups
- Young Adults
- Children & Youth RE - Lis Epperson, RE Coordinator
 - Children's Programs - Lis Epperson
 - Youth Programs - Gabe Epperson
 - Child Care & Staff - Lis Epperson

Teachers

- Adult RE - Natalie Johnson
 - Children's RE - Lis Epperson
 - Training
 - Parent Support
 - Support
 - Hiring
 - Supervising
-

IT Update

A Wi-Fi upgrade is in progress.

BUF's IT team is working on upgrading the building's network and wifi infrastructure. Our goal is to improve wifi availability and reliability throughout the building. This may take a month or two, so please be patient.

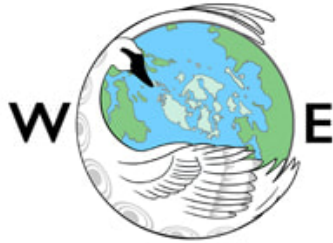
You may see things like blue tape on the walls (marking the locations of new and existing wiring), or mock Wi-Fi access points in various locations. Please leave these in place.

If you have questions or comments, please send them to either Rory McLeod (mcleodnw@gmail.com) or Jed Reynolds (jed@bitratchet.com).

~ Your volunteer IT team

Social and Environmental Justice

SEJC's October Special Collections Recipient *Whiteswan Environmental (WE)*



[Whiteswan Environmental \(WE\)](#) envisions a future where the environment and Coast Salish culture thrive together in the Salish Sea. 170 years ago, our ancestors were removed from their village sites. WE dreams of healing that begins with the restoration of Houses of Healing, Houses of Learning Longhouses. Through these sacred waters that flow from Kwelshan (Mt. Baker) to the Salish Sea, perhaps one day future generations will witness Truth, Healing, and Reconcili-ACTION. To address the disparities left to Mother

Earth and her people, WE co-founded a Washington State Charter School. This initiative arose from the urgent need to create a learning environment where indigenous youth and their peers can grow in ways that honor both Indigenous and Western worldviews — reconnecting education to land and culture. WE is leading a resurgence of classroom-to-place-based education that uplifts all peoples' history, culture, governance, and language, and prepares youth to carry forward intergenerational responsibilities of land care and relational leadership.

The SEJC Collection On October 12 Will Be Used For:

- Learning from the Homeland Language Camps — a safe, immersive experience for Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth that revitalizes knowledge systems and nurtures future leaders grounded in ancestral homelands.

[Learn More](#)

UPLIFT

UPLIFT Update: Uplifting Queer Voices Within BUF and Beyond

1. The UPLIFT Committee meets on the first Sunday of every month in the Conference room at noon. Please come. All are welcome.

2. Look for Rainbow ribbons attached to name tags. These folx 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 or 360-545-3265 (cell).

—Grace Nyblade, Co-chair

Engagement & Support

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.

Questions? Contact Mark Allyn at allyn@well.com.

Interfaith Coalition's Winter Coat Drive

Through Friday, October 24 (drop off at BUF by Thursday, October 23)



BUF has traditionally participated in the [Interfaith Coalition's Winter Coat Drive](#) to provide new or gently used coats to help keep our neighbors warm.

This year's Coat Drive is now underway until October 24. You may drop off donated coats in the bin provided in the entryway at BUF during office hours, Wednesday choir, and on Sunday mornings. Coats will be taken to Interfaith by BUF on the 23rd so please drop them off before the deadline.

All sizes are needed. In high demand are children's sizes and XL, XXL, XXXL for adults.

Thanks for your generosity!

Questions? Ask Rose Edington, BUF Liaison to Interfaith Coalition

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](#)

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