



# Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship

Community, Compassion, Commitment

Mid-Week Update: **November 19, 2025**

## Upcoming Services

### Sunny Notes

### Religious Education

- [Children's Religious Education](#)
  - [Sunday Religious Explorers](#)
  - [Youth Group](#)

### Events

- [Thanksgiving Potluck Dinner](#) - November 27
- [Native American Heritage Concert](#) - November 28
- [Holiday Joy Program](#) - Through Dec 10
- [UU Bible Study for Skeptics and Seekers](#) - December 14
- [Save the Date BUF Women's Retreat](#) - May 15-17, 2026

### News

- [Lost Guitar Cord](#)

### Volunteer Opportunities & Needs

### Building & Grounds

- [Leaf-Raking Day Gratitude](#)

### UPLIFT

- [Transgender Day of Remembrance](#)

### Social and Environmental Justice

- [Special Collection for Partner Church in Magyarszovat, Transylvania](#) - November 23

## 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, November 23, 10:30am - A Litany of Thankfuls**

*Bonnie Phinney, worship leader; Tom Nicholas, celebrant*

As we approach Thanksgiving and the holiday season, we are reminded that giving thanks is not a once-a-year practice. BUF member Bonnie Phinney will share and reflect on a sermon by the late UU minister Forrest Church that is special to her. You will be invited to share your own Thankfuls, today and every day.

---

# Sunny Notes



This past Sunday, we took some time to trace our roots, exploring the history of our congregation, our relationship with our partner church in Magyarszovat, Transylvania, Romania, and our faith tradition itself. If you weren't there, I encourage you to check out the recording on [YouTube](#), which features some incredible music, including Kevin Allen-Schmid belting out a few songs in Hungarian!

While BUF has maintained a relationship with its partner church in Magyarszovat since the early 1990s, our tradition's Unitarian roots extend all the way back to Transylvania in the 1550s and King John Sigismund's Edict of Religious Tolerance. Though King Sigismund identified as a Unitarian, he nevertheless allowed “that each person maintain whatever religious faith he wishes.” Such explicit religious tolerance was revolutionary at a time when imprisonment, torture, and death over theological differences were commonplace (including one important Unitarian ancestor I mentioned, Michael Servetus, who was executed in 1553 for his anti-Trinitarian theological writings).

All this to say, our roots run deep, making possible vibrant growth in the present and future. Though there is much to lament in our current day and time, we do have a legacy worth celebrating. This Sunday, November 23, as we come together for “A Litany of Thankfuls,” let us remember and be thankful for all those who came before us who made possible our “free and responsible search for truth and meaning” (a phrase that appears in both our Unitarian Universalist 4th Principle, as well as our shared value of Pluralism).

— Sunny Joy McMillan, J.D., M.Div.

[Schedule a "Getting to Know You" Meeting](#)

P.S. One of our dedicated volunteers, Doug Branson, helpfully brought to my attention that this is a time of year when we will likely see an uptick in text and email scams. You may receive texts and emails from a scammer using my name (Sunny McMillan) asking you to buy gift cards, or send a copy of the directory, or to call me about something urgent. Variations of this scam are targeted at congregations of every stripe, all across the country, [as described in a previous issue of UU World magazine](#).

Please know this: **BUF staff and volunteers will never send you an email or text asking you for money, bank account info, or credit card numbers.** To make contributions electronically, you have to initiate the contact—either by calling us, or through our website, or in person. If you are ever in doubt about a suspicious call or message, do not respond. Contact us directly to check out anything you're unsure of.

---

## Religious Education

### Children's Religious Education

#### Sunday Religious Explorers

This Sunday children will spend half of class practicing music with our choir director Ben! Then, the Youth class will begin the six-week JetPig Cooperative curriculum and earn weekly challenge coins. Grades K-2 will experience a Beehive Art Bar and grades 3-5 will have orientation with Alycia in the Beehive Art Room.

---

#### Youth Group

Our team this year is led by Gabe Epperson ([eppersonator@gmail.com](mailto:eppersonator@gmail.com)), Jen Villalva, and Carl Meyer. Youth Group will meet once a month to do an activity together. Parents of children in middle and high school should expect contact via email soon. Please contact [RE@buf.org](mailto:RE@buf.org) with questions or if you do not hear from us and want to join. Thank you, Volunteers!

---

## Events

### Thanksgiving Potluck Dinner

**Thursday, November 27, 1:00pm, Social Hall**

BUF will be providing the turkey, but we need everyone to bring a side dish. We will gather at about 1:00pm and help set up and have the dinner at about 1:30pm.

Please RSVP to Mark Allyn at [allyn@well.com](mailto:allyn@well.com) or call him at (360) 733-3301 with the number of people in your party and what dish you plan to bring.

[RSVP](#)

---

## Native American Heritage Concert

Friday, November 28, 6:30-8:30pm, BUF

A poster for the Native American Heritage Concert. The top section has a blue background with yellow text: "Native American Heritage Concert", "Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship", "SPONSORED BY BUF's NATIVE AMERICAN CONNECTION COMMITTEE", "FREEWILL OFFERING WILL BE TAKEN TO SUPPORT OUR PERFORMERS", "FRIDAY NOVEMBER 28TH 6:30-8:30 PM". Below this is a central text block on a white background: "A government shutdown leading to federal food assistance programs, like SNAP, for November, leave millions of Americans at risk. Tribal Nations and Peoples are particularly vulnerable at this time. Support Lummi Nations Food Bank with your food donations. NEEDED: Peanut Butter, Canned Meats, Vegetables, Dried Beans and Rice, Pasta & Pasta Sauce, Healthy Cereals, Baby Formula, Baby Food." The bottom section features four performer portraits with their names and instruments: Andrew Tsow-Met Johnson (Native American Flute), Ben Workman-Smith (Cello/Vocals), Mark Nichols (Piano/Vocals), and JP Falcon Grady (Guitar/Vocals). A "Special Guest" section mentions Bernie Pahalickun Thomas (Story & Poems). The address "1207 Ellsworth St, Bellingham, WA 98225" is at the bottom.

**Native American Heritage Concert**  
**Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship**  
SPONSORED BY BUF's NATIVE AMERICAN CONNECTION COMMITTEE  
FREEWILL OFFERING WILL BE TAKEN TO SUPPORT OUR PERFORMERS  
FRIDAY NOVEMBER 28TH 6:30-8:30 PM

A government shutdown leading to federal food assistance programs, like SNAP, for November, leave millions of Americans at risk. Tribal Nations and Peoples are particularly vulnerable at this time. Support Lummi Nations Food Bank with your food donations. NEEDED: Peanut Butter, Canned Meats, Vegetables, Dried Beans and Rice, Pasta & Pasta Sauce, Healthy Cereals, Baby Formula, Baby Food.

**Andrew Tsow-Met Johnson**  
Native American Flute

**Ben Workman-Smith**  
Cello/Vocals

**Mark Nichols**  
Piano/Vocals

**JP Falcon Grady**  
Guitar/Vocals

**Special Guest**  
**Bernie Pahalickun Thomas**  
Story & Poems

1207 Ellsworth St, Bellingham, WA 98225

**Sponsored by BUF's Native American Connections Committee.** A freewill offering will be taken to support the performers, and donations of canned and dried food will be accepted for Lummi Nations Food Bank.

Performers include Andrew Tsow-Met Johnson (Native American Flute), Ben Workman-Smith, (Cello/Vocals), Mark Nichols (piano/vocals), and JP Falcon Grady (guitar/vocals), plus special guest Bernie Pahalickun Thomas (story and poems).

Want to volunteer? Contact Beth Brownfield: [bethbrownf1@gmail.com](mailto:bethbrownf1@gmail.com)

---

## Holiday Joy Program

**Donation Drop-Off Deadline: Wednesday, December 10**

BUF will be collecting unwrapped gifts for [Holiday Joy](#), a program of [Interfaith Coalition](#) in conjunction with the [Opportunity Council](#). For local families experiencing significant financial hardship, it's a chance to provide gifts to their children and meet basic needs.

Holiday Joy relies entirely on donated gifts and volunteer efforts from more than 40 faith communities. The families who participate have been selected based on the greatest need and they express overwhelming gratitude for the donations. Each unwrapped gift is suggested to cost around \$25. Rose will be collecting our donations for delivery on Thursday, December 11. Donations can be dropped off at any time but please make sure they're dropped off no later than the December 10 deadline.

If you are able to contribute, please [click here for gift ideas](#). A paper list will also be on the box in the entry of BUF. Additional lists will be available at the collection box. We have committed to purchase gifts for the 6 to 13 year age group for donations. If you have any questions, contact Rose Edington or Ann Stevenson, Interfaith Holiday Joy coordinators at BUF.



**INTERFAITH COALITION**  
Partners in faith. Changing lives.

[View Gift Ideas](#)

---

## Unitarian Universalist Bible Study for Skeptics and Seekers

**Sunday, December 14, 12:15pm, Flex Room (Organizing Meeting)**

The Bible is a significant part of our Unitarian Universalist heritage. It was a sacred text of both our forbearers — the Unitarians and the Universalists — who for hundreds of years were Christian. Today, the Bible endures as one of our Unitarian Universalist sources, providing “direct experiences of transcending mystery and wonder.”

Contemplating the Bible today leads to myriad questions: How does the historical Jesus differ from the Jesus of faith? What was the impetus to write the gospels? What do the parables and stories of the New Testament tell us? What were some of the gospels that were not included in the New Testament?

Skeptics, seekers, and religious liberals are invited to read about and discuss these and other questions in a new study group. Starting with the New Testament, we will read from the Bible and a variety of critical texts that offer explanations of, and questions about, the New Testament.

This will be an initial/organizing meeting where we'll also decide when and where to hold meetings, how the group will operate, and what our first book will be.

Questions? Contact Natalie Johnson: [NatalieLJohnson53@gmail.com](mailto:NatalieLJohnson53@gmail.com), 703-639-7290.

---

## Save the Date: 2026 BUF Women's Retreat "Weaving the Web of Connection"

**Friday, May 15-Sunday, May 17, 2026, Camp Lutherwood\***

Held from Friday evening through Sunday afternoon, the weekend retreat includes most meals (no cooking) and is a wonderful time to connect with other women and yourself. More info to come in the following months. We hope you will join us.

*\*Camp Lutherwood (on Lake Samish) was selected by popular request via a poll of this past year's attendees.*

### Weekly BUF Events

**Lunch for All** - Tuesdays, noon, Library. *Bring-your-own-lunch and conversation with fellow BUFsters, hosted by Mark Allyn.*

**Community Night Dinners** - Wednesdays, 5:45pm, Social Hall. *Soup, salad, bread, dessert. \$5 suggested donation for those over 12+ (kids eat free).*

For more recurring events, visit [buf.org](http://buf.org) for the [complete calendar of BUF events](#).

---

## News

### Lost Guitar Cord



One of our beloved members, Pam Hayer (who comes all the way from Canada to be with us!), recently won a Fender guitar and amp at the BUF Auction. Unfortunately, when Pam came to pick up her prize, the cord connecting the guitar and the amp was

missing. Our wonderful A/V Team and tech folks have checked all over the BUF building, but were unable to locate the cord. If you or someone you know happened to pick up the cord inadvertently, please do place it in the hanging box outside Sunny's office so Pam can pick it up. Thank you for your help in locating Pam's cord!

## Volunteer Opportunities & Needs

| <i><b>Opportunity / Item</b></i>                                                                                                              | <i><b>Details &amp; Contact Info</b></i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Volunteer:</b> Building & Grounds committee Co-Chair                                                                                       | Co-chair needed December through May for Building & Grounds committee.<br><br><b>Contact:</b> Ahwren, 360-312-1244                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Volunteers:</b> Various roles (7 total)<br><br><b>For:</b> Concert event on Nov 28                                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 front door monitors doing 1/2 hour shifts to open the front door for latecomers or guests leaving and returning (7:00-7:30, 7:30-8:00, 8:00-8:30)</li> <li>• 2 volunteers to count and document free will offering and pass onto Beth to hold for JP Falcon to distribute</li> <li>• 2 volunteers to clean up the sanctuary and help load food donations into a vehicle</li> </ul><br><b>Contact:</b> Beth Brownfield by email <a href="mailto:bethbrownf1@gmail.com">bethbrownf1@gmail.com</a> with the Volunteer Position + NAME, EMAIL, and PHONE NUMBER. |
| <b>Items:</b> Gifts (unwrapped) for 6-13 year-olds<br><br><b>For:</b> Holiday Joy program, for local families experiencing financial hardship | BUF will be collecting unwrapped gifts for <a href="#">Holiday Joy</a> , a program of Interfaith Coalition in conjunction with the Opportunity Council. <a href="#">View gift ideas</a> . <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suggested cost per gift: \$25</li> <li>• Age group to shop for: 6-13</li> <li>• Gifts should remain unwrapped</li> <li>• Drop off donations at BUF by December 10</li> </ul><br><b>Contact:</b> Rose Edington or Ann Stevenson, Interfaith Holiday Joy coordinators at BUF                                                                                           |

|                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Volunteers and Items</b><br/>(warm socks, gloves, hats)</p> <p><b>For:</b> CAST, for unhoused community</p>                         | <p><a href="#">CAST</a> donations are always needed for our unhoused community: <b>warm socks, gloves, hats</b> can be put in the CAST box in the BUF coat closet.</p> <p>A team of 50 volunteers serve sandwiches and other food items, four nights a week downtown by the library. At least six BUF members are regular volunteers. If interested in joining the team, talk to Judy F., Beth F., Constance O., Henry O, Ann S., or Linda T.</p>                                                                                                                               |
| <p><b>Volunteers:</b> Dinner Leads (2-3 total)</p> <p><b>For:</b> Community Night Dinners (CND)</p>                                       | <p>CND still needs 2-3 dinner leads. These leaders in the kitchen follow a recipe provided (we'll plan which soup you cook), help make sure everyone has a task, and ensure dinner is served on time. If you'd like to try it out or shadow Jen for a week, contact her ASAP.</p> <p><b>Contact:</b> Jennifer Villalva, Community Night Dinner organizer - email <a href="mailto:jennifermvillalva@hotmail.com">jennifermvillalva@hotmail.com</a>, or call/text 360-202-7866</p>                                                                                                |
| <p><b>Volunteers:</b><br/>Community Night Dinner volunteers, various roles (several)</p> <p><b>For:</b> Community Night Dinners (CND)</p> | <p>There are many ways to help support Community Night Dinner. Sign up to help chop the vegetables and prepare the dinner, help with setup, help reset the social hall, or just come eat the soup. Help once, or help on a regular basis; it is totally up to you!</p> <p><a href="#">Sign-up online</a> or in person on the clipboard on the bulletin board in the Narthex.</p> <p><b>Contact:</b> Jennifer Villalva, Community Night Dinner organizer - email <a href="mailto:jennifermvillalva@hotmail.com">jennifermvillalva@hotmail.com</a>, or call/text 360-202-7866</p> |
| <p><b>Volunteers:</b><br/>Short-term help for B&amp;G team (5-6 people)</p> <p><b>For:</b> Building &amp; Grounds (B&amp;G) team</p>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you like to organize? Share your home repair skills now and then? BUF B&amp;G needs 5-6 more people who can be available for occasional repairs.</li> <li>• Volunteer with carpet installation skills needed for a project.</li> </ul> <p><b>Contact:</b> Ahwren, 360-312-1244</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

---

# Building & Grounds

## Leaf-Raking Day Gratitude



On this early winter day of November 15, there was no rain but a lot of wet leaves. Todd Jones was the star showing up with a leaf blower. There were two to three of us for the first two hours: thank you Todd Jones and Jacco Ten Hove. Then, one more showed up and helped: Thank you Mark Allyn. I'm also grateful for the individuals who have been independently raking leaves the past few weeks: Thank you Lin Skavdahl, Peter Lutin, Doug Branson.

Some of our leaves will become compost at the Faith Lutheran Community Garden, fueling the Maple Alley Inn meals. In his email of gratitude, Ed Wood, Community Coordinator for the garden says, "As far as the garden is concerned, I cannot forget the contribution of BUF's congregation, who funded the purchase of most of the materials for the hoop house. BTW, it is now eight years old, four years past its warranty, and still doing well, albeit with a few holes here and there. I haven't calculated how many pounds of tomatoes, cukes, basil, peppers, beets and I don't remember what else it has sheltered, but it is considerable."

---

## UPLIFT

## Transgender Day of Remembrance

**Thursday, November 20**

Transgender Day of Remembrance (November 20, 2025) is more important than ever. To be witness during this time in history is sometimes as much as we can do. Please consider attending a local vigil or learning more about TDOR. We stand in witness. Thank you to Rev. Sunny for her moment from the pulpit.

But what is the history of it and why did it start?

It started in the wake of the November 28, 1998 [murder of Rita Hester](#) and the transphobic media coverage of it in gay and mainstream media outlets that incensed the Boston area and national trans community. Hester's killer as of this date has not been brought to justice.

On the one year anniversary of Hester's death, because we were [starting to forget the names](#) of the people who had been murdered at that time because it was happening so frequently and we had better information about it thanks to the Internet, San Francisco based trans advocate Gwen Smith founded the Remembering Our Dead web project to track and memorialize those folks we have lost to anti- trans violence.

Smith also organized a vigil in San Francisco on the one year anniversary of Hester's death that grew into the Transgender Day of Remembrance event we are familiar with almost two decades later. The TDOR was rapidly adopted elsewhere in the United States and the rest of the world. [Read the full article about TDOR.](#)

[Read More](#)

---

## Social and Environmental Justice

### SEJC Special Collection for Partner Church

**Sunday, November 23**

On Sunday, November 23, 2025, BUF will hold a special collection for the Unitarians in Magyarszovat, Transylvania. Since 1992 BUF has maintained a partnership with this historic Unitarian congregation. Through letters, financial contributions, and many visits by Bellingham congregants, we have built a deep connection with the Transylvanian descendants of the founders of Unitarianism.

In 2017, a 43-voice BUF choir toured Transylvania and spent several days in Magyarszovat, singing and eating together, strengthening our bond of friendship. In 2023, BUF, together with Reka Zoltan and George Bor, hosted long-time Magyarszovat minister Reverend Tamás Balázs and his wife Kato to Bellingham. Rev. Balázs is now retired.

Előd Szőcs is the new minister in Magyarszovat, and he also serves another Unitarian congregation in a neighboring village. Előd also happens to be a regionally acclaimed, young ultra-marathoner!



*Pictured left: Előd Szőcs, Unitarian Minister, Magyarszovat, Transylvania, Romania*

BUF's Partner church committee will be meeting soon to prepare a report and to plan our special annual Thanksgiving-time collection for Magyarszovat. Please plan to give generously, either in person on that Sunday, or by other means at any time in November.

Questions? Email committee chair Kevin Allen-Schmid - [kevinallenschmid@gmail.com](mailto:kevinallenschmid@gmail.com).

*Köszönöm* ("Thanks" in Hungarian)



P.S. For a heartwarming introduction to BUF's Partnership with Transylvania, and some fun footage of BUFsters exploring the world, please watch ["The Pilgrims' Journey"](#) a fun and moving 13-minute video that Sarah Bauer and Dave Wagner made of BUF's 43-member 2017 Transylvania trip.

[Watch Video](#)

---

## 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](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).

---

### Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship

1207 Ellsworth Street, Bellingham, WA 98225

Office phone: 360-733-3887

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

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