



Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship

Community, Compassion, Commitment

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

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ICYMI: In Case You Missed It

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, December 14, 10:30am - All Music Sunday

Ben Workman Smith, worship leader

This is our bi-annual All Music Sunday! The theme this year is "HOPE." I (Ben Workman Smith) am especially proud of the work that we've been preparing this year. If you could have heard us practicing this past Wednesday, you would know that this music

will be special. Join us for a challenging, reflective celebration of the HOPE that we make carrying us into the Solstice and the New Year!

RE Reminder for All Music Sunday: Kids are encouraged to wear their pajamas and bring a stuffy and/or small blanket to cuddle during this magical musical service. The rug area will be available for children to gather with their friends, and the Wiggle Room available for use if needed during the service; however, wiggles, and maybe even a little dancing, are also welcome in the sanctuary. There will be no regular classes so that families can enjoy this special intergenerational service and ritual together.

Wednesday, December 24, 6:45-8:00pm - Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

Led by BUF minister Sunny McMillan and affiliated minister, Rev. Barbara W. ten Hove with Melanie Rieck, keyboard artist and Ben Workman-Smith, choir director.

BUF's traditional Candlelight service begins with caroling at 6:45pm followed by a meaningful service with music by both choirs, seasonal reflections, and, of course, our wonderful candle ceremony.

There are a few things to note about this special service, which you can read about in a [new Christmas Eve FAQ](#) on our website.

[Read FAQ](#)

Sunny Notes

Since arriving at BUF on October 1, I have held over 40 “Getting to Know You” meetings with small groups, committees, and individuals. In each meeting, I asked, “What brought you to BUF?” and “What do you love about BUF?” and “What are your particular interests at BUF?” Armed with my trusty laptop, I took notes—a lot of notes!

As I met with you, listened to your stories and experiences, and collected information in my notes, a few key themes emerged. One of the top themes: The importance of music at BUF. So many of you shared just how much you love the music during our services, from our fantastic keyboard artists, to our incredibly talented members who share their various musical gifts, to the guest musicians who visit from time to time. Some of you arrived at BUF and felt compelled to join the choir immediately. Some of you identified choir as your primary point of connection in our community.

And some of you identified music—whether you are performing or in the pews—as an integral part of your spirituality. I am not surprised. In his book, “Awe: The New Science of Everyday Wonder and How It Can Transform Your Life,” Dr. Dacher Keltner (who inspired my last sermon on November 30) identifies music as one of the top ways we humans experience awe. He writes:

It is a human universal to get the chills and tear up when moved by music. That is because we listen to music, philosopher Susan Sontag rightly observed, with our bodies...In our twenty-six-culture study, people often wrote that music brought them moments of clarity, of epiphany, of truth, of really knowing their place in the great scheme of life.

This Sunday, December 14, offers up a wonderful opportunity to experience a bit of awe through music. Our creative and talented Choir Director, Ben Workman Smith, will be leading us in our bi-annual “All Music Sunday.” I look forward to attending my very first “All Music Sunday” at BUF and experiencing what Ben and our dedicated choir members have created for our community. I hope to see you there!

— Sunny Joy McMillan, J.D., M.Div.

P.S. There are still a few more opportunities before the end of the year to join one of my “Getting to Know You” small-group meetings. Please feel free to use the scheduling link below to grab a spot.

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

P.P.S. We are aware that the email scams are continuing in full force this holiday season. You may receive texts and emails from a scammer using my name (Sunny McMillan) or another staff member's name 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, which you can [read here](#).

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:

- **Middle and High School Youth** will be working on the JetPig Cooperative Curriculum in the Flex Room
- **3-5** will be in the Beehive Art Room
- **K-2** will be in the Youth Room working on Soul Matters

Join the RE Committee

Sunday, December 14, 2:00-4:00pm, Lis's House (Alderwood neighborhood)

The RE Committee is in the last stages of forming, so if you wish to join this vibrant and fun group of adults working toward building and growing our programs in a way that supports our families and community (think OWL, special events, Sunday RE, Youth Group, etc), please come! This is our last week where the invitation is open to all; if you cannot make it but wish to be on the team, email RE@buf.org.

Festive snacks and drinks provided. Email RE@buf.org to RSVP and for the address.

[RSVP](#)

Children and Youth Families Solstice Party

Friday, December 19, 5:00pm, Social Hall



The second annual **Children and Youth Families Solstice Party** will take place on Friday, December 19 in the Social Hall starting at 5:00pm. Lis's now *famous* vegan/gluten free chili will be provided; we need folks to [sign up to bring sides](#).

All of BUF are welcome to join us for a playful, joyful time with food, crafts, a viewing of *A Charlie Brown Christmas*, and games for all ages. Adult beverages optional. Please RSVP by [signing up for a dish](#) or by emailing RE@buf.org.

[Sign Up to Bring a Side Dish](#)

It is a difficult time for many folks; nobody will be turned away nor will we be keeping track of who brings a dish or not so this event can be accessible to all our BUF community. Please be generous if you have the means.

Youth Group Update

Next Gathering: Friday, January 16, 2026, 6:30-8:30pm, 20th Century Bowl

The Youth Group (open to grades 7-12) meets monthly for activities, games, and outings. The next gathering is on January 16, 2026 at 20th Century Bowl from 6:30pm to 8:30pm.

Questions? Want to register your youth, be a Youth Group leader, or provide snacks at future gatherings? Contact Lis Epperson at RE@buf.org or Gabe Epperson at eppersonator@gmail.com.

Adult Religious Education

Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings and Practices - Dianne Eberlein

Sundays, January 4-25 and February 1, 12:15-1:45 pm, Flex Room (Top Floor)

This introductory course will focus on the basic ground, or view, of Tibetan Buddhism. All Buddhist practices are based on the life and teachings of the Buddha. But each tradition manifests the teachings in a different way. Tibetan Buddhism explores the relationship between mind and its world by exploring such questions as: What is the cause of suffering? What is the essence of emotions? What obscures clear seeing? And, most importantly, what is the nature of compassion?

These 90-minute classes will begin with 15 minutes of meditation followed by a focused discussion of key teachings of the Buddha - The Four Noble Truths, The Root

of Suffering, Working with Emotions, Karma and Dependent Origination. Each class will conclude with 15 minutes of analytic meditation; an opportunity to work with your mind based on the teachings.

[Register](#)

News

Congregational Administrator Job Posting

The Administrator hiring team has completed the job posting for our [Congregational Administrator position](#), which is now published on the BUF website.

[View the Job Description](#)

If you know anyone who you think would be interested in applying for this position please share the link with them. We would like to fill the position by early January but we will accept applications and continue interviews until we find the right person for this important job at BUF. If a member of the congregation applies for this position we would like to inform you that this will neither hinder nor help your application. All candidates will be considered solely based on their qualifications and interview experience.

– Barbara Ellis-Quinn (speaking for our hiring team)

Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting

Sunday, December 14, 7:00pm

Light a candle on the 2nd Sunday in December at 7:00pm to unite family and friends around the globe for one hour to honor the memories of our sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, and grandchildren who left too soon. As candles are lit on December 14, 2025 at 7:00 pm



local time, hundreds of thousands of people commemorate and honor the memory of all children gone too soon.

Several members of our BUF community have lost children too soon. You can [read more about the event](#), which is done by Compassionate Friends, an organization dedicated to supporting families who have lost children.

[Read More](#)

Please help spread the word by reminding friends of yours about it. You might not even know how important this event could be for someone else. Many people besides us have lost someone at too young an age. Life will never be the same for us or for any of them, but it is made much easier by the many family members and friends that continue to remember our children. As the light burns down in one time zone, candles spread light in another. Hundreds of formal candle lighting events are held, and thousands of informal candle lightings are conducted in homes, as families gather in quiet remembrance of children who have died and will never be forgotten.

Lucy Kesterson's Mom

Many of you know and love BUF member Lucy Kesterson, who is incredibly engaged with BUF's Black Lives Matter Team, among many other activities around BUF. For those who have been following the health challenges and recent hospitalization of Lucy's mother, we are saddened to inform the BUF community that Lucy lost her mother early Sunday morning. Lucy wanted to let as many folks know as possible via the MWU and BUF News—**at this time, she is navigating what comes next and is unable to share this news herself and respond to calls, texts, or emails individually.** She very much appreciates your love and support.

BUF News Update

As part of BUF's efforts to bring news and information to the congregation, BUF News will be changing the way it is delivered.

Starting Monday, December 22, BUF News emails will be sent out through Breeze in the same way MWU is sent. It will be regularly sent out on the morning of Monday and

Friday, with time-sensitive posts on the days in between. No more than one BUF News email will be sent out on any given day. Those who wish to post to BUF News will submit their post (similar to MWU) to be included in BUF News emails.

[Read More](#)

Questions or comments? Please contact communications@buf.org.

Meet Your MWU Team - MWU Who?



We thought it might be time to introduce you to your MWU team at BUF.

Perhaps you've noticed some improvements to the MWU over the past year, from formatting changes to the clickable table of contents. We have so much going on at BUF that these newsletters can often feel quite long, particularly when viewed on a phone. This team of three volunteers spends time compiling and editing submissions to try to deliver information to you in a clear and user-friendly fashion. Meet the team behind this communication, who recently shared some holiday cheer and snapped the photo seen here!

Maryann Welch, our newest member, has jumped right into the MWU volunteering duties along with raising her two kids: Leo, 8, and Alice, 4. **Heather Higgins** took over the MWU when Kathy Wahto left, and has been carrying on the torch. **Clare Garvin**, is a marketing professional who also squeezes this in with her full-time job and parenting of her very active 3-year-old, Ruby. You can [read more about Clare](#) in the Alohas section of the July 2 MWU, and [read more about Maryann](#) in the Alohas section of the October 29 MWU.

Events

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.

If you plan to attend, email Natalie at NatalieLJohnson53@gmail.com to receive a list of books that might be included.

Questions? Contact Natalie Johnson via email (see above) or at 703-639-7290.

Third Sunday Potluck

Sunday, December 21, after service, Social Hall

The last Potluck of the year will be on December 21, when we'll gather after service to share good food, good company and some pre-Christmas cheer. Please bring your contribution to the meal downstairs to the social hall before the service. If you'd like to contribute some of your time to help set up or take down please contact Judy Kasper: hospitality@buf.org.

Celebration of Life for Jane DeBrock

Saturday, January 10, 2026, 2:00pm

Join Les DeBrock and friends to celebrate the life of Jane DeBrock, beloved BUF member. Please save the date for Saturday, January 10 at 2:00pm. Reverend Sunny McMillan will lead a memorial service in remembrance of Jane.

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). Note: No CND on December 24 or 31. We will resume in the New Year.*

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

Volunteer Opportunities & Needs

Opportunity / Item	Details & Contact Info
Volunteers: Short-term help For: Building & Grounds (B&G) team	Occasional small repair skills needed at your convenience. Contact: Ahwren, 360-312-1244
Volunteers and Items (warm socks, gloves, hats) For: CAST, for unhoused community	CAST donations are always needed for our unhoused community: warm socks, gloves, hats can be put in the CAST box in the BUF coat closet. 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.
Volunteers: Dinner Leads (2-3 total) For: Community Night Dinners (CND)	<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>Contact: Jennifer Villalva, Community Night Dinner organizer - email jennifermvillalva@hotmail.com, or call/text 360-202-7866</p>
Volunteers: Community Night Dinner volunteers, various roles (several) For: Community Night Dinners (CND)	<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>Sign-up online or in person on the clipboard on the bulletin board in the Narthex.</p> <p>Contact: Jennifer Villalva, Community Night Dinner organizer - email jennifermvillalva@hotmail.com, or call/text 360-202-7866</p>

Humanitas

A Note of Gratitude from Humanitas

Humble thanks to all who helped replenish the Humanitas coffers via the SEJC collection on December 7. We can only offer the work of Humanitas because you support it. I like to think that we are your agents, using your contributions to help our neighbors who are struggling. Here at BUF, Humanitas is **your** outreach. It is part of the service that gives this fellowship life, as expressed in our Covenant. We are all doing our best to be present for those on the margins, those living life just hanging on and

getting by, and those who always express their gratitude that we have offered an ear to listen, the hand of help, and the warm heart of community.

The work of Humanitas goes on year-round. If you can support this work more frequently than once a year, there are many options for giving ... checks noted for Humanitas, text-to-give, or automatic withdrawals through Breeze. If you are looking to donate through the BUF website (buf.org) there is the "GIVE button" on the upper right corner which will take you to a webpage offering all options and easy instructions for the option you choose.

Love is (truly) the spirit of this fellowship!

With gratitude,
Marsha Vollkommer

In Case You Missed It (ICYMI)

This new section features content that was published in last week's MWU (or other previous weeks), but is being published again in case you missed it.

Hearing Assistance Feedback Wanted

The A/V and IT teams are exploring upgrades to the hearing assist system in the sanctuary. We know that it doesn't serve everyone well at the moment, but we'd be interested to hear how you're currently using it.

Please send your comments to jeff.copeland@gmail.com. In the meantime, we'll also be installing an additional pair of speakers to fill the sonic "dead spots" in the back pews.

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).

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