



Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship

Community, Compassion, Commitment

Mid-Week Update: **December 17, 2025**

Upcoming Services

Sunny Notes

Religious Education

- Children's Religious Education
 - Sunday Religious Explorers
 - Save the Date: Parents' Night Out - January 30, 2026
 - Children and Youth Families Solstice Party - December 19
 - Youth Group: January Gathering - January 16, 2026
- Adult Religious Education
 - Introduction to Buddhism - Sundays, January 4-25 and February 1

News

- BUF Office Closed - December 24-January 5, 2026
- BUF-News Update

Events

- Third Sunday Potluck - December 21
- Christmas Day Potluck Dinner - December 25

Pastoral Care

- Lucy Kesterson's Mom
- Celebration of Life for Jane DeBrock - January 10, 2026

Volunteer Opportunities & Needs

Humanitas

- A Story from Humanitas

ICYMI: In Case You Missed It

- Beware of Scam Emails
- Congregational Administrator Job Posting
- Hearing Assistance Feedback Wanted
- Meet Your MWU Team - MWU Who?

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 21, 10:30am - Solstice

Sunny McMillan, worship leader

On December 21, we will celebrate Winter Solstice, honoring the longest night and the coming return of the light. Join us for a contemplative service on this sacred day where we will take some time to connect with the seasonal and spiritual wisdom in the Wheel of the Year. You are invited to bring a small item from nature to contribute to an altar we will create 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

I am writing my column this week from the couch in my little Bellingham apartment, early Monday morning on December 15. Yesterday, our talented Choir Director, Ben Workman Smith, led us in "All Music Sunday," a service full of incredible performances by BUF choir members and musicians. We also thanked our wonderful Audio-Visual Team. And we celebrated BUFsters Sita Amba-Rao and Beth Brownfield as inductees into the Clara Barton Sisterhood of the Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation. The theme of the day was "HOPE," and I sure did feel it. I left buoyed by the music, the gratitude, and the collective energy.

Today, however, hope has been harder to come by. The morning is dawning windy and gray. As thousands struggle to recover from last week's catastrophic flooding, a quick check of my weather app confirms that another atmospheric river is headed our way this week. A quick check of my news feed tells me that from Brown University campus in Rhode Island, to Bondi Beach in Sydney, Australia, it has been a tragically violent few days in our world. And these events fall on top of all the other struggles and

horrors we are holding in our awareness that affect both our own personal lives, as well as that of the collective.

It is on mornings like this that I remind myself that it is okay if hope feels just outside of reach. Much like the ebbs and flows we witness in nature and seasonal cycles, hope often ebbs and flows, too. This reminder feels particularly timely as we approach the longest night, the Winter Solstice, on December 21. I will take the opportunity this week to lean into the darkness, knowing that just as the light will return, so, too, will hope. Our Solstice service this Sunday also will offer a wonderful opportunity to acknowledge and lean into the ebb and flow of this seasonal cycle, of light and dark, of joy and sorrow. I hope you can join us.

— Sunny, minister

P.S. There is still one more opportunity 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.

And if you weren't able to join one of these meetings in 2025, please do not hesitate to reach out to me at minister@buf.org about scheduling a meeting with me in the New Year!

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

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

Save the Date: Parents' Night Out

Friday, January 30, 5:00-7:30pm, Flex Room

Drop off your kids, enjoy some time out together. More details to come after the New Year.

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: January 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

BUF Office Closed December 24-January 5

Following past practices, the BUF office will be closed for the holiday week. BUF volunteers may still be in the building, working at their own pace on specific projects. Look for your friendly and welcoming volunteers to return on Friday, January 2, 2026.

BUF News Update

Happy Holidays! MWU will take a holiday after the December 24 edition. The first edition of MWU in 2026 will be sent on January 7. Please join us on Sunday, January 4 for a special service.

If you wish to stay updated on BUF happenings during this time, you can subscribe to the new BUF News by sending an email to subscribenews@buf.org with “subscribe” in the subject line. Beginning December 22, BUF News will be sending emails on Monday and Friday, along with time-sensitive email announcements on the days in between. For more information about the change, click below.

[Read More](#)

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

Events

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.

Christmas Day Potluck Dinner

Thursday, December 25, 1:00pm, Social Hall

You are invited to Christmas Day Potluck Dinner at BUF at 1:00pm on December 25. This is a potluck dinner, and everyone should bring a dish to share. Please RSVP to Mark Allyn with the number of people in your party and what dish you plan to bring at allyn@well.com or (360) 733-3301.

[RSVP](#)

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](#).

Pastoral Care

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, December 7. **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.

The family has put together a GoFundMe page to help cover the end-of-life costs for her mother. Use the donate button below to donate to the GoFundMe, or you can [contribute funds via her brother's Paypal](#) if you'd like to help pass the hat.

[Donate](#)

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.

Volunteer Opportunities & Needs

<i>Opportunity / Item</i>	<i>Details & Contact Info</i>
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)	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. 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)</p> <p>For: 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>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 Story from Humanitas

Debra came to [Humanitas](#) with an unusual request. She needed the burned out headlight on her car repaired. Doesn't sound urgent, does it? Well, it is if you are living in your car with your 2 kids, ages 7 and 5, and the police keep pulling you over because of the headlight. Remember, it gets dark early these days. Debra's partner, the children's father, died last month so she is now the sole parent.

She has almost completed classes to qualify her to do blood work in a medical lab and she is hoping to get an apartment in public housing soon. She is also looking for child care for her youngest so that she can get a job and support her family. But in the meantime she really needed a new headlight. With our help she was able to get that done.

Humanitas is your ministry through BUF. Debra was very grateful for your help.

[Donate](#)



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.

Beware of Scam Emails

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 Sunny McMillan's name 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.

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)

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.

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.

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).

Office phone: 360-733-3887

buf.org | admin@buf.org

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