

CUF Board Member Sharing: Kathy O'Laughlin

I am the newest member of the Board of Trustees, having been appointed to a vacant position in July. Of course, I am not new to CUF, having been a member for 24 years and active in a variety of committees and activities over the years.

I came to CUF in July, 1999 as the spouse of Bill Sasso, the minister emeritus, when he came to serve as the first minister. I was new to Carbondale, and relatively new to Unitarian Universalism, having joined our previous church, Second Unitarian in Chicago, in 1997. Bill and I met and started dating in 1995, when he was studying for the ministry. Having been raised Roman Catholic, I never saw myself marrying a clergy person!

Once I encountered Unitarian Universalism, I found that it was a good fit for me. With a progressive political outlook and two gay brothers, the non-acceptance of LGBTQ folks in Catholicism didn't work for me. After I marched with Second Unitarian folk in the gay pride parade in Chicago in 1997, I knew I had found my people. When we moved to Carbondale, it quickly felt like home. Less than a year later, we added our daughter Elena to our family, adding a whole new dimension to life in Carbondale. Elena grew up at CUF and is now 23 and a medical student in Chicago. We're incredibly proud of her!

Most recently, my work at the Fellowship has centered on social action and reproductive justice. I am happy to see Carbondale welcoming people seeking both gender affirming care and abortion care that is being denied in their home states. I helped CUF apply for the grant that is funding our outreach efforts around reproductive justice, and am gratified at the support our project is receiving at CUF and in the wider community. In previous years, I have also been involved in Immigration Justice, being a member of the sponsor circle for our Afghan refugee family, and active in the Vote Love Campaign.

Beyond Social Justice, I regularly participate in the Awakening Heart Dharma Group, the Social Stitchers, and both the BYO Book Group and Roundtable Readers. I just recently started dipping my toe in with the Image Spinners as well.

Prior to retiring two years ago, I worked as a public health nurse at Jackson County Health Department, my last year during the pandemic. I'm enjoying retirement thoroughly, including opportunities to travel to some of our national parks and to Europe!

As a new member of the Board, I'm still finding my way, but excited at the opportunities CUF has for making a difference in our community. I welcome any ideas or input you have for the Board—don't hesitate to grab me during coffee hour or send me an email!