

Hello CUF folks! My name is Martha Shum and I came to CUF in October 2008 and became a member in 2009.

Some things I enjoy doing are making quilts by hand for loved ones and spending time writing. I live in Carbondale with my husband, Kamran. In 2023, I retired from the Survivor Empowerment Center after 23 years.

Before finding CUF, I saw myself as a spiritual refugee- having walked away from my charismatic Christian community about fourteen years earlier after leaving an abusive spouse. Over those years I discovered the Buddhist path and have followed it since. During that time of solitary spiritual exploration, I found books by Joseph Campbell and the two Buddhist teachers, Thich Nhat Hanh and Pema Chodron very helpful. However, I missed the community of a church as well as services and music.

In May, 2008, I was taking a fantasy and science fiction class at John A. Logan taught by Sam Foskey. Rev. Bill Sasso came to our class to talk about the Harry Potter books. I don't remember much about what he said, but what stayed with me was what he didn't say. When he introduced himself and talked about the Fellowship, he never said the word, Jesus. This piqued my interest and I decided to attend a service at CUF.

After visiting CUF in October, 2008, I enjoyed the services and especially the reworded hymns. They fit my now more open and accepting views. I found myself wanting to return and soon realized I had found a spiritual home. At about this same time, Kamran and I met.

Since joining CUF, I've been a part of different groups and committees. Most notable are: the Image Spinners, the Awakening Heart Dharma Group, and the Reproductive Justice Group.

I also went through the Build Your Own Theology class which helped me sort through and move past lingering religious beliefs that no longer served me well.

I have served on the Nominating Committee, Committee on Shared Ministry, and the Endowment Committee, as well as served as a Board trustee from 2015 to 2019.

In 2017, Rev. Sarah married Kamran and me in a small, lovely ceremony.

Since retiring, I've been able to serve as Treasurer on CUF's Board of Trustees.

Being retired has also freed up my time to work on a second fantasy realism novel while trying to market my first one.

I am so glad to have found a spiritual community not based on beliefs but on values. I feel welcomed and accepted here at CUF.