

Narrative Bio: Rev. Sue Koehler-Arsenault, M.Div.

Rev. Sue Koehler-Arsenault is celebrating 25 years of varied ministry experiences. A native of Schenectady, New York, she is a 1985 graduate of the University of Vermont with a B.A. in Religion and Minor in Psychology. While at UVM she held numerous student leadership positions and was named to T.O.W.E.R.R., an honor society recognizing twelve women for their academic and leadership excellence.

Following graduation, Sue joined the Jesuit Volunteer Corps in Seattle, WA. She served as Volunteer and Food Coordinator at the St. Martin de Porres Shelter, a shelter for 200 homeless men over the age of 50. It was here at St. Martin's that Rev. Sue was first introduced to the ministry of presence, contemplative prayer and the importance of community, which have anchored her vocation ever since.

In 1987, Sue was recruited by Seattle University to become Volunteer Center Coordinator, where she launched an innovative approach to service-learning. In 1989, she was honored to receive a national award for the best new service-learning program in the nation and was named Staff Member of the Year.

Sue earned her Master of Divinity degree with distinction from the Weston Jesuit School of Theology (Boston College) in 1994. She served as a Roman Catholic Campus Minister at Wellesley College (1994-2000) and Siena College (2000-2002). At Wellesley College, Sue was part of a pioneering interfaith religious and spiritual life program, working with Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, Protestant, Unitarian, Muslim, and LGBT colleagues and students. At Wellesley, Rev. Sue began collaborating to create interfaith campus-wide rituals and learning opportunities. She also developed a love of preaching. Her presence in the pulpit at Catholic Mass often came as a surprise to the students who had never heard a woman preach!

For eleven years, beginning in 2002, Rev. Sue served people from various religious and cultural backgrounds as Coordinator of Volunteers and Chaplain with Community Hospice of Schenectady, NY. In her capacity as a Hospice chaplain, Rev. Sue developed her pastoral counseling skills and became a frequent speaker in the community on end-of-life issues. Through Hospice, she learned to meet people wherever they are on the spiritual journey. She has conducted over 300 personalized funerals and memorial services. Since moving to Cape Ann in 2014, she is regularly called on by Greely and Campbell funeral homes.

When Sue began receiving requests to officiate weddings in upstate New York, she decided to enroll at One Spirit Interfaith Seminary. Sue was delighted to discover how One Spirit's heart-centered curriculum enabled her to deepen her ministerial skills, contemplative practice and knowledge of world religions. In June 2011, Rev.

Sue was ordained and began working with couples and officiating weddings in New York and Massachusetts.

In 2014, through a series of serendipitous events, Rev. Sue and her husband, the artist David Arsenault, followed his dream of having a studio and gallery of his original oil paintings in Rockport, MA. Out of her experience as a Hospice chaplain, Rev. Sue recognized that many people are no longer connected to the religious tradition of their birth. She became a “Minister without Walls” and began offering funerals, premarital counseling, weddings, and baby blessings on the North Shore. She also joined the faculty at One Spirit Interfaith Seminary, where she teaches numerous classes and workshops, including: The Spiritual Care of the Dying, Healing from Religious Injury, Spiritual Approaches to Addressing Conflict, and Working with Couples on the Path to Marriage.

When Rev. Sue was invited by Rev. Derek Van Gulden of First Congregational Church of Rockport to be Sabbatical Pastor for three months in 2018, her call to congregational ministry was born. At First Congregational, she also completed a six month study on the future of faith formation for children and adults. She taught a popular and well received seven week class, “Creating Your Final Chapter: Facing Death, Finding Peace.” She has Privilege of Call within the United Church of Christ and is an active member of the Associated Clergy of Cape Ann. She is passionate about the Kairos Earth movement, “to bring people together in sacred relationship with the natural world.”

Rev. Sue has three adult children: a son, Pete, who works for a start-up business out of his new home in Charlottesville, VA; a stepdaughter, Brittany, who is an elementary school teacher in South Colonie, New York and a stepson, Alex, who works as an application developer for Massachusetts General Hospital. Sue and David share their home with their pampered kitty, Chloe.

For fun, Rev. Sue enjoys exploring the beaches and parks of Cape Ann. She has taken a recent interest in kayaking and would love to connect with others who also enjoy paddling. She is an enthusiastic dancer, art lover, reader, and pescatarian cook. She and David love attending concerts at the Shalin Liu Performance Center and Old Sloop Coffeehouse. One of her favorite avocations is writing comments in response to articles in the New York Times online.

Rev. Sue recognizes that our society is in the midst of a tectonic shift in religious and spiritual life. She is excited to be part of a community that aspires to walk together in the ways of Jesus, while being open to the treasures that are found in the great religious traditions of the world and every human heart.