First Congregational Parish Unitarian of Petersham, Inc.

On the Common Since 1738

Parish News, October 2025

WELCOME! Reverend Julie-Ann Silberman-Bunn

To begin this church year, we entered contract for part-time ministry with Reverend Julie-Ann Silberman-Bunn. Julie-Ann grew up in the Unitarian Churches of Trenton, Washington Crossing and later Princeton,

NJ. Julie-Ann was active in the two Youth programs of the UUA, Liberal Religious Youth (LRY) and Young Religious Unitarian Universalists. It was through youth leadership Julie-Ann first attended the UUA General Assembly and became invested in our wider religious movement.

Julie-Ann is a graduate of Thomas A. Edison State College in Trenton, NJ following time at several other colleges in the US and in Scotland and Spain. A graduate of Earlham School of Religion the only Quaker Theological School in the US. In her career Julie-Ann has studied bioethics and chaplaincy. Julie-Ann has taught medical students about the influence of religion on patient care, and has supported congregants, patients and families about end-of-life care.

Julie-Ann began her ministry at the struggling small elderly church in Kent Ohio. When Julie-Ann left Kent after 12 years the congregation was a healthy midsize congregation. Julie-Ann went on to serve congregations in Connecticut, South Jersey, Suburban Philadelphia and most recently was assistant minister in Springfield Massachusetts during the pandemic.

In addition to her ministry with us, Julie-Ann is working part-time as a chaplain for two different Hospice agencies. Julie-Ann has completed four units of clinical pastoral education to support her work at several hospice and hospitals providing chaplaincy and spiritual care.

Julie-Ann and her husband Ken have raised two boys from Ken's first marriage which left him a widow raising a 6.5-year-old and a 23-month-old. Their boys are now in their 30's and living in Philadelphia. Julie-Ann and Ken have two additional adult children that they have chosen and who are the parents of Ken and Julie-Ann's two chosen grandchildren. Julie-Ann and Ken live in a small cabin inherited from Julie-Ann's family with their rescue cat Miss Honey.

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Julie-Ann has provided four well-received Sunday Services since the beginning of the church year, and she and Ken join in lively conversation at coffee hour. Several people have said that it feels like Julie-Ann has "always been with us". She is a wonderful person who exudes warmth and compassion and gives a really good hug!

Please come to welcome her to our community on November 2nd.

Julie-Ann's sermon for that day will be *The Roots & Branches of Our Faith.*

We are so grateful that she has joined us!

Program Sundays:

Julie-Ann's Sundays are complemented by our Program Sundays which Rini Kilcoyne continues to organize for us. Robin Koenig is leading a three-part series this Fall on Exploring our UU values. It is a group discussion around our various spiritual leanings, beliefs and backgrounds. "One River...Many Wells" is perhaps a good summary of the discussions. We would like to continue these discussions at times throughout the coming year.

Music:

Loyall Allen provides amazing organ music for us and Marc Erwin and Rini Kilcoyne provide inspiring guitar and vocals. Loyall organized a vocal ensemble to sing at our opening Water Communion Service in September. Loyall is organizing an interfaith ensemble to sing at our annual Interfaith Service with the Congregational Church and St. Peter's Church on November 23rd at 3:00 pm. If you would like to join in making some communal music that day, stay after service on November 2nd for an initial rehearsal or email Loyall at Loyall4allen@gmail.com.

Many of you have mentioned that you appreciated the various music at the church in the past. Loyall and Rini are open to collaborations or additional music of any sort, so come make some joyous noise! Be a part of developing what our music program looks like in the future!

Parsonage Sale and Incorporation of Church:

On October 5th, we held a Special Meeting of the Parish during which we unanimously voted to incorporate. Once incorporated, the closing on the sale of the Parsonage

could proceed and occurred on October 15! The following Sunday, John Woolsey, church Treasurer, announced the final closing with a grateful acknowledgment of Ann Ingersoll's gift to the parish over 100 years ago. Her gift allowed the church to house our ministers through the years and is now allowing us to enhance our endowment.

Long-Term Financial Plan:

Kevin Mooney, Tim Hawley and John Woolsey are members of an ad hoc Long-Term Financial Plan Committee. As voted at a Special Meeting last year, proceeds from the sale of the parsonage cannot be accessed until a long-term financial plan is in place and approved by the congregation. We have many competing financial needs and with this plan hope to ensure that we are prioritizing them according to the will of the congregation.

There is good energy flowing all around the church! Please come to add yours and receive some back. We can all use support as we navigate through life while always striving to learn how to do it with compassion and grace.

Robin Koenig

Parish Committee