

# Celebrate Drag Queen Story Time with Edinburgh International Book Festival

A staff member was asking Jonathan yesterday about the controversy with 'Drag Queen Story Time' and telling him about their family's positive experience, taking his daughter to Celebrate Pride With Mama G! at the Edinburgh International Book Festival. Jonathan asked him if he would put it in an email for us to share with members and he has, below!

*I just wanted to let you know that I thoroughly enjoyed a recent trip to the Edinburgh Book Festival with my daughter Tilly and some of her wee friends. On Saturday 27th Aug we went to 'Celebrate Pride with Mama G!' which was a 2 hour event on the main stage at the book festival with music and stories all centred around LGBTQ+. Tilly really enjoyed the hour or so we were there. Mama G was great with the kids (Tilly was very enamoured with her outfit) and gave a nice, interactive, history of Stonewall that Tilly enjoyed singing along with, "Love is love is love is love"! . The two stories we were able to listen to were great and it was nice to hear stories (read by Juno Dawson and Jodie Lancet-Grant) that were more inclusive than Tilly is usually exposed to, mainly as that is what is generally available in mainstream kids' books.*

---

# Gender Neutral Toilets

Gender neutral toilets are bathrooms which can be used by anyone, regardless of gender.

While anyone can use a gender neutral toilet, they are particularly important for trans and non-binary students and staff who may feel uncomfortable in or unable to use gendered bathrooms.

The map below shows the locations of gender neutral toilets across the University's campuses.

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/estates/buildings-information/gender-neutral-toilets>

---

## Join us at Edinburgh Pride 2022

### SPN at Pride Edinburgh

We invite members, allies and students to join us for the Pride Edinburgh March on Saturday 25 June!

The SPN marching troupe will be meeting at 11:30 on the day at Levels Café on Holyrood Road. Speeches start at 12:30 and the march moves off at 13:00.

If you can't make it to Levels beforehand but still want to join in, just look for our marching banner – it will be 3 metres wide and looks like the image above!

### **For a quiet space after marching:**

Members are invited to meet at the Informatics Forum from 14:00 – 17:00. Join us for refreshments and a marching troupe debrief! Please note that this private space is being facilitated for University of Edinburgh staff and students only. Entry will be via Robbie on the march, through the side entrance and building sign-in. Call/TXT/iMessage/WhatsApp (07905517428) or even teams message Robert (Robbie) Court to access later in the afternoon.

**Note: We will keep this post up to date throughout the day and I'll try and share our location during the march.**

### **Live updates:**

Live location: <https://maps.app.goo.gl/d8d45uCRVSKGdAi67>

14:00 we're meeting by the rino head / gift shop by informatics



12:40 were by the traffic lights





10:20 myself and the banner are now in levels cafe having breakfast so feel free if you want to be fashionably early.





8:44 Prepping for meeting at levels cafe. The refreshments are all ready at the informatics forum at the end of the Parade route. The banner has poles this year so wind permitting

should be above the crowd. [fingers crossed].

---

# **A sincere thank you from Proud Scotland Awards 2022**

Dear University of Edinburgh Staff Pride Network,

I am contacting you to say thank you for everything you have done over the past year to celebrate, support and promote the LGBTQ+ community.

As was stated during the awards ceremony, 2022 was probably the toughest year to select finalists and winners with over 1000 nominations being received and over 36000 votes being cast, all from the public. Although it was commiserations on the night this hopefully shows the amazing impact which you and your organisation is having within the community and how your actions have caused an individual to nominate you this year.

We strongly hope that you continue your amazing work and impact so that we will see you again at the Proud Scotland Awards 2023.

During the evening, you will be aware that we raised money to help support the delivery of Pride Edinburgh, <https://prideedinburgh.co.uk/>, and Glasgow's Pride Mardi Gla, <https://glapride.com/>, and hope that we will see you showing your Pride, at either or both of the marches and events.

Again, from myself as the Chair of the Judging panel, congratulations on being a finalist in 2022 and thank you for being amazing!

Stuart McPhail

# **Iona Community: Student Week this September with Mx Ashwin Africanus Thyssen**

10 – 16 September: Students' Week (*title tbc*) A week for students to experience life in the community, to share laughter and stories, to explore the island and to reflect on current concerns.

This week is jointly led by Iona Community staff with staff and students from Glasgow and Edinburgh Universities and the Student Christian Movement. We are delighted that we'll be joined by Mx Ashwin Africanus Thyssen from Stellenbosch University for this week.

<https://iona.org.uk/visit-and-stay/iona-abbey-centre/iona-abbey-programme-bookings/?fbclid=IwAR2DhbgZdvhzn5GnSr1G8EA3XQfYKLbhqAXd5v12EIw07sCGzQWozghMZDU>

---



# The Pride material “Grace Like Glitter” launch

Excerpt:

*You can't get rid of glitter. It doesn't matter whether you sprinkle it like fairy dust or send it in a card; whether you glitter-bomb as a protest or decorate your face with it at a festival. It doesn't matter how the glitter got there in the first place – you can't get rid of glitter. (..)*

*As LGBTQ+ folk, we believe that God's grace is always there in and around and woven through our lived experiences. We exist, whether folk like it or not, and so we are sprinkled liberally with God's grace. We have noticed that resources for and by LGBTQ+ folk in a faith context often focus on suffering and sorrow. And don't get us wrong, we know there is plenty of suffering to go around, and we have experienced more than our fair share of it.*

*And yet, we also want to do justice to God's grace, and to the joy and euphoria that living our authentic lives as LGBTQ+ people brings. And so, whilst some of these resources contain raw glimpses of our pain, the overall tone that we are going for is one of hope, of joy, of love and, yes, of grace like glitter. We hope that these resources will help you to spread grace like glitter too, wherever and whoever you are. May it be so.*

[https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=pfbid0Ar8Cw8Fi2RpHtaZoftwB4SHbjAnwLGy8kxyFHtfjTnzphjAuav8SnMPoxC3b2L4cl&id=100005037420123&m\\_entstream\\_source=timeline](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid0Ar8Cw8Fi2RpHtaZoftwB4SHbjAnwLGy8kxyFHtfjTnzphjAuav8SnMPoxC3b2L4cl&id=100005037420123&m_entstream_source=timeline)

---

# Breathing Space: a week on Iona for LGBTQ+ folks and allies

*spending time together, exploring their own identities and the Iona Community's work for social justice.*

*There's plenty of time to discover community over meals, to laugh and relax outdoors, to engage in creative activities, to explore this beautiful island with its white sandy beaches and profusion of wildlife, to read or write in the library – or simply be quiet in the peace of the church or the landscape*

**It would be really helpful to know if there are staff and students who'd like something like that next year – then we can plan to do it for sure. Please feel free to send the info around!**

<https://m.facebook.com/IonaCommunity/photos/a.10150226571841211/10159464633256211/?type=3&source=54>

Warmly,

Urzula

**Rev Dr Urzula Glienecke**

Associate Chaplain (she/her)

The University of Edinburgh

Chaplaincy Centre

1 Bristo Square

Edinburgh EH8 9AL

Office phone: 0131650 2598

Email: [Urzula.Glienecke@ed.ac.uk](mailto:Urzula.Glienecke@ed.ac.uk)

*Office days: Tuesday, Thursday*

*WAH days: Monday, Wednesday, Friday*

For the Listening Service, please contact [Listening.Service@ed.ac.uk](mailto:Listening.Service@ed.ac.uk) or call Security on 0131 650 2257 out of hours for emergencies.

For this and other information on the Chaplaincy, please visit our website at <https://www.ed.ac.uk/chaplaincy>.

---



# A message for you from Urzula Glienecke (she/her), Associate Chaplain and SPN volunteer

Dear Members,

Today we have an exciting and emotive message for you from Urzula Glienecke (she/her), Associate Chaplain and SPN volunteer:

*I'm delighted to share some great news from the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. Today it voted in favour of 'same sex' marriage. Many voices were saying: 'At last!' It has been too long and with much struggle heartbreak on the way, but it has happened now. It means that those ministers of the CoS whose hearts have been longing to conduct LGBTQ+ weddings now may do so – including me! And I would be more than delighted to!*

*This means a lot to me as I grew up under a system that was highly oppressive against LGBTQ people. My country Latvia was occupied by the Soviet Union, where being gay was not talked about and treated as a medical disorder. A lot of people couldn't be who they were, couldn't live the life they deserved. When the resistance movement I was part of (the Underground Church, the Barricades, the Baltic Chain) was successful in the end and the Baltic States became free and independent, many things changed for the better, but not enough. There is still a lot of discrimination and injustice, despite the fact that the countries have become part of the EU. Because of that I am involved in fighting for gender*

*justice, equality, inclusion and diversity – together with the Latvian Open Church Network and the Women Theologians' Association.*

*One of the best things that have happened recently as a result of this work is this:*

*Patvērums Baptist Church (The Refuge) is a small congregation in Latvia that is passionate about LGBTQ+ inclusion and empowering women for the glory of God. The church was founded in August 2021 and offers an alternative view for Latvian Christianity.*

*Our church was born out of a pressing need in the community. My wife and I were hearing more and more about our friends being isolated from their churches because of their sexuality and views. Our friends were being denied the opportunity to serve in the church in any capacity because of their same-sex relationship, and they knew that if they continued to attend church, they would keep getting angry emails from their brothers and sisters, and people would not even hide the fact that they were praying for their family to end in divorce.*

*My wife Kaiva was a member of a Baptist church, and while she still attended the church's youth events, there were many occasions when the organisers for their youth services could not find a preacher, a man who would preach. So my wife decided to come forward and preach, only to be told afterwards by a brother that "he couldn't hear a word because she is a woman".*

*Personally, I, a seminary graduate and worship leader, was*

told that I would no longer be invited to preach because I had dared to say publicly that I would vote for a party that supports LGBTQ+ rights in the upcoming general election. That was the moment I realised that I would be even more ostracised in the church if I had not been “lucky” – as a bisexual man I had fallen in love and married a woman. I experienced just a little of what my LGBTQ+ brothers and sisters in the church faced on a daily basis.

And so we got together and slowly started dreaming of an inclusive and affirming Baptist church here in Latvia. We contacted people in the much more experienced St Saviour’s Anglican Church in Riga for advice and felt that this is the direction God wants to take us. I also met with the Bishop of the Union of Baptist Churches in Latvia and he made it clear that there will be no relationship between our church and the Union.

At the moment we meet weekly for our services and most of us are still healing from the traumas we experienced in previous churches. We are working to create an environment where same-sex couples can be part of the church and serve without hindrance, and where their families are celebrated. And everyone has the opportunity to preach and lead – regardless of their gender.

We see that an inclusive, affirming and egalitarian Baptist church is a great need in Latvia. Currently, the Union of Baptist Churches in Latvia is campaigning for an amendment to the Latvian Constitution that defines a family as “one man, one woman and children”. The former bishop and the pastor of the largest Baptist church in Latvia have just been published in a political advertisement newspaper promoting a party that



*is also campaigning for this change in the constitution.*

*We plan to make our church more open to newcomers and to publish articles on our website about the Bible verses that are so often used against people from the LGBTQ+ community and women in leadership positions. We are only a small group of people, but I believe that God has called us to show His love for all people in a loud, meaningful and healing way.*

*(Jānis Uplejs)*

*There are many Christian churches which are inclusive and welcoming here in Edinburgh: Augustine United & Your Tribe: <https://www.lgbthealth.org.uk/lgbt-community-groups-scotland/trans-community-groups>, St Andrew's St George's West, Broughton St Mary's, Greyfriars Kirk and of course the Chaplaincy here at the University of Edinburgh, for all religions and none. Everybody is welcome, everybody is loved. You are wonderful just the way you are!*

*Urzula (she/her)*

*Associate Chaplain*

---

# Officially a proud member of the Rainbow Enterprise Network

This is to certify that the University of Edinburgh is a proud member of the Rainbow Enterprise Network.

By joining, they have pledged to actively and positively promote equality, diversity and inclusion. Everyone is very welcome to use their spaces and services, including LGBTQ+ and intersectional communities. This is a safe place and they will treat all people with kindness while promoting the value of compassionate inclusion to others.

---

## Grace Lavery at the University of Edinburgh

She's the *enfant terrible* of Trans academia, described in her book as "the David Bowie of Californian English professors." Grace Lavery is at the University of Edinburgh to promote her memoir, *Please Miss: a heartbreaking work of staggering penis*, and like Bowie, the book constitutes in its diversity of styles and switches of voice a marmite quality you'll either love or be bewildered by. This is not to question the book's value; it is in parts beautiful, hilarious, and poignant, as well as sometimes oblique: a mould-breaking series of self-reflections in other words, unlike the other, 'straighter' memoirs that largely make up the trans biographical canon. Prepare, then, to disorientate and depart from the linear trans life-story, and so too the cagily respectable one-woman

show. Grace, unlike *Please Miss* with its multiple metaphors, is an open book and a brilliantly responsive improviser to her audience.

At the UoE talk, shared with the laid-back suaveness of the chair Lindsay of the Lighthouse Books team, the auditorium is full and the carefully be-spaced audience laugh and applaud Grace's free-flowing sharpness and self-deprecating humour. This includes her fabulously kinaesthetic reading of the 'Trans-Woman-As-Alien' homage from her book, and her rapid onset of spinning good yarns. Grace and Lindsay bond quickly over their mutual inability to summarize the book in a few short words, with Grace waving her hand, "My complete failure to describe the book in fact is not a bad descriptor of the book." Perhaps if there is a guiding theme it is of the memoir as partly a response to the media narrative of trans people hating their bodies. The playfully constructed *Please Miss* is Grace's rejoinder, with its focus on the sex and sexiness of the trans body, as a celebration of "trans joy." Another driver is the desire to create a queer text – and therefore a convention-busting one – that switches font and tone because transition is all about such switches. The body of the text, then, as trans female body, one that captures the ethos of Oscar Wilde, never settling on one thing but expressing itself via complex and contradictory multiplicities, and doing so with Wildean elan.

As both an organizer and an increasingly seduced audience member, I sit and watch Grace Lavery in awe and with love as the talk continues. Rarely does a 60-minute talk go so quickly, a good and bad thing. Grace's sincerity, channelled through her hyperactive mind and charismatic conversation, rewards us early with her tale of a robbery of an Edinburgh McDonalds hashbrowns gone wrong, before she gets down to analysis and shares her counter-narrative about the 'transition' story: "Everything that's interesting and worthwhile and worth affirming about transitioning ... takes



place in the strangeness of transition, not in its capacity to harmonize or normalize or neutralize our feelings of intensity or antagonism.” The strangeness and surrealism include a darkness too, of course. An audience member asks Grace for her survival strategies in the face of online abuse that Grace is well-known for bearing. The online campaigns against her have included sex photos of her and her husband hacked from her account and sent to her boss and to her mother. “I’m sometimes scared,” Grace confides. With this fear, though, is her recognition that what happens online is a distortion of the real world, in which the hate and hostility are generally absent. She came to the UK uncertain what to expect, she says, expecting a Beatlemania of ‘gender-critical’ hatred, but all she has seen so far is a single woman handing her a piece of paper in a Manchester book-signing talk, asking her if ‘woman’ is being erased by the existence of people like Grace. Judging by the number of women in this UoE audience who are loving Grace with every passing minute, the absurdity of the notion is never clearer.

In the blink of an eye, the talk ends, and concerning *Please Miss*, there are some parts of the book which shall remain a mystery (the book’s recurring clown scenes, what do they mean? I think I might know, though I’m not even sure if Grace knows, or whether she wants to know). We all leave this warm and electrifying space with its unsolved plethora of mysteries and maybe a single shared sentiment left to offer the wonderful Grace Lavery: Please Miss, give us more.

By Gina Maya

*Grace’s talk, organized in a collaboration between the UoE’s Staff Pride Network and Lighthouse Books, can be seen at the Lighthouse Books youtube channel:*

Originally

posted:

<https://www.ginamaya.co.uk/theatre/grace-lavery-at-the-univers>

ity-of-edinburgh.html