



## LGBT+ Unitarian Voices Project

This exhibition documents the radical actions and steps taken by the Unitarian church in the UK, at a national level, to recognize LGBT+ rights, to resist faith-based homophobia, and to accept people into the ministry regardless of their identity. It is the outcome of an exciting project exploring the brave, inspiring, and sometimes challenging experiences of LGBT+ people in the Unitarian and Free Christian denomination.

The project and pop-up exhibition documents the struggles and triumphs of LGBT+ Unitarians through oral history interviews (with Rev. Dr Ann Pert, Rev. Andi Phillips, Derek McAuley and Rev. Jeff Gould), with photos and original documents. Our Ipswich Unitarian Meeting House plays a significant role in the Unitarians' support for LGBT+ rights since it was the first place in Ipswich to facilitate same sex blessings (March 1994) and same sex marriage (September 2015) and plays an active part in Gay Pride celebrations each year. The project has been led by two Unitarian HQ staff members, who are both trained historians – Dr

Lizzie Kingston Harrison and Rev. Dr Rory Castle Jones. They have worked closely with an advisory panel made up of LGBT+ Unitarians and with Kate Alderson-Smith, Fellow Librarian at Harris Manchester College, Oxford.

We invite you to join us for a reception celebrating the opening of this nationally touring *LGBT+ Unitarian Voices Project* at the Ipswich Unitarian Meeting House on July 14<sup>th</sup>, at 7:30 pm. Dr Lizzie Kingston Harrison will present a brief introduction to the exhibition, and refreshments will be served. The exhibition will remain open on Saturday July 15<sup>th</sup>, 10:00 to 17:00, and Sunday July 16<sup>th</sup>, 10:00 to 16:00 with our regular service at 10:45 am to which all are welcome.

To help with catering please contact Liz Constable ([elconstable@gmail.com](mailto:elconstable@gmail.com)) by Friday July 7<sup>th</sup> to be put on the guest list for the reception on 14<sup>th</sup>.

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## Friends Visit to Willis

As one of the benefits of being a Friend of the Ipswich Unitarian Meeting House, we were able to arrange a guided tour of our neighbours, the WTW (known locally as the Willis) building, followed by refreshments in our Meeting House. Both are Grade 1 listed and it is fascinating to see how different and yet how very special both buildings are.

From the roof of Willis we are also able to see the Meeting House from a different angle!



If you would like to join the Friends group, please contact Ann Baeppler on [annbaeppler@gmail.com](mailto:annbaeppler@gmail.com) and she will put you in touch with the Membership Secretary.

## Book Group

The book group are reading 'Piranesi' by Susanna Clarke and will be meeting on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> July at 19.00 via Zoom to discuss it and share their impressions.

All welcome to join us – whether you have finished the book or not! Contact Tessa Forsdike for the link.

## Lighthouse Care Packs

Last year we focussed on raising funding for the Lighthouse Women's aid charity and part of our support was to make, fill and deliver care pack bags for women and children. We know that some women have to leave their dangerous homes at very short notice and cannot therefore take much (or anything) with them. Some of our congregation continue to support the care packs by donating specific items, making the bags etc. Recently we delivered another 9 bags for women – filled with necessities such as toothpaste, toothbrush, shower gel, shampoo, a notebook and pen, deodorant, sanitary ware, a novel, plus, depending on resources, emery boards, nail brush, make up remover pads, tissues, conditioner and other personal items which may help the family to adjust to the trauma of the move. If you have spare items (as suggested above), or if you find an offer of two for the price of one, maybe you will feel able to donate the occasional item for future care packs? Please bring them to the Meeting House and leave them with Liz Constable or Tessa Forsdike.



Photo – Tessa Forsdike and Deb Johnson from Lighthouse with the care packs.

## Poetry Group

The poetry group next meet on Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> July at 2pm and the featured poet is Louise Gluck.

Contact Riena Jackson for more details -

[rienajackson@icloud.com](mailto:rienajackson@icloud.com)

## Services in July

2<sup>nd</sup> - Lynne Davies - Octagon UC. Norwich

9<sup>th</sup> - Linda King - Ipswich Unitarians.

16<sup>th</sup> - Jackie Grace - Octagon UC Norwich

Also the LGBT+ Unitarian Voices exhibition

23<sup>rd</sup> - Andrew Benedict - East of England Faiths Agency

30<sup>th</sup> - Rev Cliff Reed Minister Emeritus, Ipswich - and Lammas Communion.

## Birthdays in July

We wish the following people a very happy day on their birthdays –

Angus Hamilton on 1<sup>st</sup>; Cherrie Wilkinson on 2<sup>nd</sup>;

Pipiri Hudson on 6<sup>th</sup>; Beatrix Stevens on 15<sup>th</sup>; Dan

Cohen on 17<sup>th</sup>; Harold Mangar 27<sup>th</sup>; Edmund Reed on 28<sup>th</sup>.

## Events at the Meeting House

Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> July – 15.30 – Talk by Ruth Leigh –

From Downpipe to Dead Salmon – a Writer’s Journey

Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> August -18.30 - Fundraiser for Suffolk Sight – a talk about Sound On – talking newspaper and Librivox.org for free audio books.

Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> September -

Heritage Open Days

Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> September – SHCT Ride and Stride

event. If you would like to look round local churches and raise funds for our Meeting House at the same time, please contact Adam Whybray ([adamwhybray@gmail.com](mailto:adamwhybray@gmail.com)) for details.

Friday 8<sup>th</sup> September 19.00 – talk by John Field –

Secrets of the Ipswich Medieval Churches

Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> September – 10.00 to 12 noon –

talk by John Warren (organised by the Ipswich Society)

Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> December - Dickens by Candlelight -

readings from Dickens with mince pies and mulled wine.

## Family Tree – a play by Mojisola Adebajo - review

In our current climate, religious and secular communities and institutions are reverberating with urgent discussions of ways to reckon with past racial injustices. And so, it’s no surprise that many of us were immediately interested to learn that a new play about Henrietta Lacks, staged by the *Acting Touring Company*, was on at Ipswich’s *New Wolsey Theatre*. *Family Tree* (2023), by Mojisola Adebajo, London-born Nigerian-Danish playwright is currently touring the UK. For those not familiar with the story of Henrietta Lacks, she is the African American woman whose cancer cells, known as the HeLa cells, proved invaluable cell lines for medical research due to their unparalleled ability to survive and reproduce. The development of immunotherapy, chemotherapy, IVF, polio and Covid-19 vaccinations have all benefited from the HeLa cell lines. However, her case is embedded in histories of racial inequities in US healthcare, medicine, and medical research since her cells were ‘harvested’ at Johns Hopkins Hospital in 1951 without her or her relatives’ consent or knowledge, and her family were not remunerated for the discovery and use of the cells.

Perhaps the title of Adebajo’s play, *Family Tree*, alerts us to the ambitious and transhistorical scope of her focus. Like a family tree, the play moves backwards and forwards from the individual (Henrietta Lacks herself) to explore historical roots of racial injustice in medicine as well as legacies and continuities of racial and gender-based injustices in medicine today. More specifically, it centres on the capitalisation of black female bodies in medicine. For example, as if Henrietta is time-traveling, *Family Tree* and Henrietta look back to nineteenth-century US medical history by alluding to the work of Dr J. Marion Sims. Known as ‘the Father of [US] gynaecology,’ he remains a controversial figure today. Sims undertook pioneering work from the



## **Family Tree – a play by Mojisola Adebajo – review – continued**

1840s onwards to develop surgical treatments for extremely painful complications from childbirth: vesicovaginal fistulas. However, he undertook this work by experimenting on enslaved women whose consent was complicated by their status as slaves. And he conducted the experiments without anaesthesia. Three of the characters in *Family Tree* play the three slaves---Anarcha, Betsy and Lucy--- who Dr Sims names in his autobiography, and whose conversations Henrietta witnesses on stage with them.

Introducing Sims' work as a possible historical antecedent to Henrietta Lacks' experience is thought-provoking. However, the reference remains allusive, probably perplexing to some audience members, since the play cannot fully contextualize his work, nor explore the questions Sims' work raises for us today. For example, at a time in the mid-1840s when the safety of chloroform or ether as anaesthetics was not yet established, was Sims' action not taken perhaps out of caution, rather than bluntly racist? Certainly contemporary medical researchers make this argument today. Without introducing more than one point of view on issues, in this example and in others, *Family Tree's* emphasis on the 'harvesting' or extraction of cells or labour from black female bodies becomes somewhat monologic. As one of our congregation puts it, *'I felt it was too much of a diatribe to be effective as a play and I was feeling rather bashed over the head after a while.'*

The actresses playing Anarcha, Betsy and Lucy also play three NHS nurses of various ethnicities as the play's forward gaze branches into exploring contemporary legacies of racial inequities in healthcare in both the US and the UK. By taking the audience into the present-day branches of a troubling family tree, the play alludes to the unequal toll of Covid-19 on communities of colour, to Black Lives Matter and to the key role of

foreign-born nurses in the NHS. The nurses oil each other's hair as they discuss a wide range of issues: from their own exhaustion from work, to Toni Morrison's powerful novel, *Beloved*, about the complex ethical questions maternity raises for enslaved women, to Greta Thunberg and climate change. Here, some pruning of the branches of the tree would have strengthened the play's dramatic effect. As another of our congregation puts it, *'Her (Lacks') story, her pain, her life and death disappeared in the forest of too many other---though connected---issues.'*

Adebajo's play certainly tackles compelling issues. But, as the quote above suggests, *Family Tree's* bold reach to join dots between pasts and presents of medical history and racial injustices, climate change and the environment easily becomes both a rather bewildering forest of inter-related issues and without the introduction of differing points of view, as Mark Fisher, reviewing it for *The Guardian*, comments, *'The characters become mouthpieces for opinions that, however laudable, meet with neither conflict nor contradiction.'* Less telling, and more showing of conflicts playing out would have made for more engaging and thought-provoking drama.

By Liz Constable



We are grateful for the gift of tickets for our group from the Wolsey Theatre.

## Clean Air Now

As we all know, campaigning for change can be tough - but so worth it when things suddenly change. When we started our campaign for clean, safe legal air for Ipswich, IBC and SCC said they were doing all they needed to, and weren't minded to take action to reduce pollution.

But together, we've stayed strong and kept battling. From protests in the streets to crafted hearts sent to councillors in the post, from support from our local paper and our brilliant (and promoted!) football club, to an endless stream of questions to leaders at council meetings, we have kept the pressure on together and demanded better.

Members of the campaign and general public have also raised question after question at the [Suffolk Health and Wellbeing Board](#), a forum that brings together council officers, councillors and representatives from partner organisations from across Suffolk. This Board has a legal duty to "encourage integrated working" between health, care, police and other public services in order to improve wellbeing outcomes for Suffolk. We argued that there can be few wellbeing issues more important than the air we breathe. And finally, this Board has agreed to take action on air quality seriously - and to focus on Ipswich. We understand this is a difficult area for our politicians, and know that only brave leadership and strong partnership will be able to address this issue. At the May meeting, the Board demonstrated significant leadership confirming air pollution as the most serious environmental public health issue, agreed that that it shortens life and causes serious and chronic illness, and that Ipswich is an area of real concern, as it has four illegally high areas.

May's Board started with 3 questions from the public on air pollution followed by 40 minutes of discussion. The Board confirmed:

- Air pollution as a health priority for Suffolk.
- That IBC and SCC have a shared statutory duty to lower air pollution.
- It is overwhelmingly caused by traffic.
- It is an equalities issue – poorer people live next to the worst polluted roads and suffer the worst health outcomes.

Watch the meeting [here](#)

Three initiatives were established;

- Suffolk Air Quality Engagement Plan, April 2023 – April 2024
- Suffolk Air Quality Strategy and Action Plan, May 2023
- Suffolk Air Quality Action Plan, May 2023

### New campaign strategy - what now?

Words can be easy - action is harder. After 17 years of inaction, some may see this as yet another opportunity to prevaricate rather than take difficult action. If we're going to see real change and legal levels of air quality in our town, it's more important than ever that we keep pushing, to drive real change for those who live here. The aim of this campaign remains clear - we want to see safe, legal levels of air quality for everyone in Ipswich.

While we understand that it's important to persuade and build understanding of the issues with the public, it's also clear that encouraging personal change in Ipswich residents will not be enough. As towns and cities across the country have shown, it takes better infrastructure and transport options too - our councils have to work together to build alternatives that enable people to change. We will continue to explore the changes that deliver better air quality - and

pushing for the same impact on pollution here.

We know too that it's also vital to build solutions that work for the different journeys that people make - whether that's for those who live and travel within Ipswich, those who travel in from outside or those that just pass through. Evidence from across the country shows that tackling air quality can build a stronger local economy and we'll be looking at how we can build a more prosperous, less congested, healthier town together.

And of course, we'll hold our councils to account.

Change is coming - let's work together to bring it faster. As ever, please do share this message with those you think would be interested and share any ideas that you may have.

Together, we can make this happen.

Tony Horner for  
[www.ipswichcan.org](http://www.ipswichcan.org)

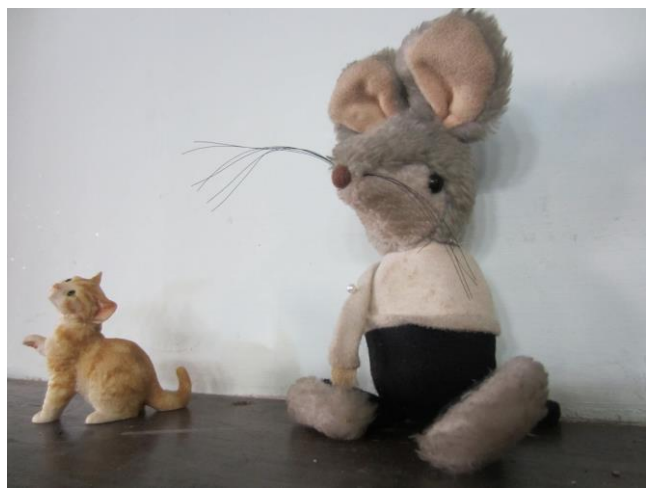
**IPSWICH CAN**

### **Heart and Soul**

Heart and Soul is a contemplative spiritual gathering in which you can take time to reflect on life in the company of others. Lizzie Kingston Harrison leads a session each month via Zoom.

Heart and Soul follows a regular pattern, including readings and music from an eclectic range of sources, time for guided prayers of gratitude, compassion for others, self-reflection, and silent meditation. Each gathering closes with refreshments, conversation, and an opportunity to get to know others at a deeper level. All are welcome to participate.

For the link to the next session contact Lizzie -  
[EKingston@unitarian.org.uk](mailto:EKingston@unitarian.org.uk)



When we have children visiting the Meeting House, one of the challenges is to invite them to find our 'Church Mouse'. They usually find him quicker than their parents!

### **Thought for the month**

We will fail when we fail to try  
Rosa Parks

### **Disclaimer**

We welcome contributions from all members and friends of our congregation. Views expressed in the articles are those of the individual and not necessarily those of our congregation or of our Unitarian community.

### **Contacts**

Contributions PLEASE for the next newsletter to Tessa before the deadline of Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> July by email to [tessa@tessajordan.co.uk](mailto:tessa@tessajordan.co.uk) We welcome poems, cartoons, reflections, reports, reviews and news.

To contact our Secretary, ring 01473 728498 or our Treasurer Robert Waller on 01473 610723 email [tessa@tessajordan.co.uk](mailto:tessa@tessajordan.co.uk) Website – [www.unitarianipswich.com](http://www.unitarianipswich.com)