



# THE SIBYLS

*Christian Spirituality Group for the Transgendered*  
**BM Sibyls, London WC1N 3XX**

36 Salmons Lane  
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## **NEWSLETTER 35**

### **September 2005**

☎ 020 8763 0146

#### **DATES FOR YOUR DIARY** **2005**

- |                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| Thursday 13 October | 5.30 - Service at St Anne's, Soho, followed by meal at the Gourmet Pizza, Swallow Street, off Piccadilly, London   |
| Friday 14 October   | 12 Noon - Oasis Group at Petersfield - ring Jackie 01489 878765  |
| Saturday 15 October | 3:30pm - 6:30pm MCC Manchester Discussion Group meeting at St John Chrysostom's Church S. Manchester Followed by a meal at SanGam on Curry Mile. Contact Jenny-Anne 01606-783035, jennyannebuk@yahoo.co.uk or go to <a href="http://www.mccmanchester.co.uk/trans.htm">www.mccmanchester.co.uk/trans.htm</a> |

#### **Friday 18 to Sunday 20 November – Weekend at Holland House, Worcestershire**

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|----------------------|---|
| Saturday 26 November | 3:30pm - 6:30pm MCC Manchester Discussion Group – see Saturday 15 October for details   |
| Thursday 8 December  | 5.30 - Service at St Anne's, Soho – see Thursday 13 October for details.  |
| Saturday 17 December | 3:30pm - 6:30pm MCC Manchester Discussion Group - St John Chrysostom's Church S. Manchester Followed by our Christmas Meal, probably at Zorba's in Chorlton. See Saturday 15 October for contact details. |

#### **2006**

- |                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| Saturday 7 January  | Usual New Year meeting with communion and supper chez Jay                |
| Friday 3 February   | 12 Noon - Oasis Group at Petersfield - ring Jackie 01489 878765.         |
| Thursday 9 February | 5.30 - Service at St Anne's, Soho – see Thursday 13 October for details. |

#### **Friday 19 to Sunday 21 May - Weekend at Windermere**

#### **Friday 15 to Sunday 17 September - Weekend at St Columba's House, Woking**

#### **2007**

#### **Friday 18 to Sunday 20 May - Weekend at Whaley Hall**

### **PLEASE HOLD IN YOUR PRAYERS**

Please pray for Pam and Rosie, David in ongoing illness, Jane Bowles after surgery, Susie settling in her new home, those who await a date for surgery and all whose recovery from surgery or illness has not been all that they have sought or wished for, or who are in pain.

### **LISTENERS**

People who are prepared to listen to others and are happy to be available are listed below. If you need someone to talk to, choose which one and give them a ring: -

Michelle O'Brien 020 8397 2403  
Jenny Bond 01623 836662  
Jane Bowles 01690 760365  
Michelle Le Morvan 01743 341026  
Jenny-Anne Bishop 01606 783035  
Carol Moore 01625 858487

### **LEGISLATION AND ALLIED MATTERS**

#### **Gender Recognition Certificates**

If you are able to satisfy the conditions and have been living full time in your true gender (two years or six years), you can apply for your Gender Recognition Certificate. The system is up and running. If you need any advice, give me a ring, but, give credit where it is due, the Gender Recognition Panel is very helpful.

#### **The Gender Recognition (Disclosure of Information) (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) (No. 2) Order 2005**

I have been in correspondence with the Department for Constitutional Affairs. They have been helpful but refuse to withdraw or modify the order in any way

Thinking hard about it, the real evil is that churches discriminate against transsexual people, the law enables them to do so, and there is no recourse. That is the problem.

The Order merely absolves a priest or clergyman, in defined circumstances, from incurring criminal liability in revealing a transsexual person's transsexual status. The revelation is relatively trivial, the discrimination hugely important. Indeed if the order was not in force what real difference would it make? It might be possible to take a priest or clergyman to court, but that would put him in the position of martyr at the hands of transsexual people. Not good PR and pretty pointless.

During the Bill's passage through the Lords, the Government ruled out any discrimination provisions with the promise that they would introduce a bill to eliminate discrimination in the provision of goods and services. I have been in touch with the Women and Equality Unit of the Department of Trade and Industry and am told that this Bill will be brought in during the lifetime of this parliament. Work has started in anticipation and Stephen Whittle is working with the DTI. I have registered my interest in the proposed Bill on behalf of both The Beaumont Trust and The Sibyls.

I think that we should be involved. The exemptions given to religious bodies were disgraceful and I don't want this to happen again (although past experience points to disappointment). We should be devoting our efforts to ensuring that this Bill is comprehensive with no discrimination against transsexual people, whatever the

circumstances. Religious bodies should have no special rights to exemption. I have therefore dropped my opposition to the Order.

This issue of ensuring good anti-discrimination legislation is really important and something for which all bodies concerned with transsexual people should be lobbying. Indeed it seems to be the ideal issue for UKTA to get its teeth into.

### **The Bishop of Winchester**

I have been in touch with the Bishop regarding the Order. He has replied saying that, whilst he broadly agrees with the Order, the Church of England did not seek any powers in respect of section 2 (e), the bit about excluding anyone from a service, sacrament etc, and would not apply them. We may disagree with the Bishop in some of his views about transsexual people (especially in relation to marriage and to the priesthood) but he has always been adamant that anyone and everyone should be welcome into a church for services etc and, I am sure, supports us in this. I have asked for his help in ensuring that the Discrimination Bill in its passage through the Lords, does not seek to exclude people from churches.

Regarding his point that no-one should be excluded from a Church of England church, I am well aware that there have been a number of cases in the past. However, are there any now or recently? If you have been a victim in the last year or two and want me to take it up with the Bishop of Winchester, you will have to give me chapter and verse and permission to use it and I'll happily take up the case. Of course you can do so yourself.

### **GARDEN PARTY - JULY 9**

This was good. The weather in the morning was grey and overcast but the forecast promised sun in the afternoon and was as good as its word. About a dozen of us could sit out in the garden peacefully with tea and cake. Martin Kelly came in good time to take an excellent and moving service which we held in the garden under the cherry tree. Although I say it as shouldn't, it is a perfect place for a service in fine weather. Afterwards we tucked into the buffet, and conversation went on far into the evening. Garden parties seem to be popular and will be restored as a permanent fixture in the programme.

Talking of which we shall hold the usual New Year get-together at my house. Usual format of gathering in the afternoon over buns and tea, a communion service, and extensive buffet and wine. With of course much talk. It's a bit like the Garden Party but only the brave venture out into the garden! Give me a ring if you are coming - Jay, 020 8763 0146.

### **WEEKEND AT HOLLAND HOUSE - 18-20 NOVEMBER**

Summer is well and truly over, which perhaps accounts for bookings so far being slow. Now is the time to make that booking. Come and enjoy a weekend at Holland House. This should be every bit as good as previous weekends and we are looking forward to it. All the usual Sibyls features. The house is very comfortable, the food is excellent. The booking form is at the end of the newsletter.

Because this weekend is being held in November, when the weather is not at its most cheerful, we are not arranging any excursions but we will have a speaker. The Rev'd

Jane Fraser will be joining us on the Saturday morning to lead a discussion on sex and sexuality. What could be more interesting? Peter Middlemiss has kindly provided the contact and she comes highly recommended. Saturday afternoon should be free for expeditions, lazing and /or chat

If this is not enough the Rev'd Georgina Everingham will be taking our communion service on the Sunday. I know you will look forward to that.

### **OASIS MEETING AT PETERSFIELD - FRIDAY 14 OCTOBER AT NOON**

These are excellent meetings. At the June meeting Marian led an excellent thoughtful communion service and there followed a splendid three course lunch. With six Sibyls present, conversation flowed and as ever was a mixture of the serious, the sad and the funny. We were delighted that Pam and Rosie were able to come and it was lovely to see them. These are good meetings if you can get there on a Friday in the middle of the day.

We are very grateful to Jacky for arranging these and to Jenny for her generous hospitality. The cost is now £10 but if you need any help with this, please talk to me. The next meeting will be held on Friday 14th October, at noon. Please ring Jackie - 01489 878765 - to confirm. Put 3 February 2006 in your diary as well.

### **LONDON EVENING MEETINGS**

These meetings are very good; gentle lovely evenings with a service which is always thoughtful, peaceful and healing, followed by a good meal at The Gourmet Pizza in comfortable surroundings. Nourishment for mind, body and spirit. Few people come but those that do find it very worth.

Details: 5.30 service at St Anne's, Soho, Dean Street, 50 yards up on the left from Shaftesbury Avenue (look for the sign above your head, it doesn't look like a church but it is), followed by a gathering at The Gourmet Pizza, Swallow Street from 6.30. Swallow Street is off Piccadilly and opposite St James's Church. Next meeting - Thursday October 13. Every two months, on the second Thursday - except when it isn't. No need to book - just come.

### **SUNDAY COMMUNION - 24 JULY**

I duly paraded at St James's, Piccadilly, at the appointed hour but no-one came. This doesn't seem worth pursuing.

### **REGIONAL AND OTHER MEETINGS AND EVENTS**

A very big thank you to Jenny-Anne and Elen for organising events in the North-West. As you will see from the diary there are regular services and social events, mostly based around the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) in Manchester. MCC is a friendly, welcoming, inclusive church. Jenny-Anne can be contacted on 01606-783035 or by e-mail [jennyannebuk@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:jennyannebuk@yahoo.co.uk). The MCC has its own website [www.mccmanchester.co.uk/trans.htm](http://www.mccmanchester.co.uk/trans.htm).

## **THE NEWSLETTER**

This is a slim newsletter and the reason is simple. We need articles for publication and this time we just haven't got them. The news takes a few pages but we need interesting articles, humour, spiritual experience, ideas, controversy, something that you think would be of interest to all the diverse Sibyls who read this newsletter. Please write; we need your input. Ideally on floppy 3½ inch disks in Word or print out in a clear typeface printed with black ink. Anything else defeats the scanner. If you really have to handwrite them, bear in mind that it takes time to type them.

## **THE UNITED KINGDOM TRANS ALLIANCE - UKTA**

The last meeting of the transgender umbrella group, which has adopted the above name, was held in June at Telford in Shropshire. Michelle Le Morvan kindly attended on our behalf, and has agreed to be our representative at northern meetings. The next meeting is scheduled for October. We shall continue to be supportive.

## **QUOTE OF THE QUARTER**

Andrew Brown writing in the Church Times 26 August, "..... the Archbishop squirts theology as a squid squirts ink; to conceal his retreat from any visible position."

Love and Prayers.

Jay Walmsley (Miss)

Susie Withers (Mrs)

"I'm dying to be a woman. I seem to have spent practically my entire life as a man. Just to play a straight girl would be exhilarating!" Those, believe it or not, are the words of a woman, of Alice Coote, an outstanding English mezzo-soprano with a growing international reputation on the musical scene. She was most recently acclaimed for her Proms appearance as The Angel in Elgar's "Dream of Gerontius".

The writer has appeared many times on the operatic stage, but only as a Gentleman of the Chorus. This led to some very useful tips, not to mention the experience, in applying and wearing make-up. I greeted these words of a fellow-performer with wry amusement; most of her early appearances in opera were travesty roles such as Cherubino in Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro*; but mine were necessarily consonant with my real gender. Even so, I had to be convincing as another persona, and I gained more from that than many realised.

Each transvestite has a unique story. I do not intend to bore you with what would only be at best a kind of ill-informed amateur sociology, but I do seek to respond to one TS friend who happened to share with me a certain puzzlement about being TV. I draw enormous satisfaction from my life, my profession and my family ever to want to abandon, it, but there's also a deep satisfaction in occasionally adopting another role in which my feminine persona finds expression.

A woman's clothing is designed to elicit maximum response from her whole being. A good deep bra with real-weight prosthetic breasts encourages posture, and the proper concealment of genitalia with a cache keeps a firm hold on the lower body. Support tights bring heightened awareness to legs and thighs, especially when helped by high heels. A slip under a blouse and skirt enhances the feeling of being caressed when walking, even more so with a full-length dress. The gentle motion of a long wig across shoulders is a surprisingly sensual reminder of what matters. The slight tension brought to facial skin by a good foundation and well-applied lipstick, with the faint aroma of powder, can be caught with almost every breath, and the aroma of a carefully chosen perfume enhances this even further. Ear-rings, a good gold chain and bracelets are constant reminders of the meaning of movement. Finally, a good coat brings an embrace not found in any other circumstances; my particular favourite is a camel coat from Windsmoor. To be out and about so dressed is an experience of sensuality in which almost every part is caressed and every sense indulged, even before you catch the incredible excitement of a reflection caught in a shop window. Just to play the straight girl, as our singer admitted in another context, is exhilaration indeed.

"Rarely, rarely comest thou, Spirit of delight" wrote Shelley in his "Song". Sadly such opportunities for self-indulgence are rare, but all the richer for that. It is a form of escapism from the pressures of a busy but immensely fulfilled professional life in which, for a brief time at least, I'm there just for myself, sustained and enriched beyond measure by the tangible rewards of giving expression to what the German writer Goethe hailed as "the eternal feminine (that) draws us on". In more than one sense I'm an amateur, enjoying playing the role and then perforce withdrawing from it. But it must be, for better or worse, part of what I am. I look forward to the day when this can be more widely accepted; till then, dream on.

## SO WHAT DID YOU DO LAST CHRISTMAS?

Jan S.

Was it going to Church to celebrate the Midnight Mass? Lots of mince pies round a roaring fire? Or perhaps a great family Christmas Dinner and lots of Christmas presents to follow? And what about Boxing Day? A brisk walk followed by drinks around the fire?

It's a bit idealised isn't it? Not everyone's choice. But then some people don't even have the option of a traditional Christmas. No family, unless you count a faithful dog and no home, unless you count a draughty shop doorway or a cosy cardboard box.

It was my privilege to spend the last two Christmas holidays working as a volunteer with Birmingham Open Christmas, a charity that strives to provide warmth, shelter, food and company to the homeless of Birmingham over the Christmas period. I quote: "We operate 24 hours a day for 5 days and nights at St Martins Youth and Community Centre. Each day we welcome between 50 and 150 people through our doors, providing breakfast, lunch and dinner, continuous tea, coffee and sandwiches, a place to sleep, haircuts, chiropody, dental treatment and good second hand clothing".

"To run an operation like this needs over 200 volunteers working shifts to do the food preparation, cooking, cleaning, washing up, and not forgetting to take some time to chat to clients."

What did I do? Cleaning, sorting clothes, serving food and drink, washing up, chatting, even sleeping-over in an upstairs temporary dormitory, on the floor, just like the clients down below - not a lot of difference? The evening soup run in groups of three round the city centre carrying soup, tea, coffee, milk and sandwiches: "*Avoid confrontation. If you can't, Jan, let the other two girls get away first*". Well, I am 6ft and still have a strong teacher's voice but even so...

Impressions: atmosphere very smoky – clients even offered free cigarettes on Christmas Day. Strict security: a permanent security presence on the door 24 hours a day, searching us all, clients and volunteers, for drink and drugs. Very friendly. Well organised. Every phase of the day seemed to run like clockwork - from clearing bedding in the morning to getting it back out again at night. Incredible amount of washing up. A cup of tea always needed three spoonfuls of sugar. More volunteers than clients on Christmas Day, a lot thinner on Boxing Day. Very interesting mix of clients: young and old, drug abusers and alcohol abusers, sleepers and talkers, chess players and draught players. One client had come from London to Birmingham because he felt that St Martins was "more personal than *Crisis at Christmas* in London" and also told me the cheapest way to travel on the train. And yes, our clients also had embraced the mobile phone culture.

Was it worth it? Would I do it again? Definitely! I've already signed up for Christmas 2006. It was very hard work but at the end of each day it felt that we were all making life a little better, if only temporarily, for our clients.

PS As a transgirl, I was a little worried about how I would be received by the organisers. When I had volunteered to work for another organisation at Christmas, I had been messed about and then eventually turned down because they "had enough volunteers". A friend eventually discovered that my gender status (which I had declared) was the problem.

However, no problem with BOC. When I disclosed my status, I was told that there was already another transgirl working there! The welcome when I arrived for my first shift was reassuringly warm and everyone was very friendly, albeit some were curious. Openness seemed to be the best way, so I was very happy to explain about my gender dysphoria to anyone that asked questions. My time with BOC has certainly added a slightly different twist to meaning of the “real life experience” we transgirls are supposed to undertake before GRS can be approved.

## **HANDY HINTS for Transgirls**

### **1 Birthdays**

Transgirls! Why not celebrate your new life with an Official Birthday? After all, the Queen has one and it must be nice to have two birthdays each year. Mind you, I’m not suggesting that you borrow a horse and review the troops, far from it. A trip round the shops or your local friendly supermarket might suggest the means to a more modest celebration

My Official Birthday falls in the merry month of May, on the date that I was officially diagnosed with gender dysphoria and, therefore, the time that I feel that my real life started. This year, Jan was (officially) four years old so it was off to the supermarket for a card (must have “I am four” badge attached – weren’t available the first time around), a birthday cake, fork ‘andles (four candles), cream and strawberries (English, surprised to find them so early in the year – must be something to do with global warming). Laden, I whizzed off to friends for the weekend and we had a very enjoyable time being four. Drew the line at champagne ‘cos Mummy wouldn’t have approved of her four-year-old daughter imbibing the bubbly.

### **2 Trying on new dresses**

There you are in the store changing-rooms with an exciting pile of potential retail therapy to try on. Off comes the present and on goes the future. No, not this one. Style/colour/length/fit is wrong – delete as appropriate. This next dress looks the business. Bit tight to get on. Whew! In there and looking out at the cubicle mirror. Definite improvement – bulges in most of the right places. Must have!! Now, out of it again and change back to own clothes. Hitch. Can’t remove dress: won’t go up or down! Stuck! Horrors! Panic starts to set in. ~Must buy now, envisage walking home in new dress and living in it until I lose weight or it wears out. Now come on! Think it out! Ah! Ask for help from lady who checks you in and out of changing area. Sorry I’m busy - be with you in a moment. Long moment and several clients pass by as lady is very busy. Eventually, she is free and comes over to me. Now what is the problem? Can’t get out of dress, I reply, reddening just a tad. Have you undone the zip? Zip? What zip? I can’t find a zip. It’s a concealed zip, she responds. (Thinks: yes it must also be a camouflage expert because it wasn’t there when I looked before putting on the dress). It’s here she says tactfully, lifting up the store security tag, price tag etc which have been cunningly placed to stop me finding the \*\*\*\*\* zip in the first place and operating the zip for me. Thank you I say, retreating quickly back into the changing cubicle, free at last.

**Moral:** forget vanity and always wear your spectacles when indulging in retail therapy.





## THE SIBYLS

Christian Spirituality Group  
For the Transgendered

36 Salmons Lane  
Whyteleafe  
Surrey CR3 0AN

☎ 020 8763 0146

WEEKEND AT HOLLAND HOUSE

18 - 20 NOVEMBER 2005

Name.....

Required - Single/twin room (delete as appropriate)

Name of other occupant in room .....

Address .....

(not needed if as per your address label)

.....

.....

Phone No. ....

Please reserve for me the following number of places:-

Full weekend Friday night to Sunday lunch    £108.00    .....

24 hour overnight – afternoon to lunch        £54.00        .....

For any variation on the above, please        .....

ask for a quote

If you are not coming for the full weekend please specify the days/times for which you are booking

.....

Cheque payable to “Miss J Walmsley – The Sibyls” enclosed        £.....

Any special dietary requirements .....

Any other special needs .....

Please send this form with your cheque to Jay Walmsley asap