



THE SIBYLS

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

36 Salmons Lane
Whyteleafe
Surrey
CR3 0AN

NEWSLETTER 36

December 2005

020 8763 0146

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Regular Meetings

London usually the second Thursday of every second month at 5.30 - Service at St Anne's, Dean Street, Soho, followed by meal at the Gourmet Pizza, Swallow Street, off Piccadilly, London. Next dates February 9th, April 13th.

Manchester every third Saturday of the month at MCC. For details contact Jenny-Anne 01606 783035, jennyannebuk@yahoo.co.uk or go to www.mccmanchester.co.uk/trans.htm

Petersfield Oasis Group every four months on Friday at 12 Noon - ring Jackie 01489 878765. Next date February 3rd.

Weekends

2006

Friday 19 to Sunday 21 May - Windermere

Friday 15 to Sunday 17 September - St Columba's House, Woking

2007

Friday 18 to Sunday 20 May - Whaley Hall, Derbyshire

Friday 14 to Sunday 16 September - Holland House, Worcestershire

Other Meetings

Saturday 17th December MCC Manchester Trans Discussion Group Christmas meal to which all are invited, we are probably going to Zorbas Greek Restaurant, Chorlton Cum Hardy, cost about £15-20 depending on your meal and consumption of alcohol!

Saturday 7 January Usual New Year meeting with communion and supper chez Jay.

Fun Weekend Friday 24 to Sunday 26 March – (Not Sibyls) – Hamilton Hall, Bournemouth details from Jenny-Anne 01606 783035, jennyannebuk@yahoo.co.uk

PLEASE HOLD IN YOUR PRAYERS

Please pray for Pam and Rosie, David in ongoing illness, Jane Bowles after surgery, Susie's new 'family' (especially Alan's heart problems), 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

The listening system works. There are a number of Sibyls who use this service. If you want someone to talk it over with, why not give it a try?

RUSSELL REID - AN APPEAL

Many of you will be aware of the case against Russell Reid that the Charing Cross people have taken to the General Medical Council. The case is expected to come up in February and will probably take several weeks.

What would be very helpful would be individual letters of support. In your own words, they should include a statement of the treatment that you have received from him, what it meant to you and anything else that you want to say. Addressed "To whom it may concern", the letters should be sent to me and I will forward them on.

In no way should you feel any pressure to do this. Only if you really want to do it should you write. However he is facing difficult times and these letters of support would be encouragement and, much more important, evidence of the regard in which he is held by his clients. It's entirely your decision but they would help.

MEMBERSHIP OF SIBYLS

One is never sure that every member wishes to continue receiving the newsletter and in the state of our finances there isn't any money to spare. Sending the newsletter by email costs nothing and anyone on that list will continue to receive it. However next March I am going to send out a little form with the mailed newsletters and ask each of you to complete it and send it back to me. If you don't, then it will be assumed that you don't want to continue. Don't worry - the form will be on coloured paper and very obvious, but you will have to say that you want to continue, if that's what you want.

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. Difficulties have been reported by the transgender groups, mainly with the medical certificates. It is important that the medical certificates fully specify the diagnosis and the treatments in technical medical language.

Discrimination

The Government is pushing through a bill at present to set up one anti discrimination

body. This bill really only has that as its main intention but it is being used to add on various discrimination matters. It will be interesting to see where it all ends up.

The Department of Trade and Industry tell me that they will be issuing a green paper in the New Year covering the outlawing of discrimination against transsexual people in the supply of goods and services. This I await with interest. There isn't much doubt that the bill will pass and discrimination will be stopped. However the weak link is that religious bodies will push for exemption, and probably get it. Our job is to try to prevent this. At present any church may legally bar a transsexual person from its congregation, from attending a service, and from being eligible for any office within the church. If the bill goes through with exemption for religious bodies, that situation will continue. How can that be right?

The Bishop of Winchester

One Sibyl who was barred from joining in church activities has come forward with a case of discrimination by the Church of England. With the kind permission of the individual concerned, I brought the matter to the attention of the Bishop of Winchester. He has replied that as the matter is outside his diocese he cannot intervene but will keep the matter under review.

NEW YEAR MEETING AT JAY'S HOUSE - 7 JANUARY

The usual New Year meeting will be held at my house. Meet at 4 o'clock onwards, tea and buns, communion service at about 6 ish followed by an extensive buffet, with plenty of wine and time to chat and catch up or discuss problems. Martin Kelly will be taking the communion service and we all know that he takes a lovely service.

It should be fun and I look forward to seeing as many as possible. No charge but please give me a ring so that I know how many to cater for. Jay - 020 8763 0146.

GARDEN PARTY

I haven't fixed a date yet for 2006 but will do so. In fact I'm wondering whether two might not be a good idea, one at the beginning and one towards the end of high summer. These are popular, are safe (important for those who don't like public venues), and easy. This might help to meet the need for those who do want to meet but find the Thursday meetings too difficult. I'd be grateful to hear what you think of the idea.

WEEKEND AT WINDERMERE - FRIDAY 19 TO SUNDAY 21 MAY

The booking form is at the end of the newsletter. Windermere is always a popular venue and the Lake District in May has to be an alluring prospect. At our last visit most of the rooms had been converted to en suite, making it very comfortable indeed. Come and enjoy. Get the bookings flowing.

There are those of you, especially from the South, who consider it too far to go. The sensible thing is to take a few days off, stay on and enjoy the magnificent Lake District. It is often possible to stay in the house at very reasonable rates, and, should it be booked, they have very good boarding houses they can recommend. There's so much to see. It takes me five hours to drive there, some 300 miles, and there are

frequent trains from Euston, changing at Oxenholme for Windermere. The house is about half a mile from the station. It's not difficult if you put your mind to it.

What is new is that whilst I have every intention of being a part of it, Jenny-Anne and Elen will be organising and running it. I am sure that they won't be dispensing with old favourites but it will be lovely to see what new ideas they put into it. The minibus trip will be running, with limited space. This is a good way to see much of the lovely Lakes whilst still together, sharing, talking.

WEEKEND AT HOLLAND HOUSE

Jay

This was excellent and everyone got something out of it. Holland House has excellent facilities, they look after us very well and the food is gorgeous. It really was a pleasure. The only fly in the ointment was the relatively low bookings. With 15 for the full weekend, 3 for one night and two day visitors, this was worryingly low. Perhaps a November date didn't help. Those who came had much to enjoy.

The Revd Jane Fraser led an excellent discussion on the Saturday morning on sex and sexuality. She had us working together on attitudes and we quickly found that there were questions within questions and what was superficially easy became much more complex. It was an interesting morning.

The Revd Georgina Everingham, who had joined us for most of Saturday, took our communion service on Sunday. One of the features of Sibyls is that we try to present all sorts of ideas and ways about faith and religion. Transsexualism leads to a total reappraisal of the whole of your life and it's important to know of ideas about faith. Sunday morning provided about as strong a contrast as one could imagine. Michelle Le Morvan took the morning office, concentrating on how the whole of the universe is God's creation, that everything in it is sacred and we have to recognise that in each and every one of us. That is the test and Jesus showed the way. Georgina preached passionately about the need for a belief in Christ as God and that the church and the bible show the way. You have to decide your way and no-one can say that Sibyls doesn't provide food for thought.

SIBYLS WEEKEND 18 - 20 NOVEMBER 2005

Elen

The sun - it seems - is always shining when I arrive for a Sibyls weekend. The weather was glorious at Windermere last year, and was pleasant enough for sitting out at Whaley Hall in May. And sure enough, the sun shone brightly once again as we turned into the car park of Holland House for the latest weekend, but there the meteorological similarities ended. Sitting out in the attractive garden that sunny Friday afternoon was an option only for hardened Arctic explorers, while for the remainder of the weekend freezing mist settled to obscure the views and dampen the spirits.

Inside, however, Holland House was warm and welcoming. Jay was once again the congenial hostess, greeting us as we struggled in from the cold with our luggage and ensuring that we found our way to our appointed rooms. As the other guests arrived it was, for me, an opportunity to renew my acquaintance with those I had met at previous weekends (it was lovely to see Pam and Rosie there after their terrible tribulations), and also to make new friends.

By dinner time all but a few latecomers had arrived, and they drifted in while we ate. It was a tasty meal of chicken en crouete with imaginatively served vegetables, followed by a delicious chocolate pudding. I knew that I was going to enjoy my stay there, if only for the food!

After dinner Jay updated us on legislation going - or about to go - through parliament that might affect transgendered people, and this was followed by Susie's Night Office. This included Psalm 139, which reappeared more than once during the weekend's devotions, as a sort of theme.

After breakfast on Saturday, Morning Office was held by Philippa, and focused upon being true to oneself. At other Sibyls events the congregation has scattered after the Morning Office to explore the delights of the surrounding countryside, but this time, as the weather was far from conducive to even stepping out of doors, Jay had thoughtfully organised an in-house event, hosted by The Reverend Jane Fraser. We were all invited to join in, and as the subject was 'Sex and Sexuality', many of us were relieved - I'm sure - to discover that our attitudes towards those themes within society was all that we were being asked to disclose. We had to take a stand (literally, as we had to position ourselves in a line across the room) on whether we agreed or disagreed with a number of contentious statements, after which we analysed in small groups how and why we made our decisions.

Lunch was a tasty cheese dish followed by strawberries and ice cream (more suitable to our May event but still nice in November). Afterwards, Michelle Le Morvan led us in a meditation session. She had first introduced us to this discipline at Whaley Hall and I had then found it hard to achieve inner stillness without nodding off. Following that lunch it was even harder (I'm sure I heard at least one faint snore!) and I was pleased to discover - when Michelle brought us all back to the here and now - that my (inappropriate, I had thought) awareness of the sounds of afternoon tea being laid out in the hall was one of the things we should aim for!

A few intrepid individuals did venture outside during the afternoon, and even I made a brief foray into the garden for some fresh air (fresh frozen air!), but I occupied most of the afternoon getting to know people and in such vital feminine activity as repainting my nails for the evening.

Dinner was an opportunity for me to wear something a little longer and more elegant, in both the dress and wig department. The main course was pork in a delicious barbecue sauce (though it was hardly the weather for a barbecue), followed by another wickedly rich chocolate desert!

After the meal came the entertainment, a highlight of any Sibyls weekend, and once again Jenny-Anne volunteered to act as MC (could it be a clever ploy to get out of having to perform?). Susan Gilchrist, who had dropped in for Saturday afternoon and evening, opened the proceedings with one of her own poems, crafted around three stones that she had collected in various locations, two of them at different Sibyls events. Then Janet gave us - with just a little prompting - Wordsworth's "Golden Daffodils" (she ought to have kept that for Windermere!), and Suzanne followed this with a few witty stories. Lesley gave us quite a performance on her Celtic drum; after a few minor hiccups with a cider bottle that refused to open and a lost drumstick, she regaled us with The Sibyls 'Zider' Apple Chorus.

A hard act to follow, but Jay managed it with not one but two scimitars balanced on her head as she shimmered her way around the floor. Then Susie had us all laughing with more of her comic poems; no show-stopping one-legged horse this time, but an

equally amusing 'stamped addressed antelope'! Philippa changed the mood with a melancholy Irish ballad, but we were soon back to giggling with Jan's and my offerings, both shaggy dog stories (literally in my case, though more of a ruffled parrot story in Jan's). Jenny-Anne impulsively decided that she would not be left out and read out the words of Gloria Gaynor's "I Am What I Am" (very appropriate for trans people!), and the proceedings were brought to a moving close by Susie, who dedicated the evening's entertainment to Pam.

Before we reverted to polishing off the Sibyls wine, it was time for the Night Office, in which Jay led us in psalms and prayers.

During breakfast on Sunday it was a delight to see Helen Mather arrive. After breakfast, Michelle Le Morvan took the Morning Office, one of her customary thought provoking services, blending Christianity with cosmic mysticism and a Red Indian prayer.

In Sibyls Together we reviewed the strategy for our weekends away as attendance at Holland House had been disappointingly low. Various options were discussed - reducing to one weekend a year, smaller venues or non exclusive occupancy - but we eventually decided to leave things as they are for a little longer and hope that it was only the late date of this weekend that had caused the dip in numbers.

The communion service which followed was held in the modern glass-walled chapel attached to Holland House, and was led by the Reverend Georgina Everingham. It was particularly memorable for me in three respects. Firstly, I did one of the readings; secondly for the peace (a totally inclusive 'group hug' which I found especially moving), and thirdly for the way the circular form of the chapel was used in the partaking of communion, with each of us receiving the host and wine from the person on one side of us before giving them to the person on the other side. Once again, it was wonderfully inclusive.

Which could well be my summing up of the whole weekend: wonderfully inclusive. I know that I shall be at Windermere next May, partly because I am assisting Jenny-Anne in helping Jay to organise it, but I would not miss it anyway. For anyone seeking spirituality among a tolerant group of loving friends, a Sibyls weekend is surely a must!

THE SIBYLS AND NUMBERS

There was a call at Holland House that we should be actively seeking to increase membership. We should be represented on the web and actively advertising. The concept is that Sibyls is good; therefore we should have more members and do more.

I am not sure that I agree. The essential purpose of Sibyls is that we love and support each other. It only takes two for that. The only other situation where we need numbers is where we take a house for a weekend and sufficient people must come to give the house a decent financial return. Otherwise numbers are not important and are not what we are about. Our aim is to love and support.

We should make sure that we are known to other transgender groups and that we are available. Otherwise I am wary. When the Tranny Guide featured us, I spent time fending off begging letters and religious maniacs, and was very relieved when our name was taken off their listing, however dim the view they took of that.

On a not dissimilar point, Sibyls is not a secret society. Our existence is not a secret, nor is what we are about. I have made sure in correspondence that the Archbishop of Canterbury and other bishops are well aware of us and what we are about and I have talked inter alia with the Bishop of London and the Bishop of Winchester. There is no secret about the existence of Sibyls. However I draw a firm line between talking about Sibyls and about individual Sibyls. Each and every member is entitled to complete secrecy and security.

OASIS MEETING AT PETERSFIELD - FRIDAY 3 FEBRUARY AT NOON

These are excellent meetings. At the October meeting Marian led an excellent thoughtful communion service and there followed a splendid three course lunch. As ever, the conversation flowed and was a mixture of the serious, the sad and the funny, although perhaps overshadowed by doom and gloom in the Church of England. We were delighted that Pam and Rosie were able to come. These are good meetings if you can get there on a Friday in the middle of the day.

We are very grateful to Jackie 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 3 February 2006, at noon. Please ring Jackie - 01489 878765 - to confirm.

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 and a nice atmosphere. Nourishment for mind, body and spirit. Few come but those that do find it very worthwhile.

Details: 5.30 service at St Anne's, 55 Dean Street, Soho W1D 6AF, 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 9 February. Every two months, on the second Thursday - except when it isn't. No need to book - just come.

MANCHESTER MEETINGS

A very big thank you to Jenny-Anne and Elen for organising events in the North-West. There is a regular monthly meeting, third Saturday, at 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. The MCC has its own website www.mccmanchester.co.uk/trans.htm .

THE NEWSLETTER

We are grateful for your articles and need more of them. Please write for us. We need interesting articles, humour, spiritual experience, ideas, controversy, something that you think would be of interest. 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.

THE UNITED KINGDOM TRANS ALLIANCE - UKTA

Sadly we couldn't have representation at the last meeting at Grimsby. However I have heard that it was badly attended and there are grave doubts for its future.

CONTACTING ME

It might help if I set out how best to get in touch with me. One or two members have found problems and this may make it easier.

1. I am happy to take phone calls but very often I am out. My telephone has a 1571 system; please leave a message. It's better if you do as then I can try to get back to you. If you don't, and withhold your number, there's no chance.
2. I don't do email. Sorry but I don't. Two reasons. Firstly I don't think the quality of the communing is good and secondly there's an awful lot of rubbish. At Seahorse it is reckoned that only one in forty of the emails received is serious.
3. Letters are great. People write much more seriously in letters than they do in emails. There's no logic in that but there it is. Letters will always get replied to as soon as I can.

TRADE DISPUTE OF THE QUARTER

The Sunday Times reports that an official union of Indian eunuchs has called on police to take action against beggars who are only pretending to be castrated. The Uttar Pradesh Eunuchs Association says the fake eunuchs have been arriving at weddings, engagement parties and other social functions to beg for cash. Genuine eunuchs have been confronting the impostors and demanding to check their private parts, and now want police to do the same. The eunuchs collect money from social events, often by threatening to expose themselves.

Now what was it the Gender Recognition Act said?

A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all the Sibyls and those they hold dear.

Love and Prayers.

Jay Walmsley (Miss)

Susie Withers (Mrs)

SIBYLS TOGETHER AT HOLLAND HOUSE NOVEMBER 2005

Jay

1. Jay reminded the Sibyls of Russell Reid's case before the GMC and said that letters of support for him, but only from those who felt it right to do so, would be very welcome. They should be sent to Jay.
2. Jay said that she had heard that people were finding the listening panel a help. The facility is there and it's good that people are using it.
3. The question of weekends was discussed. Jay was concerned that numbers were low at Holland House, which ran the risk of financial penalty, and cast doubt on the future of Sibyls weekends. The members felt that the low numbers at Holland House probably had much to do with a November date and also some members had moved on. After considerable discussion those present felt that they would support the next two planned weekends and that

they should continue. However if numbers at weekends continue to fall, then we would have to look at smaller houses.

4. The meeting felt that the facilities of Holland House were excellent and they very much wanted to come back again, but not in November. [14-16 September 2007 booked.]
5. The meeting discussed sole occupancy and strongly agreed that it was essential. Whilst many members would not be concerned if other people were in the house, some, especially nervous newcomers, would be. For their sake, sole occupancy was essential.
6. Jenny-Anne and Elen had agreed that they would run the Windermere weekend and Michelle O'Brien that she would take over the St Columba's weekend. Jay was grateful as it would take a load away from her but more importantly introduce new people to running weekends with new ideas.
7. Rosie offered to investigate the idea of setting up a Sibyls web site.
8. Elen had kindly agreed to be scribe for the weekend.
9. Jenny-Anne and Elen were organising another fun weekend at Bournemouth which would be publicised.
10. Jay thanked everyone who had attended the weekend, those who had taken the offices, Susie, Philippa and Michelle Le Morvan, Michelle for her meditation, Jenny-Anne for running the entertainment, and everyone for helping and contributing.

SANDRA MOORE WRITES:-

I was very interested in Deirdre's article "In Defence of Transvestism" in the September newsletter.

In this article Deirdre outlines what she feels is her experience of being a TV in response to what she calls a "puzzlement" expressed by a TS friend. I suppose many of us have either taken part in or heard arguments and discussion between TSs and TVs across a sort of perceived divide between them.

Perhaps, for a long time, definitions and categorisations have been bandied about and even taken on board by the medical and "mental health" (!) communities; and even then authoritatively parroted back to "patients" and clients as quasi-scientific observations. Things like "A person who for gratification or pleasure chooses to dress in the clothes of the opposite gender either temporarily or permanently"; "a person who considers him or herself to be of the opposite gender to his or her physical body and seeks to be realigned" etc etc.

Personally, having turned over all these definitions and legalistically structured concepts for many years, I have come to feel they mean almost nothing.

For example, the title of Deirdre's very interesting article in fact (although I mean no criticism by this) is meaningless. There is actually no such thing as transvestism (or transsexualism for that matter) which needs defending. What? What on earth do you mean? How can you say that? What nonsense! * * * * *

For example there are people whom we could all think of who usually wear more or less the same clothes every day. Better put, the same style of clothes. There are others who like to wear something different every day. Then there are those who like

to have tattoos or even body piercing; and there are even cases of people who demand to have permanent physical alterations to their bodies; up to and including amputations.

There is in all of this an absolute minefield of fashion, of peer pressure, social criticism, so-called expert advice and money-making exploitation. But in the end everything comes down to one thing. Each individual is TRYING TO EXPRESS SOMETHING UNIQUE ABOUT HIM/HERSELF.

In that sense (returning to the TV/TS theme) I have come to see and feel that there is NO SUCH THING AS TRANSVESTISM OR TRANSSEXUALISM IN GENERAL. There are only INDIVIDUALS seeking to discover their own inner self and bring it to expression.

For some this may involve “dressing up” in a way that seems artistic, genial and even “life accommodating”; one could almost say “Goethean” in Deirdre’s sense. For others a life crisis; a sense of being at odds with one’s physical being and needing a drastic alteration may be their approach to themselves.

But the driving forces in this will be found to be unique, and though the results may be superficially alike (to use a comparison, there can be many reasons why men carry a gun, they may be soldiers, gamekeepers or clay pigeon marksmen; but to generalise them as gunners would be misleading) there will be found to be no universal law involved.

And surely that is good! Christ made each of us unique; not members of types or legal definitions.

So if anyone asks me “Are you TV or TS?” I answer “No, I’m me!”

RELIGION, OPIUM AND SPIRITUALITY- A PERSONAL REFLECTION

Michelle Le Morvan

“Religion is the opium of the people” - thus said Karl Marx, and when we look at our world today we can see some peoples who are enslaved by religion, and others who have thrown off the slavery. But on the whole those who are ‘religious’ are very little different in attitudes and behaviour from those who profess no religion - though they may often be much more fanatical and judgemental. The reason for this, of course, is the fact that below the surface we are all human beings. The great thing about religion for most of us, and having been a religious person for most of my life which has given me a certain amount of insight, is that it makes us feel good and secure. Our religion, our denomination, our tradition is the correct one, and as for the rest ... well we often condemn them. My creeds, my scriptures, my doctrines and dogmas are correct - the result is that my god is made in my image and likeness. I have been saved. My opium protects me against reality and irrelevance.

This, of course, has nothing to do with faith and spirituality. The call of the Gospel is so simple that we seldom hear it: “Repent and Believe”. Repent does not mean saying “sorry”. It actually means ‘turning my life around’ to follow a new path (metanoia in Greek). Belief does not mean assenting to creeds and dogmas (which are irrelevant to my daily living), but being ready to step out into the unknown, trusting that ‘God’ or ‘Life’ will support me, no matter how dark the tunnel in which I find myself. Such ‘repentance’ and ‘belief’ actually form the basis of Spirituality which is as different from religion as chalk is from cheese.

A close reading of the Gospels (the foundation documents of Christianity), shows us that Jesus had little time for organised religion, good Jew though he was. He came simply to show us how to live, how to be fully human. This means to face the reality of our lives, no matter how painful they may be, knowing that God's love and forgiveness is, in spite of what religion tells us, as plentiful and available as the waters which flow over the earth. This is reality. We are called simply on our part to love and forgive. To love ourselves (which I have found very difficult, and I know many others find the same), to love our neighbour and to love our 'God'. We cannot love our neighbour until we can love ourselves. For many of us in the transsexual community this is incredibly difficult - but self-acceptance and gratitude for who and what we are is the basis of real self-love and inner peace. The rest will follow when we truly love ourselves. We can then face the darkness which we often encounter outside and which can be so painful.

How can we love a 'God' whom we cannot see or touch, when such a 'God', if IT really exists, is in itself UNKNOWABLE? Through creation which reflects in some way this God; through history, especially our personal history - yes in some way. But it seems to me that this matter is essentially deep and personal, and is at the same time a real act of FAITH - a Trusting in that which we cannot prove in any human way. We can love this God by, on the one hand accepting our lives and circumstances in real gratitude, and on the other hand by saying 'yes' to the future. NONE OF THIS IS EASY, but it is worth a trial. After all Jesus nearly died in the Garden of Gethsemane trying to say 'yes'. That should encourage us.

We need, therefore, to seek real spiritual values. We need to remember that religious conformity is often the easiest way to find security, but is often also the greatest enemy of real spiritual growth. It gives just enough spirituality to protect us from the real thing. It is reflection on the life of Jesus that brings us 'life'. A friend of mine has written "Jesus wants the unwanted; he loves the unloved; he has a passion to break bread with the broken". Many of our community feel unwanted, unloved and broken. And we may feel it ourselves.

There is hope - and it may not be found in religion.

UNIQUE & MCC MANCHESTER TRANS GROUP FUN WEEKEND 24th - 26th March 2006 at Hamilton Hall, Bournemouth

Elen of Unique and Jenny-Anne of MCC Manchester Trans Group invite you to another of their popular fun weekends at Hamilton Hall in Bournemouth.

The Hall is just a short distance from Bournemouth town centre and has a very tranquil and calm atmosphere where you can have a peaceful and stress-free weekend, just being yourself, or it can provide a restful base for more energetic excursions. A visit to the local transgender-friendly Metropolitan Community Church on Sunday morning has become a regular feature of our Bournemouth weekends, but this is optional - the emphasis will be on relaxation and fun.

There is much to do in and around Bournemouth, and group outings can easily be arranged. These could include trips to Brownsea Island (nature reserve), Corfe Castle, the Swanage Railway, shopping, swimming and so on, though on previous weekends most people just did their own thing.

Hamilton Hall has six en-suite rooms, but will sleep up to 13 with people sharing rooms (10 guests is an optimum number). The hire charge for the Hall is £900.00 for

the weekend, full board, irrespective of the number of guests (we have exclusive use of the Hall from Friday 2:00pm until Sunday 4:00pm approx.). For 10 guests the cost will be £90.00 per person, while for 8 guests (the required minimum) the cost will be £112.50 per person.

Day attendance is a very reasonably priced option for those who live in the vicinity as the Hall has plenty of space and can accommodate larger numbers than the rooms will sleep (advance booking for meals will be required for day attendance).

Reservations will be on a first come, first served basis, and if you are prepared to share one of the larger rooms so much the better. If you have any questions or suggestions please call Elen on 01745 337144 or Jenny-Anne on 07768-738416 or e-mail elen.heart@btopenworld.com

If you would like to come with us to Bournemouth in March, please complete and return the form below, together with £50.00 per person deposit. The maximum cost per person will be £112.50 and your booking a place indicates acceptance of this condition (if we receive less than eight bookings the weekend will be cancelled and your deposit will be returned).

Please send the form and cheque (made payable to Hamilton Hall) to:
Ms Elen Heart, 12 Ffordd Las, Rhyl, LL18 2DY

✂ -----

I/We would like to book for Hamilton Hall for the weekend of 24th – 26th March 2006 and enclose deposit of £50.00 per person by cheque made payable to **Hamilton Hall**. I/We understand that, assuming a minimum of 8 people, the cost per person for full board will be £112.50 (cost will vary downwards with a higher number of bookings).

NUMBER OF PEOPLE BOOKING: _____

NAME/S FOR BOOKING PURPOSES:

ROOM PREFERENCE: Double ☐; Single ☐; Twin ☐ (if Single, are you prepared to share: Y ☐; N ☐)

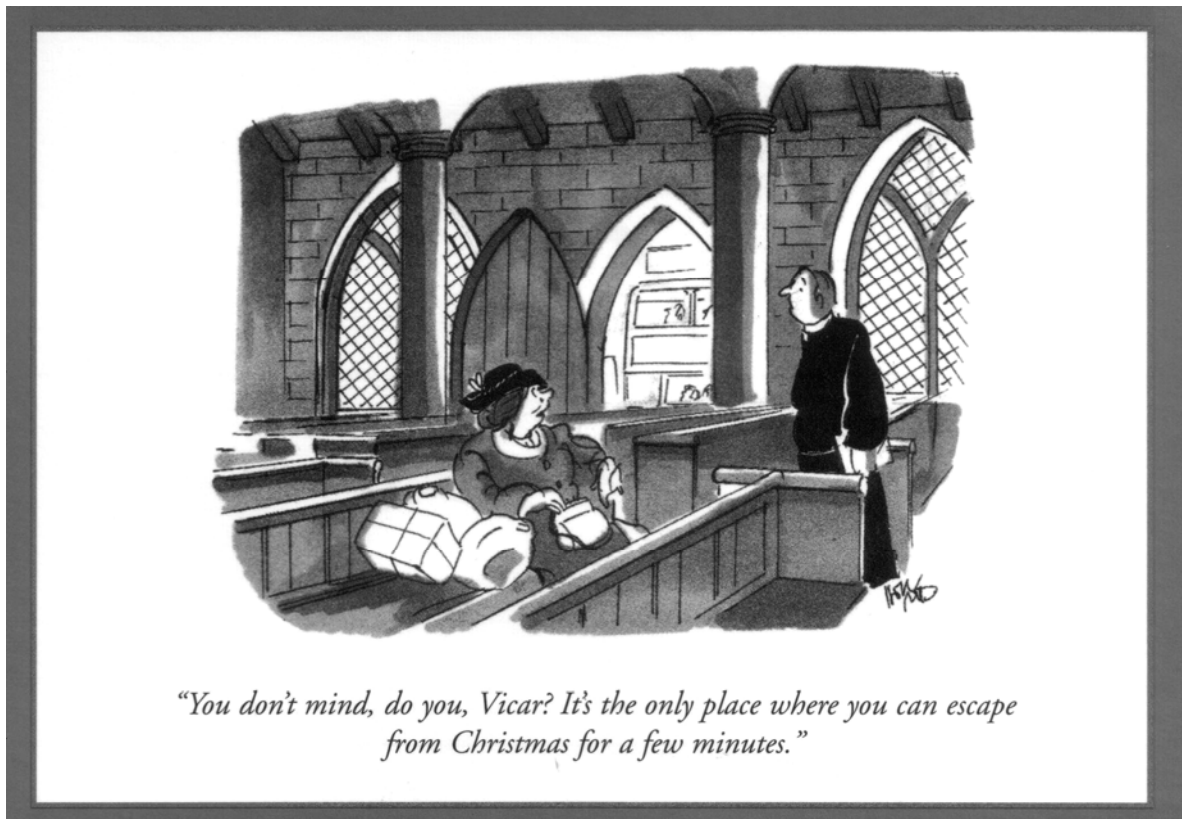
ANY SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS (e.g. vegetarian):

CONTACT NAME & ADDRESS (this will be known only to Elen, not to the Hall staff or anyone else):

CONTACT TELEPHONE:

E-MAIL ADDRESS:

The Pick of Last Year's Christmas Cards:-



ISN'T IT STRANGE

Isn't it strange how a £20 note is a large amount when you donate it to church, but such a small amount when you go shopping?

Isn't it strange how two hours seems so long when you're at church, and how short they can seem when you're watching a good film?

Isn't it strange that you can't find a word to say when you're praying, but you have no trouble thinking what to talk about with a friend?

Isn't it strange how difficult and boring it is to read one chapter of the bible, but how easy it is to read 100 pages of a popular novel?

Isn't it strange how everyone wants front-row seats to concerts or sports events and the back row in church, yet they always want to be the centre of attention.

Isn't it strange how we need to know about a church event 2-3 weeks beforehand so we can include it in our agenda, but can adjust it for other events at the last minute?

Isn't it strange how difficult it is to learn a fact about God and to share it with others, but how easy it is to learn, understand, extend and repeat gossip?

Isn't it strange how we believe everything that magazines and newspapers say, but we question the words in the bible.

Isn't it strange how everyone wants a place in heaven, but they don't want to believe, do, or say anything to get there.

Isn't it strange how we send jokes in e-mails and they are forwarded right away, but when we are going to send messages about God, we think about it twice before we share it with others.



THE SIBYLS

Christian Spirituality Group
For the Transgendered

12 Ffordd Las
Rhyl, Denbighshire
LL18 2DY

☎ 01745 337144

WEEKEND AT THE WINDERMERE CENTRE 19-21 MAY 2006

Name.....

Required - Single/twin room/triple (delete as appropriate)

Name of other occupant(s) in room

Prepared to share with

Address
(if not as per your address label)

.....

.....

Phone No.

Please reserve for me the following number of places:-

Mini-bus outing (to be booked and paid for in advance)	£18.00
Full weekend Friday night to Sunday lunch	£97.00
24 hour overnight full board	£48.50
Day visitor – Saturday lunch and tea/coffee (add £2 if you want breakfast)	£7.00
Day visitor – evening meal/Sunday lunch	£15.00

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

Do you need help with transport to Windermere

Please send this form with your cheque to Ms Elen Heart (address above) asap