



# **THE SIBYLS**

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

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## **NEWSLETTER 42**

**June 2007**

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 a meal in Chinatown. Next dates August 9th, October 11th.

Manchester every fourth Saturday of the month at MCC. For details contact Jenny-Anne 01606 783035, [jennyannebuk@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:jennyannebuk@yahoo.co.uk) or [www.mccmanchester.co.uk/trans.htm](http://www.mccmanchester.co.uk/trans.htm)

Rosie's Meeting in Dorset - every four months - next meeting at Rosie's house between 12 Noon and 4 o'clock - ring Rosie 01258 830889. Next date Friday 5 October.

#### **Weekends 2007**

**Friday 14 to Sunday 16 September - Holland House, Worcestershire  
2008**

**Friday 16 to Sunday 18 May - Windermere  
Friday 13 to Sunday 15 September - St Columba's**

#### **2009**

**Friday 15 to Sunday 17 May - Whaley Hall, Derbyshire**

#### **Other Events**

**Saturday 14 July 2007 - Jay's Garden Party.**

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

Please pray for Rosie and her family, Angela Hammerton with inoperable cancer, David in ongoing illness, Susie's friend Alan and his various medical problems, Jayne Edwards with a broken ankle and Barbara Trueman looking after her, Rachael Ridley recovering after successful surgery, Anna Booth and Helen Mather going for surgery soon, all those known to us who are in need, those who await a date for surgery, and those with disabilities 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 Le Morvan 01743 341026  
Jenny Bond 01623 836662  
Jane Bowles 01492 660147  
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?

### **THE BEGGING BOWL**

Thank you to all those who responded. Please keep the donations coming. The newsletter has to be paid for and support given to those who would benefit from the weekends but can't afford the prices. All donations welcome, great or small. A big thank you to those who give.

### **RUSSELL REID**

For those who do not know, the General Medical Council decided that Russell had committed serious professional misconduct.

The verdict can be said to be within the letter of the law but far from the spirit. In certain cases by prescribing hormones at the first visit without first conducting blood tests or checking with the patient's GP, he was considered to have put his patients at risk. That he always wrote immediately to the GP after the visit and a few years ago changed his method of working did not affect the outcome.

The sanctions imposed were minimal which implies that the panel did not take the view that the breach was very serious. It is extremely sad that there should be this slur on his reputation and we are all very sorry at the outcome.

Your letters of support were all used and a large selection, amounting to about a lever arch file in thickness, was placed before the panel, who read them. Another two files were available. You did make a difference. Never has there been a case where a doctor received so much support. Those letters are a record of how much this community appreciates what he has done for us.

Russell, we are deeply grateful to you and wish you well for the future.

### **JAY'S GARDEN PARTY - SATURDAY 14 JULY 2007**

This is imminent, very imminent - don't forget the date and miss the opportunity to visit the stately home. 3.30 onwards. Usual format - shady hats, summer dresses, peaceful garden, weather permitting a communion service under the cherry tree (if it rains, then indoors), lots of food and chat. We are pleased to welcome back the Rev'd Martin Kelly to take the service. Peace and time to be. No World Cup football guaranteed. Come and enjoy. Give me a ring if you are coming.

### **WEEKEND AT WHALEY HALL IN MAY**

This weekend was super and everyone enjoyed themselves. The house has its character and although there were minor problems, all were overcome and a good time was had by all. Elen Heart had everything well organised. Helen Mather's account of the weekend and the report of Sibyls Together are elsewhere in this newsletter.

## **WEEKEND AT HOLLAND HOUSE - 14-16 SEPTEMBER 2007**

It's high time to be thinking about our weekend at Holland House in September. While September may feel as if it's a long way away, this is the last newsletter before the weekend. There won't be another. Now is time for you to get your booking form in.

We shall be welcoming Daphne Cook to talk to us on the Saturday morning. Daphne is a Reader in the Church of England and has taken a keen interest in matters transgender. I am sure that she will give us something to think about. Musica in Ecclesia will treat us to a sung Vespers on Saturday before dinner. You may remember that they sang on our first weekend at Holland House and, whilst it may not be to everyone's taste, you have to agree that they sing beautifully. It will be a delight and again an experience that should not be missed.

Christina and Michelle ran a workshop at the Changing Attitudes Conference at St Anne's Soho in January. This was very successful and gives plenty of opportunity for views and discussion, and ultimately for worship. They have kindly agreed to run the workshop again on Saturday afternoon at Holland House and that's something that you can get your teeth into.

With all the usual Sibyls features and the excellent hospitality and food of Holland House, it should be a great weekend. It's a great venue and the only drawback is that we do have to deliver enough people attending to make it worthwhile for them. Please get those bookings flowing in. In the belief that those who want to come will come, and they will tell others how good it is, I generally don't push the weekends. With Holland House we do have to provide numbers. **So please get the booking forms on their way to me.**

If you want to know more about Holland House, including directions as to how to get there, try [www.hollandhouse.com](http://www.hollandhouse.com).

## **ROSIE'S MEETINGS (FORMERLY OASIS)**

We held an excellent meeting at Rosie's house on Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> June. Marian took a thoughtful communion service and Rosie excelled herself and provided a splendid three course lunch. In all ten of us were there and it was a pleasure to get together and simply enjoy Rosie's magnificent hospitality.

We talked over the future of the meetings. Rosie is happy to continue to hold a meeting every four months or so, which will be to the Oasis format of a communion service at noon followed by a lunch and lots of talk. Jackie has not been able to find another venue and this arrangement should work well and be suitable for everyone concerned. We are deeply grateful to Jackie for all that she has done for transgendered people that have come her way and delighted that she wants to continue being with us.

The next meeting will be held at Rosie's house on Friday 5 October between 12 noon and 4 pm. Please give her a ring to confirm attendance (necessary for catering) and to get directions. 01258 830889. Overnight stay possible. No charge, thanks Rosie, but donations to Sibyls if you want.

## **LONDON EVENING MEETINGS**

After considerable discussion and debate, we decided that we would like a change to a Chinese restaurant for our meal and evening together. We tried it and it worked. In future we will be eating at the Imperial China Restaurant in Lisle Street, Chinatown.

These meetings are very good; gentle lovely evenings with a service which is always thoughtful, peaceful and healing, followed by a good meal in a peaceful restaurant with a nice atmosphere. Nourishment for mind, body and spirit. Few come but those that do find it worthwhile.

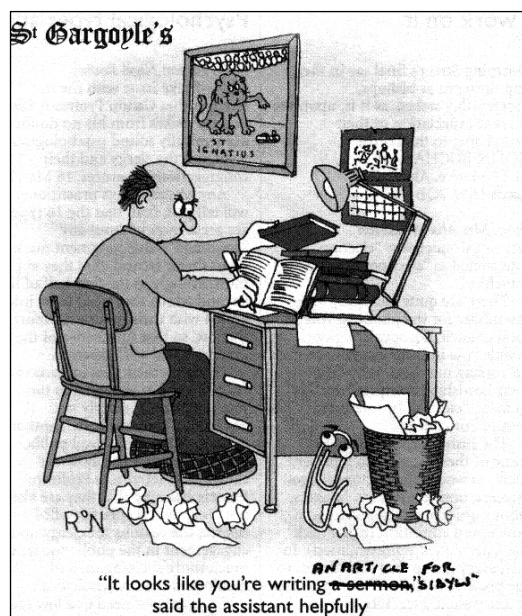
Details: 5.30 service at St Anne's, 55 Dean Street, Soho W1D 6AF, 50 yards up on the left from Shaftesbury Avenue (it doesn't look like a church but it is), and from about 6.15 a gathering at the Imperial China Restaurant in Lisle Street, Chinatown. Next meeting - Thursday 9 August. Every two months, on the second Thursday - except when it isn't. No need to book - just come.

## MANCHESTER MEETINGS

Jenny-Anne and Elen organise events in the North-West. There is a regular monthly meeting, fourth 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](mailto:jennyannebuk@yahoo.co.uk). The MCC has its own website [www.mccmanchester.co.uk/trans.htm](http://www.mccmanchester.co.uk/trans.htm).

## TELEVISION - CHANNEL 4

A television producer, Susan Tomlinson, has been in touch with me regarding a programme to be made for Channel 4. She needs FtoMs which limits the field. However she is also looking for transgendered people who are looking to live either in a third sex or androgynously. I make no recommendation but if you are interested, contact her. 020 8674 3781.



## THE NEWSLETTER - ARTICLES

You must be getting fed up with my writing. Please write - we need articles. Interesting articles, humour, spiritual experience, ideas, controversy; something, anything that you think would be of interest. If you don't like what is written, give the Editor a choice of articles.

Items can be sent by e-mail to [withers.susan@virgin.net](mailto:withers.susan@virgin.net) (please note change of address) on CD or floppy 3½ inch disk to Jay (in Word, please) or print out in a clear typeface printed with black ink. Anything else defeats the scanner.

## THE UNITED KINGDOM TRANS ALLIANCE - UKTA - AND TRANZNET

Tranznet report that they find it a useful means of exchanging information between groups. No formal reports have been seen. Susie has been our representative but cannot continue and we are looking for a new representative.

## TALE PIECE

The Sunday Times reports that protestors, armed with bags of organic potatoes, moved in to disrupt a government GM-crop trial last week (April). More than 200 people arrived on the 40-acre site in Hedon, East Yorkshire, and began planting. Just one small problem - they were in the wrong field. "I told the police officers that it was a bean field," said the farmer, who has nothing to do with genetically modified potatoes. "But they said the protest seemed peaceful, so we'd better let them get on with it."

Love and Prayers.

Jay Walmsley (Miss)

Susie Withers (Mrs)



**From Sandra Moore**

Dear Editor,

I was most struck by Cerys Brangwyn's article in the latest newsletter (March 2007). The idea of a prophetic community seems to me quite exceptionally interesting and valuable.

Cerys refers especially to two figures in spiritual life who, one can feel, not only played a decisive part in their time but actually continue to do so in hidden ways in ours.

Due to our often limited education, in which basically "secularism" is the religious orthodoxy (by that I mean the notion that "science" provides a kind of truth by its methods but restricted to the purely tangible and sensory; and that any perception outside the tangible or sensory is unreliable, purely personal and possibly psychotic and a matter for medication; and that religious matters are more or less just belief and

attachment to fanciful wish-systems) due to this “secularism” we have often very inadequate ideas about figures like Buddha or Elijah, mentioned by Cerys, while feeling somehow that there is far more to them than meets the eye of the historian, who dwells largely in a world of mummified remains.

It is interesting for example to read how similarly the coming of Elijah was experienced on Israel, and the equivalent “Coming of Dionysus” was in Greece. One has to try to discover the way language was used in times 3000 years ago or so. A person could be described as coming like a “flame” or “wind” without this meaning that he physically combusted or blew away. I mean, how would we describe Princess Diana?

In the same way, Elijah was experienced as affecting wide regions of the country merely by the fact that he was around; in the atmosphere, excitingly, so to speak. People felt different because of him; and the “powers that be” were unsettled by this. It is much like the way yeast converts grape juice into wine. It is kind of everywhere and makes water wine. And this is a picture of Elijah who created in his followers, beginning with Elisha, a gift; namely prophecy. A sort of fiery tongue which could make people seem drunk. Their words became full of enthusiastic vision of future truth.

Something similar also existed in Greece, namely the Sibyls and Pythonesses. A kind of prophetic school. Something arising out of the female nature of the Sibyls, but tamed and controlled by the sun like figure of Apollo.

Our limited education may not have also given us an adequate picture of Buddha. Basically we see however from the postures of the Buddha that his whole approach was to avoid entanglement with the deceptive and shadowy sides of earth existence and to keep awake something divine and virginal in human beings which is as-it-were “from the beginning of things”.

It was clear to the Buddha that earth existence is OK, so long as one realises that nothing earthly endures. The physical world is (what someone called) a “flux of transience”. (Perhaps it was Plato.)

Nothing in the sensory world is permanent. Buddha, aware of the sufferings we undergo by forgetting this, demonstrated a life of non-attachment, which therefore seems a life of compassion.

In my opinion, not everything pertinent to the secrets of spiritual life is always placed on the front cover so to speak, but hidden between the lines for the more earnest to find; and so the fact that Dionysus in Greece always appeared in women’s dress, or that in some myths, Dionysus was slain and dismembered, and his male member cast into the sea; or that the populace at large believed that this item caused grape juice to become wine. I mean, the bible gives a clue in the fact that Jezebel and Ahab are terribly concerned to acquire a vineyard!

Similarly Buddha renounces a certain kind of interest in earthly affairs and driven by a particular kind of thought; the thought attached in a particular way to self-interest.

In short both Buddha and Elijah are concerned with the TRANSFORMATION OF SELF-INTEREST (which is a characteristically male force, whether in a man or a woman) into something else.

One feels that differing streams of spiritual life meet in real human beings. It is as if they formed the preparation into which a great synthesising impulse entered in the historical moment in 33 AD; in which something which previously had been a sort of “theatre of illusions” became instead a “theatre of prophecy” of a future reality, which at present is still in embryonic form. And this is what makes Cerys’s article so inspiring. It speaks of a loving future rising from a cross-like world of dark self-interest.

*Sandra Moore*

## **SIBYLS TOGETHER AT WHALEY HALL - MAY 2007**

Jay

1. Jay thanked everyone for attending and for making the weekend such a success. She felt it to be her role to create a safe space with ideas and opportunities for everyone to make as much or as little of as they wanted and whatever happened was down to them. She thanked Elen Heart and Jenny-Anne for their hard work in organising the weekend so successfully. She thanked Alison and Jasmine, Rosie, Anna and Susie for taking offices, Helen for being scribe, and Lesley for a marvellous job with the entertainment.
2. The venue was discussed. Elen was concerned that there had been difficulties in organising the weekend, there had been problems and the house was not run efficiently. She, Jenny-Anne and Anna would like a weekend at St Deiniol’s Library. There we could not have sole occupancy which they felt was an opportunity to help the public to better understand transgenderism. There was much discussion and it was clear that many people liked Whaley Hall and would like to come back. It was agreed that we would seek a return booking in May 2009 and that Elen and Jenny-Anne would make arrangements for an extra weekend at St Deiniol’s Library.
3. Overwhelmingly those present felt that the weekend at Whaley Hall had been very much enjoyed.
4. Jay was concerned that Holland House needed numbers to meet their budgets and it was hoped that as many as possible would come to the September weekend.
5. Elen asked that the booking form be modified so that members filled in the address section and also supplied their email addresses. It would be preferable if the booking form had no newsletter on its back.
6. Elen was organising a weekend in North Wales (non spiritual) to which all Sibyls would be very welcome. Jay asked for a paragraph if she wished it publicised in the newsletter.
7. Elen explained that TranzNet had been established to enable groups to exchange information more effectively. Susie had been our representative but was also representing two other bodies and could not continue. Elen asked if anyone would like to be the Sibyls representative. There is a vacancy.
8. Jan Scobey mentioned that the nuns at the Bar Convent in York offer a bed and breakfast service, which is highly recommended.



## “KNOWING ME, KNOWING YOU” – Whaley Hall, May 2007



This was my first complete Sibyls weekend for some years, and I was looking forward to seeing familiar faces in a well-known setting.

But familiarity breeds contempt, they say. It's not far: won't take long to get there. I didn't reckon with roadworks near home, so I arrived late – just like the first time I went...

Fortunately dinner had been delayed too, and I missed nothing. As I sat at the table I looked round the faces trying to remember names. Some were familiar, but many were new to me. I realised that it was eighteen months since my last weekend, and that only a flying visit... But I'm back now, on familiar territory. You're here; you're part of it. Enjoy!

After dinner there was coffee. At last! No time for relaxing, though. Hit the ground running! We moved into the lounge where Jenny-Anne introduced Susan Hargreaves, who's *"an active Anglican and playwright who seems to keep getting involved in identity issues..."*

Susan has developed a special interest in transgender issues. Her work as a playwright draws on her experience of the Manchester community: people at risk of social exclusion. She'd been invited to introduce our theme "Knowing me, knowing you". So



she started with a song. Not the ABBA number, but a quiet Judy Garland piece. And she's a good singer too! Susan sees our theme as a chain, and suggested a series of linked questions:

*who am I?  
what's my purpose?  
who are you?  
who's my neighbour?  
who is God?*

She sees the search for an identity as a stripping down and reclothing (a bit like Ezekiel's dry bones!). Don't fight it, she says, do our best with what we have...

But who are **you**?

We have to see each person as they are. Susan gave us some of her own ideas: There's an atmosphere of spirituality, a gentleness associated with *trans* people (Col. 3:12?)

It takes courage to be yourself; it's risky, and the journey isn't straightforward, but there's a sense of camaraderie within the transgender community that supports and encourages.

There's a spectrum – we're all at different places, and there's often a change with time for each individual. And for each of us, it's not about externals; it's a state of mind. But over all, there's a sense of optimism and moving forward.

She summed it up in the keywords **COURAGE, CAMARADERIE, CONFIDENCE**. Find yourself first, she said, then look at others and see the similarities.

And, by way of encouragement, she finished with her impression of Ethel Merman in her trademark song "*There's no business like show business.*" Awesome!

Jay added her own apt summing-up:

*"O wad some Power the giftie gie us, To see oursels as ithers see us!"*

(Robert Burns: *To a Louse*, 1786)

Alison & Jasmine Woolley led tonight's Night Office – I hadn't met them before. We met in the Oratory: a tiny stone-built chapel decorated in the same Byzantine style as the main Chapel, added since my last visit. Tonight it was beautifully lit by soft candlelight. One very profound way of knowing is through touch. This can be gentle, but not always. And people are moving apart now – we touch much less. There's often a sense of vulnerability in touch, and this is especially true of being touched by God.

Alison & Jasmine led us in a quiet meditation on the woman who anointed Jesus' feet at Bethany, illustrated from the Gospels (Mark 14 and John 12), and with lots of quiet space. Then they invited us to offer candles to give to each other with a touch and a blessing (in the same way as we share the bread and wine at Communion).

We finished with a prayer:

*Loving God, who reached out to touch those whom the world saw as untouchable,  
Open my eyes that I may see people's deep need to be touched,  
Enlarge my heart that I may offer connection to the disconnected,  
Use my hands that I may offer the hand of friendship,  
Teach me generosity that I may seek to give rather than to receive,  
For it is in sharing our brokenness and vulnerability that we become like you...*

Then it was quietly back into the lounge. At least it was when I'd recovered my things from the car (no time earlier!) When I joined the others they were well established.

First priority: find a glass. There was wine, true, but no glasses to be had. And coffee seemed to be entirely do-it-yourself tonight! Friday evening is always the first real chance in a busy weekend to catch up on progress, exchange memories and photos, and generally to renew friendships. But don't ask me what I did!

Why do I always have to sort my things out on Saturday? Too much rush I suppose. But at last it's done, sort of... Shower taken, clothes on, and it's time for breakfast already. It's form-a-queue-for-the-food today (cramped in here with 20 people round a big table). And look, another toaster with a mind of its own! (fond memories of Holland House). But there's never enough time on a Sibyls weekend for a normal Saturday breakfast. Certainly not for my coffee! Ah well, another caffeine-free breakfast...

And now a complete change of mood: a chance to slow down and be quiet for a short time. Rosie led the Morning Office with some personal thoughts.

She opened very appropriately with the ABBA song "*Knowing me, knowing you*"... Listen to the words: they're a response to the end of a relationship. Anyone who has lost a love in their lives can relate to them.

Rosie reminded us of her own farewell to Pam. Although she'd found a great strength in their shared faith, she regretted the Church's seeming inability to give support. But at the same time, she was learning to know God at a personal level.

God knows all about us (Psalm 139), and our response should be to seek to know him. Rosie quoted the Collect for Purity from the Communion Service:

*"God, unto whom all hearts are open...*

*cleanse the thoughts of our hearts...*

*that we may perfectly love thee..."*

And how to love him?

*"...with all your heart and all your soul and all your strength and all your mind.*

And

*"Love your neighbour as yourself."*

And that's the hard bit: loving ourselves.

But, Rosie said, God accepts me **just as I am**. Can I ask for a greater friend than that? She quoted Psalm 139 v.1

*"God knows me; God knows me when I sit and when I rise..."*

... and finished quietly with the familiar Walford Davies setting of "God be in my Head":

*God be in my head,  
And in my understanding;  
God be in mine eyes,  
And in my looking;  
God be in my mouth,  
And in my speaking;  
God be in my heart,  
And in my thinking;  
God be at mine end,  
And at my departing.*

From the Sarum *Book of Hours*, 1514

Now I can get a coffee. It was time too, to say our goodbyes to Susan, who had to leave (but, she asked, "*Can I come to Holland House?*") Of course! Please do.

This afternoon's free. There's the traditional Minibus tour; they're talking of a trip out to the Goyt Valley, a local beauty spot. Ready to go as soon as you are... Shall I go? Or

not? But I wasn't in a rushing mood today. And the weather didn't look so good. I decided on a quiet day, so I stayed talking in the lounge until three, then went to Buxton for a browse. I ended up sitting in the Pavilion gardens in the sunshine watching a wedding party. Entertaining, and it's free! I never did find out what that bus trip got up to. {Jay's note - we explored the lovely village of Castleton, watched some black faced Staffordshire Morris dancers perform and then walked up a lovely valley with steep sides brimming with rhododendrons and azaleas in full bloom, gloriously colourful in the sunshine, to visit the ruins of Errwood Hall.} The weather had cleared up, and I went exploring the moors, and so missed afternoon tea, and more importantly, a report by Carol on the position of NHS provision for gender reassignment in Wales (non-existent, it seems). But there was still conversation to be had.

Tonight's dinner was an elegant affair. Sibyls Saturday night is entertainment night. So it's "dress for dinner". Wear your best frocks tonight. That doesn't happen very often!

Lesley hosted the entertainment tonight in inimitable style. Proper music-hall! Carol, dressed very elegantly in a long black dress, started the proceedings on her violin. Not so elegant her choice of music, though: a community singalong of Beatles' songs. Surprising how well known they are 40 years on! Next, the first of the stories, read by Elen, followed by Susie with her ever-popular humorous verses, including, by universal request, the one-legged horse (it never fails...) Then Anna Booth bravely sang for us. "*I've only been singing a few weeks*", she confessed. I wouldn't have dared! Now Lesley's own spot. Gone were the spoons and her trademark drum. She led a second singalong – more '60s songs delivered in her unique *sprechgesang* style. This audience knew Lonnie Donegan even better than the Beatles! Ah, the old songs are the best...

And then more nostalgia: a Jackanory moment. Helen read a magical account of gender reassignment "somewhere over the Rainbow" (complete with appropriate hairband and matching earrings). "*You can't get that on the NHS*", commented Rosie. Janet read more verses. But just where had she put them? And where were her glasses? Big hunt under her chair. Is this part of the entertainment? Sibyls' entertainments wouldn't be the same without Jay's dancing; it's part of the scenery. But no scimitar and spangles today. All in black, and with just a simple cane. Minimalist! Not a top hat in sight! And more singing now: Cerys went classical with Handel ("*Where'er you walk*", I remember.)

Jan recounted a real life incident next – showing how easily *trans* people can fit into society, and present a good account of ourselves to others... Now maybe the highlight of the evening, saved until last: a new double act (certainly to me). Alison and Jasmine gave a hilarious account of Creation ("*God and Man and Woman*"). Quite a few asked afterwards "*Can we have a copy?*" But we'd not quite reached the end: Janet had discovered another reading under her chair. And Lesley finished in fine style with a last song.

Night Office led by Anna started quietly with a musical meditation on Psalm 139 to set the mood. Then followed a simple service of Compline, and we left quietly. I like to return to the Chapel and to be quiet, but I realised later that I'd missed this time. Never mind...

So we returned to the lounge for much talk and drinking of wine, and lots of photographs; Alison had been busy with her new toy (great camera: a real delight to use – I wish...) all through the evening, and wasn't stopping now. But don't even think about those sausages!

Is it me, or don't we do late nights any more? There were just Susie and myself left at 2345, so we tidied up (what, all those bottles!) and went to bed. There wasn't much else to do!

Sunday. And it's a fine morning. I've more time than yesterday. Time to get everything



*Whaley Hall's do-it-yourself carillon*

into the car before breakfast. No need to rush. I'd even a little time to look around the garden. I don't remember the bells. Are they new? They're most certainly a do-it-yourself affair. Looks impressive, but sounds very odd. Nothing seems to match!

But it's gone quiet now. Where is everyone? All the bathrooms were busy at 7 o'clock! And there weren't many waiting in the lounge when I returned. Not everyone turned up for breakfast today. So, more room to move. But there's even less time than yesterday. Early in but last out! Too much talking. It's all rush again! I like a leisurely breakfast on holiday: mealtimes are for enjoying. I made sure of today's coffee, rush or no rush! But rush it was! There's just too much to do. And never enough time.

Susie's Morning Office, traditionally-structured, set a confident and affirmative mood:

*"God of love, God of courage, God who calls, meet us face-to face on our journey..."*

At its heart were readings from John's Gospel (the meeting in the upper room, John14: 1-14)

*"Do not be worried and upset; believe in God and believe also in me..."*

and *"The Christmas Box."* by Richard Paul Evans, which spoke of personal relationships "for a Reason, for a Season and for a Lifetime", recalling Rosie's talk on Saturday. After prayers we finished in the same confident mood:

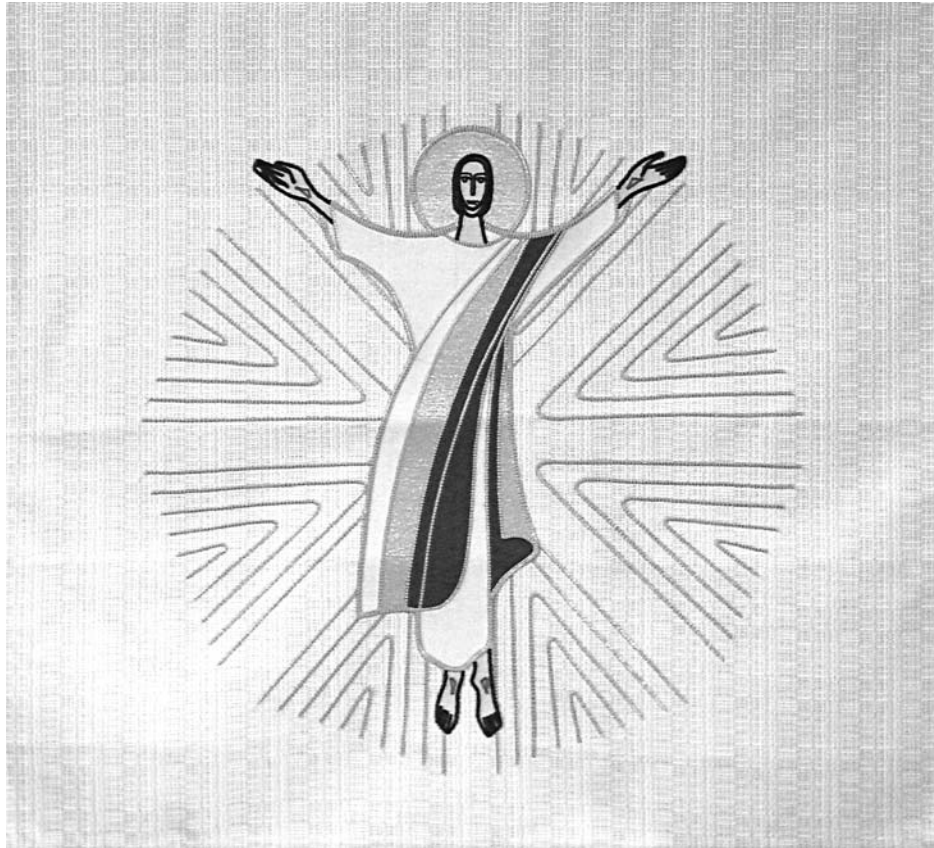
*"Trust steadily in God, Hope unswervingly, Love extravagantly.*

*"In the name of Christ. Amen!"*

No coffee yet! We got straight down to business with Sibyls Together (details elsewhere).

Now a short break before Communion. Time to go out on the patio (with coffee!) and escape for a few minutes. Besides, I'd an errand. We were one member short this weekend. Rachael had had her surgery yesterday afternoon, and I'd promised to find

out how she was. “*She’s fine. Do you want to speak to her?*” So soon! So I passed on all our best wishes. Now, everybody sign that card! I’ve promised I’ll visit her tonight.



*The Chapel frontal, Whaley Hall, Ascensiontide 2007*

Our Communion, marking the end of our time together, sets the seal on the whole weekend. It’s a time when we can share together as we are, whatever our background. Some of our Communion services have been very moving, but today’s, led by the Rev’d John Foulds, was a quiet, low-key service: the sort I’m familiar with at Whaley Hall.

The two Scripture readings set for the Sunday after Ascension were given by Elen and Helen (sounds confusing? not really.) And there was music at last. The small keyboard has been replaced by a very impressive organ, but it remained unplayed! Alison set the key for our two unaccompanied songs at a very low pitch (easier for most people, she said). It certainly suited my alto voice.

John opened his talk by reminding us that the Eurovision Song Contest was held last week: And of course, ABBA had famously won in 1974 (though not with our theme song). He looked at our weekend. What has it been for us? Firstly, a time for knowing ourselves, and secondly a time to get to know others. He suggested that we write down one thing we’re taking away with us as a reminder. And then he finished by bringing us back to the Gospel reading – “*You are my messengers*”. So appropriate – we’ll soon be going back out into the real world, as ourselves...

Some things never change in our Communion: lighting candles with our prayers (changed a bit from my earlier weekends - health and safety considerations maybe!), the bread and wine passed from hand to hand (a reminder of Friday evening...), and the hugs in the Peace. And of course we finished in the best Sibyls tradition with “*Guide me*

*O Thou Great Jehovah*" at the same low pitch as our earlier song (*"Make me a channel"*). That really got some welly!

And with the Blessing we reached the end of the service, and the weekend was almost over.

And now one more Sibyls tradition: the group photograph. As always, a do-it-yourself affair.

*"Everyone who wants to, get a photograph."*

Whaley Hall has an impressive patio, great for photographs. But a bit of an obstacle course!

*"You'll have to move that tub..."*

*"Mind the paving stone – don't fall off..."*

Oh! Nobody mentioned that wobbly paving slab at the edge of the patio, or the drop below...

But eventually all the photos were taken.

At last. That concrete is torture on the knees! Well, somebody has to be at the front.

There's always something about the Sunday lunch. You know there's not much time left together. There's a certain busyness. People are discussing journeys, talking about whose church they are going to, the next weekends; anything but this weekend. That'll come later. Surprisingly, after a salad lunch, and an oh-so-filling dessert (seconds, too!) most people moved into the lounge for coffee. Time for a sit-down and a last chat. But not for long. I took a look around the garden while people were packing, then it was goodbyes, until the next time... Now it really is the end of the weekend. Time to go home. So soon. Everyone seemed to disappear quietly in twos and threes, and I was one of the last to go.

But my weekend's not finished yet. I've a card to take, and a friend to see in hospital...

Helen Mather

## RELIGION AND MYERS-BRIGGS

Jay

Longer serving members of Sibyls will recall that we ran a weekend on Myers-Briggs and followed it up with Myers-Briggs and Spirituality. Both were both successful and enjoyable. Myers-Briggs is a helpful aid in knowing yourself and others, and can take you further along the road of spirituality. One of the objects of the spiritual path is to find and be yourself.

For those who don't know, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator is a system of distinguishing between four contrasting psychological preferences. First is that between **I**ntroverts (who gain their energy from being alone and thinking things through) and **E**xtraverts (who gain their energy from others and like to talk things over). Next are **S**ensing types (who like detail and what they know) and **i**ntuitives (who want the nub of the matter and see the potential for change). Third are **F**eeling people (who are concerned for human values and want harmony) and **T**hinking (who are concerned for objective logic and value truth and justice). Finally are **J**udging (who like things organised and cut and dried) and **P**erceiving (who like to wait and see what will happen as it might be interesting and better).

This is a fairly crude summary of the system. You are really recommended to go on a course, many of which are arranged by churches. The system is not the complete answer to understanding how all humans work but it can be a great help in understanding yourself and

other people. It is astonishing how much use it can be. It is important to remember that there is no virtue or vice in any particular type - neither is better nor worse - it is merely an indicator of the individual's preferences.

There was a fascinating article by Canon Professor Leslie J Francis in the Church Times in March. He wrote that back in 2001 there had been a survey of 427 male Anglican clergy in Wales which showed that there was a predominance of ISFJ types. In 2004 there was a survey of people who worship in Anglican churches in England, and again there was a predominance of ISFJ. A survey shortly to be published of 626 male and 247 female Anglican clergy in England shows a similar pattern but with more Ns among the mix.

The good professor was concerned, rightly, that this bias to one type set was unhealthy. Each type brings a different strength to the whole and you need the strengths of a mix of types to make a good team or society. A bias to one type will inevitably lead those people to fashion the church to suit their needs. Whilst that will be exceedingly comfortable for them it will put off people of other types who will not find it to their taste at all. Naturally the longer the situation goes on, the more the attitudes of the existing members will be reinforced and the less they will attract others.

He also made the comment that the Church of England having a higher number of Ns, who are looking for the essence of it all and to improve things, will move that church towards change - witness the ordination of women, the furore over women bishops, the problems over gay and lesbian clergy - all a move towards justice and away from tradition.

His points are valid. A healthy body of people needs a good mix and manifestly the churches have not got that. Additionally there are a couple of points that concern me.

Firstly the majority of clergy are I. Nevertheless their job requires them to be leaders and "put on a show", to be very much in the public eye, and to chair or serve on endless committees. That's all part of the job and I's will cope. However they need their space for recovery, to recharge their batteries. Unless they get a fair amount of space to themselves, down time, off duty, they are going to get increasingly distressed by being pressured to operate in a way that does not suit them. We all know the pressures on clergy to be "on duty" at all hours and on every day. They need time to be alone, without which they will be increasingly stressed.

The second observation is that if the majority of churchgoers are ISFJ, no wonder we have problems. With the need and capacity of ISFJs for great detail, with the passion they bring to what they think right, and their need for decisiveness and order, it's no surprise that many are avid bible readers with a conviction that it is right and a consequent insistence on its inerrancy, and if only it could be imposed on everyone all would be well. They will rely on the certainty of the written word, defend it to the death, and not be open to the uncertainty, indeed danger, of the idea of God or his Spirit moving in the world. In the last resort, being I's, they will break away from the world and pull up the drawbridge. It also explains why so many Christians like church services, with their repetition and complexity coupled with a general lack of new ideas and spiritual exploration.

This leaves little room for people who don't fall into that pattern. It also goes a long way to explain why people who are transgendered or gay or somehow different from the congregational norm are not acceptable in so many churches.

**From Sandra Moore**

Dear Editor,

It is interesting to notice how widely various are many of the ideas that one finds expressed in the Sibyls' magazine. It is as if being transgendered has caused a kind of liberation in the souls



of those who experience it; a sort of revolution, which breaks open something which might otherwise tend towards conformity and rigidity maybe.

Somehow one thinks of the remarkable picture of Peter being released from prison by and brought back to the house of the apostles. (The maid hears him first just as he first denied Jesus to a maid.) But the angel! Surely it is feminine? Or is it? Raphael seems to have discovered something not to be confined within the rigid boundaries of gender, perhaps established for a season by Moses and the prophets who were all men.

Another non-conforming figure associated with the Roman Empire is the so-called Pagan emperor Julian. Perhaps a sort of JFK among emperors; ruling exactly 1600 years earlier! Julian, who involved Pagan "sacred energies" (as we would call them now), is described in a book by Adrian Murdoch. He describes how Julian visited the shrine of Cybele the mother of the gods, and also Julian's adherence to the cult and its female Sibyls.

Apparently the cult's climax was on March 24<sup>th</sup>. It celebrated the death and resurrection of Attis, a beautiful youth who deserts the goddess and is driven mad as a result. In a frenzy, he castrates himself under a pine tree but then dies. This cult had originally been shunned by the Romans but they had been told by an oracle that Hannibal could not be defeated unless they admitted it into Rome; and so it was and so they did!

One can imagine the orderly and very war-like Romans finding a problem with an effeminate type like Attis or Adonis, and his death from self-mutilation, in a similar way to which the church later on had problems with Origen; for a similar reason. Possibly this also played into attitudes to Jesus himself, who was unmarried and childless, despite effort to suggest otherwise.

But it is very interesting to observe that this cult was "celebrated" by the chosen ones emulating Attis and (if still alive) rushing in a frenzy and entering the first house which took their fancy and being clothed by them as a woman. In effect the goddess has claimed one back to herself. Most interestingly we discover that St Peter's itself is on the site of a cult of Cybele!

We know that in St Peter's not only is St Peter's release from prison depicted but also the prophets and Sibyls; and that the whole foundation of Rome derives from Sibyls and their prophecies. It seems to me that all kinds of secret inner threads join us to events, seen at first as mere history; but which are still being woven around us and through us.

Yours truly,

*Sandra Moore*

Editor's Note. Of course the experience of living full time in the gender to which you feel you belong is liberating. Everything changes; your attitude to your world changes and the attitude of your world and everyone in it to you will change. All these changes you have to cope with and think through, and if the change of gender is what you truly wish, it will be wonderfully liberating. A spiritual experience, and if it enables you to find the true you, it can only emphasise your individuality.

I say living full time as I doubt that a part time or occasional change is quite so profound. Much will remain the same, which is not the case with a full time change.

**Health warning.** Self castration is not recommended as it leaves insufficient material for the surgeon to do a good job. Do not try this at home, kiddies; this job is strictly for the professionals!



## THE SIBYLS

Christian Spirituality Group  
For the Transgendered

36 Salmons Lane  
Whyteleafe  
Surrey CR3 0AN

☎ 020 8763 0146

WEEKEND AT HOLLAND HOUSE

14 - 16 SEPTEMBER 2007

Name.....

Required - Single/twin room (delete as appropriate)

Name of other occupant in room .....

Address .....

.....

.....

Phone No. ....

Email address .....

Please reserve for me the following number of places:-

Full weekend Friday night to Sunday lunch    £118.00    .....

24 hour overnight – afternoon to lunch        £59.00        .....

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 .....

Can you offer anyone a lift .....

Please send this form with your cheque to Jay Walmsley asap