



THE SIBYLS

Christian Spirituality Group for Transgendered People

BM Sibyls, London WC1N 3XX

www.sibyls.co.uk

E-mail: info@sibyls.co.uk

Newsletter No. 55 – Christmas 2010

To us a child is born, to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor,
Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

May the Prince of Peace be very present with each one of us
and those we love this Christmastime.

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Please accept our apologies for the delay in producing this Newsletter and for not producing an Autumn edition. Hopefully we will be back to normal in 2011. Unfortunately this Newsletter is a bit thin but I thought it was important to get something out before Christmas. The Spring one should be a bumper edition!

If you have submitted items for inclusion over the past 6 months, could I please ask you to send copies to me at:

**Mrs Rosie Martin
1 Woodruff Close
Christchurch
Dorset
BH23 4UN**

Tel: 01425 270 540

E-mail: rosie@sibyls.co.uk

Also please send any new articles or other contributions including information about events to me and I will do my best to include them in the next Newsletter.

Thank you to all who are prepared to receive their Newsletter by e-mail as this reduces costs. Please let me know (rosie@sibyls.co.uk) if you do not already receive your copy by email and would like to assist in this way.

We will still send your Newsletter on paper if you prefer.

Please note that views expressed in this Newsletter are not necessarily those of the editor or Sibyls in general.

OUR MISSION

The Sibyls is a UK-based confidential Christian spirituality group for transgender people, and their supporters, offering companionship along the journey, and information/advocacy to churches. Sibyls pray, eat, and talk together, and seek to fulfil Christ's command to love one another.

PLEASE HOLD IN YOUR PRAYERS

Please pray for David in ongoing illness, Ruby in hospital, all who are contemplating or recovering from surgery, all those who cannot for whatever reason take the course of action their heart desires, and for all those known to us who are in need, and those with disabilities or who are in pain.

Please also remember the families and friends of Sibyls member Sonia (David Burgess) who was tragically killed in late October (see article below by Tina Beardsley) and long standing friend of Sibyls Rev Monica Mills who died earlier this month after a short illness.

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LISTENING SERVICE

People prepared to listen to others are worth their weight in gold. We are fortunate in having some members who are happy to listen to you and chat with you. Please remember that we are not trained to give advice – but a problem shared in confidence often seems less of a burden. Please call if you need someone to talk with:

Jenny Bond 01623-836662

Jane Bowles 01492-660147

Carol Moore 01625-858487

Jenny-Anne Bishop 01745-337144

Helen Mather 0115-922-6450

Jay Walmsley 020-8763-0146

Please let me know (contact details above) if you would like to join the list of listeners. The listening service works so if you want someone with whom to talk it over, why not call?

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DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

LONDON a few members gather on the second Thursday of every second month at 5.30 for a Service at St Anne's, Dean Street, Soho, followed by a meal together. The next few dates are: 10th February, 14th April and 9th June.

MANCHESTER; Jenny-Anne and Elen organise events in the North-West and North Wales. There is a regular monthly meeting of TransForum (Manchester Trans Discussion & Support group), 3:30 pm Fourth Saturday, at Manchester Metropolitan Community Church.

JennyAnne can be contacted on 01745-337144, mobile 07500-741955 or e-mail jennyannebuk@yahoo.co.uk

The TransForum group web page is www.mccmanchester.co.uk/trans.htm , there are also directions to the group venue on this website.

You are also most welcome to attend the communion service at 4:00 pm every Sunday at Metropolitan Community Church , Manchester (www.mccmanchester.co.uk).

NOTE: Please do check the website, or with Jenny-Anne, as arrangements for MCC and the TransForum are subject to change.

JAY'S NEW YEAR GET-TOGETHER 8th JANUARY 2011

Gather at about four o'clock for tea and buns with a communion service taken by the Rev'd Martin Kelly, followed by the hearty buffet. All welcome for a time for peace, good chat and good food but please do ring Jay on 020 8763 0146 to let her know that you are coming.

OASIS MEETING - DORSET

Every four months between 12 Noon and 4 o'clock at Rosie's house in Christchurch. The next meeting is planned for Saturday 12th February 2011. Please contact me if you plan to attend so that I can cater accordingly. There is no charge but donations to Sibyls (if you wish) would be greatly appreciated.

OTHER INCLUSIVE CHURCHES

City United Reform Church, Windsor Place, Cardiff, CF10 2BZ, 029 2022 5190, (www.cityurc.org.uk) welcomes all to their Sunday service at 1030am.

Dorset Gardens Methodist Church, Dorset Gardens, BRIGHTON BN2 1RL 01273 605 502 (www.dgmc.org.uk) welcomes all regardless of age, gender, race or sexual orientation.

Metropolitan Community Church's throughout the world embrace diversity. In the UK there are churches in North London, South London, Manchester, Birmingham, Bournemouth, Dorchester, Torbay, Bath and Newcastle See the main website (<http://ufmcc.com/>) for details.

Other inclusive churches may be found by going to the Inclusive Church website (<http://www.inclusivechurch2.net/>) and clicking on Churches.

Please do let me know of any other inclusive Churches and I will do my best to include details in future Newsletters.

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WEEKEND RETREATS

We try to hold two weekends away each year to enable those attending to enjoy peace and quiet and to worship together as their true selves. Many have found these weekends to be both inspirational and uplifting events. We currently have three weekends planned:

2011 Friday 20th to Sunday 22nd May – Whaley Hall, Derbyshire
(a booking form for this weekend is attached to this Newsletter)

2011 Friday 16th to Sunday 18th September – Holland House, Worcestershire

2012 Friday 18th to Sunday 20th May – Windermere, Cumbria

We are conscious that the cost can sometimes be a barrier to attending so help can sometimes be made available if you would like to go to a weekend but have financial constraints; please do speak in confidence with Jay on 0208 763 0146.

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Trans News (from the Inclusive Church Newsletter)

from Tina

In late October many people were shocked by the death of Sonia David Burgess, leading human rights lawyer, member of the congregation at St Martin-in-the Fields (and previously at St Anne's, Soho) and, more recently, of Sibyls.

It was not just the violent manner in which Sonia died (having fallen in front of an underground train at Kings Cross) that distressed people: there was widespread anger and hurt at the sensational and insensitive press headlines and reporting – all of it totally

inexcusable given that transgender people's lives and experience are so much better understood nowadays.

Trans Media Watch, <http://www.transmediawatch.org.uk/tmw/pages/tmw101.asp> expressed the general dismay and welcomed allies in the struggle to improve the way Trans people are portrayed in the media. Success in that respect would be a fitting tribute to Sonia, who dedicated her life to challenging and overturning injustice.

Stephen Whittle's obituary, which recounts her outstanding contribution as a human rights lawyer <http://whittlings.blogspot.com/>

also emphasises her consistency as a person, whether working as David or partying as Sonia, but many of the early newspaper reports lacked any subtlety of this kind.

Sonia's funeral, at St Martin-in-the-Fields in mid-November, the celebration of an outstanding, and much-loved individual, was also deeply poignant for although she was referred to as both David and Sonia on that occasion, she had evidently been in the process of going 'full-time' as Sonia for a while - to meet her however you would never guess that she was anything other than the beautiful woman in front of you. I have tried to convey something of the loss many of us are feeling in my own blog piece:

<http://changingattitude-england.blogspot.com/2010/10/sonia.html>

(See also the Tribute and a report to Sibyls by Sonia herself at <http://www.lgbtac.org.uk/> and look out too for a forthcoming feature article on Sonia due to appear in *The Observer* on January 9th 2011.

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I received the following email about Revd Monica Mills from her husband Peter:

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

It is with great sadness I have to inform you that my beautiful wife, Monica passed away at 6:00am on Wednesday 1 December 2010. Monica was diagnosed with stomach cancer but was unable to tolerate chemotherapy and after a short but truly courageous battle of the disease is now peacefully with Her Lord.

Monica wished and planned for a celebration service for all who would like to attend.

The hearse will depart Lymington United Reformed Church at 9:30am on Friday 10 December for a private family service at Bournemouth Crematorium. The celebration service, which all are very welcome to attend, will be held at Lymington United Reformed Church at 2:00pm Friday 10 December.

Monica was cared for in Oakhaven Hospice for 5 weeks where she received the best care, we as the family could have wished for, and therefore request no flowers but donations to Oakhaven Hospice Trust would be deeply appreciated.

Peter, Lymington United Reformed Church

May Monica rest in peace in the presence of The Lord and may all those who grieve know the consoling peace of Christ Jesus.

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When Jay handed the running of Sibyls to the committee I offered to take on that part of her role relating to the Sibyls' engagement with the churches and their leaders. This is not a task I could, or even should, have tried to do alone, and I was grateful that Sibyls members responded so generously to the challenge.

It's not that long ago that Sibyls' complained, rightly I think, of being sidelined by the larger campaigning LGBT Christian organisations, which were very good on the rhetoric of inclusion but didn't, when it came to it, follow through when Sibyls tried to engage with them or offered to help in any way.

By his determination to take Trans people seriously Changing Attitude's Colin Coward gave us the platform – literally so at the Lambeth Conference fringe in 2008 – from which to interact with the key LGBT Christian organisations.

At one stage I envisaged that we would probably need to have a Sibyls member as a Trustee of LGCM and Inclusive Church, as well as Changing Attitude, in order to ensure that Trans people's concerns were taken seriously by the 'big players'. That worried me, in terms of the time commitment and pressure that it would place on a small but dedicated group of people, but things became much easier last year with the formation of the LGBT Anglican Coalition which has enabled Sibyls to work with, and alongside, the larger organisations.

From the very start Sibyls have sent the highest number of representatives to Coalition meetings – each organisation is allowed up to four - and it is a Sibyl, Susan, who has designed and set up the Coalition's brilliant website – which has plenty of Trans resources on it: <http://www.lgbtac.org.uk/>

Early on the representatives on the Coalition were divided into four work streams:

- Engaging with the structures (Parliament, Bishops, etc)
- Grass roots education
- Liturgy (transition/name-change rites for Trans people; services for same-sex blessings)
- Engaging with those who disagree with us (e.g. dialogue with conservative Evangelical Christians)

The 'structures' group was quickly taken over by events, and co-ordinated a rapid 'response to Rowan', i.e. to Archbishop Rowan Williams' notorious (because of its reference to 'lifestyle choices') letter that seemed to criticise the Episcopal Church's inclusive measures at last year's General Convention. However, since then Coalition press releases have been less reactive, and you may have noticed that Sibyls is usually included in the list of endorsing organisations, which means that the Sibyls committee will have agreed to the text being issued.

The most successful work stream, or working party, so far, has been the grass roots education one which not only produced a list of resources on trans issues and lesbian and gay sexuality for parish use, but also organised the excellent day conference on 'Sexuality and Human Flourishing', reported by Sandra Moore in the last newsletter. A joint venture with the Centre for the Study of Christianity and Sexuality (CSCS) - which held its AGM during the conference lunchtime - the Trans presence that day made CSCS realise that it was about time that it invited a Trans person to join its committee.

It's still not that easy making sure that the Trans voice is represented in self-proclaimed LGBT groups but Sibyls has every reason to be proud of its current engagement: two members – Elaine and I - are Trustees of Changing Attitude, and hold specifically Trans portfolios; three members – Susan, Elaine and I (Mish and then Mercia have both, for different reasons 'stepped down') – are the Sibyls' representatives on the LGBT Anglican

Coalition, and another member - Rosie – is now on the committee of the Centre for the Study of Sexuality and Spirituality.

Meanwhile the Department of Equality, has, for the first time, begun to consult Trans organisations, and I had the privilege of representing Sibyls at the initial meeting earlier this year; Jenny-Anne was also present in another capacity and Susan has just the second round. There will be more of these events I'm sure, and the new government (advised, presumably by its civil servants) has clearly signalled its sensitivity to specifically Trans issues (and the danger of assuming that LGBT means one-size-fits-all) by speaking of LGB *and* T – a welcome development and a sign that people really have been listening to our communities.

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The Sibyls Book

Tina & Mish

Work on the book has continued in the past twelve months. We have organised the material, which will soon be ready to submit as proposal, into four parts or sections:

1. History, Recollection and Testimony
2. Transsexualism in Science and Society
3. The Bible, Theology and Transsexualism
4. Practical Implications of Trans Identity and Spirituality

The book's current working title is *Sibyls Voices: Trans Christian perspectives on spirituality*.

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The Sibyls' workshop 'Gender Sexuality and Spirituality'

Tina, Mish & Jasmine

Many of you will have participated in it and we have run it in a short version (at a Changing Attitude London day conference; at the European Forum of LGBT Christian Groups; at a Sibyls weekend) and in a weekend format (with Sibyls & also with the Evangelical Fellowship of Lesbian and Gay Christians). On each and every occasion it has proved a powerful experience: an opportunity for people to share with honesty, and in complete safety, these intimate aspects of their lives.

Mish and Tina were the original architects of the workshop, with Jasmine joining them early on as a co-leader, and this September, when Mish is literally 'up in the air' flying to New Zealand, the workshop was presented at the LGBT Health Summit 2010, which was held at Hatfield University, and where, for the first time, there was a lesbian and a gay presenter as well as a trans one (all of whom were Christian, although we did try to involve a gay Muslim as well).

We were very proud to be able to share the leadership of the workshop in this way at a 'secular' event, but also recognise that we have built up a body of knowledge through the earlier workshops and so have been writing up our experiences of the Sibyls' workshop with a view to publication in a journal. This exercise, which has occupied us for some months, is nearing completion, and although it is a separate task, has proved helpful in sharpening the focus of the Sibyls book, *Sibyls' Voices*.

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Ke\$ha envy of 'trannies'

Tik Tok singer Ke\$ha claims hot men dressed as women make her jealous. 'Trannies make me want to be a better woman' the 23-year-old told *Paper* magazine. 'I see these men who have better bodies than I do, more beautiful faces, better complexions, beautiful make-up and they're more fun than any person I've met in my life. They make me feel like I'm not a very good woman'.

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Sibyls Weekends in 2011

Rosie Martin

Just a another reminder that we have a weekend away at Whaley Hall in Derbyshire planned for Friday 20th to Sunday 22nd May. The cost will be £125 so there is still plenty of time to save up for a wonderful opportunity for good company and quiet reflection in a beautiful part of Britain. The booking form is attached to this Newsletter.

I also hope to organise a minibus outing for the Saturday and would grateful for some prior indication of how many people might like to participate. The additional cost is likely to be in the order of £20 so if you would like to have a trip around the Peak District please either call me on 01425 270 540 or email me at rosie@sibyls.co.uk.

Finally I would also like to remind you that the 2011 Autumn weekend away is planned for Friday 16th – Sunday 18th September 2011 at Holland House, near Evesham in Worcestershire. The cost of this weekend will be £135. I hope to be able to book a speaker for this weekend but that will rather depend upon the numbers attending so please be think about coming along.

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THE SIBYLS

Christian Spirituality Group for Gender Variant People



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Christchurch
Dorset
BH23 4UN

☎ 01425 270 540
✉ rosie@sibyls.co.uk

WEEKEND AT WHALEY HALL, WHALEY BRIDGE, DERBYSHIRE

Friday 20th – Sunday 22nd May 2011

Name

Required - Single/twin room (delete as appropriate)

Name of other occupant in room

Willing to share with

Address

.....

.....

Telephone No.

Email address

Please reserve for me the following number of places:-

Full weekend Friday night to Sunday lunch £125.00

24 hour overnight – afternoon to lunch £60.00

Day visitor - All meals £30.00

- Lunch and tea/coffee £20.00

- Evening meal and tea/coffee £20.00

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

Please indicate if you are interested in a Peak District mini-bus
tour on Saturday (cost to be advised but probably about £20)

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

Any special dietary requirements?

Any other special needs?

Do you need help with transport to Whaley Hall?

Can you offer a lift to someone?

Please send this form with your cheque to Mrs Rosie Martin, address above