



SIBYLS NEWS

THE SIBYLS

Christian Spirituality Group for Gender Variant People

BM Sibyls, London WC1N 3XX

www.sibyls.co.uk E-mail: info@sibyls.co.uk

When the Feast of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Without warning, there was a sound like a strong wind, gale force – no one could tell where it came from. It filled the whole building. Then, like a wildfire, the Holy Spirit spread through their ranks, and they started speaking in a number of different languages as the Spirit prompted them.

From Acts 2, © The Message, Eugene H Peterson

Come, Holy Spirit!

Come, into our lives and our church,
into our relationships and our communities,
into our nation and our world.

Come to inspire and revive,
to set free those whose lives are enchained
and to bind those whose lives are cruel.

Come with words,
that we might speak your truth and share the Gospel clearly.

Come with deeds,
that we might discover your reckless dance at every turn.

Come with wisdom,
that we might live out your truths.

Come with love,
that we might find the healing and nourishment we long for,
and know it overflowing to restore creation.

Come, Holy Spirit!

© Neil Thorogood, Still Praying, URC Prayer Handbook 2011

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.

OUR RULE

Members must respect the security of each and every other member, and must never jeopardise that security.

PLEASE HOLD IN YOUR PRAYERS

David with ongoing illness, Lesley who is recovering from illness,
all those 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 any kind of need,
and those with disabilities or who are suffering from physical or emotional pain.

Thank you to all who help to keep cost down by receiving the Newsletter by email.

Please let me know (rosie@sibyls.co.uk) if you would like to receive your copy by email.

We will still send a paper version if you prefer.

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

~~~oOo~~~

**Rosie's Jottings**

No comments have been received regarding the Newsletter, so it appears that everyone is happy with the format. Please do remember that this is **YOUR** Newsletter and most of the content is therefore dependent upon your contributions. Please send any items for inclusion to me at [rosie@sibyls.co.uk](mailto:rosie@sibyls.co.uk) or by post to Mrs Rosie Martin, 1 Woodruff Close, Christchurch, Dorset, BH23 4UN. My telephone number is 01425 270 540.

Jay's article on Gender in the last issue has prompted a response from Sandra. I suspect that other members will have some views on this topic so please do let me have them, no matter how short, for the next Newsletter.

Jan has followed up her contribution last time with a thought provoking article on Guilt. I am sure we can all relate in one way or another to the feelings and emotions she has expressed so eloquently. Maybe someone would like to write about other aspects of what it means to be and to deal with being gender variant.

The weekend at Whaley Hall in the Peak District in May was a real success with 17 of us enjoying the opportunity to 'get away from it all' for a couple of days. Hopefully we will have a full report on the weekend for the next Newsletter but I have included the outline programme from Whaley Hall to give a flavour of our time together. Plans are well in hand for the next weekend at Holland House in Worcestershire in September and a booking form is attached at the end of this newsletter.

**THIS IS IMPORTANT:** If you are planning to come to this weekend **PLEASE let me know by Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> July at the latest** as I need to let Holland House have numbers. If we are unable to get 20 or more then the weekend will have to be cancelled. So far we only have 6 definite bookings and an 'expression of interest' from only another 4!

As I mentioned in the last Newsletter, the cost of these weekends is continuing to rise and it is possible that some members feel that they cannot afford to come. Please do remember that a small fund is available to help in such circumstances so phone Jay on 020 8763 0146 and discuss your situation with her in confidence. We want all members to feel they are able to fully participate and the weekends provide a valuable opportunity to meet with old friends and make new friends as we gather together in total security and freedom. Do not be left out simply because you feel you cannot afford to come.

Numbers seem to be a problem and sadly I had to cancel the Oasis meeting planned for Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> June due to lack of response. As mentioned in 'Dates for Your Diary', I plan to hold another Oasis meeting on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> October but this will be the last one I will

host. The Oasis meetings have a long history of offering support on the journey and it will be a shame if they have to cease altogether, so maybe someone would like to offer to host future meetings. If you are interested and would like to discuss what is involved, please contact me either by email or phone.

Most of the events mentioned in the Diary are run by Sibyls members so please do feel free to start your own event to enable Sibyls members to meet together. It doesn't need to be elaborate, just meeting together for a coffee and a chat can be very supportive and I am sure that many members would benefit from such local initiatives. With this in mind, I have included a breakdown of Sibyl membership by UK region so you can at least get some idea of where folk are located. If you want to be put in touch with people in your locality, just let me know and I will gladly pass on your contact details to those who live nearby.

Our thanks are due to Jay for continuing to act as our Treasurer despite trying to find someone else to take on this important role. If there is anyone who would like to offer to take over as our Treasurer, I am sure that Jay be delighted to hear from you. If you are interested, why not give her a call on 020 8763 0146 and discuss it with her?

### **SIBYLS LISTENING SERVICE**

People prepared to listen to others are one of God's greatest gifts to us. 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. The listening service really does work so if you want someone with whom to talk with, why not call one of the following volunteers?

|              |               |                   |               |
|--------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Jenny Bond   | 01623 836 662 | Jane Bowles       | 01492 660 147 |
| Carol Moore  | 01625 858 487 | Jenny-Anne Bishop | 01745 337 144 |
| Helen Mather | 0115 922 6450 | Jay Walmsley      | 020 8763 0146 |

### **DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

#### **WEEKENDS**

|                                                                  |                                                                                           |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Friday 16 <sup>th</sup> – Sunday 18 <sup>th</sup> September 2011 | Holland House, Cropthorne, Worcestershire<br>(application form at end of this Newsletter) |
| Friday 18 <sup>th</sup> – Sunday 20 <sup>th</sup> May 2012       | Windermere Centre, Lake District                                                          |
| <i>September 2012</i>                                            | <i>no weekend planned</i>                                                                 |
| Friday 17 <sup>th</sup> – Sunday 19 <sup>th</sup> May 2013       | Whaley Hall, Whaley Bridge, Derbyshire                                                    |

#### **REGULAR MEETINGS**

**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. Future dates are: 11<sup>th</sup> August, 13<sup>th</sup> October and 8<sup>th</sup> December.

**MANCHESTER** events in the North-West and North Wales are organised by Jenny-Anne and Elen.

TransForum (Manchester Trans Discussion & Support group), 3.30 pm Fourth Saturday, at Manchester Metropolitan Community Church. Contact JennyAnne on 01745 337 144 or 07500 741 955 or e-mail at [jennyannebuk@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:jennyannebuk@yahoo.co.uk) The TransForum group web page is [www.mccmanchester.co.uk/trans.htm](http://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](http://www.mccmanchester.co.uk)).

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

### **JAY'S GARDEN PARTY Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2011**

Gather at about four o'clock for tea and cake. A communion service presided over by the Revd Martin Kelly will be followed by wine and the hearty buffet. All Sibyls are 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 15<sup>th</sup> October 2011. Please contact Rosie (details above) if you plan to attend so that she can cater accordingly. There is no charge but donations to Sibyls (if you wish) would be greatly appreciated.

### **OTHER INCLUSIVE CHURCHES**

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.

**CARDIFF:** City United Reform Church, Windsor Place, Cardiff, CF10 2BZ, 029 2022 5190, ([www.cityurc.org.uk](http://www.cityurc.org.uk)) welcomes all to their Sunday service at 10.30am.

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

**OXFORD:** St Columba's United Reformed Church, Alfred Street, Oxford, OX1 4EH, welcomes all to their Sunday service at 10.45 (see <http://www.saintcolumbas.org/>)

Many 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.

### **JAY'S GARDEN PARTY - 2 JULY 2011**

This will be the usual meeting at Jay's house in leafy Surrey which hopefully you will enjoy. We start at about four o'clock with tea and cake, and there will be a communion service presided over by the Rev Martin Kelly. After that there will be the buffet with wine and good cheer. With luck the weather will be fine and we can be outside. The communion service under the trees with the sun slanting through is particularly beautiful. Let's hope it will happen again. All Sibyls and partners and friends are welcome, but for catering purposes, if you are going to come, please let Jay know on 020 8763 0146.

~~~oOo~~~

GENDER

Sandra

Jay's comments in the previous issue about discussions she was part of at Windermere last May, are intriguing.

She questions what she sees as a kind of illusion in the attitudes of some trans people that gender does not really exist in some way. She begs to differ.

She wishes to direct attention to what she sees as commonsense observations about the effects of such experiences as 'parenting', 'adolescence', 'menstruation', etc.; and to what these experiences convey.

She closes with a remark that reminds us that great attention is given the world over, when a baby is born, to the child's 'sex'.

"When a baby is born, the answer to that question will affect that baby and those around it for the rest of their lives.", she says.

Jay wishes us, so it seems to me, to consider this a piece of plain-speaking, down-to-earth wisdom.

So indeed it may be. Certainly in the 20th century it was the kind of thing one heard quite often. Indeed it lay behind the ways in which trans people were regularly treated. 'Men', according to biology, who felt that in some way or other they were 'women' were given fairly short shrift by society at large and sometimes treated in ways psychiatrically that to us seem violent and abusive.

"Can't you see you're a man? Look between your legs!", to put it at its crudest.

"Don't you see that your crazy obsession about thinking you are a woman will destroy your marriage, family and friendships and horribly upset your parents, your church and your reputation, and leave you penniless without a job?"

But to claim, as Jay seems to do that this state of affairs is somehow based on FACTS which must be accepted in some way (a bit like divine fiat), seems to me to be problematic and questionable.

I feel I have to ask, seeing as we are in a Christian context, "does a society which considers it right to categorize a person's life expectations on the basis of biological or social conditionings truly deserve the name *Christian*"?

Let us consider a parallel case.

It occurred to Martin Luther-King after all, that the 'fact' that someone was black at birth, and that, 'quite justifiably' (in the opinion of the American church), that person's life expectations were different from an equivalent white child, was not only unacceptable but ANTI-CHRISTIAN.

He was not of the opinion that a human spirit born on earth should be judged according to the body it wore and allotted expectations accordingly. He believed that each person should be allowed and encouraged to unfold potentialities according to the spirit within; the essential individuality.

He tried to do this himself and to make it possible for others. To him this individuality was a 'fact.' This seemed to him the Christian thing to do. Like many other true Christians he encountered violent and terrible prejudice for his pains, but was undaunted to the last.

Since when has a Christian trend in evolution not had to face such opposition and painful experience and struggle ?

Now very approximately, the gender issue is part of the same 'ball-park'.

As Jay points out many cultures still place great emphasis on the 'sex' of a baby. They regard it as an important fact, which obviously it is, just as if a baby is black or brown. It is important in the context of the development of the race or tribe, and by a kind of osmosis, it often happens that these considerations also impregnate and contaminate the legitimate views about the development of the unique individual as well.

So the real question is, "Should the 'fact' of gender be allowed to blot out or overwhelm considerations about the progress of the evolving individuality and destiny of the child? Should this destiny be subverted by racial, national and biological considerations as so often happens?" The 'fact' that it *does* often, or even *usually* happen does not mean that this fact should be left unchallenged or considered immutable.

It is true, older cultures especially the Roman and Jewish, had a deep hatred and fear of anything reminding them of a very much more ancient culture involving 'double-gendered

priest and priestesses' and the associated spiritual practices and traditions. (The only remains of such cultures long since vanished are exemplified in some of the Native American or Siberian regions possibly.)

Morbid fear of this kind of 'unorthodox gender-identity practice' is well-documented among the old Romans and certainly drives a great deal of American culture with its preoccupation with war and conquest even today. But this deep attachment to war, material prosperity and orthodoxy is not something that we especially associate with the Gospel is it?

I am not aware of passages in which Christ demands that his followers stick rigidly to the accepted norms or laws and codes of behaviour; or to regard the *status quo* in a society as cast in stone or even in biology. Rather one sees the effect of Christians *intervening* in all these 'facts' in order to change and humanise them through love.

Calling a spade a spade can be a useful quality if it is felt to be the *starting* point of the process of loving change rather than as a *finish* point beyond which all evolution is impossible.

The prison bars and burdensome chains of today's facts may turn out tomorrow to have been fleeting and less real than we thought, and easier to do without than we realised. After all, how did Peter, chained and imprisoned in lonely isolation actually walk lightly into freedom?

~~~oOo~~~

### **A Little Christian Humor**

Jesus and Satan were having an on-going argument about who was better on the computer. They had been going at it for days, and frankly God was tired of hearing all the bickering.

Finally fed up, God said, 'THAT'S IT! I have had enough. I am going to set up a test that will run for two hours, and from those results, I will judge who does the better job.'

So Satan and Jesus sat down at the keyboards and typed away.

They moused; they faxed; they e-mailed; they e-mailed with attachments; they downloaded; they did spreadsheets! They wrote reports; they created labels and cards; they created charts and graphs; they did some genealogy reports; they did every job known to man.

Jesus worked with heavenly efficiency and Satan was faster than hell.

Then, ten minutes before their time was up, lightning suddenly flashed across the sky, thunder rolled, rain poured, and, of course, the power went off.

Satan stared at the blank screen and screamed every curse word known in the underworld, but Jesus just sighed.

Finally the electricity came back on, and each of them restarted their computers.

Satan started searching frantically, screaming: 'It's gone! It's all GONE! I lost everything when the power went out!'. Meanwhile, Jesus quietly started printing out all of his files from the past two hours of work.

Satan observed this and became irate 'Wait!' he screamed. 'That's not fair! He cheated! How come he has all his work and I don't have any?'

God just shrugged and said, JESUS SAVES....

~~~oOo~~~

Why do so many transgendered people feel guilty because they suffer from Gender Dysphoria?

To the best of my knowledge it is a pre-natal condition that becomes so difficult to contain that eventually it has to be admitted to and revealed to family and friends, so that treatment can be sought.

Why can't it be accepted as being as serious and as real as Dementia, MS, Cancer or any other medical condition that the sufferer has little or no control over?

In my experience I am not the victim but the villain. It is seen that I have made a life style decision that will embarrass my nearest and dearest and that I am being very selfish and not considering them in any way. They feel that they are the victims and therefore I am guilty of being uncaring and self-centred.

I have dealt with this and I now refuse to carry that guilt. It is not my fault; I didn't ask to or ever want to be this way.

The vast majority of people have never questioned their gender and have lived their life on a solid, safe gender platform without realising it was even there. If only they knew how lucky they are.

So how do you plead – Guilty or Not guilty?

~~~oOo~~~

## **PROGRAMME FOR MAY 2011 WEEKEND AT WHALEY HALL**

|          |         |                                                                                                                                                                               |
|----------|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Friday   | 6.30    | Supper and Introduction                                                                                                                                                       |
|          | 8.00    | Update on Sibyls involvement with Changing Attitude, the LGBT Anglican Coalition, LGBT Health Summit, Spectrum at the Home Office and the Equalities Office Trans Action Plan |
|          | 9.00ish | Night Office                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Saturday | 8.30    | Breakfast                                                                                                                                                                     |
|          | 9.30    | Morning Office followed by coffee                                                                                                                                             |
|          | 10.30   | Collect packed lunches for your own Peak District excursions                                                                                                                  |
|          | 6.30    | Dinner                                                                                                                                                                        |
|          | 8.00ish | Entertainment                                                                                                                                                                 |
|          | Then    | Night Office                                                                                                                                                                  |
|          | Late    | Silence-together (very optional)                                                                                                                                              |
| Sunday   | 8.30    | Breakfast                                                                                                                                                                     |
|          | 9.30    | Morning Office                                                                                                                                                                |
|          | 10.00   | Sibyls Together followed by coffee                                                                                                                                            |
|          | 11.30   | Communion Service followed by group photograph                                                                                                                                |
|          | 1.00    | Lunch and Coffee and then Disperse                                                                                                                                            |

I hope the above gives those who have never been to a Sibyls Weekend a flavour of what to expect. Whilst the time is centred on worship, we had a good mix of sharing information, time for exploration (either in the surrounding Peak District or of one's self in the peace and quiet of the house), fun time together with our home-grown entertainment and times of fellowship and company over meals together.

~~~oOo~~~

LOCAL MEETINGS

Why not arrange a local meeting with other Christian transgendered folk? The table below gives numbers of members by region so you have some idea of how many like-minded

people live nearby. If you are interest in trying to arrange something locally, please let me know and I will do my best to help you.

| Region | Counties | Members |
|----------------------|---|---------|
| East Midlands | Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire, Rutland | 8 |
| Eastern | Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk, Suffolk | 16 |
| North East | Cleveland, County Durham, Northumberland, Teeside, Tyne and Wear | 4 |
| North West | Cheshire, Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Lancashire, Merseyside | 21 |
| Northern Ireland | Antrim, Armagh, Down, Fermanagh, Londonderry, Tyrone | 1 |
| Scotland Central | Angus, Argyll, Clackmannanshire, Dumbartonshire, Fife, Kinrosshire, Perthshire, Stirlingshire | 0 |
| Scotland North | Aberdeenshire, Banffshire, Caithness, Invernesshire, Kincardineshire, Moray, Nairnshire, Orkney, Rosshire, Shetland, Sutherland, Western Isles | 2 |
| Scotland South | Arran, Ayrshire, Berwickshire, Borders, Bute, Dumfriesshire, East Lothian, Kircudbrightshire, Lanarkshire, Midlothian, Peeblesshire, Renfrewshire, Roxburghshire, Selkirkshire, West Lothian, Wigtonshire | 0 |
| South East | Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, East Sussex, Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Kent, Oxfordshire, Surrey, West Sussex | 28 |
| London | Greater London and Middlesex | 11 |
| South West | Avon, Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Somerset, Wiltshire | 10 |
| Wales North | Anglesey, Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Clwyd, Conwy, Denbighshire, Dyfed, Flintshire, Gwynedd, Pembrokeshire, Powys, Wrexham | 7 |
| Wales South | Glamorgan, Gwent, Monmouthshire | 2 |
| West Midlands | Herefordshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, West Midlands, Worcestershire | 5 |
| Yorkshire and Humber | East Yorkshire, Humberside, North Humberside, North Yorkshire, South Humberside, South Yorkshire, West Yorkshire | 8 |

Please also note that no weekend has been arranged for September 2012. If you would like to organise and host a weekend then please contact me.

~~~oOo~~~

## WHO DOES WHAT

A man and his wife were having an argument about who should brew the coffee each morning.

The wife said, 'You should do it because you get up first, and then we don't have to wait as long to get our coffee.'

The husband said, 'You are in charge of cooking around here and you should do it, because that is your job, and I can just wait for my coffee.'

Wife replies, 'No, you should do it, and besides, it is in the Bible that the man should do the coffee.'

Husband replies, 'I can't believe that, show me.'

So she fetched the Bible, and opened it at the book of ... HEBREWS!



# THE SIBYLS

Christian Spirituality Group for Gender Variant People



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Christchurch  
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## WEEKEND AT HOLLAND HOUSE, CROPTHORNE, WORCESTERSHIRE, WR10 3NB Friday 16<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> September 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 £135.00 .....

Other (please specify): .....

*If you are not coming for the full weekend please telephone Rosie  
on the number above regarding costs.*

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

Any special dietary requirements? .....

Any other special needs? .....

Do you need help with transport to Holland House? .....

Can you offer a lift to someone? .....

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