



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

May the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you.
Then the land will yield its harvest, and God, our God, will bless us.

Psalm 67:5-6

We thank Thee, then, O Father,
For all things bright and good;
The seedtime and the harvest,
Our life, our health, our food.
No gifts have we to offer
For all Thy love imparts,
But that which Thou desirest,
Our humble, thankful hearts.

*All good gifts around us
Are sent from heaven above;
Then thank the Lord,
O thank the Lord,
For all His love.*

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

It is with great sadness that I have to record the deaths of Rachel Arnatt and Gerry Ellis. Please remember the family and friends of Rachel and Gerry in your prayers.

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.

I have recently had some posted Newsletters returned with "*addressee unknown*" and some emailed Newsletters have been undeliverable.

Please do keep me informed of changes of contact details.

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

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### **Rosie's Jottings**

As I write this, twenty or so members should have been enjoying a weekend at Holland House. Unfortunately we had to cancel as by the time I had to let Holland House know our expected final numbers I had only received seven confirmed bookings. Fortunately for Holland House they were able to get bookings from other groups for the weekend and they also accommodated those few members of Sibyls who decided to go anyway.

This is the second time we have had to cancel a weekend due to low numbers and as there is only weekend currently booked for 2012, I would like to suggest that from now on we plan for just one weekend away each year. Please let me know if you think otherwise.

It seems to me that the world has changed significantly since Sibyls first came into being and I wonder whether it is an appropriate time to completely rethink the purpose and future of Sibyls. I am sure there is still a great need for a Christian spirituality group for gender variant people. However, although there is still a long way to go, it cannot be denied that the Gender Recognition Act and subsequent equality legislation has made the life of transgender people considerably easier than it was in the past.

I would suggest that it is now much easier to worship as one's true self within the setting of mainstream Christian churches and therefore the need to provide an opportunity such as a retreat weekend for just Sibyls members is no longer such as priority as it once was.

In addition, the cost of weekends away has increased significantly over the past few years and it could be that this, combined with the current economic climate, has also caused some members to decide against a weekend away.

However, Jay's report on her Garden Party shows a similar decrease in numbers attending and I had to cancel the June Oasis meeting due to lack of support. Jay has decided to not hold a New Year meeting and the October Oasis meeting will be the last one I will host. It is also worth pointing out that contributions for the Newsletter are few and far between and it often difficult to find enough material to make the Newsletter worthwhile.

I hope that the above will prompt some of you to consider the future of Sibyls and hopefully will encourage you to contribute to a debate on where Sibyls should go in the months and years ahead. It could be that the purpose for which Sibyls was originally established has been all but met and that it should cease to function. Alternatively it could be that we need to consider new ways in which we can help each other on our Christian spiritual journeys as we learn to deal with our gender issues.

For my part, I do not believe that I would be where I am today had it not been for my membership of Sibyls over the past 9 years, but alongside that, I also recognise that both I and the world have moved on considerably during that time. I hope and pray that we can at least discuss the way forward rather than just let Sibyls slowly pass into history simply due to lack of support.

The booking form for the spring weekend in Windermere is attached and I hope that many members will give serious consideration to booking this. The Windermere Centre is a wonderfully welcoming place of peace and tranquillity and is set in the midst of some of the most breathtaking scenery in the British Isles. If you have Internet access you can look at the facilities at <http://windermere.unc.org.uk/>.

The cost of the weekend is £135 and it could be some members feel that they cannot afford to come. Please do remember that a fund is available to help in such circumstances so please do phone Jay on 020 8763 0146 and discuss your situation with her in complete confidence. We really do 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.

Helen has provided a personal view of the weekend we enjoyed at Whaley Hall in May so hopefully you can get an idea of the good time we had, especially if you have never been on a Sibyls weekend.

I have also included a letter Father Jamie at Whaley Hall. My first Sibyls weekend was at Whaley Hall in 2003 and I expect that like me, there will be many members for whom Whaley Hall has been an important part of their journey.

Finally, 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. I will be compiling the next Newsletter towards the end of November 2011.

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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 |

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### **DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

#### **WEEKENDS**

Friday 18<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> May 2012      Windermere Centre, Lake District  
(application form at end of this Newsletter)

*September 2012*      *no weekend planned*

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 for 2011 are: 13<sup>th</sup> October and 8<sup>th</sup> December, and the dates for 2012 are: 9<sup>th</sup> February, 12 April, 14<sup>th</sup> June, 9<sup>th</sup> August, 11<sup>th</sup> October and 13<sup>th</sup> December.

**MANCHESTER** events in the North-West and North Wales are organised by Jenny-Anne [jennyannebuk@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:jennyannebuk@yahoo.co.uk) and Elen [elen.heart@btinternet.com](mailto:elen.heart@btinternet.com).

### **OASIS MEETING - DORSET**

The next meeting is planned for Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> October 2011 12 Noon and 4 o'clock at Rosie's house in Christchurch. 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.

Please note that this is the last Oasis meeting I will be hosting so if anyone is interested in hosting a similar meeting in the future, please contact me to chat about what is involved.

### **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 contact 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.

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GARDEN PARTY 2 JULY

Jay

This was a pleasant occasion. We gathered about four o'clock and sat with tea, coffee and cake on the patio. Sadly the weather was good enough to sit out, just, but a little chilly. When it came to the communion service, we decided to move indoors. It is always lovely to hold it under the cherry tree with the sun slanting through the trees, but sadly the weather on the day wasn't up to it.

Martin Kelly took a lovely service, as he always does, but he found himself rather stumped by the bible reading about Esau and Jacob. It was hard to draw out the significance of the lesson. Perhaps the conclusion to be drawn is that conniving is as old as the hills. Possibly it may be that there is nothing God given about patriarchy and primogeniture.

The evening rounded off with the buffet, drinks and chat, with folks away none too late.

It was pleasant enough and hopefully those who came enjoyed it. However, those who came were few, only five. The trend over the last few years is that numbers are falling and that causes me to think about the future. It is quite a lot of trouble for comparatively few. An important factor is that when these garden parties started, they filled a desperate need for comfort and companionship. Nowadays they are a pleasant get together.

I have thought it over and decided that I'm not going to hold the New Year meeting. The weather always puts it at risk and numbers are dropping, as for the garden party. I probably will hold the garden party next year and see what happens then.

It may be that the format is hackneyed and people would like a change. There is nothing to stop someone else holding their own event, using their ideas. I'd be happy to offer any advice. However it has to be said that very few within Sibyls have arranged meetings at

their home. Rosie, Barbara and I have done it; others could if they wanted to. Anything is possible - it just needs someone to do it.

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**Sibyls weekend: Whaley Hall, May 2011 : “Be Still”**

**Helen**

I wasn't sure whether I would go to Whaley Hall. Another weekend? Can I afford it?

But I had to go: I've been to all the others there. Anyway, I could do with a change.

I thought I'd set off early and have a whole day looking round. But I decided to do the housework first and go later. Wrong! I arrived around 1730. And it was trying to rain....

This is familiar territory. Last time's extensive gardening work is still in evidence: the thick growth of shrubbery is gone, and you can see the lake from the house now. But the secret woodland walk down to the lake is gone, and the wobbly steps go nowhere now...



***Whaley Hall in the sunshine***

Rosie met me at the door with a big hug. Hey, I **am** early after all.

My room is *St Francis*, at the back of the house, overlooking the courtyard, right next to the bathroom; not bad. But no washbasin; no table; no drawers and just basic clothes storage: oh dear! There **is** a choice of beds, and a big mirror! And I can see the big clock in the courtyard from my bed. Now just **where** is the electricity?

A couple of trips to the car later, and everything sorted, I went downstairs for a natter.

At 1835, Jay put her head round the door: *“I think we should make a move...”*

Everyone's arrived, and there are seventeen round the table. Now I can see who's here (and who isn't: a few regulars aren't here) We'd a straightforward but filling meal: jacket potato and a veggie casserole, with fruit salad for afters.

Rosie gave us all a short briefing afterwards: *“can we have a scribe?”* she asked.

Yes, please! Who else but me? Nobody objected. Carol suggested free weekends in exchange for taking on the job permanently. I'll buy that; nice try! Rosie put in a plea to try to stick to the timetable (remember Windermere?) Will we manage it?

There was just time to grab a coffee before our first meeting.

The weekend started off with business: Tina and Susan have been involved in important PR work on behalf of the *trans* community over the last year.

Tina started off with a brief overview of projects and workshops that they have been involved in. Susan then presented a detailed report of workshops held by the Government Equalities Office and the LGB&T Consortium. Tina followed, describing their involvement in the LGB&T Anglican Coalition. She concluded with a tribute to Sonia Burgess whose recent tragic death shocked the Christian *trans* community..

The whole presentation was very professional, but there was a lot to get through, and we ran until 2120 (didn't Rosie say "*stick to the timetable?*" Well, it does say "-ish" Hmm...)

Jasmine led tonight's Evening Office. She welcomed us to the weekend, and invited us to spend a few moments in silence to leave the situations we have left at home in God's care, and focus on our own needs.

*Blessed be you, Sovereign God, Shepherd of your pilgrim people;  
a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night.  
Stir up in us the fire of your love, which shone forth from your Son, enthroned on the Cross;  
that we may be cleansed of all our sins, and be made ready to come into your presence.*

We read from Psalm 84 (*How lovely are your dwelling places*) and John 14 (*Do not let your hearts be troubled...*).

Jasmine considered Thomas, who also was unsure of the future, and suggested: "*we too may ask 'we do not know where you are going'; often there seem to be many paths that we can take, and often we do not know which one is right for us. How can we know the way?*"

She encouraged us to "*stop, be still, look around us at those who travel with us, alongside us, those who have gone before us, and those who are yet to follow.*" and to "*recognise that in Christ, God willingly walks this journey with us, and longs for us to know his companionship, whatever path we take.*"

We finished with a time of silent meditation: "*in a moment, some music will play.*

*On the table in front of you there are three bowls; one filled with fine sand, one with rocks, and a third filled with water. I invite you in silence to take a tealight, light it, and place it where you feel most appropriate to you, as a symbol of the journey that you are on.*"

I stayed, with the music, one of Bach's unaccompanied 'cello suites, playing very quietly in the background, until there were just three others left, then went into the lounge.

Friday evening is always a time to relax, and catch up on the latest news over a glass of wine. But I'm sure we don't have as much to say as we used to; no late nights nowadays, it seems. All but one had gone to bed by 2315. I stayed, writing up on my laptop, but by 0015 my battery was getting low: it's time for bed. I can't be bothered yet though; it's too early. But there's nowt else to do. Bed it is. So back to my room; my, it's cold in here...

I woke before 0600. It's still dark in here. These curtains are **huge**; and heavy: they'd do well in a blackout! What's it like outside? Sunny. Good.

I've loads of time for a leisurely shower today. But help! my door lock's jammed! Don't panic! Jay, outside, was concerned. Don't worry, it's open now: par for the course...

It was still early when I arrived in the lounge, plus laptop; there were only two others there. Time to relax with an early coffee. Mmm...

Breakfast was the usual scrum! Everyone had arrived at the same time; there's never enough space anyway, Oh, well, it's sunny; go for a walk while they sort themselves out...

I did eventually get breakfast, but I was almost last one out. No need to rush today though.

Morning Office was held in the Undercroft, part of the former cellar, now turned into a delightful chapel; intimate; soft lighting, and lots of candles. And what acoustics! **And** an organ, too: a luxury for such a small space.

Jenny, helped by Jenni, led us in a gentle and deeply moving yet joyful time together.

Although the theme of the weekend is *Be Still*, it's actually about journeys too. Jenny had built today's time together around a powerful account of her own personal journey.

She welcomed us and introduced two small books of quotations, to be used later.

Jenni opened quietly with prayer, then invited us to sing the well-known *Jubilate, everybody*. There was lots of music this morning: good singing too; and I didn't need to give the lead! The mood changed, as we sang *Be still, for the presence of the Lord, the Holy One, is here*.



**The undercroft Chapel**

Jenni introduced her story: *“This morning we’re taking the theme of the week, and thinking of journeys, but as on any journey we need to pause, rest and reflect a little. Perhaps adjust direction... I know very little about everybody’s journeys; I really don’t know what others’ journeys are, so I’m going to talk of mine, just a few brief stages. I hope someone will find a little reassurance or strength from this.”*

Jenni read the first of many quotations (*“When I loved myself enough”*), then Jenny continued

*“First, for me, there were (what I call) my Dark Ages...”*

At this point, Janet appeared noisily at the head of the stairs; she’d been asleep, and missed the start! She took her place quietly, while Jenny used the diversion for a second quotation.

Jenny took up her story again, and described her deep despair at this time. Then, she explained, God intervened: *“...I was given a gift.”*

She read the from-the-heart poem *“Hope”* she wrote then.

After a short time of silence, we sang again: *When we walk with the Lord (Trust and obey.)*

Another two quotations followed, then Jenny resumed. She recounted how some years later, a close Christian friend broke through her despair to give her the understanding and reassurance she desperately needed: *“After that incredible acceptance, barriers crumbled: there was a way...”*

She explained how she was introduced to Sibyls and the acceptance she found here.

*“I have been given unbelievable gifts of happiness. I have **much** yet to do, have no idea what may happen tomorrow. But with God’s blessing, I exist to serve, and serve happily.”*

After another silence, Jenni closed quietly in prayer.

And while Jenny searched her laptop for the closing music (India Arie - *A Beautiful Day*) we were treated to several more quotations, some of them rather irreverent!

We moved back to the lounge to relax with coffee (lots); no rush, it’s only 1030.

There’s no minibus this time it’ll be a do-your-own-thing afternoon. I’d planned to go to Buxton on the train for a change and take a look at the caves.

Although I’d plenty of time, I still ran down to the station. I was nearly there when a car drew up: it’s Jan. *“want a lift?” “Well, just to the station: I’m going to Buxton.” “so am I...”*

Now I've a choice: I need to decide – train or car? Jan doesn't know Buxton so well – so it's a shared day out, and I accepted the lift. Oh, well, train some other time...

We parked at the Pavilion and walked through the gardens to the town centre. The bikers are very much in evidence here today: ah, there's a wedding.

We soon reached the shops - Buxton's not very big - for some window-shopping. The main street has its fair share of charity shops. And look! a lovely orange summer dress. I couldn't resist trying it: *"if it fits, I'm having it."* It does. It's mine! We'd soon seen all there was to see, so we went for a coffee.

I think of Buxton as the poor man's Bath; a bit sleepy though: not much happening. The bikers livened things up a bit later when the wedding party, all on gleaming three-wheelers, rode through the town in grand style. They were obviously enjoying themselves!

Shopping done, we went back to the car, by way of a little hidden arcade, with a wealth of shops we hadn't noticed before. Good for another half-an-hour's browsing...

We returned in plenty of time for afternoon tea and a natter before getting ready for dinner.

On Saturday evening it's traditional to dress for dinner, but not as many as usual had today. Pity: I've brought a new dress for this evening.

I'd threatened to outdo Janet. No chance! I can't do rainbow; will red-and-white do?

As befits a dress-up dinner, we ate in style tonight. Pork for the main course: delicious.

And a choice of a calorie-filled chocolate fudge cake or cheesecake for afters. I chose the chocolate, but there was more than enough cheesecake. Another helping? Greedy? Well, I wasn't the only one!

Carol was tonight's MC. I don't remember her doing this before; she's very good.

She introduced Rob and Tina in her best BBC-announcer voice.

Tina introduced *"a little play what I wrote"* about Ernest Boulton and Frederic William Park (Stella and Fanny) who achieved notoriety in 1870, being arrested for openly wearing women's clothes in public! (They were acquitted: the public had taken them to its heart.)

Tina set the action 25 years later, in the dressing-room of a small theatre, where they were reminiscing on a life spent in Music Hall. Stella (Tina) said wistfully *"If I could go back again, I'd do it all again, but do it differently..."* Wouldn't we all?

They ended with "Luvverly" from My Fair Lady. Eat your hearts out, Hinge and Bracket!

Rosie was next: "what an act to follow" she said. She introduced us to her version of the Cockney alphabet, but couldn't stop laughing. Get a grip on yourself, woman! She fared even worse in her verse about the Tea Dance; "stop laughing; my glasses are steaming up!"

Carol remarked "it was worth every moment of it just to see her hysterics!"

Carol called on Jasmine "to bring a slightly different tone to the proceedings"; she read two poems from "The Book of Mary" by Nicola Slee.

Janet followed: "Janet, could you give us something serious?" Janet prefers whimsy.

She planned to give us some of her four-liners (Clerihews) but forgot her lines.

"I've suddenly gone blank – I'm not with it tonight..."

Christine rescued the day. She gave us some background on the now-forgotten poet "Perdita" (Mary Robinson) who, in the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century was the mistress of the Prince Regent and a friend of the playwright David Garrick. Christine then read two of her poems.

*"quite fantastic; it's amazing how close it is for our current time"* remarked Carol.

Jan then recalled a weekend when she sang; dismissed an anecdote (shouts of protest) then declared that she would read a poem instead “*cos I 'aven't done a poem before...*”

What she gave us was a fascinating history of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century black activist Sojourner Truth, followed by a poem (actually an extract from a speech for a Women's Rights Convention in 1852): “*A'in't I a woman?*”

Angie and Sue flew the flag for Cornwall; Angie gave us a few examples from the Cornish-English dictionary, then they sang a song in praise of the early railway pioneer, Cornishman Richard Trevithick. What they lacked in musical accuracy, they made up for in enthusiasm.

“*thank 'ee, thank 'ee very much for thaat...*” remarked Carol (woman of many accents).

Susan explained that she'd politely declined a request to read the whole of the *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, so she recited two short humorous verses instead.

Janet followed, successfully this time, with several verses, and quit while she was ahead.

So it was left to Carol to finish the evening “*Have I missed anyone out? Good: I'll close...*”

She read us her own idiosyncratic version of Lewis Carroll's *Jabberwocky* delivered in a variety of accents. “*It's a long time since I've been called to utter such rubbish*”.

She then thanked us for being a good audience “*and being well-behaved*”.

Music was playing quietly as we moved into the Chapel for the Evening Office: a setting of the *Agnus Dei* by Samuel Barber, a choral version of his well-known *Adagio for Strings*.

Rosie's Night Office followed the same gentle pattern as Windermere's.

We read from Psalm 37:1-7 (... *be still before the Lord, and wait patiently for him...*)

and Mark 4:35-41 (a dramatic reading of a dramatic account of a storm on Lake Galilee).

Rosie then gave us “*Something to think about...*”, a story of a journey, and a story of trust.

She told us a little of her own personal journey, and explained how she had to trust God, and allow him to take charge and lead her.

After a short litany, we read a Celtic setting of the *Nunc Dimittis* and the version of the Lord's Prayer that she introduced at Windermere.

Our time ended with a final blessing and we left, one by one, with Vaughan Williams's *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis* playing quietly in the background...

Back in the lounge there was lots of conversation to be had. Everybody seemed to be here. I really enjoyed myself. But Sibyls weekends certainly aren't what I remember (nostalgia!) No all-night talk-ins. Everyone left early again, leaving just myself, Rosie and Angharad. But even they aren't night-owls, and there was just me, my laptop and my music...

Half-past midnight: time for bed...

Sunday is always a busy day; today's no exception! I was well awake by 0600 tidying up...

Finally sorted by 0820; all my bags in the car, I looked in the lounge: only one person there!

But after I'd taken a last look upstairs they'd all appeared: breakfast time! No time for coffee!

But it's a continental breakfast today: nice and easy; no rush. Plenty of time for coffee now.

After breakfast we moved into the Undercroft for Morning Office, led by Angela and Sue.

We were all waiting quietly well before the start time; Rosie congratulated **everybody** on being early Is this a record? Can we start a trend? (as if!)

This morning's worship was in the Celtic style. We'd no music, but there was a great deal of participation in the form of dialogue.

Angela explained that the Celtic style is very affirmative: *"the spirituality that most of us grew up with told us that basically the Creation is fallen, and we are basically sinful. Celtic spirituality looks in completely the opposite direction: we are created in the image of God; he loves us, and he created the world, and when he created it, it was good; and when he put humankind on it, it was very good. It's a very different emphasis."*

She opened with a short litany:

*O God, you summon the day to dawn, you teach the morning to waken the earth...*  
**Great is your name; great is your love...**

Sue continued with a prayer of affirmation and contrast, and after a short silence, concluded:

*O Christ, in whose heart is both welcome and warning,  
say to us, do to us, reveal within us the things that will make us whole.  
and we will wait; and we will praise you. Amen.*

She read the account of Elijah before God from 1 Kings Chapter 19, verses 1-3, 9-10.

After a short time of silence for reflection, Angela continued with her own thoughts. She had chosen to concentrate on the *"Be Still"* theme of the weekend in this passage (but also connected with Elijah's own journey of discovery).

She recalled waking to the sound of last night's heavy rain on the bedroom window, and the calm when rain and wind stopped. *"I would like to say God was in the quiet... I thought it was an interesting parallel to what we've just heard"*

And in the quietness, (the Hebrew literally means *"Sound of Silence"*, she explained), God met Elijah. *"Quietly, almost imperceptibly, God speaks to the discouraged servant. No harsh words of criticism, not 'why are you being so stupid?'... Twice the question comes; 'what are you doing; why are you so upset? Why are you frightened; why are you discouraged?', and Elijah pours out his tale of woe just like I would have.*

*O God of earthquake, wind and fire, in silence you summon the day to dawn:  
teach the morning to waken the earth; teach us to hear your voice of love,  
and know your healing, restoring power. Amen*

The Affirmation of Faith recalled the Celtic creed we used at St Deiniol's.

Sue led us in *"Prayers of the People"*, and Angela concluded with final responses,

*For all that God can do within us, for all that God can do without us.*  
**Thanks be to God.**  
*For all in whom Christ lived before us, for all in whom Christ lives beside us,*  
**Thanks be to God.**  
*For all the Spirit wants to bring us, for where the Spirit wants to send us,*  
**Thanks be to God.**

And a well-known Celtic blessing:

*The peace of the running wave to you; the peace of the flowing air to you;  
the peace of the quiet earth to you; the peace of the shining stars to you.  
And the peace of the Son of Peace to you.*

After a short for coffee break we moved back the lounge for Sibyls Together.

Just two items occupied us today. We started off with details of the next weekends; then moved into a discussion of publicity.

Rosie, as woman-in-charge, opened the meeting. *What did you think of the weekend?*

Carol thanked Rosie for us all – **she'd** definitely come back. There have been changes here since 2009, but it has kept its charm: “*it's an old-fashioned retreat house*” commented Rosie; “*there is safety and security here*”. We would be happy to come back in May 2013...

Our next weekend, at Holland House, presents more of a problem: we need 20 members to ensure exclusive use. Rosie appealed for firm bookings by mid-July.

We considered the possibility of sharing with another group, but dismissed the idea. We felt that we need at least one weekend a year for our own (private) use.

Numbers are going down, and bookings are being made ever later. Are the weekends as necessary as they were? Cautiously, “yes”, there is still great potential.

And what of Sibyls itself? Younger people aren't joining – they also seem to be missing from the *trans* groups. Society is more accepting of *trans* people, and there are more open social opportunities. Angie pointed out that in some areas, the lively churches tend to be transphobic, so there is a real need for a group like Sibyls. Carol commented “*as long as people are struggling with a trans faith, there is a need for Sibyls*”.

We need to get the message across: “*we're here to help*”. But we need to balance discretion with a need for awareness. Rosie stressed the need to join: all new members **are** screened! There may be problems advertising outside the TG community though.

Tina mentioned work with Greenbelt, and a discreet leafletting scheme at Charing Cross.

The Internet is an obvious choice: Angharad pointed out some problems with “religious” keywords. Jenny-Anne suggested that we link to as many other websites as we can; she adds a discreet link to all her emails.

We need to give a reason for our website. Rosie thought a web presence alone (“*Sibyls exists*”) might be sufficient; Susan thought that we should expand on the nature of the group.

Angharad noted that the Sibyls website doesn't actually say that we **welcome** TG Christians: there is a real need for encouragement.

We returned to the weekends: there is still a vacancy for Autumn 2012. Jenny-Anne offered St Deiniol's again for those willing to share the venue. Helen suggested an alternative (again shared): Whalley Abbey, in north Lancashire.

Rosie reminded us that anyone can organise a weekend; it is good to bring members together outside the main weekends. People don't always want a retreat; Jenny-Anne commented that people are often secure enough in their own local church. Carol thought that we need somewhere ramshackle (“*not so much ramshackle; more quirky, like Whaley Hall*”, said Rosie). We are actually fond of Whaley Hall in spite of its faults...

The meeting finished with a few short announcements. “OK” said Rosie “*coffee is served*”.

My, that was a long one. And there's still a lively conversation going on in the lounge!

The Communion service is our last worship time together, the high point of many weekends.

In the few minutes before the service, I looked round the Chapel. There's more space now: the rail and the bench seats are gone. But the gorilla's still here behind the organ, where it was two years ago; and the organ sports an even more strange collection of pipework!

Today's service was an in-house affair: David, who presided, is a member of the Whaley Hall staff. And in Whaley Hall tradition, it was a straightforward Anglican *Common Worship* service; mostly spoken. (A pity though, after the good singing we've had this weekend.)

No-one had been chosen to read the lessons, and David made an open invitation for readers. I volunteered immediately for the first – don't miss out! I read from Acts 6: 1-7. Carol read the second, from 1 Peter 2:4-9 (*Jesus Christ, the Living Stone*) This is much more dramatic: I shouldn't have been so eager! but Carol read with feeling.

David read the Gospel, from John 14:1-12 (*do not let your hearts be troubled...*)

He followed with a short talk, though he confessed; *"While I was reading (the Gospel), I was thinking 'am I going to say a homily or not; and if so, what am I going to say?"*

He spoke of faith, and explained that because of what we have experienced, we can help others who are going through the same experiences. *"it is through those ups and downs of our Christian faith that we therefore are able to help other people. ...you are the one who was perhaps sent to help them; because you have gone through that hurt, that betrayal, that mistrust; all different ways and things."*

*"...we can put all those hurts in different rooms; we could even seal the doors, but we can never forget what has happened, and sometimes through those journeys we can just unseal those doors and look at them and think: 'well, I've been there...'"*

After a time of formal intercession, we followed with a traditional time of personal prayers, each person lighting a candle. David concluded with a prayer for us all: ... *"Christ died to help us all today; Christ, too, had people who were prejudiced against him for what he stood for; what he believed was right."*

We joined hands for the Peace, then greeted each other, as is our custom: where would a Sibyls peace be without hugs! Then followed the Eucharist itself.

We finished with the "Sibyls' Hymn": *Guide me, O thou Great Jehovah* – at high pitch.

**That** sorts out the sopranos among us! The service ended with a blessing...

Afterwards, we moved into the lounge for more coffee! Nearly everybody was here. But nobody seemed to be making any sort of move. The weather was still changeable – cold and very windy; where shall we have the photograph? It was eventually decided: on the front, in the traditional place. But we didn't stay long (I only got two pictures) and it was starting to rain...

Lunch was the now-traditional Whaley Hall salad with **loads** of chicken: seconds and thirds and fresh fruit for afters. Hey! The sun's out – it would be!

Now the weekend's really over All that's left is to make sure I've seen everyone I need: much exchanging of email addresses. But I got talking in the lounge, and didn't notice people slipping away. Eventually just Jay and Rosie (who were staying on) were left. Last again!

Still, I've only a short journey: just change into my travelling clothes and get off.

At least it's sunny now...

### **Some Interesting links**

Boulton and Park, Perdita and Sojourner Truth all have good *Wikipedia* entries.

#### **Boulton and Park**

"Lady Stella Clinton": <http://rictornorton.co.uk/fanny.htm>

**Nicola Slee – *The Book of Mary***: [http://womenandthechurch.org/books\\_summer09\\_5.htm](http://womenandthechurch.org/books_summer09_5.htm)

This is an fascinating website in its own right (a must if you're interested in women bishops!)  
<http://notbeingasausage.blogspot.com/2010/04/book-of-mary-by-nicola-slee.html>

#### ***A'in't I a Woman?***

*the poem*: <http://www.engender.org.za/poems/aintwoman.htm>

more biographical notes: <http://www.kyphilom.com/www/truth.html>

There's plenty on YouTube: choose! I liked Alfre Woodard, Cicely Tyson and Pat Thierault.

#### **Susan and Tina's presentation (a few tasters)**

<http://www.lgbtconsortium.org/uk>

[http://www.equalities.gov.uk/what\\_we\\_do/lesbian\\_gay\\_bisexual\\_and\\_tra/transgender\\_equality.aspx](http://www.equalities.gov.uk/what_we_do/lesbian_gay_bisexual_and_tra/transgender_equality.aspx)

<http://www.gndr.org.uk/transgender/government/government.htm>

<http://www.lgbtac.org.uk>

<http://www.gndr.org.uk/transgender/lgbtac/lgbtac.htm>

~~~oOo~~~



WHALEY HALL Community of the King of Love

Reservoir Rd Whaley Bridge High Peak SK23 7BL
Tel. 01663 732495

From Fr Jamie

Dear Friends

Some of you may know that it was always the plan to have a new chapel here at Whaley Hall to provide a worship space that would be used for the services, Liturgy, Music, and a range of other uses.

Over the last month work has started on the new Chapel, and we are hoping to have a space that will reflect the work of the Community and Whaley Hall.

In the main open space of the New Chapel we are going for a simple look this will also help with the acoustics and in many ways very similar to other Abbey Churches around the country.

We have now come to putting in the New Floor, which is going to be of Black Slate.

We are inviting you all to help by Donating £20.00 per head for the floor,

This can be in memory of someone.

There will be a plaque with the names of those people remembered put on the wall in the New Chapel.

When the Chapel is finally finished you will then be invited to its dedication.

If there is any money left over from the floor then this will go towards the New Windows and stained glass.

If you would like to donate then please put your donation in an envelope with your details, and give it to either David or myself.

We look forward to the new Chapel being completed and for you being able to see what you have given to.

Every Blessing

Fr Jamie

**The Revd Jamie MacLeod
Whaley Hall**

The Community of the King of Love is a Registered Charity No 271207

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# THE SIBYLS

Christian Spirituality Group for Gender Variant People



12 Ffordd Las  
Rhyl  
Denbighshire  
LL18 2DY

☎01745 337 144



## WEEKEND AT THE WINDERMERE CENTRE, Friday 18<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> May 2012

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 Elen  
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 The Windermere Centre? .....

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

***Please send this form with your cheque to Elen Heart, address above***