



SIBYLS NEWS



Issue no. 77 September 2016

The Church of England has endorsed the observance of a "Time for Creation", from 1 September (the first day of the church year for the Orthodox Churches) to 4 October (the feast of Saint Francis of Assisi).



Giovanni Bellini 'St Francis in the Desert' c1480,

During this season congregations are encouraged to give particular focus to environmental issues.

This issue is dedicated to St. Francis, who lived and preached simplicity of life, and respect for all of nature.

SAINT FRANCIS The Basics

Born Giovanni di Bernardone in Assisi, Italy, in 1181 or 1182

His father Pietro, was an important businessman.

He died 3rd October 1226, aged 44

By then he had become one of the most important figures in Christianity

See pages 17—20 for an abridged version of a classic life of St. Francis

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THE SIBYLS

Christian Spirituality Group for Gender Variant People

c/o 10, Ffordd Las, Rhyl, LL18 2DY

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

The Sibyls is a UK-based confidential Christian spirituality group for transgender people, their partners and their supporters. It offers companionship along the journey, and information/advocacy to churches.

Sibyls seek to fulfil the two great commandments of Jesus: To love God and love one another. To achieve this we provide opportunities to meet in safe and friendly establishments. We promote the freedom to talk, to learn, to pray and to seek God's will.

If you are having difficulties reconciling your faith with being transgendered or are concerned about acceptance in your church then maybe Sibyls is what you have been looking for. It could be that you just need to talk with fellow Christians who understand what it is to be transgendered, or simply wish to be yourself as you worship in fellowship and in a safe environment.

If you are looking for an accepting church, it may be useful to visit our website, where there is a resource for this. Go to the Resources page on <http://www.gndr.org.uk/sibyls5/indexmain.htm> Click on the "Pastoral" and then on the "Churches" tab. This is being updated, but has useful links. Especially supportive are the MCC Churches.

We like to know of churches which welcome transgender people. Also if you would like more information to give to your church please do contact us.

We welcome new members, young and old. There is no membership fee or annual subscription, and no commitment,

Sibyls Website - www.sibyls.co.uk

- Dates and information on future events are posted on the website
- A full range of resources is also available. Click on the "Resources" tab on the right of the top banner on the website to access these.

There is also a member's section for which a Username and password is required.

The current username for the member's section is **SibylsWeb** (all one word). The password is **4All-Members** (All one word: use uppercase and lowercase as indicated)

Forthcoming Sibyls events:

13 October, 8 December - St. Anne's, Soho The Meetings start at 6:00 p.m. Details on page 3

17TH September 2016 - Sibyls Reflective Day at The Sisters Of St Andrew, Lewisham

Theme: 'Reflections on Love' Details and booking form on P.4

28- 30th October 2016 - Weekend at Hilfield Priory

Theme: 'The Traveller's Way' Details and Booking form Pages 5,6,7

Regional co-ordinators The regional group idea (last issue, p.5), seems to have foundered; there were only two expressions of interest, neither of whom is in a position to act as a Regional Co-ordinator at the moment.

SIBYLS LONDON EVENING MEETINGS
NEXT MEETINGS: 13 October, 8 December.
6:00 p.m. at St Anne's Church, Dean Street, Soho.

We meet on the Second Thursday of every second month for a Service at St Anne's Church, followed by a meal together

THE SERVICE IS OPEN TO ALL TRANS PEOPLE, TO THEIR FRIENDS, SPOUSES AND SUPPORTERS
Come in whatever role is convenient at the time

During the intercessions we normally pray for those we know and also on behalf of others who would like our prayers.
If you would like your name, or the name of someone you know to be included on the prayer list, please email me.
You can email me privately at sgen4144@gmail.com. (

These meetings are very good; gentle lovely evenings with a service which is always thoughtful, peaceful and healing,
followed by a good meal in congenial surroundings

St Anne's, 55 Dean Street, Soho W1D 6AF, is 50 yards up on the left from Shaftesbury Avenue (it doesn't look like a church but it is), and from about 6.30 a gathering at a Soho restaurant. You can just turn up on the evening, but it would also be helpful to get some idea of numbers in advance. If you do know you are coming, please email me at sgen4144@gmail.com. We normally decide on the restaurant at the end of the service. If you are late please ring 07546 213 971. The next dates for 2016 are: 13 October, 8 December. Remember it's 6:00 p.m. Susan

The editor has recently received details of pastoral provision for LGBT people by the Catholic diocese of Westminster (see next item), and of **Spectrum Soho Trans Drop-in Group** - 1st Thursdays, 19.00-21.00 - St Anne's Church, 55 Dean Street, London W1D 6AF. For more information, <http://www.spectrum.support/#!/services/cdf0> OR email : info@spectrum.support or call 0800 587 8302 / 020 3322 6920. It seems that Soho is the place to be.

LGBT CATHOLICS WESTMINSTER PASTORAL COUNCIL welcomes YOU to the 17.30 Mass on 2nd & 4th Sundays of the month The Diocese of Westminster & LGBT Catholics Westminster Pastoral Council welcome lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender Catholics, parents, families and friends to the Jesuit Church of the Immaculate Conception (Farm Street), 114 Mount Street, Mayfair, London, W1K 3AH.



Mount Street Gardens
Entrance . Nearest Tube
Station: Bond Street
(Central/Jubilee)



Farm Street Entrance
Nearest Tube station: Green Park (Piccadilly/
Victoria/Jubilee)

LGBT Catholics Westminster Pastoral Council, PO Box 24632, London E9 6XF
lgbtcatholicswestminster@gmail.com www.lgbtcatholicswestminster.org

See also the Farm Street Parish Newsletter for other information & events
www.farmstreet.org.uk farmstreet@rcdow.org.uk

Diocesan Website Link: <http://rcdow.org.uk/diocese/lgbt-chaplaincy/>

Contact trans.fs.cath@gmail.com for further details. 'It's good that a number of trans people find a safe and welcoming community amongst us. We value the involvement of trans- people in all aspects of the Church's life and activities and are happy to enable an occasional support group, as needed.'



This has come to the editor's attention; it may be of use to readers:

Preventing suicide among trans young people - A toolkit for nurses

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/417707/
Trans_suicide_Prevention_Toolkit_Final_26032015.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/417707/Trans_suicide_Prevention_Toolkit_Final_26032015.pdf)



A message from Susan (at sgen4144@gmail.com)

YOU CAN STILL ATTEND THE SIBYLS DAY MEETING AT LEWISHAM ON THE 17th SEPTEMBER (details below)

For catering purposes I asked people to inform me in advance if they were coming to this meeting. If you did not **YOU CAN STILL ATTEND**. However, the food (and wine) order has been based on the number of people who I know are attending, so **if you wish to come but have not informed me, please bring your own food contribution to the meal, so that we can add this to what has already been ordered.**

The suggested donation is now between £17 and £35. **This can be collected on the day**

**SIBYLS REFLECTIVE DAY AT THE SISTERS OF SAINT
ANDREW, LEWISHAM 17TH SEPTEMBER 2016**

'REFLECTIONS ON LOVE'

In Galatians 3:26-29 Paul writes:

"For in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise".

During the course of the day we will reflect on what this passage means for us in the Gospel of Christian Love

For those who wish to join us, we will be arranging a meal in a local restaurant on the Saturday evening after the event. If you are travelling a distance and want to stay over Friday or Saturday night accommodation will be available with the Sisters of St Andrew, although this must be booked separately from the event.

THIS MEETING IS OPEN TO ALL TRANS PEOPLE, THEIR
FRIENDS, SPOUSES AND SUPPORTERS

Provisional Programme

10.00-10.30 Coffee

10.30 Welcome and Introductions.

10.45-12.15 Session 1: Love and God

12.15-12.45 Eucharist

13.00-14.00 Lunch

14.00-15.00 Session 2: Love and Others

15.00-15.30 Tea

15.30-16.30 Session 3: Love and Ourselves

16.30 Closing thoughts and Evening Prayer

18.30 Optional Evening Meal in a Local Restaurant

To register your interest or for more information please email:
sgen4144@gmail.com

Booking form below

BOOKING FORM:

SIBYLS REFLECTIVE DAY AT THE SISTERS OF ST ANDREW, LEWISHAM—17TH SEPTEMBER 2016

Please print or cut out and send the completed form to:

"Sibyls Day Meeting", 8 Greenways Drive, Maidenhead, Berks, SL6 5DU.

Alternatively please email sgen4144@gmail.com

Where to find us: Sisters of St Andrew, The Welcome, 99 Belmont Hill, Lewisham, London SE13 5DY

Tel.: 0208 852 1662 e-mail: welcome@sisters-of-st-andrew.com

Your Name:

Address:

.....

.....

Post code: Telephone:

E-mail:

Will you stay for the meal in a local restaurant on the Saturday evening? Limited Overnight Accommodation on the Friday and Saturday Nights is available with the Sisters of St Andrew. This must be SEPARATELY booked. PLEASE

NOTE that overnight self-catering accommodation has to be booked directly with the Sisters of St Andrew. Details are on the Sibyls website at <http://www.gndr.org.uk/sibyls5/headlines/SuG0627b-SibylsStAndrewDayCosts.htm>

SIBYLS HILFIELD WEEKEND: FRI 28th OCT – SUN 30th OCT 2016.

THE TRAVELLER'S WAY

Following the success of last year's Sibyls Weekend at Hilfield Anglican Franciscan Friary in Dorset, a further weekend has been booked for the 28- 30th October 2016, which is NOT a bank holiday. There will be time for discussing and relaxing, but the theme of the weekend will be "The Traveller's Way".



St Francis was a traveller. We will have input from Brother Samuel SSF, who was the Minister Provincial for the European Provinces, and from the Revd Jonathan Herbert, who is Chaplain to Gypsies, Travellers and Roma in the Salisbury Diocese. A workshop on Transgender Care will be held on the Saturday morning. We are all travellers in our own journeys, and we hope that insights from others who have encountered their own journeys of challenge and discrimination will help us in our journeys through life and the gender divide.

We will be self-catering for breakfast and the evening meal, and joining the Brothers for lunch

DRAFT PROGRAMME:

Friday

- 17.15 Evening Prayer, (followed by prayer time) with Franciscans
18.00: Bring and Share Supper and Introduction
19.30: Talk during or after meal "Travellers Way": by Rev Jonathan Herbert, Chaplain to Gypsies, Travellers and Roma in the Salisbury Diocese. (Jonathan will be briefed that people who arrive later may wish to eat during the talk.)
21.00: (Night Prayer with Franciscans)
Chores for Everyone, washing up etc. - if not already completed!

Saturday

- 07.00 (Silent Prayer in Chapel with Franciscans)
07.30 (Morning Prayer with Franciscans)
08.15 Breakfast: Self Catering
10:00 Transgender Care Workshop, led by Tina Beardsley. This will help form input into the forthcoming "Transgender Care Manual" to be edited by Chris Dowd and Tina Beardsley
11.00 Coffee
11:15 Workshop: Continued
12.00 Midday Prayer and Eucharist with Franciscans
13:00 Lunch with Franciscans
14.00 Free time/ Entertainment/ Garden Ceilidh?
16.30 Afternoon tea
17.15 Evening Prayer, (followed by prayer time) with Franciscans
18.30 Dinner: Self Catering
19:30 Talk: "Franciscan Way": by Brother Samuel SSF, Formerly Minister Provincial for the European Provinces
20:45 (Night Prayer with Franciscans)
Chores for Everyone, washing up etc. - if not already completed!
Late Silence Together (very optional)

Sunday

- 07.30 (Morning Prayer followed by silent prayer with Franciscans)
08.30 (Sung Eucharist with Franciscans)
08.30 Breakfast
09.30 Sibyls Together
10.30 Coffee
11.00 Communion Service in the chapel
12.15 Group photograph
12.45 Midday Prayer with Franciscans
Chores for Everyone, washing up etc. - if not already completed!
13:00 Lunch with Franciscans
14.00 Disperse

"If you have men who will exclude any of God's creatures from the shelter of compassion and pity, you will have men who will deal likewise with their fellow men."

Francis of Assisi

BOOKING FORM ON PAGE 6 + GIFT-AID FORM ON PAGE 7

BOOKING FORM for SIBYLS HILFIELD WEEKEND : OCTOBER 28TH – 30TH 2016

I/ we wish to attend the Sibyls Hilfield weekend from Friday October 28th to Sunday 30th October 2016.

I enclose a cheque for £ _____ *

Name (s): _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____ Tel: _____

Email: _____

I/ we will be staying for the Whole Weekend / Friday / Saturday/ Sunday / (Delete as applicable)

Are you a member of the Sibyls: Yes/ No

Any special dietary or access requirements/: _____

Most rooms are single but it may be necessary to share a room.

Are you willing to share? Yes / No

If yes: Anyone or Name: _____

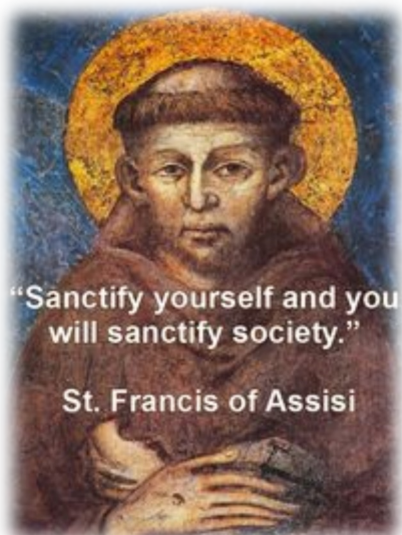
* The Friary asks for donations. The suggested rate for donations is from £80 to £120 per person for the whole weekend (pro-rata if you only attend for part of the time).

Please make cheques payable as explained on page 7

Please post this booking form to Hilfield Weekend, 8 Greenways Drive, Maidenhead, SL6 5DU or email it to sgen4144@gmail.com

PLEASE BEAR IN MIND :

This weekend is partly self-catering. You will be asked to bring something for the Bring- and-Share buffet on the Friday evening and pudding/cheese/biscuits etc. for the Saturday evening meal. Basics for breakfast will be provided but if you want a particular cereal bring your own! So that everyone does not bring the same thing, specific requests will be given to you at a later date.



Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love.
Where there is injury, pardon.
Where there is doubt, faith.
Where there is despair, hope.
Where there is darkness, light.
Where there is sadness, joy.
O Divine Master,
grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled,
as to console;
to be understood, as to understand;
to be loved, as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive.
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life.
Amen.

*'Preach the Gospel at all times
and when necessary use words.'*
~ St. Francis of Assisi

**"START BY DOING
WHAT IS NECESSARY,
THEN WHAT IS
POSSIBLE, AND
SUDDENLY YOU ARE
DOING THE
IMPOSSIBLE."**
— ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

GIFT AID for Hilfield

Please note that at the moment you cannot Gift Aid to the Sibyls. However you *can* Gift Aid directly to the Community of St Francis.

If you can Gift-Aid, we therefore recommend that you split your contribution into two parts

- As cheque/contribution of £30 made directly to the Sibyls (Gift-Aid cannot be claimed on this)
- A cheque representing the remaining balance of your payment, made payable directly to the Community of St Francis. (Gift-Aid for the Community can be claimed by them provided you complete and return the Gift-Aid form below)

Any surplus remaining in the Sibyls Contribution, over and above that which is needed by the Sibyls, will be donated by the Sibyls to the community of St Francis.

So, for example, if you decide to donate £110 pounds, a cheque/payment for £30 should be made payable to Mr P.A. Raftery –The Sibyls, and a cheque/payment for £80 should be made payable to The Community of St Francis.

If you cannot Gift-Aid your total payment of £110 should be made payable to Mr P.A. Raftery – The Sibyls

GIFT-AID FORM FOR THE COMMUNITY OF SAINT FRANCIS

I am a UK taxpayer and want The Community of Saint Francis Charity number (286615) to reclaim the tax on this donation, any donations I have made in the past 4 years and all future donations.

I confirm I have paid or will pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax for each tax year (6 April to 5 April) that is at least equal to the amount of tax that all the charities or Community Amateur Sports Clubs that I donate to will reclaim on my gifts for that tax year. I understand that other taxes such as VAT and Council Tax do not qualify.

I agree to the above statement.

Legal Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____ Email: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

If you pay Income Tax at the higher or additional rate and want to receive the additional tax relief due to you, you must include all your Gift Aid donations on your Self- Assessment tax return or ask HM Revenue and Customs to adjust your tax code. Please notify the Community of St Francis if you want to cancel this declaration, change your name or home address or no longer pay sufficient tax on your income or capital gains.

CONTACT DETAILS: hilfieldssf@franciscans.org.uk Tel: 01300 341345

PLEASE RETURN THIS GIFT-AID FORM WITH YOUR DONATION for THE COMMUNITY OF SAINT FRANCIS, (MADE PAYABLE TO THE COMMUNITY OF SAINT FRANCIS),

TOGETHER WITH THE SEPARATE PAYMENT for THE SIBYLS, (MADE PAYABLE TO MR P.A. RAFTERY –THE SIBYLS)
TO:

Hilfield Weekend, 8 Greenways Drive, Maidenhead, SL6 5DU.

We will forward your donation to the Community of St Francis together with the Gift-Aid form directly to the Community of St Francis

Debbie recently spoke at the NASUWT and the TUC conferences. I asked her how important the 'trans' label was to her.

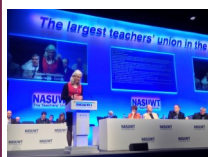


"My name is Debbie Hayton and I am a trade union activist"

Put like that it sounds like something that might be disclosed in a self-help group. Actually, trade unionism is a self-help activity and I am proud to be part of it. The public image is sometimes unflattering, but the reality is a movement run largely by volunteers who invest time and energy in order to make their workplaces a better environment for everyone.

Equalities are a cornerstone of trade union activity, and the rights of trans workers is an ongoing campaign. Whilst the Equality Act provides essential legal protections, discrimination can be very difficult to prove in individual cases. For example, a potential employer will not turn someone down because they are trans; instead they might say that another candidate had more experience, or was better qualified. Most people hear this occasionally, but trans people can hear it far more than most. The pattern is clear, but that is little help to someone struggling to find work. Trans people have become more visible in recent years, and frequent good news stories have reassured prospective employers that it is not particularly courageous to employ someone who is trans, but there is still much work to be done to break down prejudices in society. As a trans person this is a natural campaigning issue for me, and I represent my union, NASUWT on the TUC LGBT Committee where I take a specific interest in the rights of trans people at work.

However, there is more to me than the trans label. I want to be seen as a trade unionist, as a teacher, as a Christian, as a parent, and most importantly as a human being who just happens to be trans. Being identified primarily as a trans person increases the likelihood of being viewed differently in the minds of the public. As Bono wrote in the lyrics of the song, *Invisible*, "There is no them, there is only us", but to be seen principally as trans can label us as "them". Certainly there is the danger of being seen as a one-trick pony.



My campaigning therefore is also mainstream. At my union's annual conference earlier this year I spoke on pensions and issues relating to teachers' contracts. Both matters were relevant to me but also to every teacher in the room. Although my history is no secret, it is not something I refer to when it is not relevant. I am simply Debbie Hayton from Coventry who is worried about her pension and concerned about changes to her contract of employment. In my day-to-day work, my union activities focus on Pay and Conditions most of the time. Yes I am trans but I have a job to do like every other union official and, by doing that work diligently and competently, I hope to show that trans people are much like everyone else and help to normalise the impression that folks have of us.

Please see page 9 for the full text of Debbie's blog for the TUC online



(Australia)

Transgender teacher forced out of work, told to 'think of the children' 25th August 2016

A school in Australia is facing allegations that it discriminated against a teacher because she started transitioning. High school teacher Blaise Harris began her transition to female in 2014 – starting to grow out her hair, take female hormones, and seeking to change her legal name and gender. But Ms Harris, who taught at Cessnock High School in New South Wales for three years prior to transitioning, said that the school abruptly stopped offering her work – after the head warned that her gender "might be a problem" for her working there. According to the Sydney Morning Herald, she took her complaint to the Department of Education, but was stunned when a senior official sided with the school and declined to take action. The senior manager told her: "I don't have a problem with what the school did at all. You have to think of the children."

Ms Harris is now bringing a case against both the school and the department via the Anti-Discrimination Board, which has accepted her case for adjudication. She is seeking an apology and compensation. The teacher said that at one point during the disagreement she became so depressed that she came off hormones and decided to return to work as a man, before realising it would be unbearable to return to her old life. She told the Herald: "I thought at the time, I can't take on the department, they're bloody massive, and it would be easier to change me. I changed back and sank into depression again, until I basically realised no – I'm not going to do this, I'm going to be who I want to be. "I don't see how me having boobs and wearing a dress to work because that's how I want to be, I don't see how that negatively impacts on anyone else's life."

A spokesperson for the Department of Education said it would respond to the Anti-Discrimination Board case.



This article was written by Debbie Hayton for the TUC Blog. She is an activist within NASUWT, The Teachers' Union. The original article can be found here: <http://bit.ly/2ahNpSn> 26.7.16

While government stalls, workers must organise for trans equality

by Debbie Hayton

The Government has finally responded to the *House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee Report on Transgender Equality* that was published in January 2016. This wide ranging report recognised that, despite welcome progress in recent years, our society is still failing to support the rights and interests of trans people. The Committee noted that the earlier 2011 Advancing Transgender Equality action plan remained largely unimplemented, and they required the Government to agree a new strategy, which it can deliver with full cross-departmental support, within six months.

Almost six months later, the Government response was underwhelming. The tone was marked by phrases such as “*we will keep these issues under consideration*”, “*we will continue to monitor the issue*”, and, when responding to issues of discrimination under the Equality Act, “*we will keep this under review and will continue to listen to and monitor people’s experiences of discrimination, harassment or victimisation*”. However monitoring does not equate to action and, whilst the Government claims that transgender issues remain a priority, the promised action plan indicated further reviews rather than actual legislation to improve the lives of transgender people.

As trade unionists, we have a specific interest in workplace issues. Discrimination against trans people remains rife. Earlier this year, Total Jobs reported a Survey of Trans Employee Experiences. Their findings were stark: 60% have experienced transphobic discrimination in the workplace, and 53% have felt the need to hide that they are trans from colleagues. 36% left a job because the environment was unwelcoming. Trans people face extra hurdles when finding work and, when they do secure work, they find that their careers can be hampered by employers reluctant to deploy them in public facing roles. To quote two respondents to the survey: “*I was turned down for a job as the employer was worried about what customers might think;*” and, “*My boss stopped sending me out on site after the transition.*” Discrimination can be hidden behind comments such as “*I’m sorry but on this occasion another candidate has something extra to offer*” but it is still discrimination.

Evidence of discrimination is widespread and was also reported to the Women and Equalities Committee. They noted that, despite recent legislation, trans people still face discrimination in employment and other aspects of their lives. Even the scope of the Equality Act is unclear as the protected characteristic is Gender Reassignment, rather than Gender Identity or some other term that would definitely include non-binary and dual role people. When giving evidence to the committee, Caroline Dinenage MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary for State for Women, Equalities and Family Justice, suggested that non-binary people were protected under the discrimination by-perception provisions of the Equality Act. However the lack of relevant case law leaves people vulnerable and uncertain of their legal position, so they are reluctant to initiate legal proceedings in order to challenge discrimination and protect their rights. Cases are certainly not being brought to Employment Tribunals.

It is disappointing that, six months later, the Government’s response is to simply repeat Ms Dinenage’s assertion regarding discrimination by-perception. They claim that provision of a protected characteristic of “gender reassignment” is fully compliant with their obligations under the Equal Treatment Directive (2006/54/EC). In response to the workplace discrimination that is so widely reported, they merely cite guidance for employers that was produced by the Government Equalities Office in partnership with Inclusive Employers. Whilst the provision of advice by Government is to be welcomed, it places no requirements on employers to follow it, or even make themselves aware of it. The Government promised to keep workplace issues under review and continue to monitor the situation, but that is no substitute for legislation to *address* the situation. Discrimination needs to be tackled, not merely logged and recorded, and the Government should drive the agenda forward by improving and updating the legislation. It is regrettable that they have chosen not to do so.

However, any proposals for legislation may have been overtaken by events following the EU referendum on June 23. The implication of the result is likely to drive the Government’s agenda for years to come. In these very uncertain times it is more important than ever for trans people, just like everyone else, to join a trade union and organise within their workplace. Whilst Government reviews the situation and makes sympathetic noises, discrimination continues to occur. However, by organising and working collectively, workers can bring about change in their own workplaces, and improve the environment for everyone. Employee action should not substitute for Government action, but we cannot wait when Government is slow to act.



A comedian who came out as trans last year has changed his mind – and will now be living as a man again. 30.12.2015,

Will Franken had announced last year that he would be transitioning to female full-time, taking on the name Sarah Franken. The comic opened up in July after performing for the first time as Sarah – but six months on has ‘reverted’ back to Will.

A FORTNIGHT LEFT ! ... TO SUPPORT THE NEW BOOK

A LETTER FROM TINA Dear Sibyls,

Many thanks to all who supported the Sibyls book, *'This is my body'* with your purchases. It has been well received so far and all the copies that the Sibyls were obliged to purchase under our agreement with the publisher have been sold - a great achievement (with special thanks to Philippa for taking your orders and to Carol for managing orders/payments/despatch).

On reading the book some people have said it left them wanting more, and **we have more!** Chris Dowd has already presented his research into trans people's spirituality at a Sibyls weekend and many of us have been hoping that he would publish his findings. That time has now come. The working title of his book is *'Transgender Pastoral Handbook'* and Chris has graciously invited me to co-author it with him. A publisher is interested, but, as with the Sibyls book we will have to guarantee a certain number of sales. This time we are using crowd funding to achieve this, which means that you can place your orders or donations on this site:

<http://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/transgendered-pastoral-care-manual/?>

We're already well on the way to our target and the site only went up this week, please help us to maintain this momentum. Don't be put off by the infelicitous 'transgendered' in the link - it doesn't appear on the site, nor will it appear in the book. By pledging just £10 you are pre-ordering a book that we hope will be of practical help to many people and a worthy companion to *'This is my body'*.

Tina

GREENBELT REFLECTIONS – Tina Beardsley

2016 was my first Greenbelt and I can't think why it has taken me so long to attend this amazing Christian arts and justice festival. Over the years friends and colleagues have raved about it and I've been impressed reading about the range of ideas discussed and the big names the festival attracts, but for some reason, probably because I've been working that weekend in August I've never actually been there (or was it because I thought I'd grown out of camping under canvas?!). This year was different though and so, with my 'mummy' sleeping bag I set out to do some serious glamping – glamorous camping: yes there were even mirrors and hair dryers for us 'artists' - thanks to my Sibyls' friend Abigail Maxwell, who generously shared her spacious two room tent with me for the Saturday night.

Mine was a brief stay only but I managed to overhear (I was walking outside the Big Top at the time) the end of Kate Bottley's interview with the Archbishop of Canterbury; cover the two hours Sibyls duty on the Outerspace – the stall for Christian LGBTI people – where I met some lovely enquirers; catch up with friends and make new ones; have a drink in the Jesus' Arms (yes that's the name of 'the pub'); enjoy hilarious late night cabaret (comedy singer Lorraine Bowen) and attend the Sunday morning Communion service at which the Archbishop of Canterbury was interviewed by children, which was just delightful. Had I had the stamina I could have danced the Saturday night away as well in the Big Top, but you now have a snapshot of the Festival and I haven't mentioned the poetry, talks, and activities – the choice of things to do is enormous. I also had to 'work', as a panel presenter (hence my artist's privileges and the perks of glamping) and here are my reflections on that event - also available here <http://changingattitude.org.uk/archives/8740>



There are no secrets – on trying not to stare into the darkness

'There are no secrets' is the title of director Peter Brook's 1993 'Thoughts on Acting and Theatre' which I was reading on the way to this year's Greenbelt Festival. The phrase is likely to remind members of the Church of England of the Collect for Purity, 'Almighty God, to whom all hearts be open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden' which is said at the beginning of the Holy Communion Service in many churches. What an extraordinary prayer it is – there is no hiding from God, it reminds us: our very hearts, even our deepest desires, are an open book to God; with God there is no hiding place.

In our social relationships, though, we hide from one another all the time, and one aspect that can be hidden, along with sexual orientation, is gender identity, which is why trans people, like lesbian, gay and bisexual people, decide to come out. They reach a point when they can no longer hide who they are, and their faith in God may be a positive contribution to that self-acceptance. That was the point of my visit to Greenbelt, to join Abigail and Jamie Fletcher in a panel discussion: 'Is gender bendable or fixed forever?'

GREENBELT REFLECTIONS (continued)

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But on the way I was reading Peter Brook, who begins 'There are no secrets' with the incident when he was lecturing in an English university to an audience that expected words of wisdom, as he stood, 'six feet above' (he doesn't actually use the words 'above contradiction', like a preacher, but he might as well have done) his listeners, while he stared out into what he describes as 'a big black hole'. Unable to see the audience, or connect with them, he asked for a change of room where he and they felt free to have a conversation.

A few hours later I am sitting with Jamie and Abigail in the Little Big Top. Three chairs have been placed for us on the platform but we are unable to use them as the angle of the spotlights is such that we too would be staring into a big black hole, unable to see our audience, who have also come for a conversation. We move and sit on the edge of the stage instead. The tent is still dark, but we can see some faces now among the shadows – old friends and people we've never met before, a wide spread of ages, and some children, even a baby.

We were as near an empty space as possible – Peter Brook would be pleased – which means that something interactive and creative might happen. We have our scripts, and Power Point slides, and also the usual nerves on these occasions, not least because this will be an open discussion and we have no idea how people are going to respond or what they might ask us. We are still looking into a black hole!

Earlier on Saturday, in the Glade Big Top, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, had been interviewed by Kate Bottley. That was also a conversation with the audience, one of whom asked the Archbishop when the Church would be able to bless her civil partnership to her female partner. There has been anger and frustration that the Archbishop replied that he couldn't see the road ahead. He too was looking into a black hole it seems in relation to this, apparently straightforward, question.

How can we help the Archbishop, and other church leaders, to see the way forward? Perhaps our experience in the Little Big Top offers a clue. Convention had set up the three of us as 'experts' and we have all done some thinking and writing about being trans or gender queer and Christian; but there were lots of other experts in the room, and once we'd finished our presentations and the conversation took off, we were able to discern the way ahead.

This was an intergenerational conversation. I'm fourteen years older than Abigail (who told us her age) and Jamie is about eighteen years younger than Abigail. Our experiences are very different and we had much to learn from each other, and even more from the very young people who bravely spoke from the heart to that large crowd.

Many people of my generation – including the House of Bishops – conceptualise gender in binary terms: male/female, men/women, masculine/feminine. I understand my own transition in terms of a male-to- female trajectory, while realising that this shorthand phrase could easily mislead or over-simplify. Many young people just don't see gender like that. For them gender is fluid, or they wish to express their gender in non-binary terms, and this can be hard in a church that continues to maintain the binary, for example, by insisting that marriage is exclusively for men and women.

What I saw as I peered into the darkness was a new generation that looks at things very differently from me, but that's how the Spirit is moving, and it's not for me to get in the way. I can join in the conversation, live within the old patterns if I want to, while embracing and learning from the new. I hope and pray that the Church of England's House of Bishops will have the courage to look into their current black hole about gender and sexuality and discern the way ahead.

It will require a conversation with the young and I can see why the Diocesan Shared Conversations were meant to include a large percentage of young people. I wonder if that quota was met, but even if it was, the age profile of General Synod and of the House of Bishops means that an important conversation partner was and will be missing at those crucial stages. At least our Archbishop was prepared to gaze into the 'empty space' of the Greenbelt Big Top.

As Peter Brook said, 'there are no secrets', that is, no specialist techniques, no 'superior' wisdom, when it comes to acting, and the same is true when it comes to being a Christian community. We are entirely dependent on God, from whom no secrets are hid – the God who loves us in our sexual and gender diversity, in our varied ethnicity and social class – the God who is with us, in the light and in the darkness, and in every shade in between.

Planes, trains, and automobiles.....and a busand a taxi (or How Elaine earned her flying wings)

by Elaine Sommers

Those who know the film whose title I have adapted above, will remember how the main character (played by Steve Martin, and hindered by John Candy), was trying to get home for Thanksgiving, with all the trials and tribulations that he met on the way. I have just had a similar experience, but on a smaller scale, which I will now relate.

Last week I had to go to Italy for the weekend, to attend a board meeting of the European Forum of LGBT Christian Groups, of which I have recently become a co-president. I have often wanted to experience an international flight as Elaine, but this was the first opportunity I had to do so. Yes, I was a virgin flier! Because I live a dual gendered life, sometimes male, sometime female, my passport stays in my male name, with photo to match. So I wondered whether this situation might cause problems if Elaine turned up at the airport. I asked a trans friend for advice and she assured me that there was no need to worry, as she hadn't encountered any difficulty when travelling by air.

So off I went, armed with my self-designed trans ID card, designed to assist airport staff in their duties. I needn't have worried. I sailed smoothly through the outward journey, which involved a flight change in Brussels. I didn't even bother to produce my ID card, as there weren't any apparent problems. So I was in a buoyant mood when I arrived at the monastery situated high above the Adriatic coastline, where the meetings were being held.

After the weekend, I set off for home, fully expecting that that my trip would be as straightforward as the journey out. To begin with it was. I shared a taxi to the station with a lady who had been visiting the monastery, and the two hour train journey to Bologna was fine, too. It was then just a short bus ride to the airport. No problemo.

Whilst walking through the metal detector at Security for the first flight (to Wroclaw), the inevitable happened - I set the machine's alarm off (in fact I noticed later that almost everyone was setting it off!). Now the only metal that I had on me was the wires in my bra. Could that be it? What happens now? Will I have to take the bra off? Will they dismantle it? Silly thoughts raced through my head. Anyway, the rather surly officer looked me up and down, then paused for what seemed to be an eternity. I knew that the rules were that body searches should be carried out by an officer of the same sex as the one in which the passenger presents. However, I wasn't so sure that Mr.Surly was aware of this rule or had studied the regulations. However, he eventually summoned over a female colleague, who gave me a pat down search, followed by swab tests of my palms (evidently looking for traces of explosives), before sending me on my way. So far, so good.

The second flight was to my home town of Bristol, so I began getting that 'nearly there' feeling, a bit soon as it transpired. At passport control, the woman behind the desk looked at my passport, then at me, then back at the passport. She looked confused, and who can blame her? She leaned over to a colleague, and they had words. Then they both smiled, and after a further flick through the passport, it was handed it back to me and I was waved through. I thought that would be it, but at the departure gate another official gave me more quizzical looks, and asked me if the passport name really was mine. He finally let me go through to the aircraft.

I settled back in my seat and reckoned I would be home by midnight. Too hasty again. Just before arrival time, the captain announced that due to fog, we were being diverted to Birmingham, over a hundred miles away. Ouch!

After sitting on the plane for over half an hour whilst Ryanair decided what to do with us, a rather weary bunch of passengers staggered off the aircraft and into passport control. I had gone to the e-passport queue, but as I got near the front, the man ahead of me kept setting off the machine's buzzer. I wondered what he was doing wrong, so that I could learn how to avoid such problems. But then I noticed that the machine scans your face, presumably to compare it with your passport photo. Panic! I know what's going to happen. It's going to detect a mismatch, which will set off all sorts of flashing red lights, alarms and whistles, etc. I even envisaged the machine itself jumping up and down, and handcuffs shooting out and clamping my wrists together. This flight of fancy was only halted when it was my turn to be screened. I nervously placed my passport face down on the scanner, smiled sweetly (I've no idea why) and waited. And what happened? Nothing at all. Green light on; barrier open; GO! Phew, why had I got so worked up?

After another hour of hanging around the terminal, we were ushered outside to the coaches which would take us back to Bristol, except that there was only *one* coach! Now, seeing 120 people trying to get into a 40-seater coach is not a pleasant experience. In fact, it reminded me of another film, the one where Leonardo Di Caprio has an argument with in iceberg, and gets quite wet - only in my case, there was only one lifeboat. I held back, to see what would happen. Well, nobody drowned, so that was positive. But there were still 80 of us left stranded. Soon after, a 20-seater coach pulled up. There were more lifeboat scuffles. I held back again. Then I heard someone shout, 'One more person, with cabin baggage only'. No one moved, so I gallantly stepped forward and was promptly pushed on to the coach, taking the only remaining seat, surrounded by piles of luggage occupying every available inch of floor-space.

At last we were off; it was 2 a.m. Then I saw it: a road sign saying that the M5 was closed for repairs. Sure enough, we were soon off on a swirling detour down minor roads, unmade surfaces, endless roundabouts and so on, until we were allowed back on the motorway. Surely all would be well now? Well yes, except that.....I had by now forgotten why we hadn't landed at Bristol in the first place - FOG! We were immersed in a white world of mistiness, and I wondered how our driver had any clue of where she was going, or what obstructions lay in our path. But at last we arrived, and all I had to do was phone the

Continues page xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Planes, trains and automobiles (continued)

....minibus driver who would take me to the off-site car park, where I would get my car and drive the short journey home. This was going to be easy. I would stand alone in the deserted drop-off zone and wait for my well-marked minibus to arrive. Except for one thing. I had overlooked the fact that it was now 4a.m, and people had started to arrive for the morning flights, all dressed up in their holiday hats, shorts and flip-flops, heaving enormous cases out of assorted taxis which were pulling up in random fashion all over my 'deserted drop-off point'. I'll never see my man, I thought. Eventually we did find each other and he took me back to the car. I tried to stay alert as I drove home (oh yes, of course there was more FOG), and I fell into bed at about 4.30, trying not to disturb my long-suffering wife.

So, Elaine *did* get to fly in the end, four times in a single weekend, and there were no really tricky moments. The journey was eventful for other more general reasons.

And if there is a trans person reading this, and thinking of embarking on international air travel with an 'incongruous' passport, please don't be put off by my story. I encourage you go ahead and try it for yourself. I can't wait for another opportunity; I think it's going to be Amsterdam next time.

And I really do feel I've earned my flying wings.

News from Australia :

A billionaire philanthropist has donated \$2 million to a university to establish a chair of transgender studies. 20th January 2016



The position will be funded by American Jennifer Pritzker, who donated the money to the University of Victoria through her Tawani Foundation. No other position like it is believed to exist in global academia.

Half of the money will be given to fund the chair position for the next five years, and the other half is to match other donations to the course. The inaugural chair will be Aaron Devor, a sociology professor who has studied trans issues for over thirty years.

"Far too many trans and gender-nonconforming people still live in poverty and fear," Dr Devor said in a statement. "As the inaugural chair, I will act as a resource locally and internationally for those needing information for their own research or for policy development, as well as building linkages between community-based and academic scholars working in transgender studies."

Dr Devor founded the same university's transgender archives, which were created in 2012. The archive aims to keep a historical record of trans history particularly of trans activists. The Tawani Foundation is a supporter of military history, and Ms Pritzker is out as trans and formerly an army lieutenant colonel.

"The chair in transgender studies sets [University of Victoria] apart," The University of Victoria President Jamie Cassels said in a statement. "I am proud of our campus community's commitment to diversity, as well as grateful to Dr Devor, Lieutenant Colonel Pritzker, the Tawani Foundation and all those who help us continually learn and grow in a welcoming environment that promotes the rights and affirms the dignity of all persons."

Being transgender is like anorexia, claim conservative lobby group 19th August 2016

The Australian Family Association told its members in an email sent on Thursday (August 18) that it was important to respond to media stories featuring transgender children and that they should draw inspiration from an article in right-wing US website. The group's president Paul Monagle urged supporters to read Moira Fleming's piece for The Federalist, that compared being transgender to having anorexia nervosa, and use it to convince others.

BuzzFeed reports that the email said: "Fleming says that both anorexia or transgendering [sic] are driven by a mismatch between the person's brain and their body, 'a wrenching awareness of what it feels like to be disconnected from your body, to hate with every fibre of your being the way you look in the mirror...' It goes on to suggest that allowing someone to transition is the same as allowing someone with anorexia to starve themselves. Also in the email was a link to an article that said transgender people should be 'counseled' into accepting their gender at birth – in a similar way to 'gay cure' therapy.

The email from Mr Monagle follows months of rhetoric against transgender children and an effort to shut down a government funded anti-bullying programme. Australia's leading paediatrician, Michelle Telfer, said that being trans was not a mental illness, unlike anorexia. "The distress that one experiences over gender dysphoria is considered something that needs treatment. If society accepted transgender people for who they are, there wouldn't be distress."

A number of studies from around the world have revealed that ensuring transgender people get the correct access to medical treatment leads to better health outcomes.

What treatment do young children receive for gender dysphoria and is it irreversible? 6.10.16

Fiona Kelly, Associate Professor at La Trobe University Law School, looks at the treatment transgender children can actually receive in Australia.

[Excellent long article for which we have no space. Full text available from editor at carol.nixon2012@btinternet.com]

A Pommy bloke calls at Australia House in London to get a Visa to visit family in Australia. Bloke behind the counter asks "Do you have a criminal record ?" Pommy bloke sighs and asks, " Is that STILL a requirement.....? " (with apologies!)

The Evangelical Alliance – *Transsexuality*.

This is the first of two articles exploring church writings that trace their ideology back to Oliver O'Donovan's *Transsexualism and Christian marriage* which was discussed in my last article. The Evangelical Alliance published their report called *Transsexuality* in 2000. Their aim was to explore transsexuality from a conservative Christian viewpoint and to provide a policy statement for their member churches to follow. A later version was produced that included observations on equality legislation in 2005 which has since been withdrawn from circulation. (*I rang the Evangelical Alliance and tried to obtain a copy. I was told that it was out of print and was directed to the earlier version. No explanation was given.*)

Understanding of transsexuality in the report.

The report explains there are non-operative transfolk as well as transsexuals and makes a distinction between transvestitism (which they deem has an erotic element) and being Trans. While it admits that most transsexuals are happy with gender reassignment surgery (2000:24), it argues that the duty of Christians is obedience to God and that natal gender should be seen as a clear intention of God's will. It contends that the onus of proof should be on transsexuals and the medical establishment to claim the reality of transsexualism rather than the onus of proof being on Christians to justify their position on the issue (2000:52). The report recognises that the Church is seen by society as "strong on condemnation and weak on compassion" (2000:53) and a denier of human rights (2000:52) on the issue of transsexuality. It justifies this stance as being counter-cultural against the "me-first culture" and the "deification of sex" (2000:54).

Halfway through the report the central concern against transsexuality is explored. This concern is that if transsexuality is real, it renders the gendered distinctions between male and female "infinitely plastic" (2000:57). This plasticity would threaten the complementarian nature of gender espoused by the Evangelical Alliance (2000:48). This concern is further explored in the ethical implications section where it affirms that a given biological sex is fundamental. Any revision of this as a result of gender alienation and is a form of unacceptable Gnosticism which makes gender subjective and contingent. This argument is borrowed directly from O'Donovan.

Transsexuality further argues that sex and gender are a biological reality (sic) and a matter of public fact and these facts are more important than self-perception. While it acknowledges that some people may see not this reality (sic) it argues they should be dissuaded from their false gender beliefs and be led to the truth of their biological sex (2000:65). It considers GRS is only appropriate in matters of pastoral emergency (2000:67) as a way of managing symptoms rather than curing the problem.

Use of Sources

The report offers a review of scientific literature. This section begins by asserting that science does not have greater authority in this area than Scripture. It also dismisses much of the science it discusses as "one off" results and a deliberate skewing of results to appease unspecified "single issue lobby groups" (2000:15).

Transsexuality begins by referencing work by evangelical Christians Whitehead and Whitehead (1999) whose work is neither published in an academic publication nor peer reviewed. When the report engages with peer reviewed literature it only quotes selectively from it. An example of this is how it establishes the incidence of transsexuality (Gallarda et al 1996). While the report correctly quotes the statistics from the article, it ignores the article's finding that medical intervention is the only way to improve the clinical condition of transsexuals. This omission is presumably because it would undermine the EA's contention that surgery is a last resort after all other options have failed.

Another example of obfuscation occurs when discussing Bosinski et al (1997). This study showed that 83.3% of untreated female to male transsexuals had above normal values for at least one measured androgen (male hormone) as opposed to 33.3% of a female control group. While the authors consider this biologically significant, *Transsexuality* does not report this finding. Instead it attempts to explain that the masculine body shape of the FTM participants observed in the study meant that they were treated differently than other women (sic). The report contends that this treatment was the cause of their transsexuality rather than the greater presence of androgen. This can only be a misinterpretation of the article which clearly argues a biological link to transsexuality.

Transsexuality also criticises the work of Gooren (Zhou et al 1995). It attempts to throw doubt on his study arguing that brain structures change in response to behaviour. As evidence it cites an article in the popular science magazine *Scientific American* (Kandel and Hawkins 1992) rather than peer reviewed clinical studies in rebuttal.

The report then argues that since a biological cause has not been established, the obvious answer is that the cause must be psychological. In evidence the report misquotes Holder as endorsing psychological causation (2000:22). What he is actually discussing is his concern that a proved biological basis for transsexualism could be tested in utero and this may prompt parents to abort transgendered fetuses (1998a:92). He is later misquoted again as citing a high incidence of regret after GRS (2000:25). In this case he is discussing the recommendation in *The Lancet* that the Harry Benjamin Gender Dysphoria Guidelines are used because it increases the probability of a successful gender transition (Holder 1998:94). How he is quoted implies

What have the Churches said? (p.2)

a great deal of dissatisfaction with GRS. However, peer reviewed studies such as Lawrence (2003) report the exact opposite.

Transsexuality also cites Cohen-Ketternis and Arrindell (1990). In their study they show transfolk remembered their parents were more emotionally distant than a cisgendered control group. What is not quoted is the discussion about the impact of subsequent events on the interpretation of memory (1990:619). The article examines the possibility that if the transperson had subsequently experienced difficulties with parents this could impact their interpretation of their personal histories.

The overwhelming impression is that this material has been included in order to give a veneer of scientific respectability to the report. A mixture of popular science, Christian pseudoscience, misquotation and the selective quoting of peer reviewed sources is not helpful in allowing the reader to come to an understanding of the origins of gender dysphoria or transsexuality. What the reader is left with is a vague impression that somehow transsexuality is psychological in basis and somehow both transfolk and their parents are to blame. This is neither a useful nor an accurate summary of the cited material.

Use of Scripture

Given the Evangelical Alliance's assertion of the primacy of Scripture, very little space is given to the exploration of it. Of the 87 pages of the report only three and a half pages are specifically devoted to the exploration of Scripture. In these pages it discusses the possibility of a progression from the prohibition of Deuteronomy 23:1 to the recognition of Matthew 19 to the acceptance of the Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts 8:26-39. It attempts to wrestle honestly with the complexities discussing whether Deuteronomy can apply to transsexuality and the applicability of Mathew 19 (2000:46).

Instead of continuing this biblical work, it veers off into a doctrinal discussion of Creation and marriage (2000:48), The Fall, Redemption and Final Restoration (2000:51). In these sections it does deal with Genesis 1.27 asserting that this is a clear setting up of a gender binary.

Impact on Church practice

The authors believe that with prayer, guidance and support, revision to natal gender is possible for some transsexuals but also acknowledge this may not be possible for all. They accept their member churches have a pastoral responsibility towards transfolk but consider it should take the form of "heavy shepherding" towards gender conformity (2000:83).

(This term seems to have come from the evangelical Shepherding Movement of the 1970's to mean a system of meetings with some form of coercion to correct (sic) problem behaviours. It is not defined in the report.)

The report concludes with advice to churches on issues such as dealing with marriage (where it concludes that divorce or separation may be the best option); whether the repentant transsexual should receive baptism and communion (left to individual churches but with a warning that privileging (sic) a transsexual may lead to resentment amongst congregants) and a discussion concerning whether transsexuals could be in church leadership (not recommended because they are poor role models).

On matters of pastoral care it recommends a healing (sic) of disunity between body and spirit (2000: 81). It discusses compassionately the need to allow openly Trans members to be part of a church in order to save them from self-harm and suicide but counsels a gentle heavy shepherding where possible (2000:82). The report clearly states that the only appropriate Christian response for a transsexual who refuses to return to their natal gender is celibacy (2000:78).

While it is less than enthusiastic about transfolk, the report recognises the pastoral reality that most transfolk are happy with their new identities. While coming from the conservative social and theological position of its membership, it does accept member churches have a pastoral responsibility to transfolk and attempts a compassionate response within its own understandings.

Reactions to the report

Justin Tanis (2003:98) is particularly concerned about the recommendations of shepherding back to gender conformity and the "last resort" option of GRS. He asks how much misery a person should be put through at the cost of their inclusion in the Christian community? He is also very suspicious of the charge of Gnosticism, arguing that transfolk fully inhabit their bodies and that is what makes the pain of gender dysphoria so intense (2003: 100). He is also deeply concerned that the onus of action to promote acceptance is entirely put on the transsexual person and that the Evangelical Alliance does not suggest any form of education or enabling of congregations to accept transsexual members (2003:101).

Rev Dr Beardsley's critique of the Evangelical Alliance Report is that it is disingenuous because it supports medical intervention to "correct" intersex conditions but does not advocate surgery for transfolk because they are born with normal (sic) bodies. She also dismisses the claim that GRS is experimental, noting that there is nearly 80 years of experience (Beardsley 2007:14). She also considers the report "simplistic and rigid" (Beardsley, O'Brien and Woolley 2012:261) and overly dogmatic in its insistence of a psychological cause for transsexuality. She is also critical that it has not engaged with transfolk in order to gain their perspectives (Beardsley 2007:14).

Watts is also suspicious of the insistence on a psychological cause of transsexuality arguing that it is likely that there is at least some biological basis for transsexuality (2002:77). He is uneasy about how the report pits the "truth of someone's sex" against

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their “false gender beliefs” (2002:78). He points out that dualism has a respectable place in the Christian tradition and that the use of the term Gnosticism is “a very loose use”. He is also concerned over the use of Genesis 1:27 as an exclusive statement when there are demonstrably intersex folk who do not fit in a gender binary. Given this biological reality he contends it may be logical to assume that transfolk are another category (2002:79).

In conclusion

It would be hard to see *Transsexuality* as particularly helpful. It is truly the child of O’Donovan and recycles much of his original arguments. It also carries on his tradition of ignoring expert opinion and lived experience in favour of championing an ideological position that cannot be arrived at through any academically credible way.

But what is the most distressing about *Transsexuality* is the lack of humility or humanity in this report. Even with its obvious flaws it is unshaken in its own self-confidence. It also places a theological viewpoint before any compassion, kindness or pastoral sensitivity. It is my fondest hope that the Evangelical Alliance reconsider their position and withdraw from circulation a document that is neither helpful nor hopeful in any sense.

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Thanks to Susan for spotting this



A classic life of **St. Francis** by PASCHAL ROBINSON, heavily abridged by the editor
Born at Assisi in Umbria, in 1181 or 1182; died there, 3 October, 1226.

His father, Pietro Bernardone, was a wealthy Assisian cloth merchant. Of his mother, Pica, little is known, but she is said to have belonged to a noble family of Provence. Francis was one of several children. At baptism the saint received the name of Giovanni, which his father afterwards altered to Francesco.

Francis received some elementary instruction from the priests of St. George's at Assisi, though he learned more perhaps in the school of the Troubadours, who were just then making for refinement in Italy. However this may be, he was not very studious, and his literary education remained incomplete. Although associated with his father in trade, he showed little liking for a merchant's career, and his parents seemed to have indulged his every whim. No one loved pleasure more than Francis; he had a ready wit, sang merrily, delighted in fine clothes and showy display. He soon became the prime favourite among the young nobles of Assisi. But even at this time Francis showed an instinctive sympathy with the poor.

When about twenty, Francis had a strange dream, in which he saw a vast hall hung with armour all marked with the Cross. "These", said a voice, "are for you and your soldiers." "I know I shall be a great prince", exclaimed Francis exultingly, as he started (to fight) for Apulia. But a second illness arrested his course at Spoleto. There, we are told, Francis had another dream in which the same voice bade him turn back to Assisi. He did so at once. This was in 1205.

Although Francis still joined at times in the noisy revels of his former comrades, his changed demeanour plainly showed that his heart was no longer with them; a yearning for the life of the spirit had already possessed it. After a short period of uncertainty he began to seek in prayer and solitude the answer to his call; he had already given up his gay attire and wasteful ways. One day, while crossing the Umbrian plain on horseback, Francis unexpectedly drew near a poor leper. The sudden appearance of this repulsive object filled him with disgust and he instinctively retreated, but presently controlling his natural aversion he dismounted, embraced the unfortunate man, and gave him all the money he had.

Not long after his return to Assisi, Francis went to his father's shop, impulsively bundled together a load of coloured drapery, and mounting his horse hastened to Foligno, then a mart of some importance, and there sold both horse and stuff to procure the money needful for the restoration of the ruinous church of St. Damian's. The elder Bernardone was incensed beyond measure at his son's conduct, and Francis was dragged home by his father, beaten, bound, and locked in a dark closet.

Freed by his mother during Bernardone's absence, Francis returned at once to St. Damian's, where he found a shelter with the officiating priest, but he was soon cited before the city consuls by his father. The latter sought to force his son to forego his inheritance. This Francis was only too eager to do; he declared, however, that since he had entered the service of God he was no longer under civil jurisdiction. Having therefore been taken before the bishop, Francis stripped himself of the very clothes he wore, and gave them to his father, saying: "Hitherto I have called you my father on earth; henceforth I desire to say only 'Our Father who art in Heaven.'"

On a certain morning in 1208, probably 24 February, Francis was hearing Mass in the chapel of St. Mary of the Angels, near which he had built himself a hut; the Gospel of the day told how the disciples of Christ were to possess neither gold nor silver, nor scrip for their journey, nor two coats, nor shoes, nor a staff, and that they were to exhort sinners to repentance and announce the Kingdom of God. Francis took these words as if spoken directly to himself, and so soon as Mass was over threw away the poor fragment left him of the world's goods, his shoes, cloak, pilgrim staff, and empty wallet. At last he had found his vocation. Having obtained a coarse woollen tunic of "beast colour", the dress then worn by the poorest Umbrian peasants, and tied it round him with a knotted rope, Francis went forth at once exhorting the people of the country-side to penance, brotherly love, and peace.

Bernard of Quintavalle, a magnate of Assisi, was the first to join Francis, and he was soon followed by Peter of Cattaneo, a well-known canon of the cathedral. In true spirit of religious enthusiasm, Francis repaired to the church of St. Nicholas and sought to learn God's will in their regard by thrice opening at random the book of the Gospels on the altar. Each time it opened at passages where Christ told His disciples to leave all things and follow Him. "This shall be our rule of life", exclaimed Francis, and led his companions to the public square, where they forthwith gave away all their belongings to the poor. After this they procured rough habits like that of Francis, and built themselves small huts near his. When the number of his companions had increased to eleven, Francis found it expedient to draw up a written rule for them.

This first rule, as it is called, of the Friars Minor has not come down to us in its original form, but it appears to have been very short and simple, a mere adaptation of the Gospel precepts already selected by Francis for the guidance of his first companions, and which he desired to practice in all their perfection. When this rule was ready the Penitents of Assisi, as Francis and his followers styled themselves, set out for Rome to seek the approval of the Holy See, although as yet no such approbation was obligatory. In spite of the sinister predictions of others in the Sacred College, who regarded the mode of life proposed by Francis as unsafe and impracticable, Pope Innocent, moved it is said by a dream in which he beheld the Poor Man of Assisi upholding the tottering Lateran, gave a verbal sanction to the rule submitted by Francis and granted the saint and his companions leave to preach repentance everywhere. Before leaving Rome they all received the ecclesiastical tonsure, Francis himself being ordained deacon later on.

After their return to Assisi, the Friars Minor -- for thus Francis had named his brethren - (eventually, in 1211) obtained a permanent foothold near Assisi, through the generosity of the Benedictines of Monte Subasio, who gave them the little chapel of St. Mary of the Angels or the Porziuncola. Adjoining this humble sanctuary, already dear to Francis, the first Franciscan convent was formed by the erection of a few small huts or cells of wattle, straw, and mud, and enclosed by a hedge. From this settlement, which became the cradle of the Franciscan Order and the central spot in the life of St. Francis, the Friars Minor went forth two by two exhorting the people of the surrounding country. Like children "careless of the day", they wandered

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from place to place singing in their joy, and calling themselves the Lord's minstrels. The wide world was their cloister; sleeping in haylofts, grottos, or church porches, they toiled with the labourers in the fields, and when none gave them work they would beg. In a short while Francis and his companions gained an immense influence, and men of different grades of life and ways of thought flocked to the order. Among the new recruits made about this time were the famous Three Companions, who afterwards wrote his life, namely: **Tancredi**, a noble cavalier; **Leo**, the saint's secretary and confessor; and **Rufinus**, besides **Juniper**, "the renowned jester of the Lord".

During the Lent of 1212, a new joy, great as it was unexpected, came to Francis. Clare, a young heiress of Assisi, moved by the saint's preaching at the church of St. George, sought him out, and begged to be allowed to embrace the new manner of life he had founded. By his advice, Clare, who was then but eighteen, secretly left her father's house on the night following Palm Sunday. Clare stayed provisionally with some Benedictine nuns near Assisi, until Francis could provide a suitable retreat for her, and for St. Agnes, her sister, and the other pious maidens who had joined her. He eventually established them at St. Damian's, in a dwelling adjoining the chapel he had rebuilt with his own hands, which was now given to the saint by the Benedictines as domicile for his spiritual daughters, and which thus became the first monastery of the Second Franciscan Order of Poor Ladies, now known as Poor Clares.

In the autumn of the same year (1212) Francis's burning desire for the conversion of the Saracens led him to embark for Syria, but having been shipwrecked on the coast of Slavonia, he had to return to Ancona. The following spring he devoted himself to evangelizing Central Italy. About this time (1213) Francis received from Count Orlando of Chiusi the mountain of La Verna, an isolated peak among the Tuscan Apennines, rising some 4000 feet above the valley of the Casentino, as a retreat, "especially favourable for contemplation", to which he might retire from time to time for prayer and rest. For Francis never altogether separated the contemplative from the active life, as the several hermitages associated with his memory, and the quaint regulations he wrote for those living in them bear witness. At one time, indeed, a strong desire to give himself wholly to a life of contemplation seems to have possessed the saint. During the next year (1214) Francis set out for Morocco, in another attempt to reach the infidels and, if needs be, to shed his blood for the Gospel, but while yet in Spain was overtaken by so severe an illness that he was compelled to turn back to Italy once more.

The first general chapter of the Friars Minor was held in May, 1217, at Porziuncola, the order being divided into provinces, and an apportionment made of the Christian world into so many Franciscan missions. Tuscany, Lombardy, Provence, Spain, and Germany were assigned to five of Francis's principal followers; for himself the saint reserved France, and he actually set out for that kingdom, but on arriving at Florence, was dissuaded from going further by Cardinal Ugolino, who had been made protector of the order in 1216. He therefore sent in his stead Brother Pacificus, who in the world had been renowned as a poet, together with Brother Agnellus, who later on established the Friars Minor in England. Although success came indeed to Francis and his friars, with it came also opposition, and it was with a view to allaying any prejudices the Curia might have imbibed against their methods that Francis, at the instance of Cardinal Ugolino, went to Rome and preached before the pope and cardinals in the Lateran. This visit to the Eternal City, which took place 1217-18, was apparently the occasion of Francis's memorable meeting with St. Dominic. The year 1218 Francis devoted to missionary tours in Italy, which were a continual triumph for him. He usually preached out of doors, in the market-places, from church steps, from the walls of castle court-yards. Allured by the magic spell of his presence, admiring crowds, unused for the rest to anything like popular preaching in the vernacular, followed Francis from place to place hanging on his lips; church bells rang at his approach; processions of clergy and people advanced to meet him with music and singing; they brought the sick to him to bless and heal, and kissed the very ground on which he trod, and even sought to cut away pieces of his tunic. The extraordinary enthusiasm with which the saint was everywhere welcomed was equalled only by the immediate and visible result of his preaching. His exhortations of the people, for sermons they can hardly be called, short, homely, affectionate, and pathetic, touched even the hardest and most frivolous, and Francis became in sooth a very conqueror of souls. Thus it happened, on one occasion, while the saint was preaching at Camara, a small village near Assisi, that the whole congregation were so moved by his "words of spirit and life" that they presented themselves to him in a body and begged to be admitted into his order. It was to accede, so far as might be, to like requests that Francis devised his Third Order, as it is now called, of the Brothers and Sisters of Penance, which he intended as a sort of middle state between the world and the cloister for those who could not leave their home or desert their wonted avocations in order to enter either the First Order of Friars Minor or the Second Order of Poor Ladies. That Francis prescribed particular duties for these tertiaries is beyond question. They were not to carry arms, or take oaths, or engage in lawsuits, etc. It is also said that he drew up a formal rule for them, but it is clear that the rule, confirmed by Nicholas IV in 1289, does not, at least in the form in which it has come down to us, represent the original rule of the Brothers and Sisters of Penance. In any event, it is customary to assign 1221 as the year of the foundation of this third order, but the date is not certain.

At the second general chapter (May, 1219) Francis, bent on realizing his project of evangelizing the infidels, assigned a separate mission to each of his foremost disciples, himself selecting the seat of war between the crusaders and the Saracens. With eleven companions, including Brother Illuminato and Peter of Cattaneo, Francis set sail from Ancona on 21 June, for Saint-Jean d'Acre, and he was present at the siege and taking of Damietta. After preaching there to the assembled Christian forces, Francis fearlessly passed over to the infidel camp, where he was taken prisoner and led before the sultan. According to the testimony of Jacques de Vitry, who was with the crusaders at Damietta, the sultan received Francis with courtesy, but beyond obtaining a promise from this ruler of more indulgent treatment for the Christian captives, the saint's preaching seems to have effected little. Before returning to Europe, the saint is believed to have visited Palestine and there obtained for the friars the foothold they still retain as guardians of the holy places.

What is certain is that Francis was compelled to hasten back to Italy because of various troubles that had arisen there during his absence. News had reached him in the East that Matthew of Narni and Gregory of Naples, the two vicars-general whom

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he had left in charge of the order, had summoned a chapter which, among other innovations, sought to impose new fasts upon the friars, more severe than the rule required. Moreover, Cardinal Ugolino had conferred on the Poor Ladies a written rule which was practically that of the Benedictine nuns, and Brother Philip, whom Francis had charged with their interests, had accepted it. To make matters worse, John of Capella, one of the saint's first companions, had assembled a large number of lepers, both men and women, with a view to forming them into a new religious order, and had set out for Rome to seek approval for the rule he had drawn up for these unfortunates. Finally a rumour had been spread abroad that Francis was dead, so that when the saint returned to Italy with brother Elias -- he appeared to have arrived at Venice in July, 1220 -- a general feeling of unrest prevailed among the friars.

Apart from these difficulties, the order was then passing through a period of transition. It had become evident that the simple, familiar, and unceremonious ways which had marked the Franciscan movement at its beginning were gradually disappearing, and that the heroic poverty practiced by Francis and his companions at the outset became less easy as the friars with amazing rapidity increased in number. Cardinal Ugolino had already undertaken the task "of reconciling inspirations so unstudied and so free with an order of things they had outgrown." This remarkable man, who afterwards ascended the papal throne as Gregory IX, was deeply attached to Francis, whom he venerated as a saint. That Cardinal Ugolino had no small share in bringing Francis's lofty ideals "within range and compass" seems beyond dispute, and it is not difficult to recognize his hand in the important changes made in the organization of the order in the so-called Chapter of Mats. At this famous assembly, held at Porziuncola at Whitsuntide, 1220 /1221, about 5000 friars are said to have been present, besides some 500 applicants for admission to the order. Huts of wattle and mud afforded shelter for this multitude. Francis had purposely made no provision for them, but the charity of the neighbouring towns supplied them with food, while knights and nobles waited upon them.

It was on this occasion that Francis, harassed no doubt and disheartened at the tendency betrayed by a large number of the friars to relax the rigours of the rule, and feeling, perhaps unfitted for a place which now called largely for organizing abilities, **relinquished his position as general of the order** in favour of Peter of Cattaneo. But the latter died in less than a year, being succeeded as vicar-general by the unhappy Brother Elias, who continued in that office until the death of Francis. The saint, meanwhile, during the few years that remained in him, sought to impress on the friars by the silent teaching of personal example of what sort he would fain have them to be. Yet, strong and definite as the saint's convictions were, he was never a slave to a theory in regard to the observances of poverty or anything else; about him indeed, there was nothing narrow or fanatical. As for his attitude towards study, Francis desiderated for his friars only such theological knowledge as was conformable to the mission of the order, which was before all else a mission of example. Hence he regarded the accumulation of books as being at variance with the poverty his friars professed, and he resisted the eager desire for mere book-learning, so prevalent in his time, in so far as it struck at the roots of that simplicity which entered so largely into the essence of his life and ideal and threatened to stifle the spirit of prayer, which he accounted preferable to all the rest.

In 1221, Francis drew up a new rule for the Friars Minor which is very unlike any conventional rule ever made. It was too lengthy and unprecise to become a formal rule, and two years later Francis retired to Fonte Colombo, a hermitage near Rieti, and rewrote the rule in more compendious form. In this form the rule was solemnly approved by Honorius III, 29 November, 1223. This **Second Rule**, as it is usually called or Regula Bullata of the Friars Minor, is the one ever since professed throughout the First Order of St. Francis. It is based on the three vows of obedience, poverty, and chastity, special stress however being laid on poverty, which Francis sought to make the special characteristic of his order, and which became the sign to be contradicted. This vow of absolute poverty in the first and second orders and the reconciliation of the religious with the secular state in the Third Order of Penance are the chief novelties introduced by Francis in monastic regulation.

It was during Christmastide of this year (1223) that the saint conceived the idea of celebrating the Nativity "in a new manner", by reproducing in a church at Greccio the praesepio of Bethlehem, and he has thus come to be regarded as having inaugurated the population devotion of the Crib. Christmas appears indeed to have been the favourite feast of Francis, and he wished to persuade the emperor to make a special law that men should then provide well for the birds and the beasts, as well as for the poor, so that all might have occasion to rejoice in the Lord.

Early in August, 1224, Francis retired with three companions to "that rugged rock 'twixt Tiber and Arno", as Dante called La Verna, there to keep a forty days fast in preparation for Michaelmas. During this retreat the sufferings of Christ became more than ever the burden of his meditations; into few souls, perhaps, had the full meaning of the Passion so deeply entered. It was on or about the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross (14 September) while praying on the mountainside, that he beheld the marvellous vision of the seraph, as a sequel of which there appeared on his body the visible marks of the five wounds of the Crucified which, says an early writer, had long since been impressed upon his heart. Brother Leo, who was with St. Francis when he received the stigmata, has left us in his note to the saint's autograph blessing, preserved at Assisi, a clear and simple account of the miracle, which for the rest is better attested than many another historical fact. The saint's right side is described as bearing an open wound which looked as if made by a lance, while through his hands and feet were black nails of flesh, the points of which were bent backward. After the reception of the stigmata, Francis suffered increasing pains throughout his frail body, already broken by continual mortification. At the last he felt constrained to ask pardon of "Brother Ass", as he called his body, for having treated it so harshly. Worn out, moreover, as Francis now was by eighteen years of unremitting toil, his strength gave way completely, and at times his eyesight so far failed him that he was almost wholly blind. During an access of anguish, Francis paid a last visit to St. Clare at St. Damian's, and it was in a little hut of reeds, made for him in the garden there, that the saint composed that "**Cantic of the Sun**", in which his poetic genius expands itself so gloriously. This was in September, 1225.

In April, 1226, the saint dictated his testament, which he describes as a "reminder, a warning, and an exhortation". Meanwhile alarming dropsical symptoms had developed, and it was in a dying condition that Francis set out for Assisi. A roundabout

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route was taken by the little caravan that escorted him, to prevent the Perugians from attempting to carry Francis off by force so that he might die in their city, which would thus enter into possession of his coveted relics.

It was therefore under a strong guard that Francis, in July, 1226, was finally borne in safety to the bishop's palace in his native city amid the enthusiastic rejoicings of the entire populace. In the early autumn Francis, feeling the hand of death upon him, was carried to his beloved Porziuncola, that he might breathe his last sigh where his vocation had been revealed to him and whence his order had struggled into sight. On the way thither he asked to be set down, and with painful effort he invoked a beautiful blessing on Assisi, which, however, his eyes could no longer discern.

The saint's last days were passed at the Porziuncola in a tiny hut, near the chapel, that served as an infirmary. On the eve of his death, the saint, in imitation of his Divine Master, had bread brought to him and broken. This he distributed among those present, blessing Bernard of Quintaville, his first companion, Elias, his vicar, and all the others in order. "I have done my part," he said next, "may Christ teach you to do yours." Then wishing to give a last token of detachment and to show he no longer had anything in common with the world, Francis removed his poor habit and lay down on the bare ground, covered with a borrowed cloth, rejoicing that he was able to keep faith with his Lady Poverty to the end. After a while he asked to have read to him the Passion according to St. John, and then in faltering tones he himself intoned Psalm cxli. At the concluding verse, "Bring my soul out of prison", Francis was led away from earth by "Sister Death", in whose praise he had shortly before added a new strophe to his "Cantic of the Sun". It was Saturday evening, 3 October, 1226, Francis being then in the forty-fifth year of his age, and the twentieth from his perfect conversion to Christ.

The saint had, in his humility, it is said, expressed a wish to be buried on the Colle d'Inferno, a despised hill without Assisi, where criminals were executed. However this may be, his body was, on 4 October, borne in triumphant procession to the city, a halt being made at St. Damian's, that St. Clare and her companions might venerate the sacred stigmata now visible to all, and it was placed provisionally in the church of St. George (now within the enclosure of the monastery of St. Clare), where the saint had learned to read and had first preached. Many miracles are recorded to have taken place at his tomb. Francis was **canonized at St. George's by Gregory IX, 16 July, 1228**. On that day following the pope laid the first stone of the great double church of St. Francis, erected in honour of the new saint, and thither on 25 May, 1230, Francis's remains were secretly transferred by Brother Elias and buried far down under the high altar in the lower church. Here, after lying hidden for six centuries, like that of St. Clare's, Francis's coffin was found, 12 December, 1818, as a result of a toilsome search lasting fifty-two nights. This discovery of the saint's body is commemorated in the order by a special office on 12 December, and that of his translation by another on 25 May. His feast is kept throughout the Church on 4 October, and the impression of the stigmata on his body is celebrated on 17 September.

He is the one saint whom all succeeding generations have agreed in canonizing. Certain it is that those also who care little about the order he founded, and who have but scant sympathy with the Church to which he ever gave his devout allegiance, even those who know that Christianity to be Divine, find themselves, instinctively as it were, looking across the ages for guidance to the wonderful Umbrian Poverello, and invoking his name in grateful remembrance. This unique position Francis doubtless owes in no small measure to his singularly lovable and winsome personality. Few saints ever exhaled "the good odour of Christ" to such a degree as he. There was about Francis, moreover, a chivalry and a poetry which gave to his other-worldliness a quite romantic charm and beauty. Other saints have seemed entirely dead to the world around them, but Francis was ever thoroughly in touch with the spirit of the age. He delighted in the songs of Provence, rejoiced in the new-born freedom of his native city, and cherished what Dante calls the pleasant sound of his dear land. And this exquisite human element in Francis's character was the key to that far-reaching, all-embracing sympathy, which may be almost called his characteristic gift. In his heart, as an old chronicler puts it, the whole world found refuge, the poor, the sick and the fallen being the objects of his solicitude in a more special manner. Heedless as Francis ever was of the world's judgments in his own regard, it was always his constant care to respect the opinions of all and to wound the feelings of none. Wherefore he admonishes the friars to use only low and mean tables, so that "if a beggar were to come to sit down near them he might believe that he was but with his equals and need not blush."

This habit of courtesy Francis ever sought to enjoin on his disciples. "Whoever may come to us", he writes, "whether a friend or a foe, a thief or a robber, let him be kindly received", and the feast which he spread for the starving brigands in the forest at Monte Casale sufficed to show that "as he taught so he wrought". The very animals found in Francis a tender friend and protector; thus we find him pleading with the people of Gubbio to feed the fierce wolf that had ravished their flocks, because through hunger "Brother Wolf" had done this wrong. And the early legends have left us many an idyllic picture of how beasts and birds alike susceptible to the charm of Francis's gentle ways, entered into loving companionship with him; how the hunted leveret sought to attract his notice; how the half-frozen bees crawled towards him in the winter to be fed; how the wild falcon fluttered around him; how the nightingale sang with him in sweetest content in the ilex grove at the Carceri, and how his "little brethren the birds" listened so devoutly to his sermon by the roadside near Bevagna that Francis chided himself for not having thought of preaching to them before. Francis's love of nature also stands out in bold relief in the world he moved in. He delighted to commune with the wild flowers, the crystal spring, and the friendly fire, and to greet the sun as it rose upon the fair Umbrian vale. In this respect, indeed, St. Francis's "gift of sympathy" seems to have been wider even than St. Paul's, for we find no evidence in the great Apostle of a love for nature or for animals. The personification of the elements in the "Cantic of the Sun" is something more than a mere literary figure. Francis's love of creatures was not simply the offspring of a soft or sentimental disposition; it arose rather from that deep and abiding sense of the presence of God, which underlay all he said and did.

Transgender health services nearing crisis as clinics face 2800% surge in referrals 11th July 2016

There have been repeated warnings in the past few years that NHS gender identity services are struggling to keep up with a surge in demand across a range of services. Parliament's Women and Equalities Select Committee sounded the alarm in January as waiting lists exceed legal limits across a range of services, while the Care Quality Commission has warned of unacceptable backlogs at the Gender Identity Clinic at London's Charing Cross Hospital – with some patients waiting more than a year for an appointment.

The Guardian reports today that the number of people seeking referrals to the 14 Gender Identity Clinics across the UK has surged exponentially in some areas. Under data obtained through the Freedom of Information Act, the newspaper found that all the services have seen a boom in patient referrals in the past 10 years.

Nottingham's GIC saw the most marked growth, with a 2800% increase from 30 referrals in 2008 to 850 in 2015. More than 1000 are expected this year.

It was far from alone, with the Laurels clinic in Exeter – which was forced to apologise after a data leak last year – seeing a 2000% increase in referrals over a decade, while Sheffield has also seen referrals surge from single figures to several hundreds.

Louie Stafford of the LGBT Foundation warned that as backlogs for appointments grow, trans people face a wait of several years with little support.

The campaigner said: "You're referred from your GP, there is no contact with any specialists or clinicians until your first appointment at the gender identity clinic. People are completely on their own, sometimes for up to three years, dealing with issues around gender that are potentially life-threatening... it's not surprising that people get desperate in that timeframe. You can throw all the money you want at a service, but unless you have people who are trained and skilled to work in those areas, you're not going to improve capacity."

Last year, a separate report found there were 2744 patients on waiting lists for gender treatment – which means that even if no more referrals are made, the existing backlog would take over a year to clear. However, patient referrals have instead continued to increase without a corresponding increase in capacity – which means transgender people face the prospect of years stuck on waiting lists before seeing a doctor.

Under the forecasts, all GICs will have waiting lists in excess of a year by March 2017 – while those referred to the Northern Region Gender Dysphoria Service Newcastle could have a wait of twelve and a half years unless capacity expands

It would also leave patients referred to the Leeds GIC with a projected wait of 5 years 11 months, and patients referred to the Northamptonshire Gender Dysphoria Service with a projected wait of 7 years and 4 months.

The statutory NHS target waiting time is 18 weeks.

Government slammed for 'lukewarm' commitment to transgender reforms 22nd July 2016

Parliament's Women and Equalities Committee, chaired by Conservative MP Maria Miller, released a landmark report on trans issues in January. The committee recommended 35 separate reforms related to trans people: warning that the NHS is currently in violation of the law due to strained services, finding that the current process of gender recognition is not fit for purpose, and bolstering anti-discrimination protections.

The government finally released a reply to the report this month, and while it did commit to a review of the 2004 Gender Recognition Act, a large number of the recommendations were effectively rebuffed, with the Government Equalities Office merely committing to 'continue to monitor the issue' rather than pursue reform. In Parliament this week, equalities minister Caroline Dinenage came under fire from the opposition.

Labour's shadow equalities minister Angela Rayner said: "The Government took six long months to release their response to the Women and Equalities Committee report into transgender equality. LGBT campaigners have called the Government's response 'lots of polite words signifying precisely nothing'. Will the Minister explain why the Government rejected the Committee's main recommendation that the protected characteristic in the Equality Act 2010 regarding trans people should be changed to 'gender identity'?"

SNP Margaret Ferrier also questioned the report, asking, "Does the Minister accept the assessment that this has been a lost opportunity to ensure that all trans and non-binary people are clearly protected in law, and will she commit herself to working with them and others to achieve true equality for all trans people?"

Equalities minister Caroline Dinenage defended her work. She said: "I do refute that. The response to the Women and Equalities Select Committee took representations from more than 12 different Government Departments and public bodies. It was an entirely comprehensive piece of work, and a very large number of the recommendations were accepted and are being followed up, not least the commitment to look again at the Gender Recognition Act 2004, which trans people tell me is disturbing, long winded and in much need of reform. This Department takes its commitment to trans people very seriously. I rebut the allegations that this has been a missed opportunity, given that we have taken on board so many of the Committee's recommendations. The inquiry was a ground-breaking piece of work which has encouraged at least 12 Government organisations to look again at what they do, and to make some very strong and firm commitments to the transgender population to demonstrate that we support them and are paying attention to their needs."



Katie Hopkins claims NHS shouldn't fund transgender people's 'life choices' 1st August 2016

The controversy-monger made the claim on her LBC talk show over the weekend, after right-wing Tory MP Peter Bone attacked fertility provisions for trans people on the NHS, which allows people to freeze sperm and eggs before undergoing gender surgery. As surgery often makes transgender people infertile, the routine choice is offered so they can have biological children later, as it is in similar cases for people undergoing cancer treatment and other surgeries.

But Hopkins attacked it as a "life choice".

She said: "Is it OK that we are paying for these individuals and their life choices? As much as I love to wave the rainbow coloured banner and much as I see that that's the way the world's going, I don't agree with it. I don't think we should be paying for trans people to have their eggs frozen on the NHS. If we lived in a world of endless resources, there would be no problem with the amount of cash available but the fact is we are 4 or 5 billion pounds in debt with our NHS. The fact is we've got cataract operations being cancelled, three out of four trusts now do not perform cataract operations until the patient is perfectly blind because we don't have the funds to approve them. We have people waiting 12 months for operations. I waited for mine personally for 3.5 years – I fell off the waiting list because it was so long. Do we really need to pander to the trans community and their whims? I say no."

The NHS Trust that houses the gender clinic at Charing Cross Hospital has served notice that it will cease providing the service – and try to hand it over to another provider. 25th August 2016

The Gender Identity Clinic at Charing Cross has been helping transgender people since 1966, and is governed by West London Mental Health Trust. However, following repeated warnings about spiralling backlogs in the sector as demand for trans services booms, the Trust has today announced that it is planning to **terminate its contract**. The news comes just months after the UK's health watchdog recommended an urgent expansion of the service, warning that patients were being let down by limited capacity.

As the commissioner of gender identity services, it will be up to NHS England to seek to find a replacement provider for the service.

The Trust says the change would not impact services for patients, contingent upon NHS England finding a "suitable alternative provider" as quickly as possible. But trans activists are concerned that patients may end up falling through the gaps. In a statement, the Trust says it will attempt to ensure a "smooth" handover. "Demand for gender identity services has risen sharply in recent years as society has grown more understanding and awareness of NHS services has developed. This has been challenging for the clinic and resulted in waiting times that are longer than we would like. However, the clinic's staff have continued to invest huge amounts of energy and, working with NHS England, have made great strides in bringing these waiting times down while still providing a service which is rated highly by patients.

"However, as WLMHT moves forward it is necessary to refocus the services that we provide. The Board has made a decision that the medium-term strategic focus for the Trust will be to develop mental health services, physical care and integration between the two. As a result, the Trust has come to the conclusion that patients requiring gender identity services would be better served in the long term by another provider, and has therefore served notice on our contract to NHS England."

The Trust also issued a number of assurances to patients. It says: "This does not mean services are stopping now – we will continue to provide services as normal until such time as a new provider is able to take over; this is likely to be at least six months. "Patients from London and the South East will not be left without services or have to travel much further – NHS England as the commissioner for gender identity services will find a suitable alternative provider as quickly as possible.

"Patients will not have to start their treatment all over again – continuity of care for our patients is the number one priority for clinic staff. GIC staff will work closely with NHS England and a new provider to ensure disruption to treatment is kept to an absolute minimum.

"This does not mean we will let services deteriorate – WLMHT and the GIC will continue to deliver on plans we have developed with NHS England to improve access to and quality of services while it continues as the provider. We will not reduce staffing levels – while we remain the provider of this service we have an obligation to ensure there are sufficient qualified staff to maintain and continue improvements in access and quality. We will ensure a smooth handover to the new provider, working closely with our colleagues at the GIC and NHS England. We will keep patients and staff informed about progress on the handover to a new provider and what this means for them as our work with NHS England develops over the coming months."

UPDATE: The Trust's initial version of events appears to be in some parts disputed.

Specialist **Dr Stuart Lorimer** has suggested that the decision was actually taken by the GIC service, in order to migrate transgender services away from a mental health trust, though this conflicts with the reasons given in the initial statement.

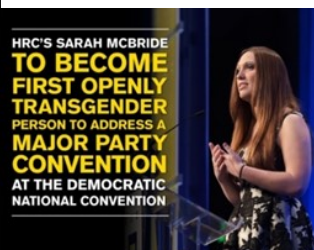
Dr James Barrett, Lead Consultant at the Gender Identity Clinic (GIC), on behalf of GIC clinicians, said: "The gender identity clinic is not closing. To clarify, we clinicians have long felt that West London Mental Health Trust is not a good fit for the unique and specific service we provide (the vast majority of those we see are not mentally ill). Increasingly, we feel our patients would be better served by us if we worked somewhere better able to support and develop a more tailored approach to gender. There are a number of options in terms of alternative providers. We would not make any move unless confident that patient care would be markedly improved. Until that point, current arrangements will still apply. Our aim is for any change to be a positive one, and any transition to be as seamless as possible."

U.S.NEWS—Headlines only. For more information contact editor at carol.nixon2012@btinternet.com

The city of Cleveland passed a transgender rights ordinance, days before hosting the 2016 Republican National Convention. 14th July 2016

Failed Presidential candidate Dr Ben Carson has compared transgender people to racists, saying they “don’t make sense”. 19th July 2016

School bathroom ban ‘humiliates’ trans students by making them wear green bracelets 22nd July 2016



Trans campaigner addresses Democratic Convention in historic first 25.7.2016

A dozen states have filed a brief in favour of the Obama Administration’s historic guidance on bathrooms for transgender students. 27th July 2016

Chelsea Manning could face decades of solitary confinement after suicide attempt 29th July 2016

US Supreme Court says school can block trans student from using male bathrooms during lawsuit 3rd August 2016

This proud Texas Christian mom is taking on the world for her trans daughter’s rights 11th August 2016

Texas and a group of other states will ask a federal judge to halt Obama’s historic guidance on bathrooms for trans students. 12th August 2016

A federal judge has blocked an Obama administration directive that called on schools to safeguard the rights of transgender students, amid a lawsuit from the state of Texas. 22nd August 2016

A transgender prisoner failed to be recognised as a woman, now she has been found dead in a men’s prison 24.8.16

Girl claims she’ll fail gym because trans students are allowed in the locker rooms 25 Aug 2016

A barber’s shop turned away a trans teen because they insisted he was female. 24 Aug 2016

Judge rules that University of North Carolina can’t use HB2 to block trans bathroom access 26 Aug 2016

A new video released by the US Department of Justice, hopes to train law enforcement officers to be more respectful when it comes to interactions with trans people. 25th August 2016

Seven Jewish summer camps across America are rolling out a more trans-inclusive gender-neutral form of Hebrew. 12th August 2016

Study calls for trans identification to be removed from list of mental illnesses 27th July 2016,

After the first of several field trials, a recently released study recommends the World Health Organization (W.H.O.) remove transgender identity from its current list of mental illnesses. The change is under review for the 2018 edition of the W.H.O. codebook, which classifies diseases and influences the treatment of patients across the globe. The study, led by the National Institute of Psychiatry Ramón de la Fuente Muñiz, consisted of interviews with 250 trans people that found their distress and dysfunction were linked to experiences of social rejection and violence – not to having gender identity issues.

The motion to move the mental health label from transgender identity has not faced opposition from W.H.O., but other parts of the proposed change are stirring debate. The proposal would not take transgender out of the codebook completely because the classification is widely used for billing and insurance coverage of medical services and for conducting research, but many are unsure as to where the identity should be moved to. Under the current proposed change, trans identification would be relocated to a newly created category: “Conditions related to sexual health.” However, many disagree with this move because being transgender has nothing to do with sex.

Dr. Griet De Cuypere, a psychiatrist at the Centre of Sexology and Gender at University Hospital in Belgium and a board member of the World Professional Association for Transgender Health, believes giving it a more separate designation would be better.

Others are taking issue with the proposed change of name, from “transsexualism” to “gender incongruence,” chosen to try to express “a discrepancy between a person’s experienced gender identity and their body,” said Dr Geoffrey Reed, a psychologist who is coordinating the mental health and behaviour disorders section in the upcoming edition of the codebook. The issue is that “incongruence” has different connotations in different languages. In English, it sounds kind of neutral – my association is with geometry,” Dr Reed said. “But in Spanish, it sounds very bad, it sounds kind of psychotic”. So, the proposal in Spanish is “gender discordance,” which, he said, “in English sounds really bad.”

Though the road to change remains long, researchers see promise in continued studies and more understanding of the lives of trans individuals. The lead investigator, Dr Rebeca Robles of the Mexican National Institute of Psychiatry, said, “The next step is to confirm this in further studies in different countries, ahead of the approval of the W.H.O. revision to International Classification of Diseases in 2018.”

SHRINKING THE FOOTPRINT—A TIME FOR CREATION (Please see cover page)



'Time for Creation' links in naturally with the time when we celebrate harvest thanksgivings. Every act of worship should be one that is thankful for all of the mysteries and wonders of God's creation but, in a special way, Creationtide follows the Psalmists' call to join our song of praise with the forests, rivers and fields who bring their own praise to the Creator. Our common home is crying out to be cherished and our thankful praise should stir us to action and to tread more gently on the earth and care for our shared environment.

Some quotations

The world has been created for everyone's use, but you few rich are trying to keep it for yourselves. For not merely the possession of the earth, but the very sky, the air, and the sea are claimed for the use of the rich few. ... The earth belongs to all, not just to the rich. **St. Ambrose of Milan (340-397)**

Let us be 'protectors' of Creation, protectors of God's plan inscribed in nature, protectors of one another and of the environment. Let us not allow omens of destruction and death to accompany the advance of this world!" **From the Installation Mass Homily of Pope Francis, (2013)**

We need an imaginative commitment to new ways of approaching the subject of climate change that does not accept a deterministic or selfish nationalistic policy. We cannot simply look at ourselves and say, 'we must do better', and kick the ladder away from the vast majority of humankind that is struggling to find the prosperity that we enjoy so richly. This is not a standalone issue. It cuts across all we do. **Archbishop Justin Welby (2015)**

Prayers for the Earth based on the fifth mark of mission:

'To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth'

God, creator of the universe,

Fill us with your love for the creation, for the natural world around us, for the earth from which we come and to which we will return. Awake in us energy to work for your world; let us never fall into complacency, ignorance, or being overwhelmed by the task before us. Help us to restore, remake, renew. Amen

Jesus, Redeemer of the World,

Remind us to consider the lost lilies, the disappearing sparrows; teach us not to squander precious resources; help us value habitats: seas, deserts, forests and seek to preserve this world in its diversity. Alert us to the cause of all living creatures destroyed wantonly for human greed or pleasure; Help us to value what we have left and to learn to live without taking more than we give. Amen

Spirit of the Living God,

At the beginning you moved over the face of the waters. You brought life into being, the teeming life that finds its way through earth and sea and air, that makes its home around us, everywhere. You know how living things flourish and grow How they co-exist; how they feed and breed and change Help us to understand those delicate relationships, value them, and keep them from destruction. Amen



COMPETITION

Invitation to write a hymn on the theme "The God of Creation" for the competition organised by Settle Methodist Circuit's 17th Annual Hymn Festival

First Prizes of £150 and second prize of £100 for both the Open Class and the Local Class

Please indicate the TUNE to which your hymn is to be sung. Please do NOT compose your own tune.

The closing date for entries is 3rd October 2016

[Details and application form](http://users.daelnet.co.uk/allinson/hymn-writing-competition-2016.htm) at <http://users.daelnet.co.uk/allinson/hymn-writing-competition-2016.htm>

