



SIBYLS LOGO - ROBYN GOLDEN - HANW 28/MAY/2018

***Self-rejection is the greatest enemy of the spiritual life because it contradicts the sacred voice that calls us the "Beloved." Being the Beloved constitutes the core truth of our existence.***

- Henri J.M. Nouwen

## SIBYLS NEWS

**Issue no. 85**

**September 2018**

Dear Sibyls

Greetings. This issue has been somewhat delayed, by circumstances. I'm sorry. When I first wrote this, the glorious summer was still not quite over. So I wrote: I trust you have bared as much flesh as is decent and/or safe. I myself still have what I consider to be quite attractively striped feet though my knuckles now trail even closer to the ground on account of the arm-elongating strain of striving to irrigate, by watering can, the brown and arid patch of desert that used to be my garden. A highlight of my summer was escaping from the drought in Yorkshire at Lourdes where I was immersed in the icy cold waters of the grotto's spring. It felt surprisingly meaningful to me: a rite of passage and blessing from God on my new life after transitioning.

But now autumn is upon us. At least I don't have to water the garden or cut the grass any more....

As you will all know, the government is consulting on reform to the gender recognition act (<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/reform-of-the-gender-recognition-act-2004>) and I hope you have used or will use this opportunity to have your say in this matter of such importance to trans people. The issue can

raise very strong feelings and this newsletter includes articles from people who take very different views. It will be interesting to see what the government eventually decides to do, though they have signalled clearly that some sort of reform will happen: it is a matter of how far they are prepared to go down the route of simplification and self-identification. Not quite as tricky as Brexit perhaps but let's hope a compromise is possible that most of us will find acceptable.

I am pleased that this edition includes a number of articles by Sibyls other than myself. Keep them coming! This means that some may find the newsletter too long. I apologise for this but felt everything was worth including. I suggest you read whatever you find interesting and skim or ignore whatever you don't. I met some of you at Hilfield (for the last time at that excellent but not very accessible venue) and it was another highly enjoyable and enriching weekend. Next time most of you will hear from me will be at Christmas or even perhaps in the New Year....

Pauline [pauline.fleck@btinternet.com](mailto:pauline.fleck@btinternet.com)

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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](http://www.sibyls.co.uk) E-mail: [enquiries@sibyls.co.uk](mailto: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, except confidentiality. Your details are held in total confidence and will not be given to any other members without your permission.

**Sibyls' Website - [www.sibyls.co.uk](http://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.

Please note that the members' section of the website is no longer password protected although the older newsletters have been archived and still protected.

### **Facebook Groups**

Two Facebook Groups are available to enable Sibyls and other trans Christians to communicate and express and exchange views and news. They are the Sibyls Members Group and TranschristianUK. Do join up if you are not already members.

## **Forthcoming Events**

- European Forum of LGBT Groups – 26 June to 30 June 2019. Sibyls, led by Elaine Summers and Susan Gilchrist, are fully involved in the preparations and delivery of this conference
- Sibyls Residential Weekend – 27 to 29 September 2019. The venue is Purley Chase Centre in Warwickshire. The cost for full board is only £125. There will be further information about the weekend nearer the time. Because of the Euro Forum conference, it is proposed to have only one Sibyls weekend next year.

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## **SIBYLS LONDON EVENING MEETINGS**

**6:00 p.m. at St Anne's Church, Dean Street, Soho.**

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

**THESE EVENTS ARE 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. Include any details you think appropriate. You can email me privately at [sibylslink@gmail.com](mailto:sibylslink@gmail.com). (If you would like your request for prayers to be made available to the whole group, the Sibyls members can of course email the Sibyls email group instead)

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. Details: 5.30 service at St Anne's, 55 Dean Street, Soho W1D 6AF, 50 yards up on the left from Shaftesbury Avenue (it doesn't look like a church but it is), and from about 6.30 a gathering at a Soho restaurant.

You can just turn up on the evening; however it would also be helpful to get some idea of numbers in advance. If you do know you are coming, please email me at [sibylslink@gmail.com](mailto:sibylslink@gmail.com). We normally decide on the restaurant to go to at the end of the service. If you are late please ring 07596 197 665.

**London Meetings for 2018**

**11 October, 13 December**

**All Meetings start at 18:00**

**Susan Gilchrist**

## Regional Meetings

The recent exercise to comply with Data Protection Regulations despite its irksome elements, did at least show that amongst a large majority of Sibyls there is a very clear appetite to have regional meetings – i.e. opportunities for Sibyls who live within reasonable travelling distance of each other informally to get together. We have not yet organized this to the point where each area has a volunteer to be its regional organizer and the distribution of members around the country does not lend itself readily to neat groupings. In the first instance, until we get this properly organized, it might be best for anyone interested in attending a regional meeting, in whatever part of the country, in the first instance to contact [pauline.fleck@btinternet.com](mailto:pauline.fleck@btinternet.com) and she will attempt to put them in touch with the nearest organizer.

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## SIBYLS REFLECTIVE DAY AT THE SISTERS OF ST ANDREW, LEWISHAM 10<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2018

### **MY PEACE I GIVE YOU**

*The sessions will be facilitated by the Revd. Simon Buckley Rector, St Anne's  
Dean Street Soho London*

*Jesus said: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you  
as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."*

*—John 14:27*



**Peace, Shalom comes from the root verb shalam, meaning "to be complete, perfect, and full." Shalom is much more than the absence of war and conflict; it is the wholeness that the entire human race seeks. During the course of the day we will reflect on this Peace, what it means for us, what it means for others, and finding the peace which allows us to be instruments of God's Love**

**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: "Peace for Ourselves"**  
**12.15-12.45 Eucharist**  
**13.00-14.00 Lunch**  
**14.00-15.00 Session 2: "Peace with Others"**  
**15.00-15.30 Tea**  
**15.30-16.30 Session 3: "Make Me an Instrument of Your Peace"**  
**16.30 Closing thoughts and Evening Prayer**  
  
**18.30 Optional Evening Meal in a Local Restaurant**

**For more information please email: [sibylslink@gmail.com](mailto:sibylslink@gmail.com)**

**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](mailto:welcome@sisters-of-st-andrew.com)**

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#### **Where to find us**

As we have a limited number of parking spaces we need to know when you book if you are coming by car or public transport. We are in proximity to the A2. A20 and the M25. Satnav: 51.4629 - 0.0000 (this is the entrance of our drive)

By train:

St. Andrews is well served by trains from London's main line stations to Lewisham and Blackheath as well as the Docklands Light Railway to Lewisham, but at present it is best to avoid Lewisham as there are huge road works and developments near the station

Take the over ground train to Blackheath (Direction usually Dartford) from any of the following Main Line stations

- London Bridge / Cannon Street / Victoria / Charing Cross
- the time of the journey will vary according to which station. eg. London Bridge is the quickest about 10 minutes and from Victoria about 24 minutes.

Once out of the station and onto the High Street cross directly to the bus top opposite and take the (numbers 108/54 or the 89) bus - direction Lewisham - and get off at second bus stop @ St. Margaret's Church, Branham Road.

Cross the road and our property is next to the bus stop with green iron gates and lots of trees. Do not go around the drive but come straight ahead to the main entrance left of the chapel.

Ring us on your mobile if there is a problem - 0208 852 1662

By bus:

We have an excellent bus service from Blackheath station with bus stops just outside the property. (Numbers: 54-89-108)

Ring us on your mobile if there is a problem - 0208 852 1662

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BOOKING FORM: Please email the completed form to: [sibylslink@gmail.com](mailto:sibylslink@gmail.com). or print out and send the completed form with your donation to: Sibyls Day Meeting, 8 Greenways Drive, Maidenhead, Berks, SL6 5DU.

Your Name:

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Address:

.....

.....

Post code: ..... Telephone:

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E-mail:

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Dietary Requirements

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Will you stay for the meal in a local restaurant on the Saturday evening?

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Are You a Member of the Sibyls?

.....

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

The suggested donation for the event is £10-£35. Lunch is included: BUT please give less or more as you are able.

***We do not want anyone to be deterred from coming if they cannot afford this.***

Please make cheques payable to "Mr P. A. Raftery - The Sibyls".

For catering purposes, if you can please book at least 5 days in advance. Donations can be made on the day.

I enclose a donation for this event of £

.....

Your booking is provisional until we have received this form (completed), with your donation. If you require confirmation, please tick the box on the right and we will send you confirmation to your e-mail address above or else please enclose a stamped addressed envelope.

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 accommodation has to be booked directly with the Sisters of St Andrew. Accommodation is self-catering only but very comprehensive kitchen facilities are provided. There are also plenty of restaurants in the area. The accommodation is available on a first come first served basis. Details are on the Sisters of St Andrew website at <http://www.sisters-of-st-andrew.com/pages/donations.pdf>.

## **The Hardest Part - Pauline**

This item is now discontinued. The last bubble has been blown, the last semi-occluded vocal tract exercise completed. Your editor has in fact given up on this, pretty well defeated and demoralised. She has accepted that some aspects of womanhood are simply unattainable for trans women (or at least for her). She is reconciled to the inevitability of telephonic misgendering and other embarrassments consequent upon an obdurately unfeminine voice (sometimes this can cause rather worse than mere embarrassment – see <https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2018/09/08/transgender-woman-bank-account-frozen-sounded-like-a-man/>). She can sometimes (in her more positive moments) see that these humiliations, if patiently endured, may actually be spiritually beneficial.....

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## **Sibyls weekend at Holy Rood House, Thirsk: personal impressions...Helen Mather**

Holy Rood House, a new venue, had been chosen as a northern replacement for the very popular weekends at the URC centre at Windermere, which has regrettably now closed. The weekend was designed around Christina Beardsley's and Chris Dowd's recently published book *Transfaith*.

It looked interesting, but I was triply booked that weekend. In the end, Sibyls won, but it was a difficult choice. It was partly a break for me; partly companionship for a close friend (Amy, who doesn't need any encouragement!)

We'd decided to travel together, but there was no rush. Thirsk isn't very far from Nottingham: time for a cup of tea and a natter first. I'm glad I wasn't driving: the motorways seemed more crowded than usual. There wasn't much point in stopping, so we were among the earliest to arrive.

We were greeted by one of the staff, Caroline, who had the most delightful accent, with the offer of as much tea as we wanted. Yorkshire hospitality indeed: an offer you can't refuse! When we came to unpack, we found that we were sharing a room. We hadn't expected that; Amy remarked later: "*They'll think we're an item!*" All the rooms are named: ours was "Tenderness", with a picture of an angel stroking a black cat. We had a fine view out over the park opposite the house to the hills of the North York Moors. Few others had arrived yet, so we set off to explore the large garden and make friends with the house's pet goats.

Back at the house later, it was time for more tea, and cakes. And catching up. We eventually numbered nine guests: not a large party, but not the least we've had; at the evening meal, we were almost lost in the large dining room: large enough for at least twice as many guests.

The first meeting of the weekend wasn't in the main house but in Thorpe House, next door. This became our base for all the weekend's discussion sessions. We had an upstairs room: I suspect the only one with AV facilities, but it also had the same good views as our room as a diversion...



Tina and Chris presented an overview of *Transfaith*: written jointly, and based largely on Chris's 2012 PhD project on the experiences of trans people in the church. Several important themes emerged from this presentation and the following discussion: there is an increasing awareness of trans issues in society (but at the same time, an increased hostility in some quarters); there is a changing self-image among trans people, and a move away from the gender binary toward a more genderfluid model; and there is an emerging acceptance of trans people in the mainstream churches, and with it, a need for appropriate liturgy. ... and we acquired the Word of the Weekend: "big-ender" (bi-gender)!

The session moved smoothly into Evening Worship based on Holy Rood House's own book of liturgies and prayers. We read through the evening prayers one by one around the room: a quiet and fitting end to the day. We agreed that we should use this book for the rest of the weekend, as appropriate.

But could we get away? No! Our discussion continued for some 20 minutes until we decided it was time for bed!

Saturday morning dawned damp. We hadn't expected much better this weekend, even after the unseasonably hot spring. Why does the weather break just when you don't want it to?

Breakfast, in the big room, wasn't quite the big offering some of our venues have offered. No "full English", but well satisfying nevertheless. Better for thinking on!

There was time for a little exploration before today's first session. The town centre isn't far away, so Amy and I decided to have a look. We discovered a typical little Yorkshire market town with a cobbled square; the Saturday market stallholders were just setting up, but it was too early for any shopping and we were short of time, and wet. Another day...

And now next door for the weekend's second session; I really must wear thicker-soled shoes: this pebbled driveway is playing havoc with my feet! Today we were in the downstairs room round a big table. Now this is a real conference room. No views though...

The session started with a short time of prayer, then led into a discussion of Tina and Chris's suggested liturgies from *Transfaith*. These are significant at a time when such liturgies are being discussed in the wider church. Tina and Chris added their own views on where their respective churches (Anglican and URC) stand on new liturgy. Tina and I agree that the Church of England shows willing, but has a way to catch up!

After the now-customary generous tea and biscuits in the main house, we returned (by way of the cobbles) for today's second session, which gave us an opportunity for further feedback. Chris encouraged us to make suggestions for what we think the churches should be doing/saying/teaching that would be helpful to trans people. A very lively discussion ensued. The main points that emerged were a need for training, both for clergy and for congregations; and welcoming and inclusivity within

our churches. We covered a great deal of ground, and the discussion carried on well after the end of the session.

Saturday afternoon was free time. Amy and I had narrowed our various choices down to two: explore the nearer edge of the North York Moors as far as Rievaulx or browse the nearby town of Ripon. We chose Ripon: there's bound to be a coffee shop to escape to if it rains...

It stayed dry, and by the time we'd parked and walked to the cathedral the sun was well out; it seemed a pity to go inside yet. But the cathedral was one reason why we came here. I for one hadn't been here for at least 35 years. And there was music too: the local choral society was rehearsing for a concert that evening. Hmm... Puccini's *Messa di Gloria* – I know that! Very catchy. We spent an enjoyable couple of hours inside exploring; unfortunately quite a lot of other people had the same idea. Maybe I'm used to my cathedrals being rather quieter!

The cathedral is on the edge of the town and there was more to see. It's uphill from here, it seems. And it was raining. Where's that coffee shop?

We looked out at the town's market square (they all seem to have one round here) from the shelter of the local Costa. Browsing will have to wait for the next visit. Perversely the sun was out by the time we returned to the cathedral...

Saturday evening, after the meal, is traditionally a lighter time. The in-house entertainments of former years (and larger houseparties) have become film nights, usually with a trans-related theme. Tonight's film was *A Fantastic Woman*. The others tell me that it was a good film, but I found it uncomfortably close to my own recent experiences and left after ten minutes for the solitude of the garden. I eventually found my way to the Chapel where I could be alone and quiet.

I returned, somewhat tearful, for the last of the tea and biscuits and just in time for the evening worship. This was based around Psalm 139, but wasn't a formal Evening Office, more a reflection. We started with an introduction, taken from *Transfaith*, and followed with a complete reading of the psalm. It's long been a favourite of Sibyls, and my own special favourite. I'd already asked to read it, and put all I could into it. After a silence, Tina invited our thoughts. The discussion could have led anywhere, but settled on two themes: God's inescapably revealing scrutiny; and change and identity. Then we re-read the psalm individually, verse by verse. The evening finished with very short individual prayers, the Lord's Prayer and a blessing. Or should have: we carried on for another ten minutes on all sorts of topics!

It's been a busy day: maybe early to bed? None of the talking into the early hours I remember from Sibyls weekends of past years!

For me, Sunday means Sunday Best; well, tidier than my usual weekday clothing! I'd made my choice, so I offered Amy a skirt she's had her eye on for some time, and matching top and jewellery. Sorted!

After breakfast, our last discussion session. We started as yesterday with a short prayer for the beginning of the day. Today's session was a Bible study taken from

*Transfaith*, on the raising of Lazarus (*John 11:32-44*). After a short introduction to the passage in the context of a “coming-out”: “*trapped within, but then set free...*”, we read through the narrative. Tina had prepared a series of points for discussion, though we didn’t always follow them!

After a thoughtful discussion on Jesus’s embracing both male and female characteristics and his easy relationship with both men and women; and a look at the relationship between this passage and his coming death and burial, we returned to the topic by considering the tension between the transitioning person and their families and congregations. There was much said about invoking the need to protect perceived vulnerable groups (when used as a diversionary tactic) and genuine protection of hurting family members, both of which may rob the transitioning person of the encouragement they seek. The discussion then turned to consider the usefulness of prior preparation well before transition. At this point we ran out of time. Coffee beckons!

The big comfortable lounge seemed an appropriate place to hold *Sibyls Together*, a regular feature of these weekends, and the only real chance we have to discuss *Sibyls* business openly between ourselves: why move? Afterwards there was time to talk about all the things we hadn’t time for earlier, before the last meeting of the weekend.

Tina led our Communion service. We were using the Julian of Norwich liturgy, which uses both male and female images of God.

Apart from the Prayer of Consecration, we all shared in the readings and prayers. And today we had music; we were using *Hymns of Hope and Healing*: new words to familiar tunes. Amy had brought her fiddle, just in case. She admitted: “*I normally fill in the gaps...*” Our two readings were from 2 Corinthians 5 (“*see, everything has been made new...*”) and Mark 4 (two parables on the growth of the sown seed); Tina spoke briefly on the first of these.

The inclusive nature of the liturgy lent a new flavour to the service. We finished with the “Christa” hymn: a hymn to the female Christ. While I myself have prayed at times to my “big sister”, I found this explicit, public expression somewhat uncomfortable!

Yet it was all in the familiar *Sibyls* style: prayers with candles; big hugs all round in the peace; and passing the bread and cup from one to the next... A fitting end to the weekend.

It’s nearly lunch time, but could we get away? Any excuse to talk!

So, almost over. So soon. And with a last meal together, the weekend was really over.

One last tradition before we part: the group photograph; no time before lunch! Fortunately it had stayed dry. The garden seemed the right place; the garden seat was large enough for the whole group: no shuffling to get everyone in. And now we can go home...

So what did I think of Holy Rood House: how does it compare with Windermere? And what did I think of the weekend? I liked the house: very friendly staff; good meals; comfortable accommodation; and more accessible than Windermere. I'd like to have seen the gardens on a sunny day though! North Yorkshire's different from the Lake District, but there seems plenty of interest nearby. The weekend was very concentrated: there was a lot to get through, though interesting. I think it gave us an insight into how trans issues are (at last) becoming accepted in the mainstream churches; and an opportunity to make an input into the debate.

I personally was glad there were relatively few of us: I felt less isolated and more included than I might have been in a larger group. Thanks to all who made me feel welcome. Now for next time...

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## **FEMINIST OBJECTIONS TO SELF-IDENTIFICATION**

Jay Walmsley

I read Susan's article in Newsletter 84 about feminist objections to transsexuals being allowed to self-identify. (Forgive my use of the word transsexual but to me it is a very descriptive word.) Susan identifies two concerns that feminists have, one, that men disguised as women may enter women's spaces for purposes of sexual attack and two, that women fear men will use it to exert power over women. Susan contends that these are misunderstandings. When women get accused of misunderstanding it usually means that they understand all too well!

The problem the transgendered world has is that it thinks it is right (and justified) to be transgendered and therefore whatever they do must be right. Consequently no-one is entitled to a contrary opinion or any reservations. What many transgendered people forget is that while they are entirely justified in being transgendered, they also have a duty of consideration to others.

All women know that most men given half a chance will try to take control, to be in charge and tell women what to do. No woman wants or likes that. Many transgendered people want to be accepted as women but retain that masculine urge to be in charge, to tell others what to do, and especially to tell women what to do. Women really don't like that; bad enough from men, intolerable from transsexuals. To give a simple example I think back to my days of running the group. At Sibyls Together the issue of support for wives was a frequent topic. Noticeably it was the transsexuals who spoke on behalf of their spouses, very rarely the wives on their own account.

The feminists have an entirely justified fear that a lot of unreconstructed men posing as women will invade their space and try to take over, creating a great deal of unhappiness.

As things stand most women and most feminists accept transsexuals fairly readily. It is known that they have gone through a rigorous process and have been approved by an expert panel. They have proved they can live as women, most have had

surgery. Provided they work at fitting in, still being themselves but considerate of others, objections either never arise or tend to fade away. However the prospect of vastly increased numbers of men self-identifying as women alters that balance and is deeply troubling. That goodwill could be lost.

The other factor of which Susan makes no mention is men's violence to women. Men punch much harder than women and many do it. The domestic violence charities reckon that one in four women will suffer domestic violence and that's a lot. I have seen or heard of more than enough cases to know that violence to women is widespread and utterly horrible. Women are and have every reason to be wary of men, at least until they prove their trustworthiness. Fears that men will use light regulation to invade women's spaces to inflict violence on former or current partners, girlfriends etc are not unreasonable.

Then there is the risk of sexual attack. I suspect that control and violence are the concerns that worry most women but the risk of sexual attack cannot be ignored.

Women want spaces free of men. For example there are in my dance class several women who are there simply because it is a place where there are no men and they can enjoy the company of other women without men. What concerns feminists and indeed other women is that they do not want a load of unreconstructed men with full male genitalia having the legal status of women and with access to their rights and space. In my view no-one with fully functioning male genitalia is a woman and should never be granted the legal status of a woman. Medical problems excepted.

The prospect of men with full male genitalia having access to women's spaces is abhorrent to most women. Calling themselves women adds insult to injury. Castration goes a long way to show good faith. And as for unisex loos – the number of women who like that idea is tiny.

The existing process under the Gender Recognition Act offers checks and balances and provides reassurance to all parties. Removing or diminishing its power will not be good for women and eventually will prove harmful to the cause of transsexuals.

I fully realise the irony of my writing this piece. However someone has to put the case.

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### **A response from Susan Gilchrist**

Note: This article contains a number of internet links. Click on them if you are reading this online: otherwise copy them into your browser to download the documents

In Jay's response to my article in Newsletter 84 she correctly notes that I identify two concerns that feminists have, one, that men disguised as women may enter women's spaces for purposes of sexual attack and two, that women fear men will use it to exert power over women. She notes that I contend that these are misunderstandings, and she then goes on to say that: "*When women get accused of misunderstanding it usually means that they understand all too well!*" Unfortunately what she states about my misunderstanding is her misunderstanding of what I

meant. I was instead referring to the differing views on how gender identity develops. I totally accept that this was a genuine mistake by Jay, and also on my part for not making it more clear, but what she said also betrayed her own feelings. Her perceptions are common to many people and they also demand a response. You can find my detailed response online at Gilchrist, S. (2018): “*Self-Declaration and Gender Diverse People*”: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/243P-SelfDeclaration.pdf>. The United Kingdom Government is currently consulting on proposals to reform the 2004 Gender Recognition Act. This consultation closes on the 19<sup>th</sup> October. For this reason, can I ask you to do two things: first to read this detailed response and then to complete and submit the consultation document before the deadline date.

People cross dress and manipulate gender for many reasons and two completely different views about how atypical gender identities develop are currently held. For many lesbians and feminists male to female transsexuals are predatory men who seek to exert power and domination over women, who manipulate femininity to their own desires and advantage by adopting a female role. For transsexuals, (as a generalisation), their understanding of history instead is one of a lifetime being forced to live in a gender role which one cannot identify with, with all of the anguish, distress, rejection and high suicide rates that are involved. The former viewpoint disregards the neurophysiological processes which dominate early development, the latter includes them. This is the misunderstanding I was referring to. However I will now use a stronger word instead of misunderstanding: it is the refusal by some more radical sections of the feminist movement to recognise the depth and nature of how transgender identities develop in their pursuit of a radical agenda, where the only reasons why male to female transsexuals seek gender reassignment are for sexual abuse, to seek power over women or to adopt the trappings of femininity for sensual or personal rewards.

That is why an extended study of these early processes is essential if true understanding is to be obtained. The current scientific consensus, which is supported by all of the major professional medical institutions involved in this area regard the core elements of both gender and sexual identities as features which arise very early in development which do not respond to the predations of others and cannot be changed in later life. This means that they are identity driven. Both the consequence of this consensus and the results of my own research show that there must be as wide a range of moral attitudes and behaviour among the gender and sexually variant behaviour as in the community at large

That is not reflected in the statements that Jay makes. She says that: “*The problem the transgendered world has is that it thinks it is right (and justified) to be transgendered and therefore whatever they do must be right. Consequently, she says, no-one is entitled to a contrary opinion or any reservations*”. She also states that; “*All women know that most men given half a chance will try to take control, to be in charge and tell women what to do*”. She also states that “*I make no mention is men’s violence to women in what I have written*”. It was not in disregard of these concerns it was precisely BECAUSE of these concerns that in my article I strongly emphasised that absolute responsibility must be exercised. This is also why, in my article, I gave very strong support to the paper by Debbie Hayton which emphasises



the absolute need, and which reflects many of Jay's views, to take full account of women's fears and concerns.

My own article which Jay was commenting on can be accessed in the Sibyls Newsletter No 84 or online at Gilchrist, S. (2018): "*Transgender People and Women's Concerns*": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/243P-TransgenderSocialIssues.pdf> and Debbie's article can be accessed at: Hayton, Debbie. (2018) "*A Plea to Trans Activists: We Can Protect Trans Rights Without Denying Biology*" <http://quillette.com/2018/03/30/plea-trans-activists-can-protect-trans-rights-without-denying-biology/>

In all of my work I have emphasised the need to apply a moral code in which those who seek to achieve the highest moral standards of society should be highly regarded, while those who seek to take advantage of the situation by engaging in any form of abuse or immoral behaviour, including sexual abuse should be very severely condemned for their acts. Awareness of that moral duality is easily lost in the febrile attitudes of today's society which is awash with sexual abuse and also the sexual scandals in the Christian Church. For Jay to accuse me of not considering these issues I believe is incorrect. It is notable that many in the more radical in the feminist movement deny the legitimacy of transgender identities, not for reasons of sexual abuse, but for reasons of discrimination and power balances in societies and the acceptance of the realities of transgender identities. A complaint by some more radical lesbian groups is that the acceptance of the reality of transgender identities destroys the legitimacy of their own lesbian identities. Just as I strongly supported Debbie about voicing the concerns of many women I equally strongly disagree with her when she dismisses transgender identities as merely a collection of feelings. My concerns are expressed in my response to a letter published in the Guardian in May 2018. That is available online at. Gilchrist, S. (2018): "*Response to the letter 'Standing up for Transsexual rights'*": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/243P-ResponseToGuardianLetterMay18.pdf>. If we do not strongly support our own position and the legitimacy of our own identities regardless of whether any of us undergoes surgical reassignment, the advances we have gained will be lost.

The Government is currently conducting a consultation on how to make it easier for transgender people to change their legal gender on birth certificates. Details of this can be found on <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/reform-of-the-gender-recognition-act-2004>. The closing date for this consultation is the 19<sup>th</sup> October 2018. Please complete this consultation, for it is very important that the issues are fully explored and understood. These are issues which create strong feelings and strong disagreements between many of us. We need to express these plainly and honestly while respecting the views that other people hold. I hope that this is and has been my approach.

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Debbie Hayton interviewed on this topic by BBC:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=1&v=5yhX6LLmUKI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1&v=5yhX6LLmUKI)

## Christians at Bristol Pride 2018

by Elaine Sommers

A year ago a small number of Christians got together to plan some events in support of Bristol Pride. We held a short service at the Cathedral for Pride Day, which was led beautifully by the Dean. About 25 people attended and many of them went up to receive a prayer of blessing with anointing of oil, a wonderfully symbolic moment.

This year our planning group met again, and arranged a service at the New Room (John Wesley's Chapel) in the centre of the city. On the morning of Pride Day July 14<sup>th</sup> we gathered for our Service of Celebration, with 70 people attending. It was an interesting, colourful and inspiring meeting. The pews were strewn with coloured paper chains, giving a festive feel to the service. I led the singing of 'Inclusive Hallelujah', a song, based on my journey of faith as Elaine.

We had been warned that there might be protests from a group preaching outside the chapel and sure enough they were there. What we hadn't expected was the presence of two men sitting in the congregation, who suddenly stood up and disrupted the proceedings, a reminder that some people are set on denouncing the inclusive message of God's love which we long to share with LGBT+ people. The interruptions only served to make us even more determined to bring a positive message to Pride. The service ended with the Charles Wesley hymn 'And Can It Be', with the wonderful line 'My chains fell off, my heart was free'. As we sang these words, the paper chains around us were torn apart, representing those who had been bound by chains of shame and rejection.

We then joined the Pride March under our 'Christians at Bristol Pride' banner, with its slogan 'GOD AFFIRMS YOU'. Our presence created much interest and support from other marchers and great cheers from spectators. I gave two interviews as we walked along, and the Bristol Post published a report about us online. As we proceeded we handed out GOD AFFIRMS YOU postcards to anyone who showed any interest in our message. Inevitably, we then passed the protesting preachers and one of our number approached them and started preaching in return - a slightly surreal moment, which was captured on camera, which you can see at:

<https://www.facebook.com/dia.moodley.9/videos/2204256313141697/?fref=mentions>

Following the march we set up our stall in the community marquee. It was amazing how many showed interest in what we were saying, and we were able to collect a long list of names and contact emails from people who wanted to be kept informed about our future activities. Some of the stories we heard from people - of isolation, rejection and judgement by families, at work or in churches - were heart-breaking.

I arrived home in the evening, exhausted, emotionally drained, but rejoicing that we had been able to bring a strong, positive and inclusive message to Pride attendees, who so often say that the Church has turned its back on them. We pray that for some of these dear people, Pride Day was the start of a journey to a new faith and walk with Jesus.

So what's in store during the coming year? We will be looking to see how we can best serve LGBT+ people – with possible worship times, pastoral support or social



occasions. And we will be looking towards next year's Pride, and how we can once again bring the message of Jesus' love to all who attend.

Have a look at our website at <https://christiansatbristolpride.org.uk/>

Or follow us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/Christiansatbristolpride/>

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### **I'm trying to help my local church actually be an inclusive church - Amy**

I come from an Evangelical tradition, and I would describe myself as a practising Christian. I'm almost 60, and I'm \*still\* trying to get it right (still practising). So that's one side of me.

The local Baptist Church has recently been doing a \*lot\* of cogitation and introspection. The local community is a little different from the church community. Values, core beliefs, activities, even housing are different, although there is overlap/similarity. The Minister has recently been leading the church to look at the core values/beliefs that we hold as a church, using the Sunday preaching, doing this both by ourselves and also using other local/lay preachers. This is also being followed up in the small cell/ core groups that meet within the church. There is a plan to look at how these values fit with those people in the community around us.

I am trying to influence things by having input into these teachings, and by living my life, just being me. The church as well as a weekly meet also meet for worship/celebration meets in small cell/core groups, on different days and at differing times. Each such group has a unique character, each group tries to support those that go along there. It was when I was meeting for coffee and prayer with my group leader that we discussed diversity, and that I define as being within the trans spectrum.

It's always a challenge outing myself, as I never know how folk will react. My leader had worked with a trans person when they were at college, and I don't think it was at all a surprise to them to discover that I have two genders/am bigender. And breathe!

In regular meetings with the Minister, the Minister was made aware of the presence of a trans person in the congregation, and I was outed, with permission, by proxy. Again, no real surprises or negative reaction. Well gosh, this wasn't how I envisaged the church being more inclusive! And breathe!

This in turn led to two meetings 1:1 with the Minister, so that they could see what support/help was required by me as a trans person, and to explain what all of this means. Starting with the difficult questions first. "What is a trans person?" Having breakfast together at the local 'Spoon pub for both meetings, and having known me (and my plain speaking) over several years helped to demonstrate that I am exactly the same person, with or without any trans status/baggage/experience.

I explained that I'm not trying to worship dressed like a little girl in frills and summer

dresses, nor do I "do" pottery. In fact, as I am able to express myself at both the Sibyls and with my friend Helen in Nottingham, I'm not about to burst out of the closet in the local Baptist church and be rather "in your face" out. That's not me. I'm approaching this the same way that I approach any evangelism that happens. All very low key, no megaphones, trying to build friendships and relationships. Food and time together feature strongly.

A period of several months paid study leave (sabbatical leave) is currently in progress for the Minister and a day has been booked for the Minister to share an Amy day with me when I worship (away from home in Nottingham), to walk the walk as well as talk the talk.

This is gaining momentum all by itself. And breathe!

I wasn't expecting this (things like this sometimes happen to me), but made a mental note, and I'm currently following this up. Yes I am really looking forward to this, but I do have one \*really\* big challenge. It will mean a \*very\* early start. I want to give a good impression, so really want to get my presentation right. First meetings give a lasting impression, I've found. I am already worrying over what to wear. Legs or slacks? Formal or casual? I may be sharing the day with the Minister's wife as well. So, let's see what happens, and I'll follow this up in a future newsletter. What can possibly go wrong?

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### **Scottish Trans Alliance – Judith Dene**

I have recently joined the Scottish Trans Alliance project within the Equality Network as a volunteer with a remit of assisting them raise the profile of transgender people and religion. Over the years many churches have found it hard to find out more about how they should welcome those who are struggling with their gender identity and this is part of the work I will be concentrating on. As an organisation we will be offering consultations on a 1-1 or group basis to try and help you move forward and welcome those of us who are different into God's family.

A major part of the role will be to offer support and advice at all levels within your communion and at all levels especially if you need to produce guidance booklets, run training courses or conferences. Our hope is that we can do this without needing to charge but if you are able to meet travel costs it would be appreciated, however, it is more important for us to be involved so if your funding does not stretch that far do not let that put you off contacting us.

My own religious background is from an Anglican base which was high church for many years but on moving to Scotland a few years ago I am now involved with the Scottish Episcopal Church and am a member of Vestry and act as Server/Crucifer on a rota basis at my own church.

Judith E Dene

Contact details: Email [judith@equality-network.org](mailto:judith@equality-network.org) Mobile 07786717051

## **Transgender parents and contact arrangements – Am I at risk of losing my children if I transition? Sue Breen**

As a family lawyer I have been increasingly perturbed by the reporting of cases involving transgender parents and the general misinformation and lack of clarity around the law. If I had one message for anyone who is on their journey and feels that there is a price to pay then I would like to assure you that that price does not and indeed should not include losing contact with your children. All children have a right to a relationship with both (or all) of their parents. The law is no different if a parent is transgender, but there is sometimes confusion about this if parents separate and cannot agree who the children live with or spend time with. This is particularly important against the backdrop of case of Re M (2017) where a transgender Jewish woman was initially denied any direct contact with her five children, but subsequently won a Court of Appeal ruling that too much weight had been placed on the deeply discriminatory practices within the mother's and children's community and that the children's right to a relationship with their father should not be ruled out simply due to potential prejudice against her as a transgender parent. I would point out that this case was quite specific in its detail and all family cases are dealt with on their own facts and merits but family Judges are extremely well trained and forward thinking on the whole and any application you make will be treated with respect and with a statutory duty to focus on the welfare of the children.

The family court will approach an application by a transgender parent who wants to spend time with their child (or live with them) as they would any other application for a child arrangements order. The child's welfare is always the Court's paramount consideration, assessed within the framework of the 'welfare checklist' as set out in the Children Act 1989.

The checklist is;

- The ascertainable wishes and feelings of the child concerned (considered in the light of their age and understanding)
- Their physical, emotional and educational needs
- The likely effect on them of any change in their circumstances
- Their age, sex, background and any characteristics that the court considers relevant
- Any harm which they have suffered or are at risk of suffering
- How capable each of their parents and any other person in relation to whom the court considers the question to be relevant is of meeting the child's needs
- The range of powers available to the court under the Children Act

Despite the decision in the Re M case, which was determined upon its very particular facts (involving unusual issues of potential ostracism by a religious community), any transgender parent should take confidence in the fact that the court is solely concerned with the welfare of the child and absolutely no other issue. The child's

welfare will be determined by the standards of a 'reasonable man or woman, being receptive to change, broadminded, tolerant, easy going and slow to condemn'. The child's welfare also has a broad definition encompassing welfare at the time of any decision and throughout the child's minority. The Court will also be mindful of the Equality Act and the European Convention on Human Rights.

If it is in the child's interests that they see their parent then that will determine the outcome. There should be no exceptional considerations or additional hurdles for transgender parents. The personal circumstances of the parent, their own transitioning journey and any negativity or prejudice from the other parent is not relevant to the application other than how it feeds into the welfare checklist. In making any application a transgender parent should confidently proceed in the knowledge that they will be treated by the law as any other separated parent and that the court will do all it can to find solutions in even the most seemingly intractable cases. I would encourage any parent reading this article to take encouragement that whilst your journey will be complex it should not be made more complex by you not seeing your children. What you might be surprised to find is that your journey of transition is the least interesting aspect of your case to the courts and to the CAFCASS officer, the focus should always be on your children and what is best for them. In my own experience the number of applications by transgender parents is increasing year on year and the Courts are becoming increasingly adept and skilful in their balancing of the various issues. There are many issues along your journey of transition but losing contact with your children should not be one of them.

Sue Breen

Family Lawyer and lay member of General Synod for London

NGA Law

Sue @ngalaw.co.uk

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### **Madonna of Montevergine - Catherine Burke (New Ways Ministry)**

An in-depth [profile](#) on the Madonna of Montevergine is drawing greater attention to the Italian third-gender *femminielli* and the wider LGBTQ community who participate in an annual pilgrimage to this ancient Neapolitan shrine.

As reported by [Kittredge Cherry](#) on the *QSpirit* blog, devotees of the Madonna of Montevergine have joined with Italian activists who support full LGBTQ inclusion in the Catholic Church to adopt this Madonna as a patron saint due to a professed miracle in which she saved a mid-13<sup>th</sup> century male couple from attempted murder because of their love for one another.



### *Our Lady of Montevergine*

In the ensuing centuries, this small town and the annual procession it hosts have become a site of pilgrimage for many in the Italian LGBTQ community. Located 30 miles east of Naples in southern Italy, nearly 2 million pilgrims and other visitors travel to the abbey on Montevergine annually to visit the byzantine icon of Mary. Cherry describes the icon as “12 feet high and six feet wide...the focal point of an ornate sanctuary loaded with colorful treasures of religious art.”

She further describes the most popular day of the year for visitors to this sacred site:

“Montevergine’s biggest and queerest procession happens every year on Candlemas (Feb. 2), the feast of the Purification of Mary. Among the pilgrims are genderbending devotees of Mary, known as ‘femminielli,’ a traditional third-gender people who are just beginning to get attention from scholars in English.”

While English-language writers may just be beginning to pay attention to femminielli and the pilgrims to Montevergine, this tradition has long been recognized in Italian circles. In a letter sent to Pope Francis in 2014, Italian trans parliamentarian Vladimir Luxuria expressed the sentiments of Montevergine pilgrims as follows:

“The community of faithful has always expressed its desire not to feel excluded by the Catholic community, without its gender identity or sexual orientation being considered a spiritual obstacle, a denial of the right to faith that should be guaranteed to all.”

One significant femminielli representation appears in a painting by Guisepppe Bonito, entitled ‘Il Femminiello’. In this 18<sup>th</sup>-century painting, two people with masculine



features are standing together, one young and one slightly older. The older femminiello is dressed in traditionally feminine clothing and preparing to wear a beaded necklace that the other is presenting with an expression that Cherry describes as 'playful'.

While the painter's intentions for the artwork are unclear, it stands as a unique portrayal of non-gender-conforming lives in historical European art. David Getsy of the Art Institute of Chicago [says](#) that paintings such as 'Il Femminiello' serve as "singular evidence that there were culturally sanctioned and official forms of gender nonconformity" that stretch back far further than our current conversations.



*Il Femminiello, by Giuseppe Bonito*

To further explain the long-lasting influence of the femminielli community, Cherry pulls a significant quote from the 2017 book, [Talking Bodies: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Embodiment, Gender and Identity](#), which explains that:

"The Neapolitan femminielli, traditional figures of men 'impersonating' women, can be seen as important precursors not only for today's trans women, but also for individuals embodying the idea of a third gender."

The influence of Montevergine is felt beyond the shrine's precincts as well. In 2017, the nearby Ospedaletto d'Alpinolo became home to the first gender-neutral bathroom

in the country during that year's Candlemas celebration, and now bears a sign at the town entrance declaring the town as "against homotransphobia and gender violence."

Still, the growth of queer pilgrims to Montevergine has not been without its official detractors. In 2002, Abbot Tarcisio Nazzaro, who leads the abbey where the icon is housed, loudly criticized what he saw as a 'shame' upon the Church, but within days was made to issue an official retraction and statement of welcome. This and a full [account](#) of one such procession was described by Annabel Howard in *The White Review*, concluding that the experience was one of many contradictions:

"One woman just laughs and gestures to the church. 'For the Madonna it's always a party. You sing the songs from your heart or not at all.' Then the icon comes into view. She is ugly, broken and utterly serene as she bobs over the heads of the large assorted crowd that has come to sing her praises. The woman looks at her with adoration. So do the femminielli, and so do the priests. The contradictions seem extraordinary, but then again, perhaps this is what makes this celebration, such as it is, an inevitability."

There are few such fervent celebrations of both Catholic faith and queer identity, and the pilgrimage to Montevergine stands out as an exception. For those seeking to find historical areas of understanding between the church and LGBTQ populations, the tradition and persistence of grace found in this small Neapolitan town may come as a welcome example.

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## **Book review - PF**

*Queer and Catholic: A life of contradiction*

By Mark Dowd

Mark grew up very devout and very gay. His story of his struggles in Manchester to accept himself and be accepted by others and then to reconcile that with his deep religious faith is one that will resonate powerfully for many trans people. His book is a real page-turner and even in places very funny despite the occasionally gruesome content. Mark especially explores the paradox of how a church that teaches that being gay is an "objective disorder" can at times be "the gayest place on the planet". I very much felt his pain as he wrestles with the contradictions inherent in being a gay (or of course trans) Catholic but he ends optimistically, sure that there will come a day ("but not in my lifetime") when the churches "will accept same sex love and attraction as a totally naturally occurring minority variant of the business of what it means to be human." He asks what a gay Christian/Catholic is to do in the meantime and dismisses the option of just leaving the church: "Throwing out the toys from the pram is always an attractive option if drama is your thing, but depriving the universal church of a serious, witnessed and well-argued LGBT input would be to deny it the very catholicity which is one of its great hallmarks." Not a bad argument I think.

## Other things that may be of interest

Trans woman gains supernatural powers after transitioning:

<https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2018/07/24/trans-woman-says-she-got-supernatural-powers-after-she-transitioned/>

Trans women endangering crocodiles:

[https://www.lgbtqnation.com/2018/06/feminists-blaming-trans-women-forcibly-transing-crocodiles/?utm\\_source=LGBTQ+Nation+Subscribers&utm\\_campaign=7632ec7408-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2018\\_06\\_19\\_05\\_17&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_c4eab596bd-7632ec7408-430631441](https://www.lgbtqnation.com/2018/06/feminists-blaming-trans-women-forcibly-transing-crocodiles/?utm_source=LGBTQ+Nation+Subscribers&utm_campaign=7632ec7408-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_06_19_05_17&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_c4eab596bd-7632ec7408-430631441)

Hairy Uncle Esau tells story of gender non-conforming Joseph and his princess dress:

<https://www.facebook.com/peterson.toscano/videos/vb.528075872/10156223018285873/?type=2&theater>

Neville Southall (remember him?) supports trans community (and explains why some trans people do not seek surgery):

<https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2018/06/21/neville-southall-backs-the-trans-community-in-powerful-twitter-transtakeover/>

Football's first out trans referee:

<https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2018/08/19/uks-first-out-trans-football-referee/>

Church of Scotland guide to pastoral care of trans people:

[file:///C:/Users/customer/AppData/Local/Microsoft/Windows/INetCache/IE/8S357U8R/Web\\_PDF\\_Diverse\\_Gender\\_Identities\\_and\\_Pastoral\\_Care.pdf](file:///C:/Users/customer/AppData/Local/Microsoft/Windows/INetCache/IE/8S357U8R/Web_PDF_Diverse_Gender_Identities_and_Pastoral_Care.pdf)

Catholic trans teen denied holy communion:

<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2018/07/27/was-gum-chewing-or-gender-identity-the-reason-for-denying-communion/>

Extraordinary BBC programme from June 1973 featuring trans women from the "Trans Sex Liberation Group":

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p06c83f4>

Look after your heart if you're taking hormones:

<https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2018/08/03/transgender-people-at-higher-risk-of-heart-disease-studies-suggest/>

New Ways Ministry: Top Catholic ethicist says transgender identities not necessarily disordered or sinful:

<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2018/08/05/top-catholic-ethicist-do-not-assume-transgender-identities-are-sinful-or-disordered/>



Trans man starts legal battle to be recognised as father of child he gave birth to:

<https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2018/06/09/transgender-man-starts-legal-battle-to-be-recognised-as-the-father-of-baby-he-gave-birth-to/>

Unconditional praise and affirmation of transgender marriage – Jo Inkpin:

<https://www.transspirit.org/blog/in-christian-praise-and-unconditional-affirmation-of-transgender-marriage>

Reading the Bible as “wrestling match”:

<https://stantlitore.com/2013/07/17/stant-litore-on-the-bible-1-how-and-why-i-read-it/>

Why LGBT people don't go to Church:

<https://bookishbearblog.com/2018/06/11/7-reasons-why-lgbtq-people-dont-want-to-go-to-your-lgbtq-inclusive-church/>

Penny Mordaunt on anti-trans bigotry:

<https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2018/06/20/equalities-minister-penny-mordaunt-anti-trans-bigotry/>

One in three employers less likely to employ transgender worker:

<https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2018/06/18/one-in-three-employers-say-they-are-less-likely-to-hire-a-transgender-worker/>

Church Times interview with Vicky Beeching:

<https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2018/22-june/features/features/god-was-still-my-highest-priority-and-my-greatest-love-vicky-beeching>

Good blog from Michael Sadgrove about Vicky's book:

<https://northernwoolgatherer.blogspot.com/2018/07/vickys-book.html>

Strong words from Jayne Ozanne:

<https://viamedia.news/2018/06/22/for-the-love-of-god/>

Transgender Ministry pioneer lets the world know her identity:

<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2018/06/24/transgender-ministry-pioneer-lets-world-know-her-identity/>

New Ways Ministry: equality in the church will only come when women and LGBT people act together. Excellent stuff on complementarity theory that underlies treatment of both:

<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2018/06/26/equality-in-the-church-only-comes-when-lgbt-communities-and-catholic-women-act-together/>

More strong words and criticism of the church from Mary McAleese:

<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2018/06/30/on-eve-of-dublin-pride-mcaleese-calls-church-teaching-on-gay-people-evil/>

Brave transwomen in Pakistan (where homosexuality is illegal):

<https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2018/07/23/pakistan-general-election-transgender-candidates/>

Life as a trans woman in Russia:

<https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2018/07/23/life-as-a-trans-woman-in-russia-meet-ksenya/>

Not much fun in Turkey either:

<https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2018/07/21/transgender-turkey-europe-highest-murder-rate/>

Fr James Martin's talk at WMF:

<https://www.newwaysministry.org/fr-james-martin-world-meeting-of-families-2018/>

Good Guardian article on what constitutes “identity”.

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/aug/31/who-owns-your-identity-kwame-anthony-appiah>

Ilia Dello, Omega Center: Quite long and learned but insightful discourse on how academic theology is the fundamental cause of the abuse crisis in the church:

<https://www.omegacenter.info/death-in-church-new-life-ahead/>

Will the CofE bishops’ teaching document on sexuality produce real change: Fr Richard Peers seems to think not:

[https://educationpriest.wordpress.com/2018/09/04/sex-lies-and-honesty-in-the-church-an-anglican-response-to-james-alison/amp/?\\_twitter\\_impression=true](https://educationpriest.wordpress.com/2018/09/04/sex-lies-and-honesty-in-the-church-an-anglican-response-to-james-alison/amp/?_twitter_impression=true)

Welcome support from the Chief Rabbi:

<https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2018/09/06/chief-rabbi-supports-lgbt-rights-in-unprecedented-move/>

Interesting blog on why even apparently inclusive churches do not meet the needs of LGBT people:

<https://bookishbearblog.com/2018/06/11/7-reasons-why-lgbtq-people-dont-want-to-go-to-your-lgbtq-inclusive-church/>

Hearing from trans men for a change:

<https://www.economist.com/open-future/2018/07/17/trans-masculine-people-are-being-excluded-from-the-conversation>