

Personal story – Nicky von Benzon – October 2021

I think I have been fortunate in my life to date. Fortunate to have enjoyed good mental and physical health; fortunate to have had a long marriage and four amazing children; fortunate to have had a varied and interesting professional career spanning the legal profession, the Church and the world of family mediation. That is not to say I have not experienced loss, struggle and sadness but perhaps as my counsellor said I have been good at adapting, and I am blessed with a natural optimism.

I am sure all that has made it easier for me to respond to the startling insight that I am transgender. How on earth can one live, as I did, for 64 years without knowing! This insight and my decision to try and live life authentically has brought me joy and a sense of fulfilment, but that decision has not been without cost to my family and to me; it led to the tragic breakdown of my marriage and all the pain, self-doubt, uncertainty and regret that comes with that.

Living on my own through the lockdown in 2020 gave me with the space to do a lot of reading, thinking and reflection. As a result, I have become comfortable identifying as trans female. Since I had managed to live a reasonably happy and successful life up to that point, I can only think there must have been an element of non-binary fluidity around my gender identity.

I am deeply aware of trans people who have to resolve some degree of life-long discomfort. My own experience is that a clear realisation can come late in life and cannot then be ignored, and that gender variance is not always debilitating. For me the most difficult challenge to overcome has been my own self-consciousness; I have been relieved to find that most people are very accepting.

I believe that gender variance can be both non-binary and fluid – changing through a lifetime. I look forward to a time when everyone is free to express themselves in ways which are not constrained by gender roles.

I moved house in the summer of 2020 and since then have lived as a trans woman. I have found my friends and work colleagues supportive, and some have been encouraging. Having moved to a new town, I have been attending the Anglican Parish Church where I now live. The vicar is lovely, welcoming and supportive, and because of covid restrictions many of the congregation have until recently seen me simply as a tall woman wearing a mask who has started coming to church. We are however getting to know each other as the restrictions ease. My new Bishop has welcomed me and given me his permission to officiate and so, whilst not in a rush to lead worship, I expect to slip gently into the sort of ministry that can be offered by a retired priest in the Church of England.

Over this time The Sibyls have provided friendship, information and support.