



SIBYLS LOGO - ROBYN GOLDEN - MANN 28 MAY 2018

“It matters not what someone is born but what they grow to be.” Albus Dumbledore



## Sibyls Newsletter 110

Dear Sibyls

Many trans people may not be entirely displeased to see the back of 2024 which has brought little in the way of positive developments for us. But as Christians, our perspective may be different to that of others in the trans community. We are people of Hope grounded in a reality that none of the passing events of the world can change. Indeed, our task must be not just to have hope but to seek to give hope to others. As trans people, the call to let our light shine forth so that people may see our good works and glorify God has a special meaning, especially for those of us with the privilege of being able to transition and live openly as God made us. Of course this may come with many challenges and I have greatly valued the support I have received in the past year from my fellow Sibyls, at our monthly gatherings, at the Purley Chase weekend and through the enriching friendships I have made in the Sibyls.

Hope of course does not come only from churches or religion. I attended the TDOR vigil in Leeds in November and was greatly encouraged by the spirit and resolve of the mainly young people I saw there. There are also some young trans people at my church from whom I've also received help and encouragement. The future is theirs and I truly believe that despite all the scapegoating and victimisation, the moral panicking and anxieties, the fear and suspicion and misunderstanding, the rejections sometimes by our own loved ones, sometimes by our churches – despite all this, the future for trans people is bright and full of hope.

As we once more greet the birth of Love in vulnerable, suffering infant human flesh, let us take heart, be renewed in our hope and allow our light to shine brightly and bravely, a reflection of that Light that at the first Christmas shone in the darkness and that the darkness could not overcome.

And let me wish you all a very joyful Christmas and a new year that will bring you blessings.

*Pauline x*

M 07581553357

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

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## THE SIBYLS

### ***Christian Spirituality Group for Gender-Variant People***

**Sibyls** is a nationwide group for Christian transgender, non-binary and intersex people, partners and allies. Sibyls offer companionship along your journey, and supports advocacy work with churches and faith groups on behalf of trans people. Sibyls seek to fulfil the two great commandments of Jesus: to love God, and to love each other as ourselves, which we hope to do by -

*Living faithfully* - accepting yourself as you worship, and in day-to-day life

*Spiritual upholding* – encountering the freedom to pray and to seek God's will

*Fellowship* - sharing with Christians who understand what it is to be transgender

*Listening* – respectfully and confidentially to each other

### **Sibyls' website**

Visit our website [www.sibyls.co.uk](http://www.sibyls.co.uk) to find more information on joining the Sibyls confidential mailing list; planned events, supportive churches and inclusive faith groups; resources, such as books and sign-posted web links.

### **Facebook Groups**

There are two Facebook groups which enable Sibyls and other trans Christians to communicate and exchange views and news. They are:

- Sibyls Members' Group – send a request via Facebook to join this confidential group
- TranschristianUK – an open group, do join up if you are not already a member.

### **Contact Sibyls committee**

*By post* - c/o 10, Ffordd Las, Rhyl, LL18 2DY

*By email* - [enquiries@sibyls.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@sibyls.co.uk)

## Sibyls' Listening Service

We know that sometimes it is necessary to talk to someone who understands the basics of being transgender and Christian. If a listening conversation could be of particular help, you can call any of the following:

*Jenny-Anne Bishop OBE* [jennyannebuk@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:jennyannebuk@yahoo.co.uk) Telephone: 01745 337144 or 07500 741955

*Pauline Fleck* [pauline.fleck@btinternet.com](mailto:pauline.fleck@btinternet.com) Telephone 07581 553357

## Meetings for personal conversation and sharing

It is possible that some of you would appreciate the opportunity for more personal conversation on Zoom, rather than the regular large sessions. We can help arrange meet-ups for just three Sibyls - this would enable easier direct conversation and sharing (with some ground rules). If you would like this please email [pauline.fleck@btinternet.com](mailto:pauline.fleck@btinternet.com) and we will see what is possible.

The Sibyls newsletter archive is now available on:

<http://sm.gndr.org.uk/newsletters3/newspaperarchiveopen.html>

Also orders of service liturgies etc for past events is available at:

<http://sm.gndr.org.uk/meetings3.htm>

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## 2024 Services and Events

We are currently planning the following events:

Sibyls Zoom Services and Fellowship Meetings are planned to take place **ONLINE** on usually the 25<sup>th</sup> of the month. We aim to send out zoom links a week or so beforehand.

In person services and gatherings at St Anne's Church Soho London.

Tuesday 12 March

Wednesday 11 June

Thursday 11 September

Monday 8 December

These services and gatherings are **NOT ONLINE**.

A pic from the December meeting:



The Sibyls residential weekend at Purley Chase in 2025 will be from 14-16 November.

Invitation from Jenny-Anne Bishop OBE

See the *Unique* newsletter here

<https://app.box.com/s/xc8n7o8ujcpr5ekzj2m3omq6ym7ynde>

Sunday 5th January 2025 LGBT Service 4-6pm LGBTQ+Church Service by zoom

Details: You are welcome to join us at 4 pm. This service is from Wibraham St Ninians United Reform Church in Manchester. Zoom link is:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88502951623>

OR Meeting ID: 885 0295 1623 OR One tap

mobile +442080806592,,88502951623# UK / 443300885830,,88502951623# UK

To find out more: <https://metropolitanchurch.org.uk>

A full listing of activities in January will be published in our January 2025 newsletter

## How did Sibyls get our name?

Have you ever wondered that? I was contacted earlier this year by a Harvard academic who specialises in the subject of Sibyls in classical mythology. I explained that any connection with the Sibyls of ancient myth was probably a little tenuous but I thought it might be worth asking Jay our founder why she decided on that name. She has given me permission to reproduce her reply here:

“Dear Pauline,

Thank you for your email. I apologise for the delay in replying but my computer has been in dry dock for rebuilding and so I have been off air. And, thank you, I am well but not travelling very far these days.

As founder of Sibyls, I take responsibility for the name and much else. When the group was being set up I was looking for a name that expressed something about the group or possibly could be made into an acronym. Better still if it could trip off the tongue. I could think of nothing that fitted the bill.

Then, without any great knowledge of the classics, I got the idea of The Sibyls as the wise women who spoke the word of God. It was neat, not specific about God or wisdom, had an air of mystery and was unlike anything else in the trans business. It caused a lot of debate among the membership and suffered the huge disadvantage that the boys could feel excluded. However despite considerable debate everyone rather liked it and no-one could think of anything better and so it stuck.

I should also point out that Sibyls was not founded solely for transgendered Christians. When thinking about who it should be for and who to invite, I agonised over this. I was saved as a natural born woman with no wish to be transgender got in touch. She had a very real interest in both Christianity and transgenderism and wanted to become a member and I couldn't think of the faintest reason why she shouldn't. It opened the door, clarified the thinking and neither of us ever regretted it. It always was for anyone who had an interest in transgenderism and Christianity. The majority of the people it did attract were transitioning, mainly because their need was greatest.

I suspect that I am the only one of the five at the first meeting who is still a member. Carol Nixon was one of our earliest members and I don't know if she is still a member [she is] but you might consider her in this inquiry.

I'm not sure that Bacchi [the researcher] will gain much more from a Zoom meeting but I would be willing if it really has any benefit.

With best wishes,

Jay [Walmsley]

So there we have it. We are the Sibyls (or possibly The Sibyls but definitely not Sybils...). And I for one like the name and am proud to be a Sibyl.

*Pauline*

*Trans is beautiful*

Open our eyes  
to the glorious gender diversity  
of sacred creation.  
Open our ears  
to transgender stories  
of pain and joy,  
struggle and solidarity,  
destruction and resurrection.  
Open our hearts  
to the power of life and love  
which offers transformation to all.



[transspirit.org](http://transspirit.org)

### Some meanderings from Yvonne

**Being Quaker** - At the Purley Chase weekend, I had a brief conversation with others about Quakers. I have attended Quaker worship since the 1980s. Initially it intrigued and frustrated me equally, but I wanted to make space for God on my own terms, not my parents' fairly strict Methodist terms. I committed in 2005. Quaker worship and community was incredibly helpful as a stable faith base while I dealt with the confusion and dilemmas of my personal life. Friends (Quakers call each other Friends) at my meeting were supportive, but I really settled when I moved to another meeting. It's true that the silent worship of Quakers means we sit in worship without a priest or leader, but it does not mean that worship is without ministry. Actually we start from stillness, even if there is coughing or traffic noise. Each person attending may offer spoken ministry - they can be the minister. The revelation for George Fox in the early 1600s was that we could each have a direct relationship with God, based on our own searching and waiting. Another way of understanding silence is that there is no dogma, no telling us what to believe, and there are no special days for worship. Like others, Quakers live their faith everyday, but based on peace, simplicity, truth, equality and sustainability – Quaker testimony. We do business based on meetings for worship, where decisions are discerned. We agree the sense of the meeting, as written into a minute agreed at the meeting – we do not vote. Some things take a long time waiting for God's will, but this is a bit different from consensus, we sometimes agree a way forward knowing that there are differences of

view, but all seek to find unity. We affirm our unity by saying 'I hope so' rather than 'yes', or 'agreed', etc. It is quite radical and right for contemporary spirituality. I recommend it!

**Pop transitions** - I love music of all kinds, I like to be surprised by new things. I listen out for interesting new names. I didn't really clock David Bowie, who, in my teens, I actually thought was a showman and stylist; I didn't realise he was transgressing gender boundaries. Over the years I have occasionally noticed transgender musicians who have made me reflect and dream. I loved Jethro Tull: their personnel changed but playing live in later years I was aware of a keyboard player Dee Palmer, who, as Dave, had worked as a musical arranger since the band first started. She was trans and intersex, and transitioned in the late 90s. Later I was a fan of Penguin Café Orchestra, and two long-standing musicians were trombonist Annie Whitehead and guitarist Ian Maidman. Many years later I saw Annie's own band at a jazz club and slowly realised the guitarist was trans, and later found out this was Jennifer Maidman and that she and Annie were partners. Anthony and the Johnstons made a stunning impression on me. Anthony's haunting songs were about questioning, uncertainty and vulnerability. Now she is called Anohni. She says 'I don't really believe in the whole idea of opposites. In my mind, the feminine is a whole. It's not just half of a whole; it's actually the whole. She doesn't really have another half. The universe is purely feminine. That's almost the exact opposite of the way that the Christians and the Abrahamic religions position it.' More up to date is the French composer and singer Christine, whose first album with The Queens (named after some drag artists she once lived with) has the song 'I am a man now'. She now performs as Redcar, always forthrightly and athletically dramatic in pinstripes, sharp creases and brogues. All an inspiration in very different ways. You will be able to name others, I'm sure.

**Hit or miss** - I don't mind being mis-gendered; it's being mr-gendered that bothers me. Actually, I have grown not to mind, I smile back whatever. Sometimes a 'thank you sir' does crash into an otherwise pleasant day, but I have also grown to realise that sometimes I imagine it. "Are you alright there?" Can sound like "Are you alright sir". Actually, in shops where this is commonly said instead of "can I help you?", I have on occasion heard the ubiquitous "are you alright" as meaning "do you belong here?". Anyway, that's for me and my counsellor. The other mishearing is with Italians - whereby, as in penne, or tagliatelle, Italianised English puts an "a" on the ends of words. Yes becomes yessir in my paranoid imagination. Anyway when out with a friend for lunch, the pleasantries "Hello ladies" is affirmation enough for me, even if there is no further personal gendering as the bill is paid.

**Not out and pragmatic out** - I have immense respect for those of us who remain hidden and constrained. The brief scene in *Catcher in The Rye* when someone is seen in a hotel room smartly dressed as a woman is to me a glimpse of someone who craves to live that life, but utterly constrained by expectations. I think of the people who never come out to anyone. We all know that experience, even if, in time, we have been able to come out to people close to us, to negotiate and to have times for ourselves, with trans support or counselling. And I have respect for those who are



out in social or public situations but not all the time, who have found an equilibrium, with family relationships and work. But for some, this life might also reflect a challenging church, or constraint in relation to faith. For some it is fear of what they might lose. I feel this respect deeply because we have all been in that position. I struggled for years, feeling the peace of my own truth, but unable to be honest with friends, and feeling boxed in by powerful convention. In moving forward, I feel humility in acknowledging those who are 'where they are'. And admiration for the strong people they are. Sibyls has gained so much from the experience, wisdom and faith of those we might call 'big enders', or 'bi-gendered', or plain 'realistic'.

**A good ally** - We talk of LGBT+ 'allies', who are so important for consolidating respect and dignity for gay, bi, trans and non-binary people. Most allies are quietly observant in their day-to-day work and relationships – keeping their antennae out for moments when they have to clarify, demystify, disagree and put right, or protect. Rowan Moore is architecture critic in the Observer and I read his articles regularly because I am interested in architecture. He has a trans son, and he has emerged as a stout defender of trans rights, challenging the damaging media and academic criticism of trans lives. He says 'Being trans is not something you can take off and put on like clothes, or put on hold while others discuss the rights and wrongs of your situation. It is part of who you are. Many commentators on trans issues don't seem to understand that.'

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Has doom-scrolling, especially since 5 Nov, left you feeling depressed or even despairing? Here is part of a reflection *Susan Gilchrist* wrote for TDOR:

“And yet, rather than letting these thoughts depress us, we should use the teaching of Jesus to inspire us, for religious, atheists, and humanists alike. For it was Jesus who welcomed the stranger, the outcast, the rejected, and the condemned. It was Jesus who welcomed the centurion and slave who dared to cross the sexual divide: When providing sexual comfort was the expected duty of his slave at the time. And in the unqualified welcome in a gospel of virtue and love, there is no evidence that Jesus condemned any physical act. For Jesus, some people are born eunuchs, some people are made eunuchs by others, and some people make themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. This passage caused a great deal of difficulty for the early Church, as it was taken to refer to the self-castrated priests of the Goddess cults who frequented Palestine at the time. Although Jesus recognised that some people would find this difficult to accept: the commands were very direct. And in a Gospel of love and virtue, there is no evidence of Jesus condemning any physical act. For Paul, circumcision was of no consequence. For Thomas, life in the spirit transcends every physical act. And it was Jesus who welcomed the stranger despite the great challenges of his own society. And for us, in the devastating challenges we face in today's society, the call of Jesus to us, is the same call for everyone, heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex people alike.”

**TDOR Prayer** by Sibyl Jan Goddard:

The Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDOR) is the day set aside each year when we remember those who have been killed because of hatred or fear of transgender and gender non-conforming people. Universally it is a day not only to mourn those whom we've lost but also to celebrate the lives they lived

TDOR was started to honour Rita Hester, a transgender woman who was murdered on Nov 28<sup>th</sup> 1998. TDOR continues to raise public awareness around the world of anti-transgender hate crimes and to encourage people to be allies to the transgender community. Marking this day of remembrance reminds non-transgender people that we are their sons, daughters, parents, partners, friends and lovers.

*Will you pray with me.....*

**Loving God,**

Out of your infinite and unconditional love  
You draw all people to yourself.  
We remember our trans-gendered brothers and sisters,  
who have lost their lives  
because of anti-transgender hatred,  
violence and bigotry;  
some of them  
for simply being themselves,  
others - because of their association  
with a non gender-conforming person.

We remember too  
any of your trans-gendered children  
who, this moment,  
are suffering the silent agonies  
of shame,  
of solitude.  
Fearful of discovery,  
ridicule, rejection or violence.

Loving God,  
You draw all people to yourself.  
Be with each we pray  
enfolding them  
in the arms of your unconditional, unfailing love.  
Amen  
© Jan Goddard

## **Trans Actual survey:**

I'm getting in touch because TransActual have just launched our 2024/25 Trans Lives Survey and we'd love for you to help us spread the word. Our 2021 Trans Lives Survey report has been very widely used and has been cited by the BMA and in the Judiciary's Fair and Equal Treatment Bench Book.

We've had a number of policy makers ask us if we've got any more up to date statistics relating to trans people's experiences of living in the UK, so an updated report is well overdue.

With that in mind, we'd really appreciate if you share it with the trans members of your group and/or in your newsletter before the survey closes at the end of January.

The survey can be accessed at <https://tinyurl.com/TransLives24>

An independent ethics panel have approved this research project, [you can read more about the research in our information sheet](#).

If you have any questions at all feel free to email us at [research@transactual.org.uk](mailto:research@transactual.org.uk).

All the best,

**Chay Brown**

*[Pronouns](#): he/him*

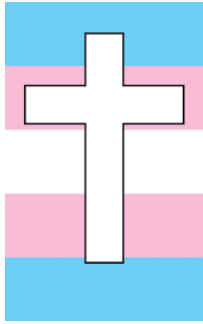
*[Pronunciation](#): sh-ay br-ow-n*

*[Hear my name](#)*

**Director of Operations + Director for Healthcare**

**TransActual**

[www.transactual.org.uk](http://www.transactual.org.uk)



## **Trans faith**

Jay Hulme's keynote speech at the 2024 Trans Theology Conference:

<https://jayhulme.com/blog/2024/10/22/the-genderweird-vibe-of-god>

Trans man George White meets the Pope:

<https://www.thepinknews.com/2024/11/05/trans-teachers-surreal-audience-with-the-pope-i-felt-my-place-was-valid/>

Invitation from rev Mark Meatcher to Sibyls in the West Mids area seeking pastoral support:

“For information I am now based in Birmingham at Hall Green United Community Church, Solihull URC and Digbeth in the Field URC. If there are any members in the area who wish to connect for support and encouragement I would be happy to say hello.”

Mark ([revd.meatcher@gmail.com](mailto:revd.meatcher@gmail.com))

Rev. Robyn Golden-Hann (a Sibyl) is interviewed by the press. How fortunate and blessed we are by our trans priests, of whom Robyn is an outstanding example:

<https://www.bournemouthecho.co.uk/news/24755822.poole-reverend-says-transitioning-helped-embrace-faith/>



## **Trans law and politics**

European Court rules all EU members states must recognise legal change of gender marker:

<https://www.thepinknews.com/2024/10/04/eu-member-states-must-recognise-gender-identity-changes-top-court-rules/>



## Trans health

More criticism of “absurd” Cass report:

<https://www.thepinknews.com/2024/10/18/open-letter-transactual-cass-review/>

...and concerns from educational psychologists:

<https://www.thepinknews.com/2024/11/12/educational-psychologists-open-letter-cass-review-trans/>

Some GPs refusing to prescribe HRT to trans patients:

<https://www.thepinknews.com/2024/10/21/trans-gps-hormones-hrt-refusal/>

4% regret rate for healthcare for trans children:

<https://www.thepinknews.com/2024/10/22/gender-affirming-care-regret-rate/>

The Charity Commission verdict on Mermaids:

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2024/oct/24/trans-childrens-charity-told-to-rewrite-guidance-on-puberty-blockers>

Trans Healthcare Coalition: working to improve healthcare for trans people:

<https://www.consortium.lgbt/trans-healthcare-coalition/>

6 year waiting lists for trans children and new clinics nowhere near ready:

<https://www.thepinknews.com/2024/12/03/trans-youth-foi-report/>

Some issues with the “trial” of puberty blockers due to start next year:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/clyd2qe5kkjo>



## Trans life

Jan Morris – according to her son:

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2024/sep/29/jan-morris-conundrum-memoir-transgender-son>

April Ashley and John Prescott: friends and allies:

<https://www.thepinknews.com/2024/11/25/john-prescott-april-ashley-trans/>

Teacher banned for outing trans pupil in transphobic messages:

<https://www.thepinknews.com/2024/10/24/teacher-barred-indefinitely-after-outing-transgender-pupil-in-series-of-anti-trans-tweets/>

More trouble after woman sanctioned for protesting participation of trans woman in football match (we seriously need a more informed debate about this highly contested issue):

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/articles/cvgk0w726w1o>

The unsaid says a lot:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aoh690u9lgQ>

Useful information from GIRES:

<https://www.gires.org.uk/>

Trans: a community under attack: report from *Translucent*:

<https://translucent.org.uk/tacua/>

Trans people feeling increasingly unsafe in UK:

<https://www.thepinknews.com/2024/11/20/trans-people-report-unsafe/>

Brigitte Baptiste, trans woman, included in Women of the Year list:

<https://www.thepinknews.com/2024/12/03/bbc-100-women-list-trans-backlash/>



## Trans world

Just 5% of Americans opposed to trans affirming health care:

<https://www.thepinknews.com/2024/10/04/anti-trans-politicians-more-likely/>

Spanish all-trans football team (their first game ended in a 19-0 defeat, but you have to start somewhere):

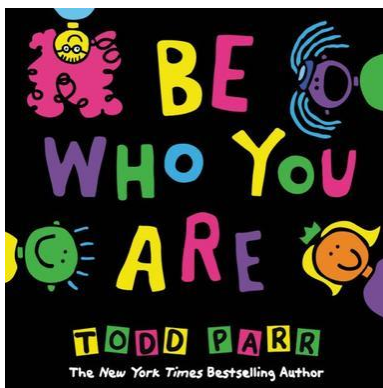
<https://www.thepinknews.com/2024/10/06/first-all-transgender-football-team-debuts-in-spain/>

One bright spot amid the gloom of the US election: Sarah McBride becomes the first out trans woman elected to Congress:

<https://www.thepinknews.com/2024/11/06/sarah-mcbride-delaware-election-congress-trans/>

Capitol Hill bathroom ban for trans people called out:

<https://www.thepinknews.com/2024/11/22/alexandria-ocasio-cortez-trans-bathroom-ban/>



## Trans Books and Media

Will and Harper Netflix doc – a trans woman’s view:

<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2024/sep/30/will-ferrell-harper-steele-netflix-documentary>

Trans actress wins Cannes best actor award:

<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2024/oct/18/madonna-please-its-only-a-film-be-happy-the-star-of-emilia-perez-on-transitioning-at-46-and-making-icons-cry>

Transa: music that hopes to change hearts and minds about trans people:

<https://www.theguardian.com/music/2024/nov/22/red-hot-transa-album-sade-sam-smith>