

*SIBYLS LOGO - ROBYN GOLDEN - MANN 28 MAY 2018*

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

.”spiritual and true freedom is wanting to do what we have to do to become who we are.”  
Richard Rohr



INTERNATIONAL  
TRANSGENDER  
DAY OF VISIBILITY  
MARCH 31

## SibyIs Newsletter 111

Dear Sibyls

This newsletter reaches you on Trans Day of Visibility – a somewhat tricky concept for some trans people. I recently made my debut as a volunteer for the charity Diversity Role Models, speaking to a large group of year 8 school kids. The person leading the session, as an ice-breaker, asked the kids if they'd rather be able to fly or be invisible. I of course said I'd prefer invisibility though flying would be nice too. Sadly, being trans confers no super powers – just the joy, as I told the kids, of living as your authentic self (itself a privilege denied to many trans people). I tried to send a positive message but also said that I could not gloss over the unhappy parts of my story – the harm I did before I transitioned and the harm I have suffered since alongside the joy and blessings. I expect many of you will have watched the heart-breaking programme on TV last week about Brianna Ghey and her incredible, inspiring mother, Esther. Esther is doing her utmost to bring something positive out of the appalling murder of her daughter and is highlighting the dangers of the toxic influences young people can be subjected to on social media and the internet. Diversity Role Models are playing their part in trying to influence kids in a positive way about the importance of inclusion and respect for difference. I said at the start of my talk that there is a sense in which all out trans people are role models as we may be the only trans person people have ever (knowingly) met. We may feel a sense of responsibility to give people a more positive impression of the trans experience than they are likely to gain from the media or, sadly, from the government. Surveys show attitudes to trans people in society are hardening, becoming less supportive. It can feel exhausting trying to resist this.

As the days grow longer, the sun warmer and nature “comes out” in her lovely Spring finery, we may feel our spirits reviving despite the chill winds blowing not just from the East but these days from across the Atlantic too. But we are Easter people and our faith is in the God who brought the greatest good out of the greatest possible evil. May I wish you and your loved ones a very joyous time of the approaching Easter season.

*Pauline x*

M 07581553357

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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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## 2025 Services and Events

Sibyls Zoom Services and Fellowship Meetings are planned to take place **ONLINE** on usually the 25<sup>th</sup> of the month (this can occasionally vary). We aim to send out invitations a week or so beforehand.

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

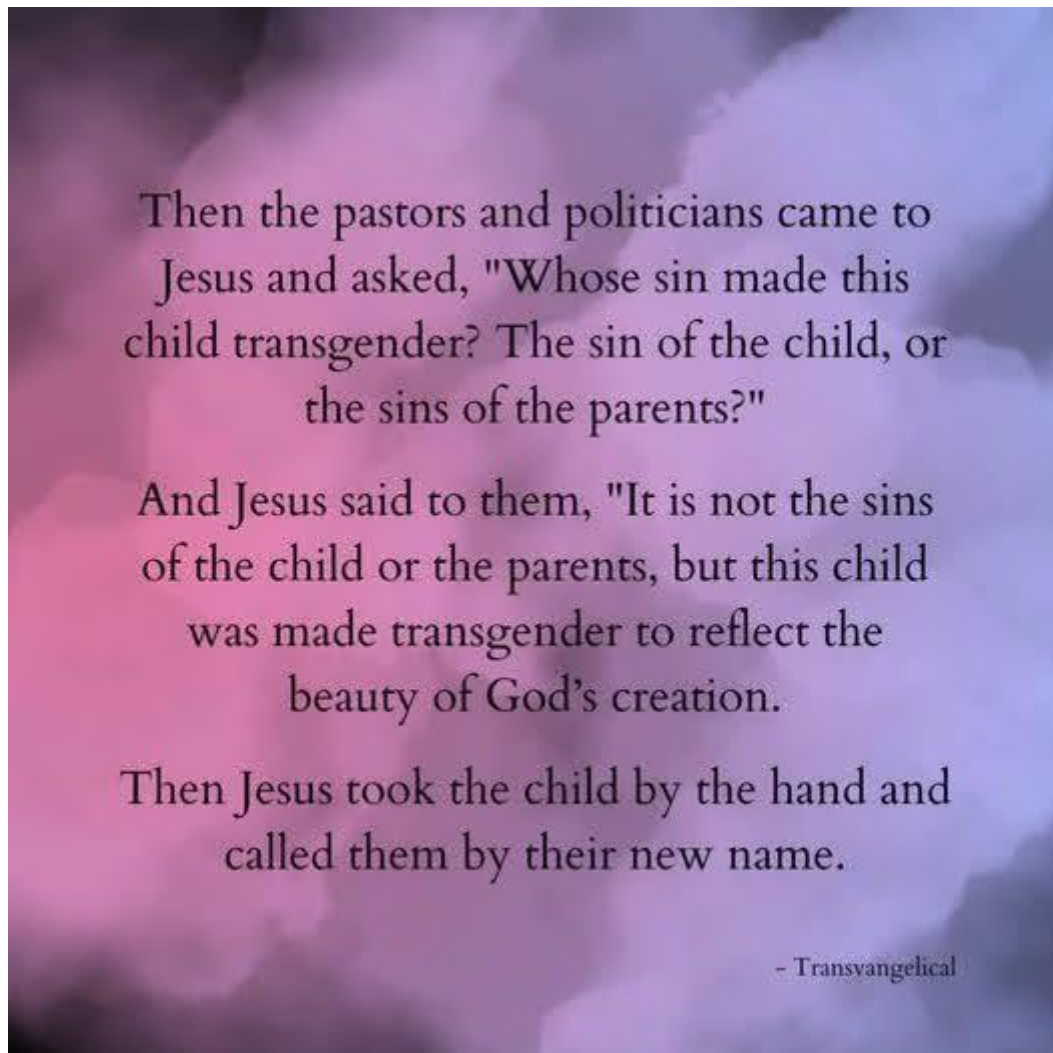
### Invitation from *Jenny-Anne Bishop OBE*

See the *Unique* newsletter for April here (there's a lot of interesting information not just for those lucky enough to live in N Wales - do have a read):

<https://app.box.com/s/2i0xbeu29iyvtpy7oz42kfv6yiomjakd>

Jenny-Anne hosts a service every Sunday at 4.00 for LGBTQ+ people:

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



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**Letter from Sibyl *Hilda*'s church in Brighton to Washington bishop Mariann Budde:**

Dear Bishop Mariann,

This letter is from St George's Church, an inclusive, community based Anglican church in Kemp Town, Brighton, England and we are currently celebrating our 200th anniversary. Members of the congregation at St George's Church are very impressed by your address to President Trump and we wish to give you our wholehearted support for both what you said and the way you said it. We have looked at the criticisms of your address and find them groundless. We are not complacent in thinking that such 'dismissal of mercy' could not happen in England, which like the US faces considerable disunity. We are grateful that you have spoken

so boldly. You have given us both hope and courage in taking forward the work of our parish.

We wish you every blessing in your ministry.

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### **Trump's Relentless Attack on Trans People Proves Jesus Was Right: Some People Just Won't Get It.**

Ever since I started my blog in 2011, I have written several posts (which I've also shared on FB) about how I, as a follower of Christ, was able to reconcile my faith with being transgender. I have elaborated on the theological arguments and rationale to clarify how this reconciliation occurred, thanks to what Jesus said to his disciples about eunuchs. That's when the penny dropped, and I could accept myself.

The expectation that all people will one day accept and affirm transgender individuals may be an unattainable goal. Even Jesus didn't suggest that such universal acceptance was possible. In Matthew 19:11-12, after discussing marriage and divorce, Jesus makes a seemingly unrelated statement about eunuchs. He says that some are born that way, some are made that way by others, and some choose to live as eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. And then he adds this: "Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given... The one who can accept this should accept it."

For years, many of us have been told that God created only male and female and that there are no other options. Many trans people have internalized this message to their own detriment. Some of us spent years trying to conform, denying who we were, and hoping that God would change us. We believed that being faithful meant ignoring what was undeniable inside of us. This kind of theological violence has broken countless lives.

But then there is Jesus, refusing to enforce rigid categories. His words about eunuchs challenge the idea that there are only two valid expressions of human embodiment. He acknowledges that some people do not fit the male-female binary. His reference to eunuchs is not just about intersex individuals but also includes those who, by circumstance or choice, live outside of traditional gender norms. Trans people fit into this conversation. Jesus offers no condemnation, exclusion, or requirement that these individuals be "fixed" or made to conform. And he does something else: he acknowledges that not everyone will be able to accept this truth.

#### *Not Everyone Can Accept This Truth?*

But just because the majority will continue to scratch their heads and not "get it," it does not give them the right to go after us, to make our existence a hell, or to render our lives impossible. Understanding may be limited, but respect and dignity are non-negotiable. Our lives are not up for debate, and our right to exist should not hinge on whether others comprehend or agree with us.

This is not an excuse to accept exclusion or mistreatment. It is an honest recognition of reality. Jesus pre-emptively declared that not everyone would understand or accept what he was saying. That warning should temper our expectations.

Some people will never move beyond their rigid thinking. They will not accept trans people, not because we are illegitimate, but because they refuse to expand their vision of what is possible. Their rejection says more about their unwillingness to receive wisdom than it does about the validity of trans lives.

Too many churches, politicians, and commentators have positioned themselves as arbiters of gender, insisting that anything outside their prescribed definitions is rebellion. They treat trans existence as an attack, an ideology, a distortion of creation. But what if their refusal to understand is the very thing Jesus anticipated? What if they are simply not among those to whom this knowledge has been given?

Jesus did not force understanding on anyone. He didn't demand universal acceptance. He extended the invitation and let people decide whether they were ready to receive it. Yet, if Jesus was so pragmatic, what does that mean for those who long for recognition, inclusion, and dignity? It is a difficult truth to wrestle with. It suggests that our message may never get through, no matter how loud we shout from the rooftops. That realization stings. Tempering expectations can feel like surrendering before the fight even begins. But perhaps the battle isn't about convincing everyone—it's about standing firm in truth, knowing that even Jesus knew some would never see.

### *Reading the Text Through Jesus' Lens*

This passage has been used against LGBTQ+ people to justify exclusion. Some argue that because Jesus referenced Genesis—"male and female He created them"—this proves gender is binary. That argument crumbles when placed alongside Jesus' next words. He acknowledges that some are "born eunuchs." What does that mean if not a declaration that some people do not fit the traditional categories? Jewish tradition at the time recognized different types of eunuchs, including those who had ambiguous or mixed-sex characteristics. The Midrash includes terms for a female eunuch (a person assigned female but with male traits) and a male eunuch (a person assigned male but with female traits). Jesus knew this. His audience knew this. His words reflect this awareness.

Jesus does not frame these individuals as mistakes or outliers to be corrected. He does not exclude them from full participation in the kingdom of heaven. The only caveat he offers is that accepting our reality is not universal. If Jesus recognized that some people would never be able to accept this, what does that mean for us? It means we should stop expecting universal affirmation. We should stop begging for it. We should stop measuring our worth based on the opinions of those who lack the ability—or the willingness—to see.

### *A Challenge to Bible Quoters Who Still Say No to Trans*

Some will read this and still hesitate. They will look for ways to soften it, to make it about celibacy, or to find some loophole that keeps them from acknowledging what is right in front of them. Here is the challenge to those individuals: What are you so afraid of?

Jesus never once condemns the eunuch. He never calls them unnatural. He never declares that their existence is an affront to God. If he does not say these things, why do you? If Jesus offers a vision of human embodiment that includes those who do not fit into the binary, why do you insist on a more restrictive interpretation than he did?

The kingdom of God is not built on fear, control, or coercion. It is not for those who demand that everyone fit into a narrow framework of existence. It is for those willing to accept what

has been given.

If you cannot accept trans people, then admit that the issue lies with you, not with us. Admit that you are struggling with the invitation. Own the fact that you are making a choice—because Jesus already acknowledged that some people would not be able to receive this truth. But do not, under any circumstances, pretend that your rejection is your righteous Christian duty. Do not drape it in theology or claim you are standing in defence of the right for girls to feel safe or the family or traditional Christian values. It is nothing more than what Jesus warned about: your inability to accept what has been given. But if you open your mind and accept this teaching from Jesus, you will find cause for celebrating, just like at the end of the story of the Ethiopian Eunuch in chapter 8 of the Book of Acts.

*Lisa Salazar*

More about Lisa here: <https://lisasalazar.com/about.html>

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**At Long Last** – *Bishop Szymon Niemiec*

The five-and-a-half-year ordeal is slowly coming to an end. The District Court for the Śródmieście District of the Capital City of Warsaw, presided over by Judge Krzysztof Ptasiewicz, decided today to discontinue the proceedings that have been ongoing since 2019 against three clergymen who concelebrated an ecumenical service before the Equality Parade in June 2019. Neither representatives of the prosecutor's office nor persons considered to be wronged (i.e. members of Ordo Iuris and the Independence March) appeared at the hearing. The closing arguments were taken by both the defense attorneys, including the invaluable attorney Michał Fertak, the Human Rights Office Agata Bzdych, and the representative of the social side, the Freedom from Religion Foundation, in the person of attorney Marcin Pawelec-Jakowiecki. The court in its oral justification upheld the position of the indictment being irrelevant and drew attention to the obvious disregard of the prosecutor's office, which throughout the proceedings did not find time to verify the basic facts concerning the canonical status of the accused. Now we are waiting for the written justification of the decision and its entry into force. Let this be the last act of this nightmare.

Yours in Christ

Rt Rev Szymon Niemiec



# PARTICIPANTS NEEDED!

**ARE YOU 18 OR OVER?**

**DO YOU IDENTIFY AS TRANSGENDER OR OTHERWISE NOT CISGENDERED?**

**HAVE YOU BEEN INVOLVED IN ACTIVISM\* IN THE UK?**

\*ACTIVISM REFERS TO ANY WORK CARRIED OUT EITHER ONLINE OR OFFLINE AIMING TO BRING ABOUT SOCIAL AND OR POLITICAL CHANGE

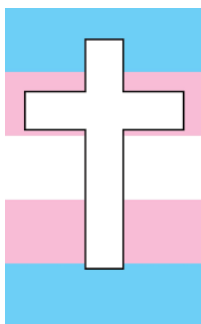
**WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING IN A 45MIN INTERVIEW TO AID RESEARCH INTO TRANSGENDER ACTIVISM?**



**FOR MORE INFORMATION, EMAIL ME AT AD765@SUSSEX.AC.UK**

**ETHICAL APPROVAL GRANTED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX  
ETHICS APPLICATION NO. ER/AD765/1**

**US**  
UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX



## **Trans faith**

Podcast on why churches who reject trans people are wrong:  
<https://www.buzzsprout.com/1352353/episodes/16194533>

Fabulous Sibyl rev. Robyn Golden-Hann talks to the BBC:  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c1kmv8p0kn1o>

Trumps onslaught on trans people and Christian nationalism:

<https://religionnews.com/2025/02/13/trump-2-0s-scapegoating-of-trans-people-is-a-christian-nationalist-distraction/>

“Food for Thought” talk by Sarah Hobbs:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xZk9P-6LGrE>



### **Trans law and politics**

Labour councillor resigns over puberty blockers ban and government’s treatment of trans people:

<https://www.thepinknews.com/2025/01/07/puberty-blockers-zoe-hughes-labour/>

Labour backtracks on plans to simplify gender recognition:

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/feb/10/labour-shelves-plans-easier-people-legally-change-gender>

Supreme court to decide on legal definition of a “woman”. Susan Gilchrist explains the issues involved – and how important it is that the Court upholds the current definition:

<https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/255P-WhatIsAWoman.pdf>

Wes Streeting engages with anti-trans groups:

<https://lgbt.libdems.org.uk/news/article/cross-party-statement-on-wes-streetings-engagement-with-anti-trans-groups>

University of Sussex fined £585,000 over Kathleen Stock – it intends to challenge the fine:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cn9vr4vjzgqo>

Trans kids deserve better: <https://transkidsdeservebetter.org/teenage-trans-activists-confront-wes-streeting>

I (*Pauline*) wrote this letter to Rachel Reeves on Christmas Eve. I was told it had been referred to the DHSC. I'm still waiting for a reply.

Dear Rachel

I write to you as a constituent who is a trans woman. It has felt for a long time that trans people have been swimming against a tide of prejudice and misunderstanding that, shamefully, was weaponised by the last government which scapegoated trans people in a cynical attempt to win a few votes. I sincerely hope the new Labour government can do better, though their welcome in opposition of the widely discredited Cass Report and action to ban the use of puberty blockers (except in clinical trials, the details of which seem not yet to have been worked out), does not fill me with much hope. I appreciate that your heavy responsibilities as the custodian of the entire economy may mean that the plight of a tiny proportion of the population is not high on your list of priorities. But I am writing to you now on behalf of trans children who, though small in number, are amongst the most vulnerable in the whole of our society and who, just now, appear to have very few friends and supporters (sometimes even in their own families) but are being left helpless and defenceless. It breaks my heart to see the distress that some trans children are suffering, with endless waiting lists for treatment and the chaotic nature of the post-Cass arrangements for their care. We are at risk of treating our trans children as badly as in some states in the USA where any form of trans-affirming health care is banned and to support a child's transition is regarded as a form of child abuse. Of course the use of puberty blockers is a serious step to be taken after thorough consideration by skilled clinicians and gender specialists but for some children they are literally life-saving - I'm sure you can well imagine that for a child suffering severely from gender dysphoria, the onset of the "wrong" puberty is a serious disaster and almost a guarantee of subsequent mental health challenges. Puberty blockers have been used safely for many years in many countries of the world and have the support of WPATH (World Professional Association for Transgender Health).

I do plead with you and the government to act with compassion and understanding towards this exceptionally vulnerable and frightened group of children. They do not have a vote and those who seek to help them are routinely demonised by a callous and heartless and ignorant media. They are utterly dependent on the good will of the government which I hope and pray will not be lacking.

Yours sincerely

Pauline Fleck



## **Trans health**

Nottingham GP practice stops prescribing HRT for trans patients:

<https://www.thepinknews.com/2025/01/02/nhs-gp-hrt-hormone-replacement-therapy/>

Study shows children's gender dysphoria diagnoses rose 50 fold in 10 years:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/jan/24/children-england-gender-dysphoria-diagnosis-rise>

...see also Mermaids' comment on state of trans children's healthcare:

<https://mermaidsuk.org.uk/news/newresearch-transyouth-wellbeing/>

Early prescribing of hormones linked to better subsequent mental health:

<https://med.stanford.edu/news/all-news/2022/01/mental-health-hormone-treatment-transgender-people.html>

Stories of top-surgery in later life:

<https://www.them.us/story/trans-nonbinary-people-top-surgery-over-45-body-week>

Mermaids calls for Sullivan review of sex and gender markers to be rejected:

<https://mermaidsuk.org.uk/news/sullivan-review-explained/>

More GPs opting out of shared care for trans patients:

<https://www.thepinknews.com/2025/03/28/gps-hrt-prescriptions-dr-aidan-kelly-transgender-trans/>



## Trans life

What does latest YouGov survey show about attitudes to trans people? “What we now see is a near even split among the public between people who think you should be able to change *both* your social and legal gender (32%) and those who think you should be able to change *neither* your social nor your legal gender (33%).”

“The public are also generally opposed to gender transition treatments being available through the NHS. Most (57%) say gender reassignment surgery should not be provided through the NHS, with 51% saying the same of hormone treatments.

Where in our 2022 survey there had already been notably more people opposed to providing surgery on the NHS, opinion had been split 38% to 41% when it came to hormone treatments; as of our latest survey, opposition in this latter case now stands a full 18 points ahead of support.”

“One of the most contentious parts of the transgender debate is whether or not children should be allowed to transition.

This is the aspect of the transgender rights debate on which the public view is most one-sided. When it comes to treatments for under-16s, 75% say puberty blockers should not be allowed, with 78% saying the same of hormone treatments.”

“Almost half of Britons say that transgender men should not be allowed use men’s toilets (47%) or changing rooms (49%) – higher than the 32-35% who would permit it. For transgender women, resistance to allowing toilet and changing room access increases to 55% and 58%, respectively. Additionally, 52% of Britons say trans women should not be allowed to use women’s refuges for victims of rape or assault.

Such opposition increases further in our follow-up questions asking specifically about transgender people who had not undergone gender reassignment surgery.

In terms of the wider principle, most Britons (55%) say they believe that allowing transgender women to use spaces reserved for women, such as women's toilets or changing rooms, “presents a genuine risk of harm to women”.”

“Most Britons are again opposed to allowing transgender people to take part in gendered sporting events, and transgender women in particular. While 60% say trans men should not be allowed in men’s sports events, this rises to 74% for trans women at women’s competitions.”

<https://yougov.co.uk/politics/articles/51545-where-does-the-british-public-stand-on-transgender-rights-in-202425>

Body of teen trans refugee who killed herself found in flat:

<https://www.thepinknews.com/2025/01/07/body-of-teenage-trans-woman-lay-undiscovered-in-her-flat-for-two-days-inquest-hears/>

Trans woman with GRC held in men's prison:

<https://www.thepinknews.com/2025/01/13/zoe-watts-held-in-male-prison/>

...and denied medication including HRT:

<https://www.thepinknews.com/2025/01/22/zoe-watts-trans-prisoner-medication/>

Trans teen with cerebral palsy:

<https://www.thepinknews.com/2025/01/17/micah-leroy/>

Swab test for elite athletes, based on research supposedly showing athletes assigned male at birth have advantages pre-puberty and after T suppression:

<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2025/feb/10/world-athletics-plans-tougher-rules-for-transgender-and-dsd-athletes>

Research comparing cis and trans athletes:

“CONCLUSIONS This research compares transgender male and transgender female athletes to their cisgender counterparts. Compared with cisgender women, transgender women have decreased lung function, increasing their work in breathing. Regardless of fatfree mass distribution, transgender women performed worse on the countermovement jump than cisgender women and CM. Although transgender women have comparable absolute  $\dot{V}O_2$  max values to cisgender women, when normalised for body weight, transgender women's cardiovascular fitness is lower than CM and women. Therefore, this research shows the potential complexity of transgender athlete physiology and its effects on the laboratory measures of physical performance. A long-term longitudinal study is needed to confirm whether these findings are directly related to gender-affirming hormone therapy owing to the study's shortcomings, particularly its cross-sectional design and limited sample size, which make confirming the causal effect ....problematic.”

<https://bjsm.bmj.com/content/bjsports/58/11/586.full.pdf>

Trans endurance cyclist's riposte to Trump:

<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/commentisfree/2025/feb/20/trump-trans-women-sport-austin-killips>

Jake and Hannah Graf's TDoV art exhibition:

<https://www.thepinknews.com/2025/03/27/trans-is-human-jake-graf-trans-day-of-visibility/>



## Trans world

Trans Pakistan: some progress, much stigma, high TB rates:

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2025/jan/03/pakistan-healthcare-transgender-community-help-tb-tuberculosis-treatment-screening-outreach>

Trans Australia: Queensland government bans hormone treatment for trans youth:

<https://qnews.com.au/queensland-government-halts-hormone-treatment-for-trans-children/>

Trans Thailand: Thai government provides healthcare support for 200,000 trans Thais:

<https://www.thepinknews.com/2025/01/28/thailand-health-ministry-trans-hrt/>

Trans prisoners in USA (**warning: seriously horrific**):

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/jan/30/trans-people-federal-prisons>

Trans woman helicopter pilot blamed for Washington plane crash:

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/feb/11/washington-dc-plane-crash-diversity-trans-jo-ellis>

Trans India: trans sex workers educating truckers about safe sex:

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2025/feb/03/diesel-oil-condoms-indian-transgender-sex-workers-teach-truckers-about-aids>

Trans Texas: “As painful as it is that the most hateful among us are often my fellow Christians, their ignorance only makes me more resolute to fight for trans kids like my daughter.” <https://www.texasobserver.org/trans-children-gods-gifts/>

Horrors Trump is inflicting on trans people (“The Trump administration and the broader revanchist movement are targeting trans people because they are a tiny minority that they think can be bullied and dehumanized without great political pushback. They are targeting trans people because trans life represents the principles of dignity, self-determination and gender equality that they abhor. And they are targeting trans people because they are hateful, sadistic and cruel – because they want to make people suffer for the crime of being different from them, and because they do not have the courage to pick on anyone who is more capable of fighting back.”

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/feb/28/trump-anti-trans-hysteria>

Trans US military veteran speaks out:

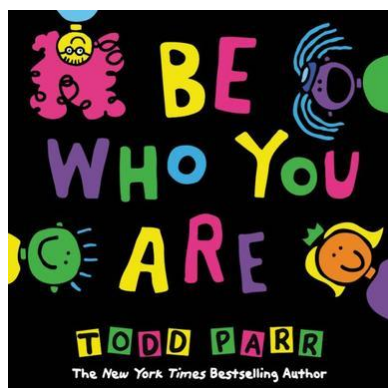
<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/mar/11/transgender-military-ban-trump>

Interview with Vivian Jenna Wilson:

<https://www.thepinknews.com/2025/03/20/elon-musks-trans-daughter-vivian-jenna-wilson-teen-vogue/>

Trans Saudi – warning, horrific tale of trans Saudi woman who kills herself:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/czepx5n3581o>



## Trans Books and Media

Emilia Perez wins big at Golden Globes (and a win for trans representation):

<https://www.thepinknews.com/2025/01/06/emilia-perez-golden-globes/>

...but this trans woman didn't think it did trans people any favours:

<https://www.thepinknews.com/2025/01/07/emilia-perez-is-a-bad-film/>

Emma Thompson and Christopher Eccleston to star in drama about Bellinger vs Bellinger – the court case that led to the GRA:

<https://www.thepinknews.com/2025/01/09/emma-thompson-and-christopher-eccleston-star-in-drama-about-landmark-trans-marriage-case/>

Trans voices added to lineup including gender-critical speakers at Oxford Literary Festival:

<https://www.thepinknews.com/2025/01/20/oxford-literary-festival-trans-gender-critical-backlash/>

“Under a Pink Sky” – Esther Ghey’s extraordinary story about her and Brianna:

<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2025/feb/22/esther-ghey-murder-daughter-brianna-transgender>

No trigger warning is needed for this book as few readers will be unaware of what awaits them. Parts of it are very hard to read indeed. Esther intertwines elements of her own difficult story with that of Brianna’s. She emerges from the horror with immense credit and dignity – her compassionate reaching out to the mother of one of Brianna’s killers, recognising her own tragic loss, is inspiring. As we know Esther now campaigns tirelessly for better controls on internet access for children which did so much harm to Brianna and utterly poisoned the minds of her child killers. She also works to promote the teaching of mindfulness in schools as an antidote to the corrupting influences to which our children are now so vulnerable.



Unbearably painful though it is, I do urge you to read “Under a Pink Sky” to honour both the memory of Brianna and her brave, extraordinary bereaved mother. *Pauline*

“Otherland” – a review by *Yvonne*

I went to see this new play called *Otherland* by Chris Bush at the Almeida Theatre in Islington. Some of you may be familiar with Chris Bush’s *Standing at the Sky’s Edge*, the musical about Park Hill Flats in Sheffield. Chris Bush is trans but says this play is not autobiographical; however, much of the content and emotion of the play must come from close experience, as well as research around others.

The play follows a young couple who marry, but then go their own different ways, with discomfort and concern for each other, but each following a deeply known need – for Harri to become herself in all parts of her life; for Jo to enable her partner and herself to have a child. It is beautifully done, with woven-in fragments of music, and addresses the realities of transition without ever using the word. Indeed the word ‘trans’ is only spoken once. Harri finds other ways to talk about herself, and others do too, even if they are not accepting or understanding her. And there are vignettes of being misunderstood by officialdom, of the awkwardness of changes at work, of a parent trying to ‘keep up’.

The second half of the play uses metaphor very effectively – of Harri being a strange sea creature coming onto dry land and looking for acceptance from its inhabitants; the pregnant Jo as a kind of robot, carrying the baby, doing what she has to do, her personality overwhelmed. In a striking scene, Harri squirms in water, to represent her own emergent self and to represent the birth of a baby.

To me the play felt like the necessary and often missing ‘introduction’ to writings about trans – an appreciation that is missing from the studies of gender services; the book by Shon Faye, indeed the critical books by Helen Joyce, Kathleen Stock. Telling simply what it is to have trans knowledge, a trans life, whether acted upon or not. Harri says at the start she has known for years, yet also that nothing will happen. She says she will not draw attention to herself; will avoid the rejection; observes ‘who would choose that?’; how could she know what women go through when they grow up? But she and Jo do face up, with friends and family, to changes that unfold.

It is fair, sensitive and positive. Trans people, families of trans, and people critical of the language and implications of trans would recognise the sensitivity of the play, and the value, for once, of a fresh and creative way of talking about it. Reflecting on this play, I thought of an interesting parallel with the book by Alexandra Hemingsley called *Someone to Love*, which is autobiographical and deals with both infertility issues and the experience of a partner coming out, and all the implications of that. I would also highly recommend that book; sympathetic, yet with just a few pages that are emotionally very difficult to read. The play is on for a limited time until later in March, but there is an article about Chris Bush and the play in the 16 Feb Observer.

## Hilda, Lisa and ‘Loos’

A working paper by Hilda Ruth Beaumont at the request of Lisa Williamson

### Introduction

*Lisa became concerned when she heard from her daughter that the removal of unisex loos at her workplace to be replaced by male and female loos led to a non-gendered employee to feel excluded. This led Lisa to think about the situation at Church House where there are men and women only loos plus one accessible for wheelchair loo and wonder how a transgender or nonbinary person might feel about this. So, she asked me, Hilda, a transgender woman, for practical help. When I started to think about this, I thought it best to take a step back and consider her request from a wider perspective. The following is the result and consists of 10 sections. Section 1 provides some useful definitions to avoid confusion, Section 2 is a commentary on the difference between a transgender woman and cisgender woman, and Section 3 is a commentary on women only spaces taking into account a TERF (Trans-Exclusionary Radical Feminist) perspective. Section 4 discusses the risk to cis gender women posed by trans gender women; Section 5 looks at the attitude of the Church of England to transgender individuals and Section 6 looks at individual Christian belief in response to the transgender in the light of comments recently made by the US Vice President J D Vance. Section 7 describes the legal position concerning transgender women using female toilets; Section 8 provides a brief Biblical perspective; and in Section 9 Hilda describes her experiences of using female toilets. Section 10, the final section asks, “Where does this leave Church House?”*

### 1 Useful Definitions

#### Transgender

A **transgender** person has a gender identity that differs from the **sex they were assigned at birth**.

- **Example:** A person assigned male at birth who identifies and lives as a woman is a **transgender woman**. A person assigned female at birth who identifies and lives as a man is a **transgender man**.
- **Key Difference:** Being transgender is about **gender identity**—how a person internally understands themselves as male, female, or another gender.

#### Non-Binary

A **non-binary** person does not exclusively identify as male or female.

- They may feel like a mix of both genders, neither gender, or have a fluid identity that changes over time.
- Some non-binary people use terms like **genderqueer, agender, bigender, or genderfluid** to describe their experience.
- **Example:** Someone who sometimes feels male, sometimes female, or identifies as neither might call themselves **non-binary**.
- **Key Difference:** Non-binary people **do not fit strictly into male or female categories**, unlike transgender people who transition from one gender to another.

#### Intersex

An **intersex** person is born with **biological sex characteristics** (such as chromosomes, hormones, or reproductive anatomy) that **do not fit typical definitions of male or female**.

- Intersex is about **biology**, not gender identity.
- Some intersex people are assigned male or female at birth, but their bodies may have variations in sexual development.
- **Example:** Someone born with both ovarian and testicular tissue or with XY chromosomes but female anatomy.

- **Key Difference:** Intersex is a **physical variation** in sex characteristics, while transgender and non-binary are about **gender identity**.

This leads us to consider the difference between a transgender woman and a cis gender woman, the topic for Section 2.

## 2 Difference between a transgender woman and a cis gender woman

The difference between a **transgender woman** and a **cisgender woman** lies in their experiences of gender identity and biological sex at birth:

- **Transgender Woman:** A person who was **assigned male at birth** but identifies and lives as a **woman**. She may or may not undergo medical transition (e.g., hormone therapy or surgery), but her gender identity is **female**.
- **Cisgender Woman:** A person who was **assigned female at birth** and continues to identify as a **woman**. Her gender identity aligns with the sex she was assigned at birth.

### Key Differences:

1. **Biological Sex at Birth**
  - A **trans woman** was assigned male at birth.
  - A **cis woman** was assigned female at birth.
2. **Gender Identity**
  - Both identify as **women**, but their experiences of womanhood differ due to social, biological, and personal factors.
3. **Physical and Medical Differences**
  - A trans woman may undergo medical treatments like **hormone replacement therapy (HRT)** to develop typically female characteristics.
  - A cis woman typically has naturally occurring female biological traits, though variations (e.g., intersex conditions or hormonal differences) exist.
4. **Life Experience**
  - A **cis woman** has experienced life as female from birth.
  - A **trans woman** may have spent part of her life being perceived and treated as male before transitioning.

### A personal caveat

Some of my transgender women friends argue that despite these differences, both **transgender women and cisgender women are women**. I think being vocally dogmatic about this causes problems where there needn't be any. There is just so much in a ciswoman's life experience that I have not and cannot experience – menstruation, pregnancy, child birth, breast feeding, menopause – and while I acknowledge that these have their basis in the biology of cisgender women and that it is impossible for me to have these experiences to say that transgender women and cisgender women are women implies that somehow we are the same. We aren't. I feel blessed that I have discovered Hilda and thoroughly enjoy living my life as a transgender woman, presenting as a woman and using women's spaces where appropriate, in ways that are respectful of my cisgender women sisters. This leads us to ask, 'What are women only spaces?' which is the topic for Section 3.

## 3 Women only spaces – the TERF<sup>1</sup> perspective

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<sup>1</sup> TERF stands for **Trans-Exclusionary Radical Feminist**. It is used to describe individuals or groups who identify as feminists but do not accept transgender women as women and often oppose their inclusion in women's spaces and rights movements. The term originated within feminist and LGBTQ+ discourse and is often used critically to highlight exclusionary or transphobic views. Some people labelled as TERFs reject the term, considering it a mischaracterization of their beliefs.

Someone who might be described as a **TERF** would likely define **women-only spaces** as spaces exclusively for individuals they consider biologically female—those assigned female at birth and who have experienced life as women under patriarchy. They often argue that these spaces are necessary for safety, privacy, and maintaining a shared experience of womanhood, particularly in contexts such as shelters, prisons, bathrooms, and sports.

They may reject the idea that gender identity alone determines womanhood, instead emphasizing biological sex as the defining factor. This perspective frequently brings them into conflict with transgender-inclusive feminism, which argues that trans women are women and should be included in women-only spaces.

The concern expressed by those who are against transgender women using women only spaces needs to be put in the context of the risk this poses to cisgender women, the topic for Section 4.

#### **4 The risk to cisgender women posed by transgender women**

*Comprehensive data on incidents involving transgender women harming cisgender women in women-only spaces over the past five years is scarce. Available research and reports do not provide specific statistics on such occurrences. However, several studies have examined the broader context of transgender individuals' interactions within public spaces:*

- **Safety Concerns:** A literature review commissioned by the Scottish Government highlighted two primary arguments for excluding trans women from women-only spaces: the discomfort or fear of cisgender women and concerns that trans women's misconduct could compromise women's safety. The review did not present empirical evidence supporting these concerns.

[gov.scot](http://gov.scot)

- **Victimization Rates:** Research indicates that transgender individuals, including trans women, experience higher rates of victimization compared to their cisgender counterparts. A study analyzing data from the National Crime Victimization Surveys found that transgender people faced a violent victimization rate of 86.2 per 1,000 persons, which is four times higher than the rate for cisgender individuals.

[williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu](http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu)

- **Policy Implications:** Discussions around policies such as the Gender Recognition Act reform have raised concerns about potential misconduct in women-only spaces. However, these discussions often lack empirical evidence linking trans-inclusive policies to increased safety risks for cisgender women.

[open-access.bcu.ac.uk](http://open-access.bcu.ac.uk)

*In summary, while concerns have been raised about the inclusion of transgender women in women-only spaces, there is a lack of concrete data documenting incidents of transgender women harming cisgender women in these settings over the past five years. Conversely, transgender individuals often face higher rates of victimization, underscoring the importance of inclusive and protective measures for all individuals.*

*Toilet facilities are just one example of women's only spaces. It is important to widen the discussion to consider the place of transgender individuals in the Church of England as a whole and not be sidetracked into limiting our thinking to considering minutiae. This is the topic for Section 5.*

#### **5 The attitude of the Church of England to transgender individuals**

*The Church of England has engaged in ongoing discussions and policy developments concerning the inclusion of transgender individuals in various roles within the church. Here's an overview of their considerations:*

- a. **Membership in Congregations:** The Church of England emphasizes that all individuals are made in the image of God and should find a welcoming environment in their parish churches. In 2018, the House of Bishops published guidance for parishes to help transgender people mark their transition, encouraging clergy to be "creative

and sensitive" in using liturgy for such occasions. This guidance is incorporated into the Church's Common Worship resources.

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

- b. **Candidacy for Ordination:** The Church has addressed the ordination of transgender individuals. In 2002, the House of Bishops discussed transgender candidates for ordination, acknowledging that at least two trans candidates had come forward. The position is summarized as follows: bishops intending to sponsor a trans person for a Bishops' Advisory Panel (BAP) must be prepared to ordain them if recommended.

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

- c. **Employment in Diocesan Administration:** Regarding lay employment, the Church of England's Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion policies aim to address unlawful discrimination. While some lay posts may require a commitment to the Christian faith, the policies are designed to ensure inclusivity and equal opportunities for all individuals, including transgender people.

[oxford.anglican.org](http://oxford.anglican.org)

*In summary, the Church of England has taken steps to include transgender individuals as congregation members, candidates for ordination, and employees within its administrative structures, promoting a message of inclusivity and equal opportunity.*

*Although the Church of England has an affirmative position concerning transgender people there are many individual Christians who struggle with this position and it is to this topic we turn in Section 6.*

## **6 Individual Christian belief in response to the transgender**

*Over the past five years, there have been instances where Christian organizations in England have been involved in legal disputes related to the treatment of transgender individuals. While these cases often centre on the expression of beliefs rather than direct discrimination against transgender people, they highlight the complex interactions between religious convictions and gender identity issues.*

**Case of Kristie Higgs:** *In 2019, Kristie Higgs, a pastoral administrator at Farmor's School in Gloucestershire, was dismissed after sharing social media posts critical of LGBTQ+ relationship lessons in primary education. She contended that her termination was due to her Christian beliefs. In February 2025, the Court of Appeal ruled her dismissal as "unlawfully discriminatory" and "disproportionate," recognizing her right to express her religious views under the Equality Act.*

[theguardian.com](http://theguardian.com)

**Case of Pastor Keith Waters:** *Pastor Keith Waters, who served as a caretaker at a primary school in the Isle of Ely, faced disciplinary action in 2019 after tweeting concerns about LGBT 'Pride Month' events, suggesting they were contrary to Christian morals and potentially harmful to children. He was issued a final written warning and felt compelled to resign. An Employment Tribunal later found that he had been discriminated against, noting that his tweet was an expression of his role as a pastor.*

[christian.org.uk](http://christian.org.uk)

*These cases primarily involve individuals expressing traditional Christian views on gender and sexuality, leading to employment disputes. While they do not represent direct discrimination by churches against transgender individuals, they underscore the tensions that can arise when religious beliefs intersect with contemporary discussions on gender identity.*

*It's important to note that many Christian denominations in England, including the Church of England, have made efforts to be more inclusive of transgender individuals. For instance, in 2017, the General Synod of the Church of England passed a motion recognizing the need for transgender people to be welcomed and affirmed in their parish churches.*

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

*In summary, while there have been legal disputes involving Christian individuals and organizations concerning the expression of beliefs about transgender issues, explicit cases of Christian churches in England discriminating against transgender people in the past five years are not prominently documented.*

*The recent outburst by J D Vance arguing that basic liberties of religious Britons, were under threat although unfounded, as the above examples show, is of concern here. Denominations and individual churches in England which are generally non-affirming of transgender and nonbinary may well seek and receive financial support from the US in line with the anti LGBTQI+ stance of the Trump administration. This administration as exemplified by J D Vance, will almost certainly attempt to have influence outside the US. So, it will be important for those denominations and individual churches which are affirming of transgender and nonbinary to be vocal in their support with clear arguments defending and promoting their position.*

*In the next section we will look at the legal position concerning the use of loos as such use has become a focus of concern for those worried about who uses women only spaces.*

## **7 The legal position on transgender women using female toilets**

*In **England and Wales**, a transgender woman who uses a public toilet labelled "**female**" or "**women**" is **not breaking the law**. There are **no laws** that prohibit transgender people from using toilets that align with their gender identity, even if they have not legally changed their gender under the **Gender Recognition Act 2004**.*

### **Key Legal Considerations:**

1. **Equality Act 2010** – This law protects transgender people from discrimination when accessing services, including public toilets. Trans women are protected under the category of "**gender reassignment**", meaning they should not be treated unfairly for using a women's toilet.
2. **Exceptions under the Equality Act** – In certain cases, service providers (e.g., businesses or charities) can legally exclude transgender people from single-sex spaces if it is a **proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim** (e.g., safety, privacy, or fairness). However, blanket bans are **not automatically legal** and must be justified on a case-by-case basis.
3. **No Specific Law Against Toilet Use** – There is **no criminal offence** for a transgender woman using a women's toilet. The **only exceptions** would be if someone engages in unlawful behaviour (e.g., harassment, voyeurism, or indecent exposure), which applies to **anyone**, regardless of gender identity.

### **Scotland and Northern Ireland:**

- **Scotland** follows similar principles under the **Equality Act 2010**.
- **Northern Ireland** has separate equality laws, but transgender people are still generally protected from discrimination in public services.

### **Conclusion:**

*A **transgender woman using a female toilet is not breaking the law**. While service providers may have policies regarding toilet access, any restriction must be legally justified and not amount to unlawful discrimination.*

*Given that the writing of this document was initiated by a member of the Church of England it is necessary to put our discussion in the context of Biblical writing. The next section deals with this very briefly and if readers wish to consider the matter more widely then *Constructive Theology and Gender Variance – Transformative Creatures* by Professor Susannah Cornwall is a useful starting point.*

## 8 A Biblical perspective

*The Bible does not explicitly mention transgender identities as they are understood today. However, several verses are often referenced in discussions about gender identity and how transgender individuals fit within biblical teachings. Interpretations vary widely depending on theological perspectives. Here are some key points:*

### **Verses Often Cited Against Transgender Identity**

1. **Genesis 1:27** – "So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them."
  - Some argue this establishes a strict gender binary, though others note this does not address gender identity or intersex conditions.
2. **Deuteronomy 22:5** – "A woman must not wear men's clothing, nor a man wear women's clothing, for the Lord your God detests anyone who does this."
  - Some interpret this as forbidding cross-dressing, though others see it as a cultural law for ancient Israel, not applicable today.
3. **1 Corinthians 6:9-10** – Some translations include terms like "effeminate" or "men who have sex with men" (*malakoi* and *arsenokoitai* in Greek), which are debated in meaning. Some theologians argue they refer to sexual exploitation rather than gender identity.

### **Verses Supporting Inclusion and Compassion**

1. **Isaiah 56:3-5** – "Let no eunuch complain, 'I am only a dry tree.'... I will give them an everlasting name that will endure forever."
  - Eunuchs in the ancient world were often gender-nonconforming or intersex individuals, and here, they are welcomed into God's family.
2. **Galatians 3:28** – "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."
  - Some see this as emphasizing spiritual equality over rigid gender roles.
3. **Matthew 19:12** – Jesus mentions eunuchs, including those "who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven."
  - Some interpret this as an acknowledgment of gender diversity.

*The Bible does not directly address transgender identities, leaving room for interpretation. Many conservative Christians see gender as divinely ordained, while affirming Christians emphasize love, inclusion, and recognizing transgender individuals as part of God's creation.*

*Lisa asked me to comment on my personal experience of using loos in public places and it is to this we now turn in Section 9.*

## 9 Hilda's personal 'loo' experience

*I always use the 'ladies' when I'm out in places like restaurants, hotels, theatres or large railway stations. In a few museums there is a choice between female, male and trans/nonbinary e.g. The British Library. Taking my friend Nina's advice I usually don't talk to anyone in the ladies unless absolutely necessary as my voice is deep for a woman. It's in the hand washing area that conversations are likely to take place but at places like railway stations most folk are just keen to 'scrub up' and move on with their journey as quickly as possible. So, conversations tend to be rare. On a few occasions in hotels or restaurants women have started conversations with me along the lines "I do like your dress," and then of course I answer by returning the compliment and we get into talking about our wardrobes and where we buy our clothes. Sometimes I take the initiative and give a compliment first. I have never experienced any difficulty.*

*I have found that women are very considerate in ladies loos. At Brighton station I remember that as I went into a cubicle a voice behind me said, "There's no toilet paper in that one." I said, "Not to worry I have some tissues." Just after I shut the door a hand appeared in the gap at the bottom of one of*

*the cubicle sides pushing through some toilet paper. I can't see that happening in the gents. And they are more complex in that they have both urinals and cubicles.*

And so, to the final section Where does this leave Church House?

### **10 Where does this leave Church House?**

*It may be that this working paper is more than Lisa bargained for and that I'm making a mountain out of a molehill. However, given the polarisation of views that can easily take place between those who are affirming of transgender and nonbinary folk and those who aren't I think it is important that Church House develops policy that is clearly affirming and is able to enact this policy in the way that transgender and nonbinary folk who work at or visit Church House are treated, down to the detail of labelling the toilet facilities. I realise that my personal position, transitioning socially very late in life, in Brighton which is noted for being accepting of LGBTQI+, being welcomed into my local parish church and becoming a member of the PCC is probably not typical of the journey undertaken by many transgender people. The relative ease of my journey makes me determined to support those who might be finding their journey more difficult. I hope that the Church of England and the Diocese of Chichester will be allies in this endeavour.*

*Hilda Ruth Beaumont*

February 24 2025