



SIBYLS LOGO - ROBYN GOLDEN - HANV 28 MAY 2018

In the millennia since Christ walked with us on this Earth, we've often tried to box up the "wind" [of the Spirit] in manageable doctrines. We've exchanged the fire of the Spirit for the ice of religious pride. We've turned the wine back into water, and then let the water go stagnant and lukewarm. We've traded the gentle dove of peace for the predatory hawk or eagle of empire. When we have done so, we have ended up with just another religious system, as problematic as any other: too often petty, argumentative, judgmental, cold, hostile, bureaucratic, self-seeking, an enemy of aliveness. In a world full of big challenges, in a time like ours, we can't settle for a heavy and fixed religion. We can't try to contain the Spirit in a box. We need to experience the mighty rushing wind of Pentecost. We need our hearts to be made incandescent by the Spirit's fire. *Brian McLaren*

## Newsletter 97

Dear Sibyls

What a joy it was to be together once more – those of us fortunate enough to be able to be there – at Purley Chase, sharing, consoling, encouraging and celebrating, feasting and dancing, praying and learning.....you can read Fiona's report on it all below. It really feels on these occasions that the Sibyls functions as an extended family in which to be trans is not the curse and affliction it's sometimes made out to be but a joy and a blessing. Some of you may have seen on TV the recently repeated series of programmes about Julia Grant (*A Change of Sex*) which reminded us, if we needed to be, of how trans people used to be treated by the likes of John Randell, the shockingly controlling, arrogant and paternalistic gender "expert". The series as a whole painted a somewhat miserable and depressing picture of the trans experience. It has got better. A bit. Probably Shon Faye would agree, despite her

rather angry newly published book *The Transgender Issue – An Argument for Justice* which is reviewed below. Would Chrissie Chevasutt? *Heaven Come Down* is a harrowing, heart-breaking account of the depths of suffering she descended to as a trans woman before an experience of re-birth inspired by Jesus but tragically more often impeded than aided by the church. You can read a review of Chrissie's book below. Shon Faye depicts a secular society often inhospitable or downright hostile to trans people. Chrissie Chevasutt makes it clear that too often our churches add to our problems instead of being places of safety, sanctuary and healing. Forgive me if this newsletter expresses perhaps too much of the frustration and anger I feel about this. I know that some trans people have far more positive experiences of their churches (though almost certainly much less so of aspects of secular society such as the calamitous state of the gender identity clinics for those needing to pursue medical transition). I myself have started going to an Anglican church which is as inclusive as such a church is allowed to be. My gender identity is in no way a problem but it would still be a problem if I had the misfortune to love and to wish to marry a person of my own gender. Here is an area where yet again the church needs to take a lead from the secular world, instead of boldly and prophetically leading the way and setting an example. I live in hope (only a little) that one day it will.

Pauline 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*

[jennyannebuk@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:jennyannebuk@yahoo.co.uk) Telephone: 01745 337144 or 07500 74195

*Yvonne Wood*

[Yvonne-wood@outlook.com](mailto:Yvonne-wood@outlook.com) Telephone 01279 833499 or 07595 087207

*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 [yvonne-wood@outlook.com](mailto:yvonne-wood@outlook.com) and we will see what is possible.

## **Zoom get-togethers**

We would love others to be involved in future Zoom get-togethers. Would you like to lead worship or facilitate a discussion? Please let us know.

## **Sibyls' On-line events**

We are currently following a routine of an act of worship on the 25<sup>th</sup> of the month and an informal social gathering on the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month, though these timings may vary depending on people's availability. The events are publicised on the Sibyls' website and notifications and zoom links are sent out by email. The acts of worship are open to all, the social gatherings are for members only.

## Invitation from Jenny-Anne Bishop OBE

The Metropolitan URC LGBTIQ+ Congregation continues to be active: running a weekly LGBTIQ+ Sunday service at 4.30pm (London Time) currently by Zoom with online involvement for everyone. < <https://metropolitanchurch.org.uk/> >  
To Join the weekly Zoom Service; please check for the Zoom link on our **Facebook page**: < <https://www.facebook.com/MetropolitanChurch> > , or our **Twitter feed** on a Sunday Morning : < [https://twitter.com/Metro\\_Church](https://twitter.com/Metro_Church) > or please subscribe to our **LGBTIQ+ congregation weekly Newsletter** here:  
< <https://metropolitanchurch.us2.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=3546eacfecb20036d5679ebcc&id=d956811cdd> >

We also provide a **URC Daily Devotional** here:

<<https://us13.campaign-archive.com/?u=8958e2851d933a7a389a9f51c&id=99fe4caf1c>>

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The Unique Transgender Network, North Wales and TransForum Manchester - Transgender social and support Groups continue to operate during these testing times and are restarting our physical groups as well as our bi-weekly Zoom meetings. Unique (< [www.uniquetg.org.uk](http://www.uniquetg.org.uk) >) and TransForum (< [www.transforum.co.uk](http://www.transforum.co.uk) facilitate our **Trans, Non-Binary** and Intersex (**TNBI**) **Support groups** which run every Thursday Evening from 8.00 pm till approx.11 pm (London Time) and every Saturday Afternoon from 3.30 pm to approx.7.00 pm (London Time) by Zoom.

Please join us to socialise, make new friends and to raise any **TNBI** issues you have. As we are on Zoom you are most welcome to join us from all over the UK (and beyond).

To join either Zoom meeting just click on the link below (you may be asked to download the Zoom App onto your computer or phone if you do not already have it):  
<<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/77583683876?pwd=TW9sc2ZRZ0Y2ZEdOazJjenhNWGs4Zz09> >

If you log in from your own Zoom Account: **Meeting ID: 775 8368 3876 Password: 130237**

If you have any difficulty please contact Jenny-Anne at  
<[jennyannebuk@btinternet.com](mailto:jennyannebuk@btinternet.com) > or 07500-741955

## UNIQUE INPERSON MEETINGS ARE BACK!

*UNIQUE is now running **FOUR** live monthly meetings  
PLUS our **TWO** Zoom virtual meetings every week*

On the **FIRST Thursday** at 8.00 - 10.00 pm at  
**The Ark in Bangor LL57 1PX**  
For further details contact: [alice@unique.org.uk](mailto:alice@unique.org.uk)

On the **SECOND & FOURTH Friday**  
10.30 am -12.30 pm - a 'drop-in' at  
**The Community House in Rhyl LL18 2DY**

For further details contact: [kathy@unique.org.uk](mailto:kathy@unique.org.uk) or [jennyanne@unique.org.uk](mailto:jennyanne@unique.org.uk)

On the **THIRD Thursday** 8.00 – 11.00 pm at  
**The Constitutional Club in Prestatyn LL19 9DL**  
For further details contact: [elen@unique.org.uk](mailto:elen@unique.org.uk) or [jennyanne@unique.org.uk](mailto:jennyanne@unique.org.uk)

**UNIQUE** continues to run its **weekly Zoom meetings: Every Thursday 8.00 – 11.00 pm & Every Saturday 3.30 -- 7.00 pm Use this Link**  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/77583683876?pwd=TW9sc2ZRZ0Y2ZEdOazJjenhNWGs4Zz09>  
For further details contact: [elen@unique.org.uk](mailto:elen@unique.org.uk) or [jennyanne@unique.org.uk](mailto:jennyanne@unique.org.uk)

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### Chair's Message from *Yvonne*

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What is special about Sibyls? It is God-centred, so it eases us away from the campaigning, the debating, the all-consuming practicalities; it even eases us away from me, me, me, which we as trans and non-binary people can often become caught up in. Or put another way, being God-centred balances our burden with spiritual leading. It allows our spiritual life to nurture our humanity and our way in the world. Faith is consoling, balancing and strengthening. We don't always have accepting churches, many of us lead faith-based lives outside a local church. Sibyls strives to be a congregation of empathy and shared experience. Church leaders won't always understand trans and non-binary lives, but they must all understand how important the sanctuary of worship is, to be welcomed with a smile, able to pray with others and sometimes to lead worship. There is no need for any of us to tell others anything apart from our name. The key part of transition is quiet self-acceptance, and faith helps. Church is a place to get away from explanation, apology and conflict. It is a place to feel entirely at one with the God of love. We don't need church to be led by God, but for many of us, that is how being led comes about - through the familiarity of words and music, the stillness, the ministry. Our humility and giving-up in faith enables us to be led. Sibyls is special because it is about the spirituality of trans, and the fellowship that can lead to. Let's reach more people who would value Sibyls and spiritual leading - young, middle aged, non-binary, trans masculine and feminine, closeted, out, certain and uncertain.

## Purley Chase Weekend



I have just experienced my first Sibyls weekend at Purley Chase. After a few years of online membership it was good to finally meet, and spend time with, others. There's a certain solidarity in being with people who share and understand such core areas of your experience as gender and spirituality, especially in a friendly, relaxed and supportive setting.

It was also encouraging to see, and learn about, a range of different gender identities and expression, particularly where that is liminal, or non-binary. My own experience is characterised by Dysphoria and a binary transition, but others are holding a different space, where they can embody and express a gender experience that is unique to them. I was struck by the courage and honesty it takes to do this, under pressure to conform to binary social expectations.

Similarly, with the spiritual life, there are a range of ways of living with gender variance in relation to religious institutions which are not accepting or inclusive. Alex spoke of Iona as an in-between place, where the veils between the material and spiritual worlds are thin. Again, this liminal space can be challenging and uncertain, but if we go there together we can be renewed and transformed. Sometimes we need to risk stepping out of the boat.

The theme of Celtic culture and religion highlighted ways in which current social and doctrinal framings of gender have been moulded historically, by oppressive political and cultural currents. This understanding points to how a more holistic and affirmative approach to gender variance is possible, exemplified by the work of the Iona and Corrymeela communities.

I have taken a great deal of support and encouragement from the weekend, and have hopefully forged some new friendships in the process. Many thanks to those who encouraged me to attend, and who shared their experience and insight with such generosity of spirit.

*Fiona McRae*

<http://sm.gndr.org.uk/activities/Purley21/SuN0926a-PurleyPresentation-24sep21.pdf>

<http://sm.gndr.org.uk/activities/Purley21/SuN0926b-AlexPresentation.pdf>

<http://sm.gndr.org.uk/activities/Purley21/PrN0925c-Corrymeela.pdf>

<http://sm.gndr.org.uk/activities/Purley21/Photos/index.htm>

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## **Borderlands**

(Based on an address given within the Holy Communion service at Purley Chase on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2021).

I have spent part of this last summer thinking about and walking in the borderlands between England and Wales, culminating in my leading a group of walkers along the Offa's Dyke trail during the first fortnight of September. The trail runs a total of 177 miles from the Severn Estuary at Chepstow to the seaside at Prestatyn. For about 100 miles it passes alongside Offa's Dyke, the earth embankment built at the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century during the reign of King Offa, who ruled the Saxon Kingdom of Mercia. History provides no contemporary record about the building of the Dyke which is thought to have been constructed as a demonstration of Mercian power rather than as a defensive rampart or agreed border. Whatever the reasons for its construction, it now stands as a historic reminder of the importance of place and identity for the people of that time; of the Saxons who were to become the English, and of the British who became the Welsh.

These borderlands hold some of the most attractive, and unspoilt countryside in Britain; valleys, rivers, hills, woodland and farmland offer varied and delightful scenery and draw you deeply into the places you pass through, their history and peoples. The villages, the old houses and peaceful churches. We may ponder how wild and remote these places would once have been. We may think of the labour required to build Offa's Dyke with its long and imposing earth works, and of local conflicts long forgotten. We will see ancient castles once bastions of power now left



as ruins, and look on the peaceful slopes of valleys where battles were won and lost, and many tears shed.

But alongside the conflicts, there are centuries of co-operation in trading and farming; drovers' roads for travelling and markets for commerce. There are times when differences are forgotten, friendships are made and families united, and life carries on in ordinary ways. The borderlands are places of intermingling where to use Rowan William's metaphor identities are "woven .... out of an awareness of ourselves, each one of us, as a place where immeasurable differences intersect"<sup>1</sup>.

Today there are different identities of Welsh and of English which are at times subtle and submerged, and at other times blazoned loudly on the sports field or in political discourse. There are differences in experiences and in understandings of history, of economy and work, and of religion. Underlying the difference is an earthiness of Welsh spirituality grounded in the fields and the mines and drawing its roots from ancient Celtic traditions, from the spirituality of the earth, of saints, of poets and of songs and of stories long retold.

What has all this to do with gender and gender diversity? Well, what is true of ethnic identities is, I suggest, also true in many ways about gender identities. For with gender comes a baggage of cultural experiences, of conflicts and of suffering, as well as getting along pretty well together much of the time. For we all have different perspectives and different stories and varied interpretations of events. Those of us who live in the borderlands of gender diversity will be only too aware of the complex woven nature of all this. Whilst some of us will see ourselves with clear gendered identity others will be more nuanced in the same way as those who live in geographical borderlands may feel more "both and" than "either or" a particular nationality or ethnicity.

I chose two readings for our service today that gave spiritual validation to those who cross boundaries, who find themselves different and living on the edge of communities. The story of Ruth who chooses to stay with Naomi her mother-in-law despite the apparent hopelessness of their situation. You will remember that Naomi and her husband have been living in the country of Moab. But her husband and both their sons died. Without any kinsfolk in Moab she is left with no option but to return to Judah where she hopes her late husband's family may take pity on her. She urges her daughters-in-law to stay behind but Ruth insists on coming with her and in effect becoming a refugee. To cut a long story short, Ruth is blessed for her commitment to Naomi and gives birth to Obed the grandfather of King David.

The second reading is about Jesus' meeting with a Samaritan woman by a well. The woman is an outsider on many different levels, a woman, a Samaritan and a divorcee who finds herself talking to Jesus, the Galilean preacher who is prepared to cross cultural divides and sees in her value and worth and offers her new life and new hope.

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<sup>1</sup> Rowan Williams as quoted by Esther de Waal in Living on the Border.

Taking all that into account, being in the borderlands of gender diversity might be a good place to be. A place, yes of challenge and change, of tensions and of joy, where alongside the struggle and suffering, there are spiritual wellsprings. A place where God touches those who search for and at times struggle to find truth, a place of spiritual growth and deeper understanding.

In all this I am struck by the significance of our willingness to be open and vulnerable. The importance of being ourselves whoever that might be, and of sharing with others our vulnerability and our uncertainties. For in doing that we witness to our truth and to God's love, and those who take the trouble to meet and get to know us will be changed and enriched by us and by God who works in and through us. In all of this we can have confidence that we are held in God's love, in both our joy and in sorrow.

*Nicky von Benzon*

September 2021

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Here *Chrissie Cevasutt* also reflects on the power of vulnerability, the paradox of "When I am weak then I am strong":

"What is obvious to both me, and those who confide in me, is that in my transness, I have unwittingly created a safe space, a space free of judgement, free of false or pious compassion, that 'holier than thou pity for the 'broken'. I am broken in relation to the norms that the religious cling to, enforcing their experience upon the rest of us. I am broken by any of the standards and cisgender heteronormative rules of this world.

Some in the church openly declare my/our existence as transgender is 'wrong/sin/rebellion'. I am a reject, a failed 'Christian', so people have no fear of judgement from me. When people sit at ease with me, it tells me all I need to know about them. Christians do not normally ask me to their table, that tells me all I need to know about them. There are some beautiful exceptions.

So I live under perpetual judgement as one who is clearly and obviously trans. What might seem a curse is in fact a wonderful blessing, it has given me free access to the holy of Holies; the sacred ground we find when the broken, naked and vulnerable share their pain, sorrow, weakness, grief and the fullness of their fragile bleeding hearts.

This is where God dwells, abides, ministers and heals. Here there is no fear. No fear of rejection, no fear of judgement or being shamed, only the promise of honesty, acceptance, reconciliation and affirmation.

Love abides with us, the damned."

*Chrissie Chevasutt*

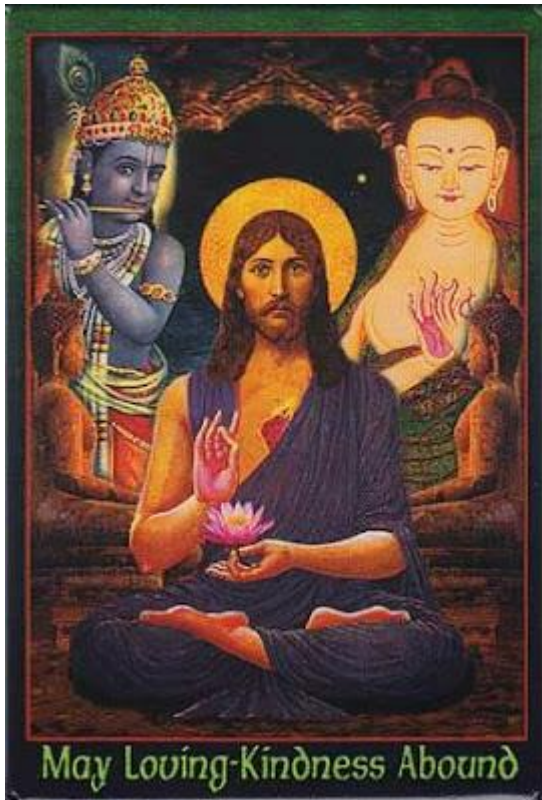
*Try praying this modern version of the prayer of Jesus from the Anglican Church of New Zealand, which both honors and reflects indigenous Maori culture.*

Eternal Spirit,  
Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver,  
Source of all that is and that shall be,  
Father and Mother of us all,  
Loving God, in whom is heaven:

The hallowing of your name echo through the universe!  
The way of your justice be followed by the peoples  
of the world!  
Your heavenly will be done by all created beings!  
Your commonwealth of peace and freedom  
sustain our hope and come on earth.

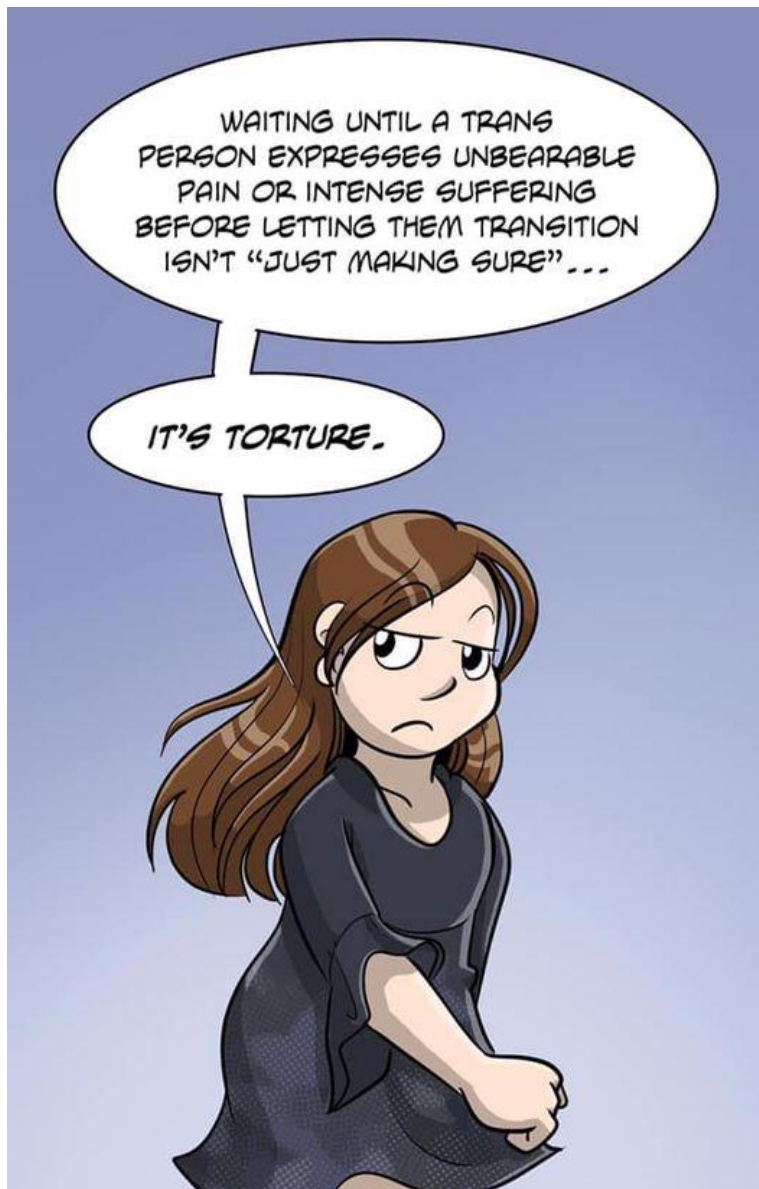
With the bread we need for today, feed us.  
In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.  
In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.  
From trials too great to endure, spare us.  
From the grip of all that is evil, free us.

For you reign in the glory of the power that is love,  
now and for ever. Amen.



So there's no more important thing for religious people than to reduce to silence our 'self-generated fantasies about God and ourselves'. Unfortunately they go together; you can't have a fantasy about God without having a false idea about yourself. And if you have false self-knowledge based on self-rejection, self-hatred, self-mistrust, feeling ashamed or guilty, if you are crippled by this kind of false self-knowledge, often it is unconsciously a self-destructiveness, a self-hating even, then our image of God is going to reflect that in some mirror-imaging kind of way. Our knowledge of God and our knowledge of ourselves are of a piece. We cannot know God without knowing ourselves and vice versa.

([The Experience of Being](#) by Laurence Freeman OSB )



For those not able to attend the zoomed service in August, here is the homily:

“This service is based on one of the evening prayer services we had at the Quest conference in Manchester in July. Quest is the pastoral group for LGBT Catholics. It was an inspiring weekend and made me realise how much I miss the consolations of Catholic spirituality and the pleasures of worshipping in person with others, of sharing oneself openly with them. It’s what the church should be like but sadly in my experience isn’t. The question I have been asking myself since I decided to leave the institutional church is whether it can ever change in the radical way I feel is necessary or whether what we are now seeing is a church on life-support, a church in a sense already dead without realising it, a church reduced to a small hard core of dogmatic purists, clinging to their old certainties to the bitter end. Can this, I wonder, really be God’s will? Is this how I now see the church to which I committed myself heart and soul almost 40 years ago, trusting that it was the church founded by Jesus to continue his work of salvation, through which sacramental grace was objectively

given? Well, as St John Henry Newman said, to live is to change and to be perfect is to have changed often. The church has made him a saint but doesn't seem too ready to follow his advice – or to approve of his sexuality. I did feel called by God to become a Catholic. The church for a long time did feel like my spiritual home. And when I transitioned and was told by a priest that gender surgery would be a mutilation, it felt like I had another calling: to show that a trans woman could still be a good Catholic. I certainly tried hard to do that and I hope that my friends at church do now have a better idea of what it means to be a trans person than what they will have received through the media and the pre-conceived, ill-informed and ideological pronouncements of the church. So I may have done a little good. But in terms of bringing about radical change, no good at all. People say that we must be patient, that the church changes very slowly. That is true: it took the church 359 years formally to admit that Galileo was right and the earth moves round the sun. Maybe in a few centuries or so the church will accept that there is such a thing as a transgender identity. Can this be the church I believed God had entrusted with our salvation? Should not rather the church be a prophetic voice in the world, leading the way in denouncing discrimination and systemic injustice in all its forms? In, like its founder, reaching out to the marginalised and oppressed, those at the bottom of the pile, like trans women of colour and gay black men, rather than colluding with and upholding the oppressor, the establishment? The motto of the Catholic bishops seems to be not the ringing words of Cardinal Newman, but anything for a quiet life, unless they rouse themselves to condemn abortion and gay marriage. We all know that Jesus reserved his maledictions for the hypocritical and self-righteous religious establishment and his blessings for the sinners, the outcasts, the poor. What would he make of today's church? Of the priests who literally keep God in a box to which they have the key, bringing God out from time to time for the faithful to adore before God is safely put away again. Who say you have to be a member of the club before you're admitted to communion but allow a twice married serial adulterer to marry in Westminster Cathedral? Who have to be men and if they're gay men, live lives of who knows what self-loathing or hypocrisy?

I could go on. I want to be more positive. I want to believe that something perhaps far better can emerge from the wreckage. I have no idea what that might be but I hope that God does. That perhaps God is leading us to a more mature form of Christianity. That the church of the future might actually embody and proclaim the Universal Christ, the Christ who fills everything with his presence, with his reckless, extravagant generosity. A church, as we heard, of a trans-God, a church truly made in the image of a God who transcends all we know or think we know about God, a God of limitless possibilities.

I do have faith that such a church is possible. I believe we are now seeing a movement of God's spirit calling us to something new. Maybe the greater visibility of trans people is one small sign of that. It's quite an exciting thought, to believe that we ourselves are actually a part of God's plan for renewal and new life in the church and the world. And why not? We shall shortly be hearing the Magnificat, Mary's song of praise to the God who looked with favour on God's lowly handmaid, but who casts down mighty kings from their thrones. God makes very surprising choices of the

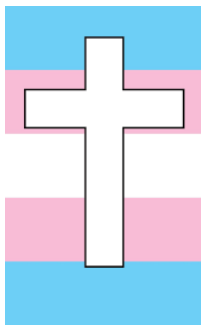
people God chooses to work with, to bring about God's will in the world. God definitely has a preference for using the weak, the flawed and vulnerable, as the world perceives it. All we need to do is believe that we too can be chosen by God, that we too have a role in the unfolding of God's providence, if we are willing to play our part, however seemingly humble and insignificant. It all counts. Nothing is wasted in the economy of the kingdom of God. Our lives, if we make them available, have a meaning and purpose beyond anything we ourselves can assign to them. We just have to trust."

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*What do you prescribe to a trans person?*

*Anticistamines*

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### **Trans faith**

Our own Diana Johnson – in The Guardian:

<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2021/sep/24/a-new-start-after-60-i-became-a-priest-at-63-after-44-years-as-a-soldier-and-a-teacher>

Alex Clare-Young's reflections on the Living in Love and Faith process and the "texts of terror":

[https://alexclareyoung.co.uk/2021/08/06/living-in-love-and-faith-the-construction-of-contemporary-texts-of-terror/?fbclid=IwAR09I0eCvnV1dtxCktPcOSi26VvoV7JdwdPPb1-YWWy72QEVOqfZ4qLA\\_ZJE](https://alexclareyoung.co.uk/2021/08/06/living-in-love-and-faith-the-construction-of-contemporary-texts-of-terror/?fbclid=IwAR09I0eCvnV1dtxCktPcOSi26VvoV7JdwdPPb1-YWWy72QEVOqfZ4qLA_ZJE)

Letter from Changing Attitude England to Bishop Sarah about LLF:

<https://www.unadulteratedlove.net/blog/2021/9/14/radical-new-christian-inclusion-changing-attitude-england-writes-to-the-bishop-of-london?fbclid=IwAR1nl1QwvgrfFAoSs4ESH86LPB6xV4264Id-UJXxzCufEniD5GUmPctUaLk>

Watch Tina Beardsley and others discussing Queer Theology:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8xNLLC3pdxU&t=5s>

Daniel P Horan on transphobic US Catholic bishops and their use of the term “gender ideology”:

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/opinion/faith-seeking-understanding/recent-transphobic-statements-bishops-make-truth-claims>

The prodigal trans daughter: a parable retold:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ps2n\\_HIkQ14](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ps2n_HIkQ14)

Brazil’s first trans woman pastor:

[https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/aug/19/brazils-first-transgender-pastor-all-humans-have-flaws-being-trans-isnt-one-of-them?CMP=Share\\_AndroidApp\\_Other&fbclid=IwAR1oYZ\\_EMaD\\_V4tLLQDHULCnlW\\_14YsLF4AeVgwOOjlsZC3LOaKcCkoPag](https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/aug/19/brazils-first-transgender-pastor-all-humans-have-flaws-being-trans-isnt-one-of-them?CMP=Share_AndroidApp_Other&fbclid=IwAR1oYZ_EMaD_V4tLLQDHULCnlW_14YsLF4AeVgwOOjlsZC3LOaKcCkoPag)

Queer “saint” Jemima Wilkinson: in 1776, the same year that America issued the Declaration of Independence, Wilkinson declared independence from gender:

[Jemima Wilkinson: Queer preacher reborn in 1776 as “Publick Universal Friend” \(qspirit.net\)](http://www.qspirit.net/jemima-wilkinson-queer-preacher-reborn-in-1776-as-publick-universal-friend)

Gay, trans, non-binary Christian minister forges their own path in rural USA:

[Christian minister forges their own path | Orato](http://www.pinknews.co.uk/2021/07/19/norway-church-trans-naming-ceremony/)

Kuan Yin – a queer, gender fluid Buddhist “Christ” figure:

[https://qspirit.net/kuan-yin-queer-buddhist-christ/?fbclid=IwAR3dbOh4E1XmAnTSQv-1qzfS4GFmyDp2Z4hcD9\\_AQ4AIDCvutE\\_SCPCLSd4](https://qspirit.net/kuan-yin-queer-buddhist-christ/?fbclid=IwAR3dbOh4E1XmAnTSQv-1qzfS4GFmyDp2Z4hcD9_AQ4AIDCvutE_SCPCLSd4)

Beautiful trans naming ceremony in Norwegian church:

<https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2021/07/19/norway-church-trans-naming-ceremony/>

Nancy Ledins: a trans RC priest:

[https://qspirit.net/nancy-ledins-transgender-priest/?fbclid=IwAR2ewUP3pWT\\_ohwHRAQMq-wE5TuXXj6jx4FE6fJfz1rSZUM5dCNnUc11v1o](https://qspirit.net/nancy-ledins-transgender-priest/?fbclid=IwAR2ewUP3pWT_ohwHRAQMq-wE5TuXXj6jx4FE6fJfz1rSZUM5dCNnUc11v1o)

*Pray Away*: Netflix documentary on conversion therapy:

<https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2021/08/01/pray-away-netflix-conversion-therapy/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2021/aug/03/pray-away-netflix-documentary-conversion-therapy?fbclid=IwAR3QPMiMEKdn1PUyDXouGI6WWkAbvtKRhB18dMYn8XeonPWPgvmtUWfgpFY>

Qspirit article sheds new light on Augustine and his view of intersex/trans people:

[https://qspirit.net/augustine-hippo-queer-saint/?fbclid=IwAR191rw43yAr8GxFbc2wYW0y\\_thikaaujPAPkazCpbaMrsyc6zO5iqrLTWI](https://qspirit.net/augustine-hippo-queer-saint/?fbclid=IwAR191rw43yAr8GxFbc2wYW0y_thikaaujPAPkazCpbaMrsyc6zO5iqrLTWI)

Agony of being a queer Catholic:

<https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2021/08/13/lgbtq-catholic-homophobia-spiritual-home-241148?fbclid=IwAR3KMnxVj5JA0d2IgOpor-CuLxGdo4JrJQ288ILVvLDqwnxUSydBtZxCIXI>

A “narrative” approach to trans people in the Catholic church (part 1):



<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2021/09/06/part-i-writer-daniel-walden-proposes-narrative-approach-to-transgender-issues-in-church/>

Part 2:

<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2021/09/07/part-ii-paul-griffiths-rejects-transgender-positive-approach-of-daniel-walden/>

Mary McAleese's fulminating speech to the *Root and Branch* lay-led Synod:

<https://www.associationofcatholicpriests.ie/2021/09/dr-mary-mcaleese-root-and-branch-synod-bristol/>

I can't resist including this lapidary extract on the state of the church:

“Many of us are in growing despair of our Church's inability to turn a critical spotlight on itself while shining a critical spotlight on the world at large, its indulgence in historical amnesia, its default to piociousness and hagiography, its capacity for dissembling, for smugly blaming everything but itself for internal problems, its controlling clericalism, its cavalier misogyny, its evil homophobia, its institutional and clerical child sexual and physical abuse, its episcopal coverups that protected criminals and ignored victims, its lack of financial transparency and accountability, its over-burdening of ageing, tired and discouraged clergy rather than face internal responsibility for the collapse in vocations, its refusal to let those most affected by contested teachings like *Humanae Vitae* into any internal debate, its failure to honour obligations under human rights treaties, its hypocrisy in preaching justice, equality, inclusion, diversity and due process to the world at large while failing to practice them internally, its relentless external advocacy of the right to life of the unborn while hypocritically ignoring the fact that the Church whose primary mission is salvation, itself teaches that it cannot guarantee a right to eternal life for the eighty million babies annually who die unbaptised through natural miscarriage, abortion and still-birth, its external championing of environmental responsibility while failing to mitigate the environmental damage, and the social and financial waste caused by the enormous stockpiled portfolio of unsustainable underused and unused property owned by the Church, the biggest non-governmental owner of private property in the world, need I mention the glacial pace of ecumenism, inter-communion, sacramental access for the divorced and remarried.... The list gets longer... and with it the magisterial Church grows more disconnected from Christ as the shallow well of decision-making ability it draws from dries up.”



### **Trans law and politics**

Appeal court rules in favour of Tavistock Clinic on use of puberty blockers:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-58598186>

No young trans people treated with puberty blockers since December 2020:

<https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2021/09/22/trans-young-hormone-specialist-referral-nhs/>

Cooper report – recommendations on how a ban on conversion therapy would work:

[https://www.ozanne.foundation/cooper\\_report/](https://www.ozanne.foundation/cooper_report/)

High Court rules trans women should be housed in women's prisons (not all trans women, obviously, despite what some people would like, just those that have committed crimes!):

[High Court backs trans women being housed in women's prisons \(pinknews.co.uk\)](https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2021/09/22/trans-young-hormone-specialist-referral-nhs/)

Some women's groups and most religious groups oppose Scottish reforms of GRA:

<https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2021/09/06/gender-recognition-act-scotland-consultation/>

Rosie Duffield seeks meeting with Keir Starmer over party's stance on trans rights:

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2021/sep/20/rosie-duffield-calls-for-talks-with-keir-starmer-on-labour-trans-rights-stance>

Angela Rayner condemns government's "campaign of hate" against trans people:

<https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2021/09/29/labour-angela-rayner-trans-labour-conference/>

Transphobic Equalities Minister:

[https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2021/09/17/kemi-badenoch-equalities-lgbt-recording/?fbclid=IwAR0bgIUUQsMW4\\_z7WZif\\_Ql4nkbWBIZ1r6AI\\_9p7wRpM3GPsB\\_9zZs9S7JA](https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2021/09/17/kemi-badenoch-equalities-lgbt-recording/?fbclid=IwAR0bgIUUQsMW4_z7WZif_Ql4nkbWBIZ1r6AI_9p7wRpM3GPsB_9zZs9S7JA)

The health secretary says only women have cervixes (has he really never heard of eg trans men?):

<https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2021/09/26/sajid-javid-cervix-transgender/>

Alex Clare-Young puts him right:

[https://alexclareyoung.co.uk/2021/09/27/some-men-have-a-cervix-an-open-letter-to-sajid-javid/?fbclid=IwAR1puQMX\\_1AXfDXnoaiJet1IQInWzIHrcq7AZuwyQS-Tb26IOXegcYVRxsA](https://alexclareyoung.co.uk/2021/09/27/some-men-have-a-cervix-an-open-letter-to-sajid-javid/?fbclid=IwAR1puQMX_1AXfDXnoaiJet1IQInWzIHrcq7AZuwyQS-Tb26IOXegcYVRxsA)

Historisch! Zwei Trans-Frauen ziehen in den Bundestag ein

<https://www.nau.ch/news/europa/historisch-zwei-trans-frauen-ziehen-in-den-bundestag-ein-66010899>

Trans leader of Green Party?

<https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2021/08/20/green-party-leader-trans-tamsin-omond/>



## **Trans health**

Dr Helen Webberley's GMC hearing:

<https://www.gendergp.com/dr-helen-webberley-mpts-hearing/?fbclid=IwAR1PYs62mOsEyQoJBx5QbZPGpDy71UJf7RPuL5Dq7gg9352fN-vNIIi4OIE>

BBC3 documentary on plight of trans teens:

<https://www.gendergp.com/transgender-teens-documentary-highlights-nhs-failure/?fbclid=IwAR3BadoCshbIK-gN0UKr02JJHKizychm5G3RkZKssHNwo0hywv9XPc5LGJU>

Jenny-Anne Bishop talks on YouTube about her gender surgery and why she chose to have labioplasty:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HX6jvqJOrpc>

Lancet's robust support for trans healthcare:

<https://www.gendergp.com/lancet-supports-trans-communities/?fbclid=IwAR1zIwvNE7nHHbD32YdRRk0pgxJwX5I-lh9b4p70KrDIByZLiy9ZkUgmpaE>

Gender GP and world's first trans clinic (Berlin 1930):

[The world's first trans clinic | GenderGP Transgender Services](https://www.gendergp.com/the-worlds-first-trans-clinic)

Neuroqueerness: the overlap between transness and autism:

<https://xtramagazine.com/power/trans-autism-connection-neuroqueer-206076?fbclid=IwAR1L0o1FdKHhvd1hvK5IPZt29QRapbi-Qu4jSHY1cTt4X1MR2MYRKR3Vv-A>

Javid orders review of policy on single sex wards for trans people (seemingly based on one inflammatory and ill-informed Telegraph article):

<https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2021/08/05/sajid-javid-trans-nhs-policy-review/>



## **Trans life**

Valentina Petrillo: trans Paralympian heroine (“better to be a slow happy woman than a fast unhappy man”):

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/stories-57338207>

Sport's toxic culture for trans and non-binary children:

<https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2021/07/23/non-binary-football-trans-kids/>

Quinn: first out trans Olympian:

<https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2021/07/23/quinn-first-trans-olympian/>

...wins gold:

[https://www.lgbtqnation.com/2021/08/quinn-becomes-first-trans-athlete-history-olympics-win-gold/?utm\\_source=LGBTQ%20Nation%20Subscribers&utm\\_campaign=ac89201d8f-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2021\\_08\\_07\\_03\\_23&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_c4eab596bd-ac89201d8f-430631441&fbclid=IwAR3bSOa26\\_t4zrgH0rce5jEWxT0kqwXcyvNRHu972YhotqLoFc6iCYypeoU](https://www.lgbtqnation.com/2021/08/quinn-becomes-first-trans-athlete-history-olympics-win-gold/?utm_source=LGBTQ%20Nation%20Subscribers&utm_campaign=ac89201d8f-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2021_08_07_03_23&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_c4eab596bd-ac89201d8f-430631441&fbclid=IwAR3bSOa26_t4zrgH0rce5jEWxT0kqwXcyvNRHu972YhotqLoFc6iCYypeoU)

Non-binary Olympic skateboarder gets misgendered:

<https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2021/07/27/alana-smith-olympics-misgendered/?fbclid=IwAR293HP9s4r2cUOXQ6u-xPG1GKCKtMyo056b0Bk6Cqw6RonLQFsK8pf7GUc>

Kellie Maloney documentary:

[https://deadline.com/video/kellie-maloney-trailer-knockout-blonde-lennox-lewis/?fbclid=IwAR16Oq4yoXM-ljhNDjnar6pE8IaNMKcO6v21e4oVSx7fZO\\_qg-WxVqryhEI](https://deadline.com/video/kellie-maloney-trailer-knockout-blonde-lennox-lewis/?fbclid=IwAR16Oq4yoXM-ljhNDjnar6pE8IaNMKcO6v21e4oVSx7fZO_qg-WxVqryhEI)

Kids meet trans athlete:

[https://www.hrc.org/press-releases/human-rights-campaign-athlete-ally-announce-partnership-with-cut-com-on-new-video-with-chris-mosier-kids-meet-a-trans-athlete-to-mark-2020-tokyo-olympic-games?fbclid=IwAR2\\_MrTOQv9z37DI2i7d59xcjkjKdiEPaxrHNcIaXnZAEo71vi0\\_lroNr-g](https://www.hrc.org/press-releases/human-rights-campaign-athlete-ally-announce-partnership-with-cut-com-on-new-video-with-chris-mosier-kids-meet-a-trans-athlete-to-mark-2020-tokyo-olympic-games?fbclid=IwAR2_MrTOQv9z37DI2i7d59xcjkjKdiEPaxrHNcIaXnZAEo71vi0_lroNr-g)

Debbie Hayton gives her views (in book review) on sporting competition between trans women and ciswomen:

[https://debbiehayton.com/2021/08/02/carole-hooven-testosterone/?fbclid=IwAR2Zzlt796d50VvwC3Z-LMyUZnHr25HJKV\\_SwVeT4JO\\_l8r\\_vZZYpL5ns4Y](https://debbiehayton.com/2021/08/02/carole-hooven-testosterone/?fbclid=IwAR2Zzlt796d50VvwC3Z-LMyUZnHr25HJKV_SwVeT4JO_l8r_vZZYpL5ns4Y)

Laurel Hubbard – a legend:

<https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2021/08/02/laurel-hubbard-trans-olympics-tokyo-2020/>

BBC article on trans women in sport:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/olympics/57989022>

Report on trans inclusion in sport at non-elite level:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/58732146>

Natasha Devon insists that trans women's rights are not at the expense of those of cis women:

<https://www.lbc.co.uk/opinion/views/natasha-devon-writes-on-trans-rights/?fbclid=IwAR3GnmDKU0j5tn-f8YxRliiqmGCsoXEdXUaat2Ad7niMX3yyBuiMTMSnGrs>

How ciswomen can disqualify transwomen:

<https://www.sowetanlive.co.za/s-mag/2021-08-20-transgender-women-reflect-on-the-little-known-societal-terms-and-conditions-of->

[transitioning/?fbclid=IwAR0MByIrR7V\\_EellpnLBApHd6wjmBkx4oP7t7JfnOv7jRimRSw1CnxovvOw](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/aug/09/1000-year-old-remains-in-finland-may-be-non-binary-viking-researchers-say?fbclid=IwAR0MByIrR7V_EellpnLBApHd6wjmBkx4oP7t7JfnOv7jRimRSw1CnxovvOw)

Trans Actual's Survey of Trans Lives in Britain today (which predictably makes for rather depressing reading):

<https://www.transactual.org.uk/trans-lives-21>

No one way to be trans:

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2021/aug/31/my-experience-as-a-trans-person-doesnt-fit-the-script-but-why-should-it>

1000 year old body of non-binary person found in Finland:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/aug/09/1000-year-old-remains-in-finland-may-be-non-binary-viking-researchers-say?fbclid=IwAR2iKVLHcCcz4U4hb9FM9W1DgirMeyJcmuC2ffWtPIXpAEnnHTZc-2zWw>

Interview with M J Rodriguez (*Pose*'s Blanca):

<https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2021/08/11/mj-rodriguez-trans-artistry-pose/>

Terf Wars: Dr Ruth Pearce:

[https://ruthpearce.net/books/terf-wars/?fbclid=IwAR23tz4ihhUnq\\_55O4Mgxo\\_LGjUzPtzpAaSHlpHrRvDbHXI36IQPSAI7UE](https://ruthpearce.net/books/terf-wars/?fbclid=IwAR23tz4ihhUnq_55O4Mgxo_LGjUzPtzpAaSHlpHrRvDbHXI36IQPSAI7UE)

Transsexuality in twins:

<https://www.hawaii.edu/PCSS/biblio/articles/2010to2014/2013-transsexuality.html?fbclid=IwAR13iVmLyskCCYRB-s6il5j0Qz671ApHIKQlWpc7SKTtflAKVgbCCe8Vggg>

Oxford Mail interview with Chrissie Chevasutt:

[I 'tiptoe' around controversy over what is a woman, says Witney transgender author | Oxford Mail](https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/2021/08/11/i-tiptoe-around-controversy-over-what-is-a-woman-says-witney-transgender-author-1011111)

....and another interview:

<https://theheroines.blogspot.com/2021/08/interview-with-chrissie-chevasutt.html?fbclid=IwAR1LRxhjJswmj13uN9eriulWfa4lXzovIh5g7mKuG1n6kdILQ76YwWsQVes>

.....and another (Chrissie is good on the "passing" issue):

[https://theheroines.blogspot.com/p/chrissie-chevasutt-part-2.html?m=1&fbclid=IwAR1H6\\_JLX86fVnifVAWaK5FM49kS6-kDX6wKbxdZBmPoN26aRDmaI\\_y0vag](https://theheroines.blogspot.com/p/chrissie-chevasutt-part-2.html?m=1&fbclid=IwAR1H6_JLX86fVnifVAWaK5FM49kS6-kDX6wKbxdZBmPoN26aRDmaI_y0vag)

Airport humiliation of trans teen:

[https://www.lgbtqnation.com/2021/08/trans-teen-forced-undergo-genital-examination-airport-people-speaking/?utm\\_source=LGBTQ%20Nation%20Subscribers&utm\\_campaign=a988d445db-20210826\\_LGBTQ\\_Nation\\_Daily\\_Brief&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_c4eab596bd-a988d445db-](https://www.lgbtqnation.com/2021/08/trans-teen-forced-undergo-genital-examination-airport-people-speaking/?utm_source=LGBTQ%20Nation%20Subscribers&utm_campaign=a988d445db-20210826_LGBTQ_Nation_Daily_Brief&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_c4eab596bd-a988d445db-)

[430631441&fbclid=IwAR3e2tv7cUCkZIWp5H1L529e0dbIaKUIK8lgTnQINYGAK8TCMaxP1q1nsV8](https://www.facebook.com/430631441/?fbclid=IwAR3e2tv7cUCkZIWp5H1L529e0dbIaKUIK8lgTnQINYGAK8TCMaxP1q1nsV8)

Tatchell withdraws from debate with Stock:

<https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2021/08/26/peter-tatchell-kathleen-stock-debate-trans/>

Trans dad:

[My parent came out as trans and the world didn't end \(gendergp.com\)](https://www.gendergp.com/my-parent-came-out-as-trans-and-the-world-didnt-end)

Trafalgar Square Fourth Plinth to feature unknown/forgotten trans people:

[Trafalgar Square's fourth plinth to welcome trans sculpture \(pinknews.co.uk\)](https://www.pinknews.co.uk/trafalgar-square-fourth-plinth-to-welcome-trans-sculpture)

Female husbands: trans people (of course) have always been around:

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/sep/10/transgender-history-18th-century-female-husbands>

A response to “gender-critical” ciswomen:

[Chimamanda Adichie's Essay and the Rise of Trans Exclusionary Feminism \(thewire.in\)](https://thewire.in/chimamanda-adichie-essay-and-the-rise-of-trans-exclusionary-feminism)



## **Trans world**

Arkansas parents of trans children speak of their joys – and their battles:

<https://edition.cnn.com/2021/07/25/us/parents-of-transgender-children-joy-wellness-trnd/index.html?fbclid=IwAR09x5f0CpCyn-ptyktfSk3uuUHERi6UZjVzPIRKpArwFL2kDhq0WiYt4dY>

Taya Ashton: 31<sup>st</sup> trans person killed this year in US:

[https://www.them.us/story/taya-ashton-trans-violence-2021?utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_brand=them&utm\\_source=facebook&utm\\_social-type=owned&fbclid=IwAR2dcNtPg5FamLm7M1OagwWKWJ6aKAoA4tYVSfOlzVB2j87AQfVnUGgtP4](https://www.them.us/story/taya-ashton-trans-violence-2021?utm_medium=social&utm_brand=them&utm_source=facebook&utm_social-type=owned&fbclid=IwAR2dcNtPg5FamLm7M1OagwWKWJ6aKAoA4tYVSfOlzVB2j87AQfVnUGgtP4)

Court rules US trans professor must be reinstated:

<https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2021/09/14/trans-professor-rachel-tudor-rehired/>

Third gender “muxes” of Mexican Juchitan:

<https://www.bbc.com/travel/article/20181125-the-third-gender-of-southern-mexico>

How Dr Rachel Levine deals with transphobia:

[https://www.lgbtqnation.com/2021/08/rachel-levine-facing-transphobia-really-able-channel-emotion-work/?fbclid=IwAR3rRmffTKDChvfy5yU-7IPxUXnxSzGjD-\\_cYI0ZfmLIItYzBe](https://www.lgbtqnation.com/2021/08/rachel-levine-facing-transphobia-really-able-channel-emotion-work/?fbclid=IwAR3rRmffTKDChvfy5yU-7IPxUXnxSzGjD-_cYI0ZfmLIItYzBe)



## Trans books and media

Interview with MJ Rodriguez (brilliant Blanca from *Pose*):

[Mj Rodriguez: Pose star on US trans rights, life after Blanca and Marvel \(pinknews.co.uk\)](https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2021/08/27/mj-rodriguez-pose-star-on-us-trans-rights-life-after-blanca-and-marvel/)

Extract from Shon Faye's *The Transgender Issue: An Argument for Justice*:

[https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/aug/24/shaky-acceptance-transgender-kids-families-fight-for-inclusion?CMP=Share\\_AndroidApp\\_Other&fbclid=IwAR2mvdS1ZbuO7wTl3M1HVcV3k7-MjZglFxo4sw2CzGX\\_AwktO\\_bRETSB9g](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/aug/24/shaky-acceptance-transgender-kids-families-fight-for-inclusion?CMP=Share_AndroidApp_Other&fbclid=IwAR2mvdS1ZbuO7wTl3M1HVcV3k7-MjZglFxo4sw2CzGX_AwktO_bRETSB9g)

Shon talks about her book:

<https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2021/08/27/shon-faye-transgender-issue-trans/>

...and here for the New Statesman:

[https://www.newstatesman.com/culture/2021/09/shon-faye-wants-deeper-conversation-about-trans-liberation-transgender-issue?fbclid=IwAR1-VlxFFlhwCIXq-iJHJ4sA5nNDNaLAYWyzGs3a\\_eOpuyFoPqrLPrfLJ04](https://www.newstatesman.com/culture/2021/09/shon-faye-wants-deeper-conversation-about-trans-liberation-transgender-issue?fbclid=IwAR1-VlxFFlhwCIXq-iJHJ4sA5nNDNaLAYWyzGs3a_eOpuyFoPqrLPrfLJ04)

A review of *The Transgender Issue – An Argument for Justice* by Shon Faye

This is rather an angry book by an angry person. You may well feel, from your own experience and after reading this book, quite angry yourself. With great clarity and precision, Shon examines the way trans people are treated in Britain today, by the media, the state, “gender critical” feminists and the NHS. If she’d included the churches in her examination she might have been even angrier. She begins with the suicide of Lucy Meadows, the teacher who transitioned and was subject to the most shocking bullying, harassment and ridicule by the press. She unsparingly exposes the toxic environment in which so many trans lives are still lived, the corrosive drip-feed of transphobia from which only the most privileged are immune, the detriments in employment, in health, in the justice system. Some of her ideas are perhaps uncomfortably radical. She believes “There can be no trans liberation under capitalism.” She thinks prisons should be abolished. She is sceptical about the view that there is a trajectory of inevitable progress for trans rights, that we are where gay people were 20 years ago and after 20 years we’ll be where they are now. Though she is clearly arguing from a socialist perspective, she is not blind to the Left’s own brand of transphobia. Reading Shon’s book, which I highly recommend you do, can

be depressing but ultimately she sees trans people as symbols of hope. “Our existence enriches the world.”

PF

And the Guardian’s review:

[https://www.theguardian.com/books/2021/sep/19/the-transgender-issue-by-shon-faye-review-a-cry-for-compassion?fbclid=IwAR1ka6SzHdwIOxT5tQBm9KMAp\\_6gTLJqDaOagbQP\\_GTrLgi4hEzXf4kpLMc](https://www.theguardian.com/books/2021/sep/19/the-transgender-issue-by-shon-faye-review-a-cry-for-compassion?fbclid=IwAR1ka6SzHdwIOxT5tQBm9KMAp_6gTLJqDaOagbQP_GTrLgi4hEzXf4kpLMc)

*Heaven Come Down* by Chrissie Chevasutt– review by R Smith

*Note: I can personally vouch for the factual accuracy of much of Chrissie’s autobiographical account because I was in some of the same places at the same time. For instance, in 1980, I may well have walked past her in the street whilst conducting Market Research in Earl’s Court, London. I can also concur with her many experiences of the woeful leadership she encountered in a variety of Churches.*

Searingly honest and heartfelt is the best way to describe this beautifully written autobiography. It amounts to far more than just another ‘*trans misery*’ memoir. The most striking evidence of God’s hand being upon Chrissie’s life is the fact that she survived it all and went on to produce such an informative and moving piece of work. When narrating her early childhood and on through the ‘*lost*’ years of her drug addiction in London and India, her account reads like a horror story of utter degradation. Frankly, I would have found it unbelievable had I not witnessed similar events when working in London at roughly the same time.

One towering strength of Chrissie’s is her ability to convey the mood and atmosphere of the times and places where she’d lived. It felt like I was right there with her. Equally vivid were her thumbnail sketches of the assortment of (often marginalized) characters whom she met along the way. Her compassion for life’s ‘*social outcasts*’ constantly shone through. One (gratefully acknowledged) individual was Chrissie’s wife who came across as just as lovable as my own. Most assuredly, she confirmed that the spouses who stick by their trans partners are the unsung heroes of the Trans Community.

Another strength was Chrissie’s increasing maturity, self-honesty, and willingness to ask herself challenging questions. On p.263 she had the courage to ask whether a particular spiritual experience was “*some kind of demonic counterfeit?*” Quite rightly, she was testing an experience in terms of “*the quality of character that emerged from it.*” P.265 further revealed that she was very aware of the danger of confusing “*the power of faith*” with “*wishful thinking.*” Much suffering had taught her wisdom. Such strengths were reinforced in how she dealt with her own challenging inner struggles with being trans, many of her experiences resonated with my own. Overall, I found her to be thoroughly engaging.

Chrissie’s autobiography amply confirmed that ‘*being Trans*’ is not a life situation from which we can escape or simply choose to walk away from. As Chrissie vividly demonstrates, a definite decision does need to be made about how best to handle it. She learnt (through many difficulties) that endless denial solves nothing. She also



grimly highlighted the damage wreaked by the *'repressive approach'* practiced by most of the Church Leaders she encountered. Some were well meaning enough (although misguided) whilst still others appeared to be on a personal *'power trip.'* This certainly was the case with the leader (quoted on p.225) who allegedly stated, *"Being Senior Pastor is like being a benevolent dictator – a kind and altruistic but dominant leader."* Hardly surprisingly, within a couple of years his church had imploded. Such heavy-handed *'petty popery'* appeared to be the norm rather than the exception in the Christian settings she describes. In mitigation, it could be argued that the Church leaders ministering to Chrissie at this time were attempting to deal with an extremely complex set of pastoral problems. Nonetheless, theirs was a blind adherence to a rigid way of thinking that did far more harm than good. The impression gained was that few, if any of the leaders she turned to, had actively sought out God's wisdom on this matter. In the end, she successfully handled being trans by being honest about herself and by following the Holy Spirit's guidance.

As I read further on, I found myself thinking that each of our Christian lives had been running along parallel lines. In the area of faith profound similarities emerged. Firstly, we had both recognized the need to rely upon divine grace to live out an effective faith and to grapple with such complex issues as gender identity. By raising these issues being trans can help make us receptive to the Holy Spirit's guidance. We had also discovered that being on the trans spectrum was an extremely challenging and valuable learning experience. Where a difference did exist, it was in the *'application'* of our faith. To her credit, Chrissie emerged as someone with a shepherd's heart for the lonely, outcast members of society – especially young trans people. She was very much a pastor.

Through reading Chrissie's biography, I gained a clearer sense of both who I was and where I was on the trans spectrum. My reaction was identical to what I'd experienced five decades ago when reading April Ashley's life story in a Sunday Newspaper. Once again, I felt I could identify with nearly all their experiences – but not completely. For example, (unlike Chrissie) I felt no sense of revulsion against my male body. Chrissie helpfully confirmed that, far from being non-binary and gender fluid, I have had a *'polarized-binary'* and *'gender consistent'* identity throughout my life! This work of clarification was hugely helpful. Chrissie demonstrated how trans and bi-gender people face two different questions. The first is, *'How do I transition into the gender I believe (or know) I should be?'* and the second, *'How can I reconcile the male and female aspects of my personality?'* Answering either question is challenging, with each answer varying on a case-by-case basis. There is simply no *'one size fits all'* solution to being trans. Her moving life story also indicated that we need to believe in Jesus and commend every known area of our lives to Him – trusting that, in His time, He will send His Spirit to grant us the wisdom to know which path to take. In my own case the direction taken has been one of sublimation – of creatively expressing my dual gender identity in my writing where I am free to live out both male and female lives. Admittedly, this is an unusual way forward, but it is one that has so far worked. I can only offer my heartfelt thanks to Chrissie for the helpful insights she provided. Consequently, I warmly recommend her autobiography as an excellent source for those wishing to review *'all things trans'* (in England) from the late twentieth to early twenty first century. It assuredly merits a five-star rating.