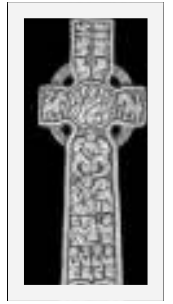




SIBYLS NEWS



Issue No. 72 June 2015

St. Columba, died 9th June 597

St. Martin's Cross, Iona

This 8th century Celtic cross stands on the Isle of Iona, site of Iona Monastery, founded by St. Columba in the 6th Century. Iona became a starting point for the expansion of Christianity throughout Scotland. In 1203 a Benedictine monastery was built on the site of the Celtic ruins. An Augustinian nunnery was also founded in the 13th Century. The Abbey church was extended in the 15th Century, but at the Scottish Reformation, the abbey was abandoned. In 1898 the Duke of Argyll gave the buildings to the Church of Scotland, which did much restoration. The Iona Community was founded in Govan and Iona in 1938 by the visionary George MacLeod. It is now a dispersed Christian **ecumenical community** of men and women from different walks of life and different traditions in the Church. They work for peace and social justice, the rebuilding of community and the renewal of worship. <http://iona.org.uk/movement/the-rule/>
A good history is given in 'George MacLeod: Founder of the Iona Community' by Ron Ferguson.



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Wednesday 17 June, 12 Noon - 5pm: [Speak up: For the Love of:](#)
- mass climate lobby of Parliament, Westminster

A message to all Sibyls from Chris Dowd

You are all welcome to Chris Dowd’s ordination at

**Zion and Newland United Reformed Church
213, Hallgate Cottingham, East Yorkshire, HU16 4BB**

On July 11 @ 2pm

Please reply* if you're coming so I can let the churches know to feed you.....
(and if you are staying the night before, open house at our manse 203 Beverley Rd HU10 7AG)

** please reply to the editor (carol.nixon2012@btinternet.com) who will forward to Chris*

THE SIBYLS

Christian Spirituality Group for Gender Variant People

BM Sibyls, London WC1N 3XX

www.sibyls.co.uk E-mail: info@sibyls.co.uk

The Sibyls is a UK-based confidential Christian spirituality group for transgender people, and their supporters, offering companionship along the journey, and information/advocacy to churches. Sibyls pray, eat, and talk together, and seek to fulfil Christ's command to love one another.

Members must respect the security of each and every other member, and must never jeopardise that security.

Editor's note

It's been very hard setting this issue, because of the sheer **volume of material**. I have absolutely no complaint about that, and am very grateful to all the contributors, but a huge number of short news items could not be fitted in, and it's still rather fat. I have not cut matter specific to Sibyls, nor anything submitted by a member.

I have been asked to include mention of the **MCC churches**. I had dropped the section entitled 'Inclusive Churches' in the last edition, because it seemed to me that we need only be reminded of these on an annual basis or when the situation changes, especially now that there is wider acceptance of trans-people in churches. I am not claiming that the situation is satisfactory, but that the number of churches where a trans person can go without fear of rejection has now escalated to such an extent that it seems invidious to mention only a few accepting churches. It is, however, true that the Metropolitan Community Church does go out of its way to include and celebrate trans-people, so **I recommend a visit to their website at ufmcc.com/**

I had planned that **Chris Dowd's** work would feature largely in this issue, but he has not yet submitted the last corrections to his PhD thesis, so has written a related article instead. I hope he will be in the next issue.

Many items of news regarding the development of Sibyls' work which would otherwise have figured in the main text of the newsletter are included in the **two sets of minutes** here presented— a highly edited report of the last Committee meeting on 19th May, and full minutes of the Sibyls Together meeting held on the final morning of the weekend at Hilfield Priory on 24th May. May I please refer you thither for information.

Please don't imagine that there is now too much material for you to be a valued contributor. **Everyone who submits a relevant item before copy date will see it in the newsletter**. Short items, and noms de plume all fine.

Addresses: Carol Nixon, Tyngwndwn, Penuwch, Tregaron SY25 6RA

carol.nixon2012@btinternet.com

Next copy date 5th September.

Sibyls Committee meeting (on Skype) 19 May 2015 at 14:00 - some extracts

- **General Synod Motion** Susan reported that Chris Newlands had got the Blackburn Diocese to agree to put the following motion to the General Synod of the Church of England in July : "That this Synod, recognising the need for transgender people to be welcomed and affirmed in their parish church, calls on the House of Bishops to consider whether some nationally commended liturgical materials might be prepared to mark a person's gender transition." The Committee strongly welcome this development and agreed that an email of congratulations should be sent to Chris to thank him for his efforts. *[see also page 7]*
- Mercia is giving a talk on 19th June at a conference on "Gender, Diversity, Leadership" in Roehampton University
- **Sparkle Fringe** - Jenny-Anne 10th -12th July Main Event. Fringe from 8th to 14th July. There are 4 events of interest to Sibyls. Surat talking about **Twilight People***, **Sparkle in the Cathedral** is taking place with Rachel Mann, **Sparkle Sunday Service** is at 16:30 at Chorlton URC, **A Non-denominational Assembly** is taking place on Sunday at 11:00.
- **European Forum** , 23-25 May - Elaine was going to the TGEU* European Forum, Sharon Ferguson leading the Trans Workshop.

*Please see **page 7** for an item about *Twilight People* and **page 11** for a description of the TGEU organisation.

New Sibyls Website - Please check out the new Sibyls Website, which is available on www.sibyls.co.uk

There is also a member's section for which a Username and password is required.

The current username is [SibylsMember](#) (all one word) The password is [Sibyl4Us](#)

The username and password will be updated with each issue of the Newsletter

Forthcoming Sibyls events:

St. Anne's, Soho - Susan

The planned dates for 2015 are **August 13; October 8; December 10.**

Sibyls' Reflective Day 24th October 2015. please see page 6

Couples Weekend - Elaine - no dates confirmed

Elaine has found someone who could be a moderator for the Couples Weekend. This person was principal of Salisbury College: A possible location is Holy Rood House but others are being considered. The weekend will be for about 12 people.

Windermere - venue is booked for 13th to 15th May 2016

Hilfield Friary - Susan has approached the Community about making a repeat booking for **September 2016.** Instead of separating full board from catering it appears that it would be for all of us to have breakfast and lunch with the Brothers, and then for all of us to self-cater for the evening meal. If we do this, it could apply to everybody. No friendly tribes (!) would be created, and appears that there would not be any restriction in the numbers involved.

Further North - A further weekend venue has been requested in Scotland. Any suggestions?

A full report of the Hilfield weekend, 22-24 May, has had to be held over till the next issue. But by request, here is the text of Tina's sermon during the Sunday service of Holy Communion. The weekend's theme was 'proportion'.

SERMON FOR PENTECOST 2015 Hilfield Priory

One of the things that is 'out of proportion' in our flat, is the number of books I've accumulated. It gets me into trouble with Rob (though he has a good collection of volumes as well). It was lovely therefore to be sleeping above the Library here at Hilfield and I nipped in yesterday afternoon to check the Greek text of the passage we've read as today's gospel (John 7:37-39), part of which says: 'rivers out of the colon', which is what happens when God's Spirit is at work in us. The Holy Spirit equals colonic irrigation! Yes! This weekend we have shared some of the shame and guilt we feel because of who we are. What are we afraid of? According to the gospel it's exactly from these shameful parts of the self that God's Spirit begins to flow! Alleluia!

That's one way in which the Holy Spirit helps us to get things into proportion. Another is the way the Spirit brings proportion to our doctrine of God. We know that God is beyond gender, even though many of our religious texts are masculinist. Their focus on the Father/Son relationship gives the appearance of an exclusively male religion that resists the feminine.

In the Hebrew Scriptures, however, wisdom/Sophia – Spirit – is feminine, and active in creation – our principal theme this weekend in this beautiful creation-caring community set in the midst of outstanding natural beauty. Where the Divine Spirit, and hence the feminine, is neglected, it's very likely that creation will be neglected too. It's significant, and reminders are everywhere here, that St Francis of Assisi, so creation-minded and centred, was also extremely gender aware, personifying the elements and nature itself in gendered terms; Brother Sun, Sister Moon, etc.

The Holy Spirit brings proportion, and the feminine, to the Godhead; though if the Athanasian Creed is correct, and that which 'we believe of the Father, the same we believe of the Son and of the Holy Spirit', feminine and masculine must be aspects of all three Persons of the Holy Trinity – as they are of us. In you and I one or other may take precedence, or perhaps they are in balance, but whatever the combination, they are expressions that enable us to bring proportion to human life and community and our individual lives, and a reflection of the Divine.

Proportion seems especially apt as a description of the equal flow of love that is the Holy Trinity, but there is something disproportionate about God as well:

- the superabundance of creation, for example; the millions of stars and the vastness of galaxies
- God's unconditional love for us seems disproportionately passionate in the teaching and healing of Jesus – (his family thinks he is mad; as did St Francis's family when he responded to God's call) let alone in his trial and crucifixion
- the invasiveness of the Holy Spirit too, often appears disproportionate, even as She restores proportion to the world. The Spirit breaks into human lives like wind and fire (interestingly, to St Francis both were masculine rather than feminine) as on the first Day of Pentecost (when people assumed the disciples were drunk), and yet restores unity (and proportion) to people formerly divided by their diverse languages.

Perhaps the most important thing that the Holy Spirit can do for us as Transgender Christians is to help us to hear God speaking to us in our own language. Instead of Sin and Guilt, we need Divine Love and Compassion; instead of concepts we need relationships; instead of doctrines, symbols. Instead of Father/Son we need Father/Son and Holy Spirit.

So, come, Holy Spirit: heal us in body, mind and spirit; in soma, heart and soul; integrate our gender, sexuality and spirituality; make us stewards of your creation, agents of your new creation in Jesus Christ.

1. **Welcome** - by Carol Nixon (acting chair for this meeting) who thanked people for attending, and participating in, the weekend.
2. **Notes of the Sibyls Together meeting at Windermere on May 18th 2014** were received. It was noted that minutes of that meeting were over-detailed.

Matters arising – it was confirmed that Chris Dowd's material, as shared at the Windermere weekend last year, was still confidential, but that it will be possible to share it soon. The Windermere meeting of 2014 had restarted the Sibyls weekends, with good attendance to hear a worthwhile speaker, and a mail shot to refresh the membership list.

3. Report of Events:

- The London bi-monthly meetings continue: numbers attending are small but it is still a valuable session for those who attend
- Carol spoke about her frustration as Newsletter Editor, in that few members have replied to her requests for comment about the new style and direction of the Newsletter. Philippa moved a vote of thanks to Carol for the energy and professional appearance of the newsletter. Carol finds that there is so much related material that she could produce a huge newsletter so the editorial pen is needed.
- Sibyls members have spoken at external events, e.g. Tina at Embodied Ministry in July 2014, LoveSpirit in the autumn of 2014, a Trans Visibility Day for Central & North West London NHS Trust in March 2015.

The possible tension between Sibyls being a pressure/campaigning/advocacy organisation and a supportive organisation was discussed. Sibyls' involvement in the former was one element of the Jay's work when leading the Sibyls, which was then passed on to a member of the Committee when she stood down, and continued now through the LGBTI Anglican Coalition to which Sibyls belongs and Inclusive Church, of which Sibyls is a partner organisation (and previously, by Tina, via Changing Attitude, England)..

4. Treasurer's Report – prepared by Peter was presented. It was noted that donations are down. No subscription is required of Sibyls members and the organisation relies on donations. Historically, Sibyls had a large number of friends and allies who supported its work with donations – could that group be increased? **Action: Philippa agreed to write an article on this topic for the Newsletter.**

5. Appointment of the Committee for 2015/6. The list of nominations was circulated. There is one vacancy on the Committee as Debbie has stood down. Pauline agreed to stand and was appointed. The next Committee meeting is on the 18th August 2015 and will take place in Birmingham. Susan indicated that she proposes to step down from the Committee after the Windermere weekend in May 2016

6. Planned Events & Activities –

- St Andrew's Day Meeting – 24th October 2015, at the Sisters of St Andrews, Lewisham. Led by the Revd Simon Buckley, Rector of St Anne's, Soho. There is the opportunity for those who wish to stay overnight with the Sisters prior to this event.
- Windermere weekend, 13-15 May 2015
- Couples weekend – a maximum of 12 couples with a facilitator, venue to be decided. Date tbc. This event is being planned by Elaine
- A return to Hilfield was discussed One problem is that it is in the deep south of England and too far for Scottish members to attend. A small group of Sibyls meeting at Hilfield would work. A small self-catering group has been successful on this occasion. **Action: It was agreed that Carol should book Hilfield for the autumn of 2016.**
- Yvonne commended Woodbrooke, the Quaker Centre in Birmingham, as a possible venue for a Sibyls event.
- Greenbelt 2015 – Yvonne will represent Sibyls if she attends
- Yvonne advertised the Quaker Trans event in Manchester on the 31st October 2014, and hopes that Sibyls will be involved with it.
- Quest, the Roman Catholic LGBT inclusive organisation would welcome Sibyls' involvement in their conference at the end of July 2016, which will have a Trans focus.

7. LGBTI Coalition – Sibyls has had a significant role in the Coalition, having co-chaired it for 12 months in its turn. The Shared Conversations on Human Sexuality are underway in the Church of England. The Coalition had formed a steering group to put greater pressure on the Church of England to become more inclusive of LGBT people. The Coalition Steering Group was now working with Stonewall to achieve this. The Steering Group had been self-selecting and there had been some fall out and resignations which meant that there was no longer a Trans person on the Steering Group. It is vital that the Steering Group include a Trans person. **Actions: Susan to contact Ruth Hunt of Stonewall & Simon Sarmiento of the Coalition to re-emphasise the importance of inviting a Trans person to join the Steering Group. Tina to sound out Tess Lowe as a potential nominee for this role.**

8. Website & social media. Many people today look online for information. Students from Manchester Metropolitan University have developed a new website for Sibyls, but its introduction has been delayed by the setbacks in Philippa's recovery. In the interim Susan is managing an interim Sibyls website that she has developed. The transition from Susan's website to the one designed by the students has been delayed because Philippa's recovery has been delayed. Susan continues to manage the interim site. Yvonne and Tina both spoke in favour of the Word Press system used by the new website designed by the students. It was also pointed out that the cost of adding PayPal to the site in order to sell the Sibyls book was not a reason to delay adopting the new website as sales could be handled by other means. **Action: Philippa agreed to approach the students again when they have finished Finals and when she is better to facilitate the transition from the interim website to the new website.**

The website domain names have been transferred and will be transferred again to the Community House in Rhyl which is now the Sibyl's postal address. Philippa is attending to website enquiries from people, some of whom are dealing with serious pastoral care issues. The setting up of a Facebook group is work in progress, and the meeting was cautious about it. The Yahoo group is clunky when adding names but will continue. It would be easy to replace it with a simple e-group.

9. The Sibyls Book - Tina summarised the history of the Sibyls book. She and Michelle O'Brien are the editors and having submitted proposals to various publishers, the book has been accepted for publication by Darton, Longman & Todd (DLT). DLT accepted the work as an e-book, but members would prefer to have a paperback version as well, and after negotiation with DLT, Sibyls will commit to purchase 250 copies at 50% RRP + P&P which works out at £10 per copy. Philippa has consulted members and orders for 100 copies have been received. Carol has generously agreed to financially underwrite the project and will sign the contract with DLT, but Sibyls members are urged to do all that they can to help sell the 250 copies so that Carol is not left out of pocket. Contributors to the Book are currently editing their contributions. The estimated publication date is February 2016.

10. The Sibyls Constitution This is a work in progress, and necessary to address the organisation's lack of cover for liability, etc and to put it on a more official footing, e.g. The Treasurer is running the Sibyls' finances out of his personal account. Susan has done an enormous amount of work on the Constitution and it was agreed that further discussion and any decisions as to whether it is needed and what form it should take would continue via email.

- 11. AOB**
- Anthea circulated a paper about how Sibyls could be more involved in the support of gender variant people at grassroots level.
 - Yvonne asked how Sibyls could reach other denominations.



THE SIBYLS RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT		
	2014 £	2013 £
Weekends away		
Receipts from members	2,755.00	520
Paid to House	- 2,716.00	-520
Surplus / (Deficit)	39.00	-
Advance bookings	-	-
Donations	186.63	386.70
Newsletter costs		
Newsletter duplication and envelopes	- 2.60	- 44.00
Newsletter postage	- 12.03	- 56.62
	- 14.63	- 100.62
Other costs		
British Monomarks box number	- 88.80	- 65.80
CSCS Conference expenses	-	- 154.05
Mall Shot - April 2014	- 183.20	-
Use of group funds for members to attend meetings	-	-
CASH SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	- 61.00	66.23
	deficit	surplus
Opening balance at HSBC Bank	1,530.04	1,463.81
Closing balance at HSBC Bank	1,469.04	1,530.04

The Sibyls Finances
Thanks to Peter for the accounts

Donations are always very welcome. Please make cheques out to Mr P A Raftery—the Sibyls. The editor is happy to pass them on.



Sibyls' Reflective Day 24th October 2015.
At the Sisters of St Andrew, Lewisham.
"My Body was Made for the Love of God" (Ernesto Cardenal)

A day of reflection on how the bodies we inhabit relate to our lives as beloved children of God.
The Day will be led by the Revd. Simon Buckley, Rector of St Anne's Soho.



10.00-10.30 Coffee
10.30 Welcome and Introductions.
10.45-12.15 Session 1
12.15-12.45 Eucharist (Anglican)
13.00-14.00 Lunch
14.00-15.00 Session 2
15.00-15.30 Tea
15.30-16.30 Session 3
16.30 Closing thoughts and Evening Prayer

18.30 Optional Evening Meal in a Local Restaurant*

*There may be an opportunity to join the Sisters of St Andrew during their evening service at 18:30. If this is the case we would go for the meal after the worship.

The suggested donation for the day is £25-£35. Includes Lunch. Please give as much as you can.
But please note that no one should be deterred from coming if they cannot afford this.

Limited Overnight Accommodation on the Friday and Saturday Nights is available with the Sisters of St Andrew.
YOU MUST BOOK AND PAY SEPARATELY FOR OVERNIGHT ACCOMMODATION

Overnight accommodation has to be booked SEPARATELY and directly with the Sisters of St Andrew. <http://www.sisters-of-st-andrew.com/index1.html> The accommodation is self-catering only but very comprehensive kitchen facilities are provided. There are also plenty of restaurants in the area. The accommodation is available on a first come first served basis. Booking details and information on the overnight accommodation are on the Sibyls and Sisters of St Andrew websites. The Sisters of St Andrew ask for donations to cover the cost of overnight and day accommodation. For an overnight stay (Friday and/or Saturday night) your suggested donation for the accommodation, per person per night to the Sisters is: £25-40, though please give as much as you can

The Sisters of St Andrew , The Welcome, 99 Belmont Hill. Lewisham, London, SE13 5DY
Tel:0208 852 1662
e-mail: welcome@sisters-of-st-andrew.com

If you require more information please contact Susan Gilchrist at: sgen4144@gmail.com

BOOKING

Please send your name , address and telephone number and email address, if any, with your donation to:
"Sibyls Day Meeting", 8 Greenways Drive, Maidenhead, Berks, SL6 5DU.

Please state:

- Dietary Requirements
- Will you be staying for the meal in a local restaurant on the Saturday evening?
- Are You a Member of the Sibyls?

Sibyls members can book now. Booking for Non-Sibyls Members opens on the 24th September 2015.

The suggested donation for this event is £25-£35. (Includes lunch). Please give as much as you can.

Please make cheques payable to "Mr P. A. Raftery - The Sibyls"
For catering purposes please book at least 15 days in advance.

Your booking is provisional until we have received this information with your donation. If you require confirmation, please say so, and we will send you confirmation to your e-mail address above - or else please enclose a stamped addressed envelope.

The Sibyls Book

If you refer to the minutes of the Sibyls Together meeting (p.5, item 9), you'll see that the Newsletter editor has a vested interest in ensuring that as many copies as possible of this book are sold.

Please do your best to help. Thanks.

The contract has been signed, and the projected date for publication is February 2016

'TWILIGHT PEOPLE'

A pioneering interfaith project documenting the 'hidden history' of transgender and gender nonconforming people is looking for stories to record.

"**Twilight People: Stories of Gender and Faith Beyond the Binary**" is a collection of oral histories, photos, and films documenting the experiences of over forty transgender British people, mainly from the Abrahamic faiths.

Hosted by Liberal Judaism, a progressive Jewish denomination, Twilight People's collated materials will be available to the public via an archive collection, a touring exhibition and innovative digital channels. The ground-breaking photographic exhibition will be launched at Islington Museum for LGBT History Month 2016. It aims to explore the narratives around 'body and ritual', documenting the interconnection between faith and gender journeys.

Rev Sharon Ferguson endorses the project: "Twilight People is a new and innovative idea that responds directly to the needs put forward by gender-variant and transgender people of faith. This project will impact on interfaith and cross-community dialogue, enhancing inter and intra-community cohesion and connections in wider British society."

Twilight People founder and trans activist Surat-Shaan Khan says: 'You are invited to tell us your story, be a sitter for the exhibition, or get involved as volunteer. We want to create a safe and welcoming space and are happy to discuss any concerns around visibility with you. So far, the response has been smashing - there is one more photo shoot in early July 2015, and only a few more slots for sitters available!!'

For more information go to www.twilightpeople.com or email twilightpeople@liberaljudaism.org



Trans Rabbi writes heart-warming letter to Jewish trans teen 4th April 2015

Rabbi Becky Silverstein, of the Pasadena Jewish Temple and Centre, California, is one of the few openly trans Rabbis. At Passover, inspired by the story of a thirteen year old trans boy, Tom Chai Sosnik, whose coming out speech at his school went viral, trans Rabbi Becky Silverstein wrote an open letter of support. In it, he compares the story of the exodus, celebrated by Jews at Passover, to the courage of LGBT teens coming out. He also praises Tom's family, school and Rabbi for their support.

"Tom, we have never and may never meet, and yet I feel as though I know you. I see in your face the faces of the LGBTQ Jewish teenagers I have had the opportunity to work with in my time as a Jewish educator and rabbi. In your face, I also see a vision of what I want so badly for our Jewish community to be: a place where everyone can be celebrated for the entirety of who they are and where nobody feels the need to hide a piece of their identity. The moments before and during the actual exodus from Egypt were extremely risky. How could the individual Israelites be sure that they would be redeemed? And yet, in order for our story to continue, each individual needed to take a risk, needed to take a leap of faith, and perform the Passover sacrifice. Tom, it seems as though you have an amazing community around you. And I want you to know that you are not alone. The LGBTQ Jewish community is growing, the trans Jewish community is growing within it. Though there is much work to be done, there is also much to celebrate. Lastly Tom, there are folks in this world who just don't get it. Here's a bit of unsolicited advice: approach them with compassion, don't read the comments, and remember, I've got your back."

Naming ceremonies for transgender people - proposed debate in the General Synod of the Church of England 23rd May 2015 [See also the first section of the notes of Sibyls committee meeting, page2]

Similar to a baptism, the ceremony is to celebrate a person's transition and their new name. Reverend Chris Newlands of Lancaster Priory proposed the notion after performing such a ceremony for a member of his congregation. He told the Guardian a young trans man had approached him and asked to be baptised again: "I said: 'Once you've been baptised, you're baptised'. He said: 'But I was baptised as a girl, under a different name.' "I said: 'Let me have a think about it'. So we did and then we created a service, which was an affirmation of baptismal vows where we could introduce him to God with his new name and his new identity." The Archbishop's Council confirmed they had received the proposal but it would not be debated very soon. Rev Newlands said: "It's an absolute trauma to go through this, with the surgery, as people get a lot of transphobic bullying. The church needs to take a lead and be much more proactive to make sure they are given a warm welcome."

Weaponising Gender by Chris Dowd

As someone who has spent a lot of time over the past few years working on a doctorate about transfolk and their experiences in the Church, I've been puzzled by the Church's response.

I think one of the surprising things is the very little bit of theology that has been done on the subject. The UK church has only written four reports that have discussed transfolk at all (*The Evangelical Alliance's Transsexuality*, and the Anglican *Issues in human sexuality, Some Issues in Human Sexuality* and the *Pilling Report*) and only two of those (*Transsexuality* and *Some issues in human sexuality*) consider transfolk at any length at all.

Both of these trace their ideas directly back to the work of Oliver O'Donovan. While other Anglicans David Horton and Rodney Holder have written more conciliatory responses to transfolk, they have largely been ignored. (*Ed: Our own Rev. Christina Beardsley has more recently written some excellent guidance for clergy.*)

In the small booklet O'Donovan wrote from Grove Books, he investigated if transfolk could marry in their new gender. I believe this work is seriously flawed because O'Donovan rejected all expert opinion, from those who worked in gender clinics with transfolk, or from transfolk themselves. In reading his work I get the sense of an academic in an ivory tower with no interest in the ramifications of his conclusions on the people whose existence he seems so keen to dismiss.

Another issue is that he failed to properly engage theologically with what the Bible might have to say. For example If we are all brides of Christ (Eph 5:25-27) what does this say about gender? If we are all the body of Christ surely this body must be both male and female simultaneously? What does Paul mean in Galatians 3:28 when he considered there is no male or female but all are one in Christ Jesus? What does the Trinity say about gender when the Spirit is often depicted as Sophia, female wisdom? That is without looking at the biblical eunuch which is claimed by several transtheologians such as Mollenkott and Kolakowski.

Instead O'Donovan concentrates on Genesis 1:27 "male and female he created them". He interprets this as an exclusive statement that creates a binary gender. He assumes that this state of affairs is God ordained and therefore marriage can only be between male born men and female born women. In order to champion this hetero-normative privilege he has to invalidate anyone who does not fit into these categories. Therefore he dismisses transfolk saying that the "transsexual claim" is invalid and that being Trans is a form of unacceptable Gnosticism where the body is alienated from the spirit.

I have come to believe that O'Donovan and the church reports that draw so deeply from his work have subconsciously recognised that the Genesis Gender Myth is one of the few places that the Church has been unchallenged in modern society. The Church has become the custodian of Western Society's founding gender myth and we fight to protect it - no matter what casualties there are.

I've come to believe this is the reason the issue of gender has become weaponised. Whether we are talking about the role of women in the church, opposition to complementarianism or the place of sexual minorities within the Church there is shrill condemnation and attempts to punish those who transgress. I've heard many people say that you can't be a real Christian if you support gender equality and LGBTI rights. That you have to "respect" other points of view even when they count as hate speech out of the pulpit and you don't feel the courtesy is returned. It also means that anyone who falls foul of this binary: transfolk, lesbian and gay folk, the gender queer and the gender non-conforming find themselves at the sharp end of clerical disapproval and at times persecution.

The cracks are showing as society has moved more and more towards abandoning this gender myth by accepting that women and men are equal, that lesbian gay and bisexual folk are not intrinsically evil nor psychologically ill and that gender is more fluid than a binary gender system allows. The Church is increasingly being seen as moving from guardian to oppressor. And increasingly the tone of the Church is having to change even if it often consists more of soundbites than any real action.

It's time to discard what the Church has written about transfolk and begin to explore anew. It's time to discard a small Grove booklet written almost 40 years ago. I believe that it is time to seriously engage with the issue of gender and transgender in the Church with the intention of discarding a gender myth that is crumbling anyway. Wouldn't it be wonderful to see the Church acting in a Christ like way by abandoning privilege to seek justice? Wouldn't it be exciting if we did the theological work to create a new way of seeing gender and be in the vanguard of a new way and radically inclusive way of reimagining personhood in Western Society?

We can only hope.....

I was intrigued by Sandra Moore's article in the last Newsletter about "Sibylline Spirituality". I must admit I had to read it several times to make sure I had understood it and even now after many readings I'm not sure I quite see what Sandra is driving at. Sandra writes:

"A religion, or religious attitude, is not primarily to do with what one thinks or understands to be "true", but far more about the way one feels it necessary to BE or DO in order to express one's nature as a spirit on earth."

Speaking for myself I cannot accept this as an adequate description of my religion or even my "religious attitude". I am a Christian because I believe that what I profess in Church each week (the creed) is actually true. I also believe, as a Christian, that I am not seeking to follow the promptings of my inner nature but my conscience under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Sandra may not mean this but she seems to me to be capable of being understood to say that objective truth does not matter and that the essence of religion is to be true to one's self. In the case of trans people of course that means being true to one's transgendered nature. I don't have a problem with that but I do think it is important not to overstate the case.

In my view the spirituality of transpeople is not that much different from anyone else's. I don't agree that "Trans life is ipso facto religious" without the need for "external accretions". That almost seems to make transgenderism itself into a religious belief! I am sure Sandra does not mean anything so clearly absurd. I expect Sandra means that being trans is "like" being religious in some respects. I think this is true but in a much more limited way than Sandra seems to suggest. In my case, becoming a Christian required an act of humility (my acceptance of myself as a sinner in need of Gods' grace) and of commitment to a way of life. It has been much the same with accepting myself as transgendered.

I have had (and to an extent still have) a hard struggle to reconcile my Christianity with being a transwoman. So I really welcome Sandra's contribution to this debate, even if I cannot go nearly as far as she seems to with her ideas about Sibylline "spirituality". As a trans Christian, I have the same spiritual needs and problems as any other Christian with the additional problems presented by a way of life that has alienated or distanced members of my family and friends and which is just about tolerated but not welcomed in my church. This all causes a lot of guilt, something no Christian should be afflicted by.

Sandra is right that I need to be true to the inner promptings of my true nature. But I also need to be careful to be sure that these promptings come from God and not from that huge part of my nature which is fallen, corrupt and selfish. For that I need faith, prayer, self-denial, good works, worship and love. I do not think these are external accretions but an even more important part of my life and nature than being trans.

I write of course as a reasonably orthodox Christian (Indeed a Catholic). I realise that many people these days have lost or are unable to find belief in organised, institutional religion. They identify as "spiritual" rather than "religious". Trans people in particular may feel alienated from the mainstream churches but still feel the need for "God" in their lives and are searching for Him (though they may not realise it). This search may take many different forms and will involve many blind alleys, as mine has though it led me ultimately to the Catholic Church. I once thought the Church had all the answers but long ago ceased to believe that. I profoundly disagree with the Church's teaching on contraception, ordination of women, admission to the sacraments for the remarried, treatment of gay people (to name but a few issues!). And now that I have decided to live permanently, openly and proudly as a transwoman, my relationship with the Church (and to God) is again changing. This is uncomfortable and disturbing but surely healthier and more pleasing to God than becoming spiritually stagnant and complacent. "To live is to change, to be perfect is to have changed often."



Trans pioneer April Ashley turns 80 29th April 2015

She came to prominence in the 1960s as a model, appearing in Vogue, and a number of acting roles. She had travelled to Casablanca in Morocco for gender confirmation surgery – one of the first people in Britain to do so – after spending some years in Paris, and had hoped to return to Britain without revealing her trans status. However, in 1961, she was publicly outed in the press.

In an interview with the Telegraph in 2013, she said: "And I never got another modelling job from that day to this. Six months' worth of booking was cancelled overnight."

She was then married to Arthur Corbett, the future Baron Rowallan, but the relationship soon broke down. Corbett filed to have the marriage annulled on the grounds Ms Ashley was legally a man. The annulment was granted, and this served as a precedent that preventing trans people from marrying until the Gender Recognition Act of 2004. She was assisted in securing her gender recognition certificate by John Prescott, who she had known before transitioning. A museum exhibition about her life ran for two years in Liverpool, and some of her letters and official documents were featured in an exhibition on identity at the Wellcome Collection. She received an MBE for services to transgender equality in 2012.

It has long been a practice of Quakers to act on principle, derived from spiritual insight, even when this goes against the grain of society. This is about letting our actions speak of our faith. It should therefore be unnecessary to be guilty or ashamed about our own experience, but to share our truth. Quakers accept everyone equally or at least we like to think so.

Quakers have a long history of loving acceptance of same sex relationships, culminating in the adoption of equal marriage by Quakers in Britain. Over the years, there has been a concerted focus on campaigning for gay equality since 'A Quaker view of sex' in the 1960s and the start of the Friends Homosexual Fellowship in the 70s. But the gay and lesbian fellowship within Quakers has been late in addressing gender-difference.

As I slowly accepted and embraced my own gender difference, it deepened my spiritual life. I started to look for a transgender network within Quakers through the Quaker Lesbian and Gay Fellowship (QLGF). I found a warm community of lesbians and gay men, but did not feel it was attuned to transgender at all. I was really not sure whether to join, but in due course I did, and was strongly encouraged by a friend on the committee. I began to consider what I could contribute – I wrote some comments about the website and wrote an article for the newsletter, which were welcomed by the committee.

I knew there have been transgender Friends within the Quaker Lesbian and Gay Fellowship, and Quakers within Sibyls, but was intrigued by Jay's assertion there was once a Quaker transgender group. After a bit more digging after the Hilfield weekend, I have found that four people founded the Friends Transgender Fellowship in the early 2000s, but there were only a handful of people and it didn't last.

I was careful not to go crashing in and shrilly assert a trans agenda. I gradually realised that the QLGF had already spent a year discussing their future – what its future role was, and even whether the group should be laid down. In some ways, with equal marriage accepted, group membership declining, it seemed that there was no need for it. There had already been some tortuous alphabetic discussion about changing the name of the group to be more inclusive. And the Quaker national 'senior officer' had observed the need to embrace trans.

I attended a couple of QLGF gatherings and my confidence grew within the group. So it was no surprise to be asked if I would join the committee. Having made some comments about the website, I took over responsibility for it. The committee developed a new purpose, based partly on the new focus on trans issues. Having received the Community Group of the year award from Stonewall in 2013, and invited its new Chief Executive Ruth Hunt to speak at a gathering, we related strongly to Stonewall's belated embrace of trans, in parallel with our own.

Two national gatherings of the QLGF were planned for 2015, in Brighton and Manchester, both to give greater prominence to trans matters. I agreed to find names to contribute, and realised that I wanted to speak at the Brighton event, rather than find someone else. I was conscious of the need to introduce QLGF Friends to some basic facts about gender difference, but also to place it within a distinctively Quaker context, with its spiritual and practical foundations of simplicity, integrity, equality.

It felt personally momentous to give a talk to a largish group, most of whom I didn't know. It was a privilege to share the joys and traumas of gender-variant experience and to consider wider concerns about faith and trans. It was a lovely day of listening and discussion, with some good comments about how my talk had made people think about themselves and what trans meant. Leading up to event, I had the chance to visit Brighton's pioneering Clare Project, which supports many individuals on their gender identity journeys.

Also in April, I had an article published in the weekly Quaker journal 'The Friend'. These feel like small but significant steps to raising awareness. I wouldn't have done any of this without the inspiring and reassuring foundation of Sibyls.

We are now planning an event in Manchester on Saturday 31 October, dedicated to faith and transgender. The challenge is to persuade members of Quaker Meetings who might gain strength from the event to actually attend, especially if they are not out. Now that trans issues are belatedly being addressed within Quakers, we want to provide a supportive network. We particularly want to reach the people who struggle with unresolved gender identity, those that feel conflicted and afflicted and those who cannot be open about their true identity. We hope some Sibyls will be able to attend as well as trans people from other faiths.

The name of the fellowship remains an issue – we will come back to it. We now tend to say 'the Quaker LGBT+ fellowship'. In a few months we will find a new name I am sure.



The First European Transgender Council in Vienna 2005 saw the genesis of Transgender Europe (TGEU).

The European Transgender Network

- believes that the acknowledgment and acceptance of gender diversity is a integral part of a modern European society.
- works for the empowerment and self determination all Gender Variant (Trans) people in Europe.
- works to increase the visibility and acceptance of ALL Trans people.
- works to ensure that all Trans people in Europe are afforded acceptance, respect and equality as European citizens.
- works to combat the unlawful discrimination and unequal treatment experienced by Trans people.
- opposes the continued exotisation of trans people and the persistent pathologisation of gender variance as a mental disorder.

TGEU's main demands

After the First Transgender Council in Vienna in 2005, the attendees of the Council, representing a total of over 100 European and National Trans Support Groups, voted for the following Demands to be made of the European Community and the nations of the Community:

1. The Right to a free choice of given name
2. The Right to change one's legally registered gender/sex in all documents, to the gender/sex of the preferred gender role. This Right to be free of any prerequisites such as any required or forced psychological, psychotherapeutic or psychiatric assessment or treatment; a requirement for a medical/psychological diagnosis of 'gender dysphoria', 'gender identity disorder' or 'transsexualism'; hormonal treatment; invasive or non-invasive sex or gender reassignment surgery; sterilisation or infertility; and any requirement to be unmarried, or never married or to proceed with a divorce.
3. The Inclusion of Trans people in all Anti-discrimination juridical case law, legislative programme or administrative policies in all European Union national treaties and legislation
4. The creation of a European wide programme of Protective Services opposed to Transphobic or other 'gender variant' related hate crimes.
5. The development of social, legal and administrative respect for the family lives of Trans people and their loved ones.
6. The Right to a Free choice of medical practitioners for all Trans people, regardless of national borders, and health care policies.
7. The Right to Political asylum for all those Trans people from Third Party nations, who are or will be prosecuted on grounds of their gender variance or sexual behaviour if returned to their own, or another, third party nation state.
8. The provision of European and National funding of sufficient support and education organisations on matters of concern to Trans people.
9. That European and Nation states include Trans, gender variant and queer concerns to be included in their Youth Welfare Programmes and legislation, including the development of Special Protections for trans and other gender variant children and adolescents, and the funding of specific trans-youth welfare, support and care projects.

TGEU have released a video showing some of the hurdles trans people to go through to gain access to legal gender recognition. <http://tgeu.org/nightmare/>

Transgender Europe released the clip to raise awareness of some of the archaic regulations that govern gender – with some countries still regarding trans people as mentally ill. TGEU said: “For most trans people in Europe, it is either impossible or very difficult and humiliating to get a passport or other identity documents with their correct name and gender. In fact, 34 countries in Europe still do not allow a trans person to change their name and registered gender without invasive and abusive requirements that violate their human rights. 3 of the worst requirements are being forced to undergo sterilisation and other medical interventions, being forced to get a divorce (if married), or having to receive a diagnosis of mental illness, despite not being mentally ill, or a ‘psychological opinion’. As a result, most trans people in Europe are not able to change their legal name and gender, or they refuse to do so because of the abusive requirements.

“This means that they have passports and other identity documents that don’t match their identity and appearance. When asked to prove their identity, for example when travelling, opening a bank account, renting an apartment, or picking up a parcel from a post office, trans people may be forced to come out as trans, accused of being a fraud, and become vulnerable to humiliation, discrimination and violence.

“It is not a surprise therefore, that 73% of trans people in the EU think that better legal gender recognition laws, that allow them to change their name and gender more easily, would allow them to live more comfortably. The 34 countries named by TGEU are Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom. In addition, 14 countries do not have any laws to allow a legal change of gender. In the UK, the Gender Recognition Act specifies that trans people must have reports from two registered medical practitioners or registered psychologists. Trans people who are married or in a civil partnership must either divorce, or gain the permission of their spouse to transition.

It's worth noting some of the internet comments which followed the publication of this video and article — see especially no.4

1 - ‘Small corrections to the end of the article, where it refers to "the UK". There is no spousal veto in the Scottish equal marriage Act, meaning that trans people here who married here can get gender recognition while remaining married, without requiring the written permission from their spouse that is needed in England and Wales. Conversely, trans people who married in Northern Ireland still cannot get gender recognition without divorcing first, wherever in the UK they live.’

2 - ‘Transsexualism is still misunderstood, misrepresented and individuals vilified for daring to be different. Sadly, some of this is perpetrated by the very people who have in their turn been rejected and vilified by those who regard themselves as superior - I refer to some who call themselves ‘feminists’. It is also regrettable that some LGB individuals too are less than supportive declaring that trans people don’t belong in the LGB cooperative.’

3 - ‘Trans activists either portray SRS as a dire invasion of their civil rights, a forced sterilization -- or they argue it's life-saving medical intervention and should be paid for as any other health expense -- or else it's just like a nose job, no big deal at all, stop gate keeping me ... No one forced me to have SRS. I had it because I needed and wanted it as a transsexual person’.

4 - ‘Gay’ was deleted from the DSM many years ago but most Trans People I would suggest currently rely on the inclusion of Gender Dysphoria on the DSM to obtain free NHS gender confirmation surgery (I speak as someone from the UK.) It's certainly not ideal but it's what we have.’



Stonewall CEO Ruth Hunt on why the charity is going trans inclusive 16th February 2015

The charity, which previously only lobbied only on gay, lesbian and bisexual issues in England and Wales, announced on Monday that it would now also include trans issues in its brief. Explaining the process, Ms Hunt, who took over as CEO in 2014, said, “This is the culmination of conversations with more than seven hundred trans people over the last six months. We went out to the communities and said ‘Stonewall currently doesn’t cover trans in its remit, would you like us to do? If we do, what would that look like? Or would you want us to keep our nose out?’ I was very determined that any change would come from within the trans community, so this is a culmination of all those conversations, it’s a very ground-breaking moment, it’s very historic. For me it was a case of we had achieved equal marriage in this country, and of course lots of people played their part in that, but that really signalled an end of the legislative battles and Stonewall was moving into the territory of changing hearts and minds. As chief exec, I am absolutely committed to creating a world through Stonewall where everyone has the right to be themselves, where everyone can be who they want to be, and I think that the artificial divide between trans and sexual orientation hasn’t been particularly helpful in the kind of disagreements that we have had, so I wanted to move it forward. It started with a conversation of fifty prominent trans activists to see if we could make any headway there at all, and it was a really good constructive day, so we were able to build on that. I was really inspired by how positive people were in that initial conversation and how much appetite there was for exploring this further, so not just a case of ‘no-Stonewall-no’ but actually of ‘Yes, maybe and let’s see what that looks like.’”

I think we should have had the conversations sooner about whether we should combine the issues and have more common ground. We didn’t, but I think we are now having those conversations, so it is really about looking to the future.”

“I think it’s important to acknowledge our past and acknowledge when we haven’t done things as well and I think that’s a crucial part of building friendship and trust again between trans communities and Stonewall. It is very important to acknowledge mistakes in order to move forward.

Speaking of she would prioritise Stonewall’s trans agenda, Ms Hunt said: “There are significant issues but I think looking at what we already do will help us prioritise. So there is the Workplace Equality Index, which is filled in by four hundred organisations each year – just by adding questions on trans for that can transform the workplace for a lot of trans people working for these major employers. If you look at the work we do with teachers, even if you include trans in that it will help transform schools and cultures. So there are things we can do very quickly and those things will be determined by what we already do. In terms of the some of the trans-specific work, those priorities will have to come from the trans community, so we will need to talk to them about what are the most important things for Stonewall to tackle. There’s a lot of good work going on already, so I think some of those issues will emerge might be about health and access to gender identity clinics for people who are non-binary. Not much is being done on that area so that might be where Stonewall can add value. But that’s really got to come once we’ve got the good training in place, the advisory group in place, and we’ve got some staff in place, and that will all take some time.”

All the staff, trans and people who are not trans, are very excited by this and I think the main challenge for Stonewall is to not run before we can walk. Googling trans does not make you an expert, so for staff it’s really about getting them to slow down and make sure we have the right training.”

On whether one of the challenges for an organisation looking to become trans inclusive was using the right language, Ms Hunt replied: “I think that is something that has to be done and I’m sure we will make some slip-ups along the way. I think what we realised through conversations is how powerful language is and how it can really put people off. So we wanted this document to help educate people as well, so that’s why at the back there’s a glossary about language and words and the words we use, because people get frightened about this issue because they are worried about getting the language wrong. And certainly our trans staff tell us that pronouns and getting pronouns right are incredibly important and that’s why it’s right to emphasis it, but there’s a lot to learn and that’s why we are clear this will take 18 months, this is not a case of just bunging T onto our remit and thinking we can just start tomorrow, it’s actually going to be quite a slow process to make sure we are fully equipped and qualified and trained to do this well because we don’t want to do any harm.



Why Stonewall's decision to lobby on trans issues was the right one Reubs Walsh

It is not very often that an organisation sets out to listen to trans people, and then makes real changes, as a matter of urgency, in response to what we say. However Stonewall has just done exactly that. After 25 years of excluding trans issues from their work, and even making serious mistakes that, at the time, did real harm to trans people, Stonewall have finally heeded the calls of numerous trans people (including myself) to integrate our needs and issues into their work. They have conducted an extensive consultation process with the trans community, in a way that ensures all sections of the community have an equal chance to be heard, and have released a report setting out the next steps. You can now see the report online, http://www.stonewall.org.uk/media/current_releases/11191.asp but there are three key features I would like to focus on.

First, there is a strong sense of 'mea culpa' in the opening pages of the report. In her foreword, Ruth Hunt (Stonewall's relatively new CEO) speaks candidly about the mistakes of the past: "We are aware that we have missed opportunities to open up this conversation far sooner. We apologise to trans people for the harm that we have caused." There is a whole six-page section called "Where we've come from" identifying when and how Stonewall ceased to be working in harmony with trans campaigns, and within that there is even a subtitle "Learning from our mistakes" under which the specific, avoidable mistakes that Stonewall has made in the past are itemised and examined. Without this sense that Stonewall's leadership recognise the severity of the mistakes they have made, and the importance for everyone of a cohesive LGBT movement, it would not now be possible to look to the future of trans people within Stonewall with the hope that I now feel.

Second, there is a thread throughout of recognising the diversity of trans experiences, and the important intersections of race, disability, age, nonbinary and intersex. The structure of the consultation process has already shown that Stonewall understand how these issues impact upon the trans experience, and they have included in the report a detailed summary of the ways these intersections add complexity to the requirements of trans-inclusive campaigning. Intersectionality is not something that Stonewall have historically been seen as achieving, so I am heartened to see that this aspect is changing too.

Third, the action-plan is ambitious, but achievable, and is built on a sense of the need to bring the experiences and knowledge of trans people and trans activists to bear on every area of Stonewall's structure. Stonewall's intends to:

- Commission trans-specific training for all staff,
- Update all Stonewall literature to include trans issues where appropriate, or produce new, parallel materials (or signposting to existing resources) where it is not.
- Ensure trans representation on the Board of Trustees.
- Establish a Trans Advisory Group advising the Trustees and senior management.
- Recruit a Director of Trans Integration to oversee the change.
- Recruit full-time staff to begin work on campaigns focussed on trans people's needs and concerns.

In the report it is clear that all of the people recruited or commissioned will have specific expertise on trans issues, which in practice means that the majority will probably be trans themselves. The report also states that these individuals will be paid for their time and expertise, which is relatively unheard of for trans activists and will be a big first step towards a powerful 'T' in the UK's LGBT movement.

Many people will continue, legitimately, to criticise aspects of Stonewall's ways of working. I for one would like to see them become more transparent and democratic. But it is good that Stonewall's way of working is so different from the majority of trans organisations in the UK. Limited reach and resources has meant that we have tended to focus on casework. We have also been highly reactive, because without salaries, trans activists have also had full-time jobs to pay the rent, and so planning ahead and taking action not driven by a sudden need was impractical. Stonewall has a five-year plan (which they intend to re-write under the guidance of their new trans experts). Stonewall explicitly does not engage in casework, but rather lobbies at the national, institutional level, by comparing (for example) schools and universities on a systematic measure of LGB (and soon, trans) inclusiveness, by speaking with powerful people in Whitehall, Westminster and the City. Trans people have not historically had access to these spaces. GIRES do amazing work in these areas, in large part because they are cisgender individuals with a deeply personal passion for trans liberation, in a sense subverting their cis privilege to achieve gains for trans people. However, at the core of all prejudice is the refusal to see the group in question as fully human, and there is no substitute for meeting a 'real life' trans person as a way of forcing them to reconsider that position. Inclusion in Stonewall means a seat at the table for trans people who would otherwise be unlikely to be in the building. Inclusion in Stonewall means enormous pressure on schools, colleges, hospitals, service providers and employers to meet their legal and ethical obligations to trans people. Inclusion in Stonewall means that things are going to get a lot better for us, and a lot quicker than they otherwise would.

Some trans people who've made the news this year.



Bethany Black

Bethany has been described Britain's only goth lesbian transsexual comedian. This year she also became the first trans actor to play a trans character on British television in Channel 4's *Cucumber and Banana*. She also responded to transphobic comments made by Germaine Greer. [see last issue]



Emily Brothers

Emily Brothers became Labour's first out trans prospective parliamentary candidate when she came out in an interview in December. She has a long history of fighting for disability rights and was a key figure in securing disability living allowance for trans people., Ms Brothers gained 11% of the vote in Sutton and Cheam, behind Lib Dem Paul Burstow, who received 34%, and Tory Paul Scully, who was elected with 40%.



Charlie Kiss

Charlie Kiss was parliamentary candidate for the Green Party, and the only openly trans male prospective parliamentary candidate. He has spoken about the lack of diversity in Parliament, and he "remains committed to the feminist cause. I just feel that in the Houses of Parliament at the moment it's not very representative of the population. It's got to change. I would love not to be the only male transgender candidate standing. Other trans parliamentary candidates include Trans activist Zoe O'Connell who has been selected to stand for the Liberal Democrats in the constituency of Maldon, and the Green's Stella Gardinier.



Rapper **Angel Haze** is one of the very few non-binary people who have gained recognition in this field. 'They' have worked with artists such as Iggy Azalea, Natalia Kills and Ludacris. They are agender and pansexual, and famously covered Macklemore's 'Same Love' to reflect their own experiences. They have also spoken out about the stigma of being LGBT in hip hop.



Laura Jane Grace The singer of punk band *Against Me!* came out in 2012. She received support from people across the punk music scene, and in January last year the band released the album 'Transgender Dysphoria Blues' to a broadly positive reception. She has continued to enjoy success with the band. She recently starred in *True Trans*, an AOL web documentary which features Grace and other trans people discussing their gender identity and transition. Laura Jane Grace told Time magazine: "Getting the chance to listen to other people tell their stories of how life shaped their identities and views on gender couldn't help but further inform my own understanding of just how complicated and also how simple all of it really is."



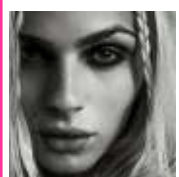
CN Lester

CN is a genderqueer classical musician and activist. They have featured on Classic FM and Radio 4, as well as being praised for their work promoting trans and non-binary representation. They founded and run Transpose, a regular event celebrating trans and queer art and culture.



Madhu Kinnar

Madhu Kinnar became India's first trans mayor in January this year. She won the election in Chattisgarh's Raigarh Municipal Corporation by over 4000 votes. She said: "People have shown faith in me. I consider this win as love and blessings of people for me. I'll put in my best efforts to accomplish their dreams."



Andreja Pejčić - the first openly trans model to be profiled by Vogue

Andreja found fame as an androgynous model, working in both men's and women's fashion, before coming out as a trans woman last year. She spoke out publicly in the hope that her story would inspire people. She said: "I want to share my story with the world because I think I have a social responsibility. I hope that by being open about this, it becomes less of an issue." She has also spoken about the positive influence of her transition, and her desire to become a mother.



Laverne Cox, whose career and visibility continues to go from strength to strength this year. Last May she appeared on the cover of Time magazine, as part of their "transgender tipping point" feature, and this year was cast in a new legal drama as a high-flying lawyer. She was the first trans actor to be nominated for an Emmy. She continued to use her visibility to push for greater trans rights. She is now set to receive a rare honour – her own waxwork in Madame Tussauds. The figure will be unveiled at the San Francisco branch of the wax museum on June 26, to celebrate Pride month.



Former Olympic Gold Medallist (1976 decathlon—world record) Bruce Jenner finally came out as transgender in an interview with ABC, after months of media speculation and denials. 'This is better than a gold medal', he said.

24th April 2015 Boy George, like many other celebrities, praised Jenner as "brave", saying: "I absolutely applaud what he's doing and I think it's very brave. And it actually makes me quite emotional. He has my 150 per cent support in every way. I think that the whole transgender thing is the new frontier." [IS IT BRAVE?]

1st June 2015 Revealing that **her name is now Caitlyn**, Jenner has reached the climax of a carefully orchestrated publicist's dream. She has now appeared in a shoot by legendary photographer Annie Leibovitz for the latest cover of Vanity Fair at her Malibu home.

[There has been much comment that Jenner's net worth of \$100 million is a great help. She's now a worldwide curiosity cashing in further on a sensational and entertaining spectacle. Compare the less spectacular, but still very newsworthy transition of **Frank/Kelly Maloney**]



U.K. Labour MP Kerry McCarthy spoke out in Parliament, after transgender women were referred to as ‘sir’ by security staff during a Parliamentary LGBT Month reception. 6th March 2015

The incident took place at Shadow Education Secretary Tristram Hunt’s parliamentary reception for LGBT History Month event on February 4. Anwen Muston and Sophia Botha, both officers for LGBT Labour, allege they were called “sir” by security employed by the Metropolitan Police at the Cromwell Green entrance to Parliament.

Ms McCarthy, the MP for Bristol East, raised the issue in the Commons with Lib Dem minister John Thurso. She asked: “What training and advice is provided to House staff on how to deal with transgender people visiting the parliamentary estate? On 4 February, there was an LGBT History Month event here. I had complaints made to me by two people who attended the event that security guards at the Cromwell Green entrance had repeatedly addressed them as ‘sir’, even though they had made it quite clear that they did not wish to be addressed in that way. The Met is looking at this – I think the House of Commons Commission has referred it to the Met – but will the right hon. Gentleman make sure that they do not have to suffer such treatment in future?”

Mr Thurso responded: “I am grateful to the hon. Lady for bringing that case to our attention. Indeed, as I believe she knows, this has been referred to the Metropolitan Police Service, whose staff these were. It is taking this extremely seriously and we have made it clear to the Met how seriously we take it. As far as our own staff are concerned, diversity and inclusion is a key part of the core induction and training for all visitor assistants and all staff generally. We take these matters very seriously and we are determined to make sure that this is not repeated. All House staff dealing with the public are expected to undertake mandatory diversity and inclusion training, and the same standards are expected from all service providers, including the Metropolitan Police Service.”

GENDER X: Before the recent election, the following comments were made on the matter of introducing ‘Gender X’ passports – for people who aren’t male or female. [I wonder how sincerely?]

Yvette Cooper said: “We should look at this as part of the transgender review. “There’s a whole series of issues around the way the law currently affects intersex and trans people... the Gender Recognition Act which is now about 10 years old and we are in an area where things have moved on a lot. This will be one of the issues that we will look at as part of the trans review that we would introduce, so I’m not saying we will just review it... This will be a specific review that we will do in government. I’m not going to preempt the conclusions of the review but just to say the specific issue would be looked at alongside a whole series of other things because I think there are wider legal issues that we would like to look at as part of that review.”

Ms Cooper made the promise at the PinkNews Debate with Evan Davis, which took place on 19th March in central London. Gender neutral campaigner Christie Elan-Cane – who doesn’t identify as male or female – called for the UK to follow countries including New Zealand, Australia and Nepal in introducing ‘third-gender’ passports for people who don’t define as men or women.

David Cameron said, “I understand the concerns of people who want to have their gender recorded differently on their passport, but this is a complex issue, particularly given the risk that people might encounter difficulties with entry restrictions into other countries. We would want to consider these issues carefully, and study the experience of those countries which have done it before making any proposals for change.

Tory peer Tina Stowell said she personally understood the wishes of Gender X campaigners. The Leader of the House of Lords told the Gender X campaigner: “Clearly this is a very important topic. It’s certainly something I personally would want to explore and find out a bit more as to what the issues are that may be preventing us from making a decision. I’m aware that there are for example some risks involved in terms of some countries not really recognising [gender X] or requiring passports that are specific in their genders. I wouldn’t want us to do anything where we created a new problem or a new risk for people whilst we are actually trying to address their fundamental concern.”

Green leader Natalie Bennett and **Liberal Democrat Chief Whip Don Foster** also both backed the idea. The Lib Dem MP – who stood down in May – said: “The answer is yes. There’s already in parliament a Lib Dem early day motion advocating this and Simon Hughes is currently within the department working to try and achieve it.”

UKIP’s Peter Whittle said he “couldn’t give you an honest answer”, adding: “I really don’t know enough about it.”

A report has been submitted by international law firm Clifford Chance to the HM Passport Office, which favours introducing gender ‘X’ passports in the UK. 24th March 2015

The report was submitted by Clifford Chance on behalf of the Non-Gendered campaign. It asks why passports with a non-specified gender, or gender X, have not already been introduced, and challenges the Government’s position on the basis of human rights and equality legislation. The Non-Gendered campaign is run by Christie Elan-Cane, who calls for the UK to follow the steps of countries like Australia and New Zealand, where ‘X’ passports are already an option.

Narind Singh, partner leading the Clifford Chance team, comments: “Access to Justice is an integral part of Clifford Chance’s Corporate Responsibility strategy and the firm is proud to be supporting Christie’s Non-Gendered campaign on its pioneering mission to attain legitimate identity for non-gendered individuals. From working with Non-Gendered we have learnt that persons in this marginalised group are forced to conceal and deny their identities due to lack of societal provision. The impact of this is devastating and allowing X Passports would be a crucial step towards protecting their human rights.”

- It was recently announced that the Oxford English Dictionary might recognise Mx – a gender neutral version of Ms or Mr. The title was coined in the 1970s as a reaction to existing ‘discriminatory’ titles.
- The official dictionary of the Swedish language has added the gender-neutral pronoun “hen” for the first time. The Swedish trans community began using it, and pushing for its wider use, in the early 2000s.

U.S.A. A teenage transgender activist has died in an apparent suicide. 27th March 2015

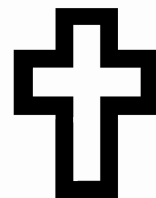
18-year-old Blake Brockington passed away on 23rd March, according to local LGBT news website Q Notes. Local LGBT Youth Group Time Out Youth wrote on Facebook: "Time Out Youth is saddened by the loss of Blake Brockington. The centre is open now and we invite youth and volunteers to join us in supporting each other today. Please keep Blake's friends and family in your thoughts today."



The death comes after a string of prominent suicides of young transgender people, following the death of 17-year-old Leelah Alcorn in December. [See Newsletter issue 71]

Mr. Brockington, from Charlotte, North Carolina, made the news in February last year when he became the first transgender student to be crowned as his high school's homecoming king, after raising over \$2300 (£1400) for charity. He said at the time: "This means a lot to me... for me this a dream that has finally been made, and for others this is an inspiration. I hope this makes everybody know that they can be themselves regardless of what anybody else says. You can do anything you set your mind to."

However, he later lamented the opposition he had faced, telling the Charlotte Observer: "That was single-handedly the hardest part of my trans journey. Really hateful things were said on the Internet. It was hard. I saw how narrow-minded the world really is. My family feels like this is a decision I made. They think, 'You're already black, why would you want to draw more attention to yourself?' But it's not a decision. It is who I am. I wouldn't wish this on my worst enemy."



Obama calls for end to 'devastating' LGBT conversion therapy 9th April 2015

The President responded to a petition which followed the suicide of Ohio 17-year-old Leelah Alcorn. White House senior adviser Valerie Jarrett said the Obama administration backed banning religious conversion therapy for minors.

"We share your concern about its potentially devastating effects on the lives of transgender as well as gay, lesbian, bisexual and queer youth. The overwhelming scientific evidence demonstrates that conversion therapy, especially when it is practiced on young people, is neither medically nor ethically appropriate and can cause substantial harm."

Survey reveals a striking growth in support for the trans community among Americans. 2nd April 2015

22% of American say they know or work with a trans person, up from 17% last year, in a survey conducted by the Human Rights Campaign. 66% of those people said they felt favourable towards trans people, compared with only 13% who did not.

HRC President Chad Griffin said: "This is powerful testimony to what we in the LGBT community have always known – that the more people who know us, and become familiar with our personal stories, the more supportive they are of inclusion and equality. This data tells us that the dramatic increase in the visibility of transgender people in our workplaces, our homes, and in our popular culture has helped propel this growing support of transgender Americans. As we celebrate the growing visibility and acceptance of transgender friends, family members and colleagues, we must acknowledge the real risks for transgender people in living authentically. It's imperative that we continue to call for policies that protect people based on their gender identity, and continue our work



A prominent Democratic congressman has revealed that he has a transgender granddaughter, while speaking out in favour of trans rights. 21st February 2015

Mike Honda – who has long been an advocate for LGBT rights within the Democratic party – spoke out after lawmakers in a number of states prepared measures which would target trans people. Sharing a photo of himself with his granddaughter Malisa, he tweeted: "As the proud grandpa of a transgender grandchild, I hope she can feel safe at school without fear of being bullied.These children need our protection and our love"



Transgender former Navy SEAL is planning to challenge one of the most senior Democrats in the House of Representatives. 13th February 2015

Kristin Beck – who came to prominence in 2013 after she opened up about her gender transition – plans to challenge Democrat Steny Hoyer in the party's Maryland primaries. Mr Hoyer has represented Maryland's 5th district since 1981, and currently serves as the House Minority Whip under Nancy Pelosi.

Bruce Jenner's second wife Linda Thompson writes of her support for him. 27th April 2015

Actress Linda Thompson, who was married to Jenner for five years in the 1980s, wrote a column for The Huffington Post in which she discusses her feelings on his transition. "I have respectfully kept his secrets private and would have taken his confidences to my grave had he not spoken out. After having harboured his secret, and feeling in my heart and mind that I have protected him through these years, I can now breathe a little easier, knowing he now has found the strength and the courage to fulfil his dream. He can finally realize his need to be who he authentically is, who he was born to be. That takes tremendous courage. For that I commend him. Bruce has already "gone through the fire," suffered unfathomable discomfort and pain, been held prisoner in his own flesh. It is certainly not our place to judge him or others who may feel trapped, ostracised, or alone."

She discussed her time with Jenner, and when their children began to notice his transition. "I was trying to shield Brandon and Brody from the truth and protect Bruce at the same time. It was exhausting."



A Louis Theroux documentary looking at the growing number of young transgender people has been broadly positively received. 7th April 2015

The documentary – which aired on BBC Two on Sunday in place of a new episode of Top Gear – drew an overnight audience of 1.68m, according to Digital Spy. In the film, Theroux travelled to San Francisco to meet a number of young children who identify as transgender – exploring what their identity means, and the challenges they face from medical intervention. The show featured a number of young children, including 5-year-old Camille, who transitioned to female with the support of her parents. In the show, Camille explained of her former self: “He was not happy. He wanted to be a girl, and then he did not like his name so he changed his name.” Camille’s parents explain: “This is very new... it’s hard getting used to going from one to the other. It’s difficult; it’s not an easy thing to do.”

The show met with a broadly good reception from trans activists and critics alike – though some raised the show’s focus on surgery and “standard trans tropes”. The Telegraph’s reviewer praised the documentary for the “excellent storytelling”, with “no soapboxing, point-scoring or finger-wagging”. Meanwhile, the Independent noted: “Given how often we hear about trans teenagers being rejected by their families, it was joyful to see so many supportive and open-minded mums and dads in action.” The documentary also sparked a lot of reaction – with the Victoria Derbyshire show a few days later focussing on transgender children in the UK.

BBC Two has explored issues faced by transgender children who transition at a young age. 7th April 2015

The Victoria Derbyshire show, which aired on 7th April, featured a long segment during which two trans girls, using pseudonyms, were interviewed about their experiences of transitioning, as well as their parents. Derbyshire said the number of children aged 10 and under who have been referred to NHS support services to help deal with transgender feelings had more than quadrupled in the last six years

The first child, Lily, 6, said she first knew she wanted to wear girls’ clothes “because I wanted to just see how it looked and see if anyone laughed or not. And I would be happy then.” When she wore boys’ clothes, or was referred to as him, “I felt cross and sad. When I started wearing girls’ clothes to school, I felt much better.”

Her mum, speaking to Derbyshire anonymously, said: “As soon as Lily could talk, she came into my room and I had a dress on and she was like ‘wow, when I grow up can I wear one of them?’” She said Lily and her brother were both brought up in the same way, were given tractors and dinosaurs, and were treated the same, but that Lily’s brother had never shown an interest in living as female. Lily’s mum said: “I thought [it was a phase] at the start, but this has been going on since she first started talking. There’s no point in trying to force them to be something that they’re not.”

The second girl to be interviewed, Jessica, who is 8-years-old said: “Everyone’s fine about it.” But when she first went to school wearing girls’ clothes, she said: “I felt really nervous. The office assistant said ‘Hi Jessica’, and then mum went really shocked – in a good way. I felt so happy.” On why she first thought she should live as a girl, she said: “Because I just don’t feel like I should be a boy. It feels like I’m in the wrong body. I feel quite unhappy with [my body] because it’s not a girl body.” Speaking about what she might do in future, when she is older, to help her deal with her body, she said: “I could go to the doctors- mum says they can help.” Jessica was adamant that, even when she is a hundred years old, she would never change her mind. She said: “No [I won’t change my mind] because I’ve always wanted to be a girl.”

Jessica’s parents, a lesbian couple, said they always thought they were open minded, and that they had initially assumed that Jessica would be a gay man. Saying that members of their family had used the word “conditioned” in suggesting that their sexuality was linked to Jessica’s gender dysphoria, the couple said: “It did cross out minds ‘what have we done?’ and ‘have we caused this in some way?’. Not just because we are in a same-sex relationship but I think you kind of question that full stop. It was quite reassuring when we saw the doctors at [NHS] Tavistock.”

Referring live to Facebook comments on the story, Derbyshire said the response had been overwhelmingly positive. One commenter said: “Amazing parents – congratulations on letting the child make the choice.” However another said: “The world has gone mad, is this really what the child wants?” Responding, Derbyshire noted that the programme had spoken to the parents of both children, and that they were “normal” and “sensible” and “just like you or me”. She concluded: “They would not have chosen for this to happen.”

Channel 4 has commissioned three documentaries about trans and gender variant young people. 15.4.15

Trans children have been getting a lot of air time recently, with a well-received Louis Theroux documentary about American children, and a BBC2 show about children in the UK. Channel 4 is joining in, with ‘Young and Trans’ set to explore the issues faced by young trans children.

A statement from Firecracker, the company who will be making the shows, says: “The documentary will follow the families as they share their situation with friends, and get to meet other families going through the same thing.”

They will also be making ‘The Camp’, showing an American summer camp for trans and gender variant children up to the age of 12, and The Testosterone Diaries, focusing on the lives of a group of trans men. The statement says of ‘The Testosterone Diaries’: “Across the UK these young people are proudly broadcasting their lives to the world in online diaries. Combining present tense personal stories with candid web diaries, the programme will show their incredible “rebirth” alongside the emotional challenges presented by their families, friends and society, and find out why they are publishing their journeys online.”

Shortly after the TV programmes mentioned above, however, the BBC Radio 4 programme ‘Woman’s Hour’ was accused of artificially forcing a debate on whether trans children should receive medical care, showing no proper knowledge of the subject, according to campaigner CN Lester.



Eddie Redmayne has appeared on set as trans woman Lili Elbe, one of the first people to undergo gender reassignment surgery. 26th March 2015

Redmayne is to play Lili Ebe, one of the first people to undergo gender reassignment surgery, in *The Danish Girl*, which will be released on 27 November. It is based on a novel by David Ebershoff and tells the story of Ebe, an artist who transitioned in the 1930s and died aged 48, after a failed uterus transplant. It is directed by Oscar winner Tom Hooper, and also stars Alicia Vikander, Matthias Schoenaerts, Ben Whishaw and Amber Heard.

[A typical online comment was:

Although Mr Redmayne is undoubtedly a fine actor and looks set to play the role of Lili Elbe well, I'd nevertheless like to see a trans actor play a trans role in a Hollywood movie sometime. After all, what would the reaction be if a white actor had 'blacked up' to play Dr Martin Luther King in Selma?]

EastEnders is set to introduce the first major transgender character in the soap's history. 1st March 2015

Executive producer Dominic Treadwell-Collins revealed the plans yesterday. He said: "The power of *EastEnders* is to change the world – so you change it gently. I am intending to introduce a trans character. We try and do all our research because we want to tell it properly. The pen hasn't hit the paper yet. I am looking for actors and I need the right character. I would want to cast a trans actor as well. You have to – you have to cast a trans actor, but you also don't want to mess up the story because *EastEnders* reaches so many people and a lot of our audience are quite traditional. We have to be very, very careful about what we say. With *EastEnders* you're preaching to a lot of people who don't want to hear about LGBT issues."

A 17-year-old trans boy has become the first in Australia to be allowed access to gender treatment without permission from his parents. 7th February 2015

In Australia, trans people under the age of 18 must have parental consent for some gender-related care, meaning that children whose parents do not respect their gender identity are left unable to seek specialised treatments. However, in the first ruling of its kind, the Family Court found that a 17-year-old from Melbourne cannot be denied access to treatment simply because of his parents' objections.

When he came out as trans, his parents blamed Western influences, and refused to give permission for him to start treatments – instead planning to bring him back to their home country and put him through 'conversion therapy'. The boy challenged for his right to access treatment in Australia through a court case, with the help of Victoria Legal Aid, and the court has since found in his favour. Michelle Telfer of The Royal Children's Hospital's Gender Dysphoria Service said, "The number of people experiencing gender dysphoria hasn't increased in terms of prevalence, but with social change and improvements in inclusiveness and acceptance of gender diversity, people are feeling safe to come forward to ask for medical assistance."

More headlines - please ask me for details if you want to follow anything up. 'Transgender is the new frontier', as Boy George says.

- 21.4.14 **A prison in New York City has opened a specialised wing to house transgender inmates.**
- 9.12.14 **New York City Council has voted to let trans people change their birth certificate without providing proof of surgery.**
- 6.3.15 **EGYPT: 7 trans people have been accused of debauchery, after police used fake dating profiles to lure them to a nightclub.**
- 7.3.15 **U.S.A. : Planet Fitness has had to defend a decision to cancel a woman's gym membership – after she complained about a trans woman using the female changing rooms.**
- 3.3.15 **TURKEY: The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) rules in favour of a trans man who had brought a case against the Turkish government who refused to permit his gender reassignment unless he undergo sterilization.**
- 31.3.15 **U.S. Department of Justice sues S.E. Oklahoma State University for denying a woman a promotion because she is trans.**
- 2.4.15 **Malta becomes first country to outlaw surgery on intersex babies**
- 2.4.15 **A trans man sues the University of Pittsburgh for banning him from using the men's toilets. Case fails.**
- 3.4.15 **A judge has ordered the California prison system to grant gender confirmation surgery to prisoner Michelle Norsworthy.**
- 9.4.15 **The White House now has a gender-neutral bathroom**
- 9.4.15 **Alabama transgender woman wins discrimination case against US army**
- 13.4.15 **Norway: Experts push for gender recognition changes**
- 21.4.15 **Trans woman loses battle to have 'father' removed from children's' birth certificates**
- 21.4.15 **A private university in New York turns down a student group's application to organise a drag show.**
- 22.4.15 **DMV agrees to allow transgender teenager to wear make-up in her driving licence**
- 28.4.15 **The Welsh Assembly has voted to explore the possibility of opening the first gender identity clinic in Wales.**
- 29.4.15 **Plans to ban trans people from using toilets and changing rooms have been abandoned in Florida.**
- 3.5.15 **Smith College in Massachusetts will admit trans women for the first time this September.**
- 6.5.15 **A trans health official from India has had her UK visa put on hold due to the sex (T) indicated on her passport.**
- 6.5.15 **Delaware Governor backs proposal to allow name changes for trans prisoners**
- 7.5.15 **Boarding schools urged to adopt gender neutral uniform policies, in order not to discriminate against LGBT pupils.**
- 11.5.15 **TGEU releases study highlighting which countries in Europe have the most progressive laws on trans rights. [compare p.11]**
- 12.5.15 **The Council of Europe has published a report on the experiences of intersex people across the continent.**
- 13.5.15 **NatWest refuses to change trans woman's title from 'Mr'**
- 15.5.15 **A "Football v Homophobia" event at the University of Nottingham is accused of discriminating against trans people.**
- 19.5.15 **Michelle Norsworthy's surgery is set for June 1st, when she will become the first trans prisoner to have surgery in the U.S.A.**
- 22.5.15 **Michelle Norsworthy may not get gender reassignment surgery which she was granted by a court, as she has been recommended for parole. [This cruel giving and taking away again may perhaps be familiar to some people in the U.K.]**
- 26.5.15 **MPs being sworn into the House of Commons have for the first time been given the option of a gender neutral title.**
- 4.6.15 **Trans people in Ireland will soon be able to self-declare to change their birth certificate gender without medical evidence.**
- 9.6.15 **Obama appoints first trans man to Presidential commission**

Toilets do seem recently to have been in the news rather more than usual. Several US states are currently pursuing 'bathroom laws' that would make it illegal for trans people to use the correct bathroom for their gender – and trans people are already often subjected to violence for doing so. It is often a case of politicians stirring matters for their own ends; sometimes religion is used as a cloak for basic insecurities. This is dispiriting and tedious. Here are some more positive reactions:



Canada A trans woman has started posting pictures of herself in the 'gents' – to highlight a law that bans her from using the ladies'. 9th March



23-year-old Canadian woman Brae Carnes took to social media to protest, after a bill that would have protected the rights of trans women was altered to exclude "sex-specific" facilities like bathrooms. Conservative Senator Donald Plett amended bill C-279, claiming it "allows for paedophiles to take advantage of legislation that we have in place".

Ms Carnes has not taken the move lying down, however, and has posted a number of pictures next to urinals, calling out the politician. She explained: "I'm giving them what they want. I'm actively showing them what it would look like if that became law and how completely ridiculous it is. It's just not right. As a trans woman I'm not even safe from discrimination at the pub. What's going to happen if I'm forced into a men's room? I think [Plett's amendment] is actually giving predators a chance and an opportunity. People think, 'Why's this girl in the washroom? She must be looking for a guy'."

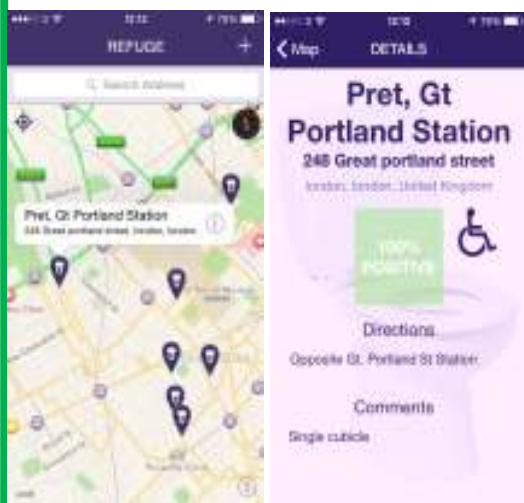
UK: Transgender man thrown out of nightclub toilet wins out-of-court settlement 10th March 2015

Kay Browning, 24, was removed from a men's toilet in Remedies nightclub, Tiverton, Devon, around nine months ago. Mr Browning, who was out celebrating a friend's birthday at the time, was asked to use a disabled toilet instead. The 24-year-old subsequently launched legal action against the nightclub. The Western Morning News reports Mr Browning and Remedies have now reached an out-of-court settlement of £1,500. As part of the agreement, Mr Browning can use the male toilets at the venue any time he pleases.

Mr Browning said of his ordeal: "It's offensive on many levels. It ruined my night so I left without saying goodbye to my friends. I am constantly judged because I am transgender. Enough is enough. I hope I've made a stand for trans culture. I would have been much happier if this sort of thing didn't happen in the first place but I'm relieved it's all been settled professionally."

Alec Carter, director of Greendale Leisure Ltd, said: "Remedies Tiverton is operated by a great team and with the training they have received and listening to our customers they are better place than ever to provide a safe enjoyable venue for all. I am pleased that past matters have been resolved and I wish Kay every success and happiness in the future."

An iPhone app has been created to provide a network of toilets where transgender, intersex and gender nonconforming individuals are free to pee in peace. 9th March 2015



New location-based app Refuge Restrooms aims to solve the problem – by creating a network of toilets where trans people can feel safe peeing without judgement. The app, which has launched this month on iPhone and Android, allows members of the public and business owners to mark unisex and gendered toilets that are accessible to trans people. It then acts partly like a Grindr for toilets – allowing trans people to see the nearest toilets to them that have been marked as safe to use.

Business owners can also download signs through the app, which make clear that trans people are welcome in their toilets.

The app makers state: "One of the biggest battlefields upon which the fight for transgender rights is taking place daily are restrooms. It seems that every other week a transgender child is made the centre of a national news story because they used the restroom assigned to the gender they identify with. Obviously, we believe that every transgender person should have the right to use the restroom they want to. However, we also realize that despite legislative victories in recent years

regarding restroom usage, many transgender individuals still face both verbal and physical harassment simply for using the restroom. Nobody should have to face that – and that is why we created REFUGE."

"Users can search for restrooms by proximity to a search location, add new restroom listings, as well as comment and rate existing listings. We seek to create a community focused not only on finding existing safe restroom access but also looking forward and participating in restroom advocacy for transgender, intersex, and gender nonconforming folk."

The app is already proving popular, with toilets added by users in a number of major cities, including London, it seems..

The Nepalese government is to issue passports with a third gender option for citizens who do not identify as male or female. 7th January 2015

The country joins neighbour India as one of the few countries that allow for a gender other than male or female to be listed in identity documents. Australia and New Zealand also allow people to be listed as "x" in their passports.

Chief of the passport department, Lok Bahadur Thapa, told Reuters: "We have changed the passport regulations and will add a third category of gender for those people who do not want to be identified as male or female."

Homosexuality was legalised in Nepal in 2007 and it looks to be progressing towards greater rights for sexual minorities as the country prepares its first constitution since the end of the monarchy in 2008. Activists say that discrimination against LGBT people is still widespread, but hope that this move will be a positive step forward.



Life for transgender people after Nepal's earthquake 25th May 2015

Maude Froberg, IFRC, Kathmandu



Last month's earthquake brought new problems for Nepal's LGBTI community— even finding a safe place to shelter was more difficult for them. In January, Nepal's government had announced citizens could identify as a third gender on their passports. But in the temporary camps set up across Kathmandu for earthquake survivors, facilities are segregated into male and female – excluding third gender people. They can even struggle to access toilets. 'The Blue Diamond Society' supports and campaigns for LGBTI Nepalis, and has been given vital help by the Red Cross. Many third gender and LGBTI people slept under a Blue Diamond Society banner for security and identification. The Red Cross gave tarpaulins, blankets and oral dehydration sachets. Tara Bhattarai, head of the Nepal Red Cross Society's gender and inclusion department, says, "It's our duty to support this vulnerable group. Many transgender people don't get help from their families and are left to fend for themselves, even in times like this." Under Tara's guidance, the Red Cross is working more closely with the Blue Diamond Society. In fact, the Red Cross is now raising awareness of minority groups among its staff and volunteers across the country. This weekend, the society should have been busy preparing for the international day against homophobia and transphobia – a chance to focus on the rights of the LGBTI people. But with the country shattered, events and celebrations in Nepal have been cancelled. Millions of people still urgently need basics such as shelter, food and medicine. Jessica Letch is a gender and protection advisor for the million Red Cross emergency earthquake operation in Nepal. She is determined that help will reach the most vulnerable – including women, children, people with disabilities and LGBTI people. She says: "The Red Cross wants to respond to the diverse needs that exist within society, and avoid a one-size-fits-all approach. It takes a little bit of a change in thinking, and the Red Cross wants to be part of that change."

You can donate to the [Nepal Earthquake Appeal](#) via the Red Cross.



Words from the wise



1. Do not walk behind me, for I may not lead. Do not walk ahead of me, for I may not follow. Do not walk beside me for the path is narrow. In fact, just go away and leave me alone.
2. Sex is like air. It's not that important unless you aren't getting any.
3. No one is listening until you pass wind.
4. Always remember you're unique. Just like everyone else.
5. Never test the depth of the water with both feet.
6. If you think nobody cares whether you're alive or dead, try missing a couple of mortgage payments.
7. Before you criticize someone, you should walk a mile in their shoes. That way, when you criticize them, you're a mile away and you have their shoes.
8. If at first you don't succeed, skydiving is not for you.
9. Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day. Teach him how to fish, and he will sit in a boat and drink beer all day.
10. If you lend someone £20 and never see that person again, it was probably well worth it.
11. If you tell the truth, you don't have to remember anything.
12. Some days you are the dog, some days you are the tree

"When my husband and I arrived at a car dealer to pick up our car, we were told the keys had been locked in it. We went to the service department and found a mechanic working feverishly to unlock the driver's side door. As I watched from the passenger side, I instinctively tried the door handle and discovered that it was unlocked. 'Hey,' I announced to the technician, 'it's open!' His reply, 'I know - I already done that side.'"

Men: if you ever wanna know what a woman's mind feels like, imagine a browser with 2,857 tabs open.
All.The.Time.

