

Who are we now? An Overview of the U.S. Grail in 2019

Spiritually Diverse

- Our spiritual diversity is beautifully rich, but also challenges us to have a Spiritual Core that is central to all members.

Geographically dispersed

- U.S. Grail members are scattered across the country, living in 26 different states and 8 countries, many thousands of miles apart. Concentrations exist in New York, Ohio, and California.

Aging

- U.S. Grail members have aged over the years, so that now our 193 members include 67% over the age of 70 and 85% over the age of 60.
- Of our 193 members, 57 members have chosen Emerita status. Active U.S. Grail members are currently only 136 women.

Engaged—primarily individually

- In the U.S., Grail women live in their own homes, not in Grail communities, and carry out their justice work individually or in small groups.
- We continue to work individually and in small groups against a political climate that savages immigrants, threatens war, ignores the threat and cause of Climate Change, incarcerates brown and black persons at alarming rates, and perpetuates gun violence with lax policies.
- In September a national gathering addressed issues of racism in our country and guided us how to be anti-racist as individuals and as an organization.
- A weekly conference call study of Laudato Si connects some members across the miles.
- Groups meet regularly (usually monthly) in places where there is a concentration of members to share on topics of their choosing.
- When called upon, groups gather locally or regionally to respond to consultative queries and documents from the national and the international.
- U.S. Grail members are active in the work of the Grail Link to the United Nations, most notably the Commission on the Status of Women and the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.
- Our Executive Director and staff carry out activities in Loveland at the site of our National Office, and on 73 acres there to engage the larger community in the Sustainable Development Goals.
- A survey of membership in 2018 (with 58 responses) indicated justice work on all 17 Sustainable Development Goals.
- Our relationships as sisters on a journey together continues to be of paramount importance to each and all.
- We are strengthened by our cherished relationships with Grail women in other countries and energized by working in solidarity for a world with peace and justice.

Shifting Capacity

- The Grail Centers that have supported the mission so well in the past have become difficult to maintain in the current world and we have sought ways to responsibly divest of property that we have not been able to use fully. This has been a difficult process that has created divisions in spite of efforts to be caring and thoughtful as we face these losses.
- In the last year, 12 Grail women have gone to their heavenly home. In the past ten years, we have lost 47 Grail women who joined the “communion of saints.” The diminishing of our sisterhood is a difficult reality to face.
- In this time of dwindling capacity, we must acknowledge that we are in a difficult time of transition from what has been. We are called to listen for what is longing to come.

Our Future

- At our General Assembly in 2017, “Affinity groups” formed and two resolutions were set to guide us forward: to be antiracist and to affirm the centrality of our spiritual core.
- The National Council chooses to be consciously anti-racist, to engage internationally for the rights of women and girls, to approach our work from a spiritual core and to make space for the future generation to shape the future.
- The National Council set **two strategic intents: One is to be attentive to the needs of our community as it is**, faithful to itself **in this part of our organizational life-cycle**. **The second is to look to the needs of a new generation of Grail members who are our future.** Primarily we acknowledge two parallel tracks.
 - **On one track**, our task is to attend to our needs in our community as it is and to shepherd our way through this moment in time in our organizational life-cycle with all of the grace and dignity we can call on.

We realize that we are in a similar position with many men and women in religious orders, religious communities, congregations in churches, synagogues, meeting houses and retreat centers.

- **On a second track**, the task is rebirthing/ midwifery.
 - While we do want to put our resources toward values that we feel are integral to the core of Grail, how those values are manifested within a movement of women in the future can only be defined by them.
 - We realize that the old models no longer work. We loved them and acknowledge how very difficult it is to let them go. At the same time we are filled with hope for the promise that lies ahead.
- From this track, the Young Women’s Initiative was born.
 - This Young Women’s Initiative has been formed and supported to meet together and discern their passions for a way forward.
 - They are committed to Grail values articulated at the 2017 General Assembly.
 - This group of six young women of diverse races has resolved:

- to be consciously anti-racist and anti-oppressive from inception,
- to engage internationally for the rights of women and girls,
- to approach their work from a spiritual core that honors inter-spirituality in a changing religious landscape,
- and to work on behalf of the future generation to shape the future.

Centers

- Centers belonged to an era when there were many within the Grail who dedicated their lives to the work of the Grail.
 - These women and others equally dedicated, continue to support the Grail, as without their bequests upon their deaths, we would have been looking at the viability of continuing to hold property long ago.
- Many years ago the Grail looked at the practice of paying subsistence salaries. We looked at how to best accommodate employees for their work and the viability of subsistence pay in these times
 - We realized that it is a matter of justice to pay women a living wage and made the decision to go forward with just wages.
 - Many years ago we also put in place a Health and Welfare Fund to help all those women who lived on subsistence in the Grail meet their expenses in their post-career lives.
 - Since that time we put into place a minimum wage of \$15.00 / hour for any of our paid workers. (The minimum wage in Ohio is \$8.55.)
- It takes hundreds of thousands of dollars annually to cover the costs of managing and maintaining these very large properties.
- As well, we are no longer able to use them to the capacity that they once were and could be again—by others with the capacity to make their vision a reality.
- The bottom line is that we can no longer sustain centers.