C R O S S R O A D S

A Newsletter of the Grail International Leadership Team

June 2015

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Letter from the ILT

Dear All around the world,

We have tried to keep you updated through monthly Newsletters on international activity of the Grail and the work of the ILT, including travels to international meetings and country visits, preparations for the International Council meeting, and meetings with working groups and Networks prior to the IC meeting in **Australia**.

But life flows faster than our ability to report.

CSW 59 (the annual meeting of the UN Commission on the Status of Women) was widely reported in the March and April ILT Newsletters. Maria Carlos was there and can testify to the fantastic work done by the Grail Link to the UN Network. Congratulations to all. They have strategically tapped this UN event to create in **New York City** an international context for informal formation, as well as an intergenerational and international Grail meeting. At the same time, CSW provides a space to network with other organizations and makes known the Grail's work in various countries.

Maria Carlos visited **Mexico**, as you read in the Newsletter from May. Then she participated in the National Assembly of the Grail in Belo Horizonte, **Brazil**, where she attended the evaluation of work undertaken in 2014, including the very positive assessment of the work done for the financial sustainability of the Grail Centre and some other projects. From Belo Horizonte, Maria Carlos and Cristina dos Anjos went to Asuncion, **Paraguay**, where a small group of women are in process of exploring the Grail. In Paraguay, there were two days of formation for them.

Zodwa has been in Kisekibaha, **Tanzania**, for the African Regional Meeting. Representatives from Kenya, Mozambique, Uganda, South Africa and Tanzania were present. It was a meeting where they reviewed the implementation of plans made in 2013 in Uganda, and where they made plans together for the future, including exchanges, training, finance and fundraising, and communication. On her way back, Zodwa Passed through Kisumu in Kenya.

Lately, the three of us have been drowning in papers and meetings. Maria Carlos has been in **Germany** for meetings of the Blessing the Space Team and the International Nucleus Team. Marian is in Utrecht for a meeting of the International Formation Team. Then all three of us ILT members will gather in the **Netherlands** to participate in the mini-Forum of the coordinators of Global Networks before meeting ourselves to work on plans for Australia.

We are drawing close to the start of the IC meeting! We want to have everything ready and well prepared.

Hoping the Spirit will blow among us all, and make of the Grail a current of women, Prophets of Hope.

Marian, Zodwa* and *Maria Carlos

From the Editor *Carol Siemering, USA*

For this Crossroads we sent a request to the countries to share with us what is going on its Grail community. We have all these marvelous articles. What a movement! What a community we are so privileged to be a part of! Thank you all for your sharing.

News from Australia, *Patricia Gemmell and Anne Marie George*

What's happening in Australia? By *Patricia Gemmell*

In **Sydney**, we run regular reflection mornings, well attended and a good means of outreach. Last year we reflected on women mystics, this year on aspects of Benedictine spirituality. Another regular and ongoing project is the Training for Transformation group, which has been meeting for several years now. A recent new initiative has been the Prison Journal project which came out of a seminar led by Sydney Grail member and prison chaplain, Elizabeth Lee. She shared stories of inmates whom she had come to know and told us that writing material was one of the commonest requests she received. So the idea of a personal journal for inmates was born. Inspired by a similar project by Joan Chittister, where for every journal sold on 'the outside', one would be given to a person on 'the inside', a working group set about collecting inspirational photographs and quotations for the journal. A year later, 2000 journals were printed -- 1000 to sell, 1000 to donate. They were all sold and now a second version of the journal is in design phase, due for release later this year.

In **Melbourne** there is a weekly *lectio divina* group which started last year and is continuing in 2015. Participants are a dedicated group of between 5-8 active Grail members with the intention of expanding this year. The group hopes to initiate some seminars open to a wider audience as well as some other outreach programmes and are looking forward to hosting some IC visitors later this year.

In **Brisbane**, the group has taken on the Days for Girls project which provides washable feminine hygiene kits to girls & women who would otherwise go without. Their DfG kit enables them to not miss valuable days from their education or employment. This description inspired Brisbane Grail members to contribute to this programme and in particular to assist Margaret Hounslow, who wanted DfG kits to take to Ethiopia.

Brisbane Grail members so far have provided approximately 30 kits for Ethiopia in 2014 and 50 in 2015. Grail members have also taken kits to Papua New Guinea, the Formation Meeting in Portugal and the Australian National Assembly in 2014. Some kits will go to the Sacred Activism programme in the USA in July and the International Council Meeting in Sydney in 2015. The Brisbane and Australian National Grail provided a small amount of funding to begin this programme. Brisbane Grail members still take an active role in the project as packers, liaison with Margaret and assistance with fund raising.

Interfaith dialogue is another Brisbane Grail activity. This has recently involved a visit to a mosque, including a talk and questions, a Buddhist day of meditation and mindfulness, a visit to a Sikh temple, and a talk on Sikh spirituality given by two women from the Sikh community.

"Democracy. Let's Do It. For A Change." One day workshop in Sydney by *Anne Marie George*

The Grail in Sydney ran a one-day workshop in May this year titled The idea emerged from a Grail meeting last year where conversation turned to the recently proposed federal government budget measures. Despite the government's rhetoric of 'fairness', the proposals appeared to manifest the opposite with radical changes to

the education and healthcare sectors which would disadvantage low to middle income earners. How could this happen? Which sectors had been consulted when putting this together? Was this how 'government of the people, by the people, for the people' was meant to operate? So there was a galvanizing issue around which to gather to probe the question of what a good democracy required of its citizens – clearly we couldn't leave the business of creating an equitable and harmonious society solely to the government!

We had over 25 attendees, of which around half were Grail. At the workshop, four panelists* with experience in citizen engagement and/or a passion for change, presented a range of fresh ideas. **The New Democracy Foundation** (nDF) are running trials using citizen juries at the municipal policy level at a number of sites in Australia. The results so far demonstrate that ordinary citizens, when invited to deliberate on matters which affect them, do so enthusiastically and effectively. nDF continue to research new democratic innovations – one day we could see politicians selected by lottery! **Sydney Alliance** work to strengthen civil society through developing community leaders and forming alliances between civic groups in society, for the purpose of working together for a common cause. This community-organizing work and training model is influenced by that of American activist Saul Alinsky and the Industrial Areas Foundation which he founded in 1940. **Pace E Bene** work to change society through non-violent direct action and have recently been staging 'pray-ins' at ministers' offices to protest Australia's asylum seeker policy. **Fairfax Press**, who publish the major daily papers in Sydney and Melbourne were represented on the panel by a young journalist who is grappling with the challenges of trying to report the truth - challenges which include lack of access to politicians who favour the rival Murdoch publications.

The discussions and questions could have gone on for much longer – a good sign that the issue of increasing citizen engagement in a democracy, in society, is full of potential. Participants noted that there is also widespread apathy and the very real problem of lack of time to engage. What was conveyed by the panelists was that passion for change paired with method and persistence, can yield results. A very encouraging message.

*Samara Barchet, **Sydney Alliance**, http://www.sydneyalliance.org.au/
Gareth Hutchens, **Fairfax Press**, www.smh.com.au
Nivek Thompson, **The New Democracy Foundation**, http://newdemocracy.com.au/
Justin Whelan, **Pace e Bene**, http://www.paceebene.org.au/

From the Grail in Brazil, *Maria de Jesus de Matos Ribeiro*

Centro Do Graal no Brasil – Uma experiência em busca de sustentabilidade

A Casa do Graal no Brasil, localizada em Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais, desde a década de 1990, sedia o Secretariado Nacional e o Projeto Centro da Mulher. Com incremento de projetos e ações sociais, refletiu o uso do espaço em consonância com os objetivos institucionais e missão do movimento.

O cumprimento da função social e os desafios inerentes ao desejo do coletivo em tornar o espaço do Graal cada vez mais acessível para outros grupos populares, bem como a necessidade de busca de estratégias para a sustentabilidade econômica do Centro do Graal, deram origem a algumas experiências de gestão.

Neste sentido, em 1998 instalou-se um **Pensionato Feminino** para Estudantes do interior do Estado. Os salões, a cozinha e os equipamentos foram disponibilizados para os grupos populares a preço solidário.

Em 2001, com outra experiência de gestão, a casa passou a receber um público diversificado: pessoas vinham à capital para trabalho, para estudo, tratamento de saúde, grupos institucionais e grupos populares.

Diante dessas experiências e os desafios apresentados com vistas à sustentabilidade econômica, percebeu-se a demanda de se investir em formação em gestão para implementação de um modelo ao Empreendimento que fosse condizente com os princípios do Graal.

Foi realizado um Estudo de Viabilidade Econômica em uma construção coletiva e orientado pela CAPINA (COOPERAÇÂO E APOIO A PROJETOS DE INSPIRAÇÂO ALTERNATIVA). Essa Associação trabalha na perspectiva de Viabilidade Econômica e Gestão Democrática de Empreendimentos Associativos. Com isso aperfeiçoa-se o Empreendimento Hospedagem que hoje já alcançou o ponto de Equilíbrio e caminha em busca de efetiva sustentabilidade.

Além da sustentabilidade econômica financeira, o Empreendimento tem pautado sempre pelo uso consciente dos recursos naturais, do tratamento do lixo e da própria relação com o espaço físico enquanto espaço disponível e comunitário.

Neste contexto o Empreendimento conta com uma horta com plantas medicinais. Pretende-se também instalar placas para captação de energia solar, e ainda Captação de agua pluviais para reaproveitamento.

Dentre os desafios apresentados estão as reformas na casa, elas são necessárias para melhor funcionamento e tornar o espaço físico cada vez mais confortável e acolhedor.

CAPINA - é uma Associação sem fins lucrativos.

GT SUSTENBILIDADE BH : Maria Helena Diniz, Janaina Aparecida Ribeiro Barros, Maria Beatriz Oliveira, Maria De Jesus de Mattos Ribeiro, Flávia Aparecida Silva

The Grail Centre in Brazil – an experiment in search of sustainability *(English version)*

The House of the Grail in Brazil located in Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais, since the 1990s, houses the National Secretariat and the Women's Centre Project. An increase of social projects and actions reflected the use of space in line with the institutional goals and mission of the Movement.

The fulfillment of the social function and the challenges inherent in a collective desire to make the Grail space increasingly accessible to other popular groups, as well as the need to search for strategies of economic sustainability for the Grail Centre, have resulted in some management experiments.

In this regard, in 1998 we installed a boarding school for Female Students in the state. The rooms, the kitchen and the equipment were made available for popular groups at supportive prices.

In 2001, with another management experience, the house started to receive a diverse audience: people of institutional and popular groups came to the city to work, study, also for health care.

Given these experiences and the challenges presented with a view to economic sustainability, we perceived the demand to invest in management training for implementing a model of Enterprise that would be consistent with the principles of the Grail.

An Economic Feasibility Study in a collective construction and guided by CAPINA (COOPERATION AND SUPPORT FOR PROJECTS OF ALTERNATIVE INSPIRATION). This Association works from the perspective of

economic feasibility and Democratic Management of Associative Enterprises. With this improvement the Enterprise Hosting has now reached the point of balance and is on the way in search of effective sustainability.

In addition to the economic and financial sustainability, the Enterprise has always been guided by the conscious use of natural resources, waste treatment and its own relationship with the physical space as available community space.

In this context, the Enterprise has a garden with medicinal plants. It also intends to install plates to capture solar energy and even capture rain water for reuse.

Among the presented challenges are the renovations needed in the house to better the functioning and make the physical space more comfortable and welcoming.

CAPINA - is a non-profit association.

GT SUSTENBILIDADE BH: Maria Helena Diniz, Janaina Aparecida Ribeiro Barros, Maria Beatriz Oliveira, Maria de Jesus Ribeiro de Mattos, Flavia Aparecida Silva

From the Grail members in Brussels, *Anne (Didine) Petit*

The Grail in this country works mostly with two themes: interconfessional dialogue and raising awareness of the problem of human trafficking. We share a few examples of our involvements in 2014 and 2015 with you.

Patricia Camisao e.g. works together with others organizing an annual prayer and exchange breakfast for politicians and their co-workers from 28 European countries since 2011. They participate in a private capacity. The intention is to support each other's dedication. The theme of the latest prayer was 'peace' and this was inspired by the peace prayer of Francis of Assisi (Patricia Camisao. *Interview,* November 21, 2014) (www.epbbrussels.be).

Karen King participated in a religious solidarity celebration for 'People without a voice' who are prosecuted in Syria and Iraq in the Brussels Beguinage Church on November 20, 2014. About 300 Bahá'í, Christians, Jews and Muslims, Shiites and Sunnites both, were present. Young people from Syria and Iraq were represented as well. The European parliament sent a support message. All bore witness of their faith in non-resistance and tolerance as means to stop bloodshed. A candlelight vigil followed to remember all people in need. Finally the 'Ode to Joy' (European national anthem) was sung in French, German, Arabic and Hebrew. In this song Friedrich Schiller verbalized the ideal of a world in which all people live together as brothers and sisters. (Karen King. *e-mail*, November 21, 2014). This celebration was organized amongst others by 'Religions for Peace', which was co-founded by Alberta Lücker at the end of her life (Marita Estor. *Antenna*, September 2014).

Didine Petit participates each month in and interconfessional silent meditation and an interreligious lectio divina in Antwerp. Last summer she also attended the international meeting 'Peace is the future: religions and cultures in dialogue 100 years after WW I'. The community of Sant' Egidio organized this together with Bishop Johan Bony and the city. Over 300 religious leaders of the world religions were invited to discuss, with each other and with representatives of the political, cultural and socio-economic world, the sources of conflict and the big challenges of our time. There was a special program for 2000 high school students where two former Nigerian enemies, an Imam and a Protestant Pastor, witnessed. The last one lost his right arm during a confrontation between Christians and Muslims. They reached reconciliation during a collective action for polio vaccinations in Nigeria. Gradually their mutual mistrust disappeared and they developed a deep friendship.

Now they strive together for peace and reconciliation in Nigeria and other countries. 'Best practices' of interreligious dialogue in daily life of young people in Antwerp were discussed as well on that day. The students walked a peace march in town afterwards with theme stops at a Hindu temple, a church, a mosque, a synagogue and a liberal centre (www.peaceisthefuture.be).

Robin Sclafani is the director of CEJI, a Jewish organization in Brussels which offers training and takes action against racism and discrimination. She has developed a network for training on these matters with Belieforma, involving several European Grail members. She also represents CEJI with ENAR, the European network against racism. On November 14, 2014 she participated in the steering group for the project 'Forgotten women, the influence of Islamophobia on Muslim women' which ENAR undertakes together with other European women organizations. By uniting strength they want to fortify actions against Islamophobia on a national and European level. (www.ceji.org: keep up to date, CEJI Flash, October 2014) (http://enar-eu.org/14-October-2014-Steering-group-on).

Since last year this Grail group has also made contact with organizations in Brussels and Flanders that work with victims and perpetrators of human trafficking. They organized two dinners with guest speakers and fund raising in Karen King's home to make this more known. The first speaker told on February 13th 2015 about the effort of the sisters of the Good Shepherd who have a house in the prostitution neighbourhood at the North Station in Brussels and a shelter elsewhere to support women who want to get out of prostitution. The second speaker explained the work of Payoke on April 18th. This organization in Antwerp helps victims with court cases against their human traffickers or pimps and with their reintegration in society in Belgium as well as in their home countries (Patricia Camisao, *Grail International Newsletter*, May 2015).

From the Grail in Germany, *Marita Estor and Beate Kessler*

How to cope with Islam and the Refugees by *Marita Estor*

Wuppertal is a town in North-Rhine-Westfalia with a long tradtion in handicraft and industry and internationally known because of modern dance performances by Pina Bausch and her Ballet. It is also a centre of pietistic Protestantism and since a few years of Salafism (fundamentalistic Islam). One day in March it faced demonstrations by divers socio-political groups at the same time: the right-wing Pegida (European Patriots against Islamisation of the Western World), Hooligans (soccer fanatics), the Salafists and other rightwing extremists;but also an alliance of groups and initiatives of citizens including church and political groups and other groups of people concerned gathered their membership to demonstrate. A thousand police-men were supposed to keep the different groups apart and prevent violence. However, instead of the expected 3000 rightwing demonstrators only 1000 showed up and not much happened as it did sometime ago in Cologne at a similar event.

What is going on in Germany right now, 25 years after the unification of East and West-Germany?
About 20 % of the population has a migration background, of whom about 4 Millions are Muslims; a rising number of refugees from many countries is seeking a safe place to live because of war, persecutions or poverty.

Already in 2010 Christian Wulff (President of the Federal Republic of Germany) stated: “Without doubt Christianity belongs to Germany. Judaism without doubt belongs to Germany.” This is our Christian- Jewish history. But meanwhile also Islam belongs to Germany.“ Many Germans didn't accept this fact. To speak about Germany as a country of immigration was a political taboo until two years ago when a new law began to face the political, social and cultural consequences of immigration and the needs of refugees.

Anti-Islamism is nourished by certain popular media and springs up particularly in the Eastern part of Germany, where there are hardly any muslims living. Pegida originated two years ago in Dresden, taking up the key slogan of the 1989 revolution in the former German Democratic Republic “We are the people.” And like the famous Monday Demonstrations then Pegida also organized weekly Monday-Demonstrations and gathered thousands of people up to 25.000 in January. But they had no goals, no political Agenda. They rather expressed discontent with politics, political parties and media. Sociologists tried to find out, who they were and what they stood for: the demonstrators were predominantly men, average age 48 years, educated and trained with an income slightly above avarage, 20 % being retired. Pegida was interpreted as a “symptom of crisis of the representative democracy,” expressing a desire for someone to listen to and who takes matters in hand. Only one third of them was against foreigners.

In post-war Germany there have always been right-wing groups and attempts to establish neo-nazi parties. But unlike most other European countries there never was a political leader capable to form a rightwing populist movement or party. The remembrance of the crimes committed by Nazi-Germany seems like an immunisation that keeps the virus of Xenophobia at least under control. And the suffering of the German population during World War II has led to a conversion so that the majority of Germans now is ‘deeply pacifistic.’ Nevertheless, when in the beginning of the nineties, right after the unification the number of asylum-seekers rose dramatically up to 400 000 per year it came to violence and attacks of foreigners. This led to a change of the

constitutional right to asylum for political reason for everbody who sought it. This right was granted because Jewish people persecuted by Nazi authorities in many cases didn't get asylum in other countries. For fear of foreigners and their impact on the German identity, the constitutional right to asylum was very much restricted and immigration from countries outside the EU became almost impossible.

The conflicts in Africa and the near East have led to mass migration also to Europe and particularly to Germany. This year 300.000 are expected. The reactions are quite complex. Although since this January only in Saxonia-Anhalt 19 homes for refugees were attacted, the general attitude has changed; groups of civil societies and churches have taken initiatives to assist refugees in manifold ways. In Marburg f. E. there are 40 different groups to support the refugees were translation or help in everyday situations is necessary. We do think that 300 000 refugees isn't much compared with millions in the neighboring countries of Syria. However, when refugees are recognized as asylum-seekers in Germany they are entitled to lodging, income support, educational, health and social services. Access to the labor market is of course very difficult because of the language and adequate training.

When asylum is not granted migrants have to return to their home country and refugees to the country where they have entered Europe first, mainly to Italy, Spain and Romania. In individual cases, when this would cause severe difficulties to life and security or separation of the families parishes would offer „Church-asylum“ which means that they offer to these persons space and all necessary means to stay within the church property, who then fight for their right to stay. There are about 400 church-asylum places right now. Recently also a mosque and a few Jewish synagogues have offered such asylums to muslim or jewish people in desparate situations. Later they are often granted the right to stay.

Civil society, churches and church communities as well as politics at local and federal and at the European level are challenged by this situation. The recent catastrophe of thousand of refugees who got drowned in the Mediterranian Sea because they fell into the hands of criminals with old boats that were not fit and equipped for a seafare. This alarmed the European States and the EU to change their policy.

The Grail project in Duisburg–Immendaal has been working for more than 40 years with migrants and also with refugees, very specially with women and children. Because of its commitment and experience the Project is very much recognized in Duisburg and beyond.

Living together in Duisburg-Hochfeld by *Beate Kessler*

At present more than 17,000 people live in the area of Duisburg known as Hochfeld. Eighty five percent (85%) of the children in this area of Duisburg have a migration background. At first, this sounds very intriguing and arouses inquisitivenessabout how this can possibly work.

Generally, because of mutual language, religion and traditional understanding of cultural behaviour, people from one particular culture tend to stick together.

Traditional understanding in a culture, such as are accustomed in daily life, habits, traditional clothing,

ideology, the understanding of how males and females interact, often collide with the interests and understanding of other cultures. As a consequence of adverse experience, conflicts or misunderstanding these prejudices are often generalized and exaggerated. These prejudices are passed on in the family and are cemented in the children at an early age.

It is not just the social environment that causes anxiety for the people living in the area but often also a difficult financial situation. A large proportion of the families living in Hochfeld exist below the "bread line".
This includes the migrants from the new EU countries (Bulgaria and Romania are new members in the EU since 2007) who are excluded from the German benefit system and are therefore unable to find work; or are forced to work below minimal wage. All too often they are at the mercy of unscrupulous exploiters.

Whether as a result of political or a catastrophic economic situation in their own country the refugee families from Syria, the Ukraine, the Balkan States or Africa, who seek relief in Germany, i.e. in Duisburg–Hochfeld, generally require more intensive attention and support.

Projects for women in the International Initiative Hochfeld e. V.

Social participation with families in Duisburg-Hochfeld has the not-so-easy task to improve communal life and to mediate in conflicts and misunderstandings. The main focus of the work is not to look for differences but to discover the similarities in our needs as human beings. This is the basis of our programmes for women, which include international breakfasts, cooking groups, educational groups, short excursions and cinema groups, as well as information sessions for women with or without a migration background.

The themes of the information sessions are decided collectively with the women in discussion groups. The participants, irrespective of nationality, political views and financial standing, especially the mothers, find out fairly quickly that they have similar problems and insecurities. The challenge of bringing up their children, their schooling, kindergarten, healthy nutrition, relationships, German-law, time management, women's health, work, discrimination and so on.

The requirements of all participants are always treated with sincerity. Dedicated experts are invited to information sessions to explain or answer any queries that the women may have. During the cooking and baking groups the women swap experiences as well as recipes.

To manage their daily chores the women don't usually have the time to venture outside the local area. The women often say that their own needs and requirements get pushed more and more to the back.

Often the women spend less on themselves, to be able to spend more on their children. This could mean new shoes or a school satchel with a picture of the child's favourite cartoon character; or they have other financial obligations.

Expo Milano; Italian Grail, *Gemma Di Marino*

Feeding the planet, Energy for life
"Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life" is the core theme of 2015 Milan Expo

The 2015 Milan Expo is the Universal Exhibition that Milan, Italy, will host from **May 1 to October 31, 2015.** Over this six-month period, Milan will become a global showcase where more than **140 participating countries** will show off the best of their technology to concretely answer a vital need: being able to guarantee healthy, safe and sufficient food for everyone, while respecting the Planet and its equilibrium. The 2015 Milan Expo will provide an opportunity to reflect upon, and seek solutions to, the contradictions of our world.

On the one hand, there are still approximately 870 million people who were undernourished in the period 2010-2012. On the other, there are those who die from aliments linked to poor nutrition or too much food (approximately 2.8 million deaths from diseased related to obesity or to being overweight in the same period). In addition, about 1.3 billion tons of foods is wasted every years. For these reasons, we need to make conscious political choices, develop sustainable lifestyles and use better technology to create a balance between the availability and consumption of resources.

For the first time in the history of the Universal Expositions, this major international event was preceded by a broad debate on the Expo theme *Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life* involving the scientific community, civil society organizations and various institutions. At the request of the Italian Government this intense and thorough process has led to the drafting of the Charter of Milan: a participatory and shared document that calls on every citizen, association, company and institution to assume their responsibility in ensuring that future generations can enjoy the right to food.

The Charter of Milan will address four major issues, all within the context of the right food:

- What economic and production models can ensure sustainable development in economic and social areas?
- Which of the different types of existing agriculture are able to produce sufficient quantities of healthy food without damaging water resources and biodiversity?
- What are the best practices and technologies to reduce inequalities within cities, where the majority of the human population is concentrate?
- How can we think about food not only as a more source of nutrition, but also as something that provides a socio-cultural identity?

Individual, associations, and companies who sign the Charter of Milan take on specific responsibilities. Their activities must be have actionable goals that create awareness, and it strongly urges governments and international institutions to adopt rules and policies at both a national and global level that ensure a fairer and more sustainable future for the planet.

As we well know, we women are generators of life and since the beginning of time know what it means to provide nourishment, starting whit breast-feeding: women make food, and when we talk about food we talk about the body, toil, hands and care. Each of us is a depository of practices, knowledge, traditions connected to food and the capacity to nourish and nourished, to not only take care of ourselves but of others. All this is at the centre of our female culture. Using this as the starting point, the occasion of the 2015 Milan Expo has stimulated us to reflect on this theme and the team within the Italian that follows "The group of immigrant women (from Latin America, the Philippines, Ukraine, Burundi/Congo, German, and some Italians)".

There are about 20 women, who since November 2014 have been meeting once month to share and discuss their various cultural experiences related to food in their country of origin.

In each meeting, one of the following aspects related to the food theme is discussed:

- To nourish, take care of, and love
- Intercultural exchange: Life on a plate
- Food and the global economy: two female protagonists: Wangari Mathai, Wandana Schiva
- Eating well to live well: with a discussion by 3 female dieticians

At the end of each meeting, in the little kitchen of our Grail centre, the ethnic food of one woman's home country is prepared and we eat together (e.g. African chicken, Filipina spaghetti). At the end of this meeting, the recipes of the prepared food are collected.

We also visited a zone in the city of Milan with the women in the group and plan to go to the stands of the 2015 Milan Expo together as well.

Slowing down and looking back to move forward, The Netherlands, *Ine van Emmerik*

There is a lot going on in the Grail in the Netherlands. Writing this article reminds me of an image that Paula Larsen once depicted of the Dutch Grail as an old tree with many branches getting new shoots. She did that in an interview in Dangerously Modern. This is my story about some recent new shoots of the old tree.

One was the initiative of Elly Konig to organize a three meditative program with the Ignation method for all women of the Grail. Those days brought a renewed and deepened connection to the Grail spirit and to each other.

Another one was a new project. We decided that we needed to describe a new piece of Dutch Grail history, the second/third generation, from 1940-1980. Now there are still many women alive who can tell their stories. And secondly it can give us inspiration for new developments in the Grail. This project follows two tracks, in two styles of historic research. The first one is "the big story". The historian who wrote a PhD thesis about the early

years of the Grail, Marjet Derks, was assigned to research on the period between 40-80. Both Marjet and her colleague Annelies van Heijst are teaching at the University of Nijmegen, where the archive of the Grail is kept. Gezien v.d. Leest and I coordinate this project. The content of the work is discussed with a sounding board (Ton Brouwer, Josette Kersters, An van Tol). Marjet en Annelies are working on the final text which is to be presented during the annual meeting, November this year. It is a pleasure to work on this project. It paints the big picture of a lively and crucial stage in Dutch (and international) Grail history. For the second track, the personal stories, we started Kitchen Table conversations. There have been seven, so far. Each time, Gezien and I invite one woman to tell her personal story about her life in the Grail. She sits at the head of the table like a storyteller. Gezien is chairing the whole program of the day. My role as 'interviewer' is being supportive to this storytelling, by brief questions and remarks. I am also taking care that the others really listen, because it is tempting to immediately react to what you are hearing. The richness of the gift of listening can never be underestimated. This personal story lasts about an hour and a half. After that there are some moments of silence, to contemplate what is heard and to formulate questions. Those questions lead to a lively conversation. The second part of the program gives room to all sorts of subjects, varying from a mystery object to the presentation of a personal project. Those days are very much appreciated by everyone who is present because they are pleasant and inspiring and you get to know each other much better than you thought that you already did. There is the main current of the Grail history, but in that current each personal story is unique. They are honest stories, there is room for pleasure and pain. These Kitchen Table conversations are precious. Listening to the unique stories is deepening our common connection to the Grail vision.

And the story goes on. One and a half year ago, during our annual meeting of 2013, we decided that we wanted to stop the constant questioning whether there is a future for the Dutch Grail. Well, at least, to stop that for the coming seven years…. During those years, we will start new projects and invest in the future. Hilde Debacker, who is our national secretary/contact person, is coordinating new Grail-programs in our center in Utrecht, for instance a symposium on Multiple Religious Belongings. Gezien v.d. Leest is coordinating the care that is needed for our (older) Grail members. I am facilitating a process of inner reflection were we are digging up which "powerwords" describe the essence of the Grail in this day and time. Hopefully they will guide us to the future. Besides that the Grail sponsors me to be trailblazer for a platform of practitioners and researchers initiated by the Utrecht University of Humanistic on engaged pluralism. I would love to tell more about this project in a following Crossroads.

Graal-Moçambique, alargando espaços e formas de actuação, *Sara Jona*

Quando em 1997 fomos desafiadas pela Maria Carlos a abrir um espaço de diálogo público no nosso centro, em Maputo, nada nos fazia adivinhar o impacto e a projecção sócio cultural que isso teria na nossa sociedade.

A ideia do nome: "Conversas de Sexta", que dava indícios de algo pouco formal e que, nem sequer, carecia de um espaço próprio para ter lugar gerou cepticismo sobre o assunto, dado que para muitos, uma conversa poderia acontecer a qualquer momento, em qualquer lugar! Pior ainda, numa sexta-feira? Dia no qual as pessoas precisavam de descansar, relaxar e desenvolver uma actividade pouco intelectual?! Espantou a muitos, mas não, as dúvidas não vincaram.

Independentemente daquele nome, daquele dia de semana, decidimos "remar contra a maré", juntámos pessoas, reunimo-las no nosso espaço e convidámos peritos de diferentes áreas de saber, para dissertarem informalmente sobre assuntos que nos interessavam. Começavam eles por abordar um tema por nós escolhido, após o qual todos dialogávamos. Quer dizer que como que "a brincar, a brincar"… fomos aprendendo a estar atentas/os ao nosso país, aos problemas que nos assolavam, a assumir uma postura perante eles e sobretudo a intervir publicamente e com responsabilidade.

Não tínhamos grandes pretensões de resolver problemas, mas estar alerta à eles, conhecê-los e através dos nossos oradores/orientadores, construíamos ideias sobre como actuar nos pequenos espaços por onde passamos, ficávamos, vivíamos, estudávamos ou trabalhávamos. E só o facto de cada um de nós ter começado a mudar o seu comportamento, observámos que, afinal, aquelas conversas, que aparentemente não pressupunham propostas de solução, já eram uma solução, considerando o nosso modo de agir e de estar na sociedade.

Tornámo-nos pessoas diferentes, muitas vezes contactadas para intervir em muitas frentes da nossa sociedade. Tornámo-nos referência! As escolas, as igrejas, os pais e muitos dos nossos amigos tomavam-nos como leme para a abordagem de alguns assuntos sócio-culturais e tem sido assim, desde aquela altura, até os dias que correm.

Hoje vemos, na comunicação social, debates a multiplicarem-se. Diálogos que, como os nossos ajudam a termos uma sociedade melhor, mais crítica e mais interventiva relativamente ao contexto que vive. Somos cidadãs/os mais expeditas/os! Denunciamos, prevenimos e temos opinião sobre as coisas. Já não aceitamos o que há, o *status quo*, intervimos e influenciamos na tomada de decisão no que toca ao funcionamento do nosso país, porém, isso é apenas um fenómeno que tem lugar nas cidades. Nas zonas rurais e suburbanas, havendo ou não conhecimento ou desejo, as populações não têm estes centros de discussão com possibilidade ou de mudarem os seus destinos … têm que consentir ou conformar-se com o que houver.

As cidades têm outras dinâmicas! Umas formais e outras não, mas facilmente criam lugares para a tomada de consciência sobre os momentos que atravessam e até projectam o futuro. É lá onde funcionam a maior parte das universidades! Onde existem os grandes centros do saber e de construção de pensamento.

Alguns exemplos resultantes das "Conversas de Sexta" têm a ver com a nossa postura perante o cuidado com o lixo: como o armazenar, onde, periodicidade de o recolher nas cidades. Em tempos passados o lixo espalhado

pelos contentores distribuídos pela cidade pareciam fazer parte do seu panorama. Além disso, hoje, estamos cientes e cuidamos para que as pessoas votem com responsabilidade de mudar alguma coisa na vida do seu país. Conhecemos, claramente, o impacto de um voto em branco ou de um voto nulo ou de não comparecer à mesa de voto. Sabemos a diferença que isso faz e a importância de escolher-se ou não por essa via. Por outro lado, quando há um corte de energia, o que com alguma frequência acontece, fazemos questão de procurar os órgãos competentes para a solução desse problema, não nos resignamos, tal como o fazíamos antes! Estamos cientes de que temos deveres e responsabilidades na nossa cidade. Já não encaramos o nosso governo como o "pai" que deve ficar atento às necessidades dos seus "filhos" e decidir como e quando as resolver… também nos impomos e escolhemos os nossos destinos! Não tem sido fácil, mas aos poucos temos conseguido! Não sofremos caladas/os!

Em vários desses encontros participou um padre Jesuíta, o Padre Manuel Ferreira, quem não só se identificava com a iniciativa, como incentivava os seus alunos a participarem, assim como também sugeria temas para debate. Este padre passou, com o tempo, a funcionar também como um guia espiritual para o nosso grupo. Porém, depois teve que regressar para a Beira, uma cidade que dista a cerca de 1200 de Maputo, onde sempre trabalhou.

Nessa cidade, uma das suas actividades tem sido a orientação espiritual de grupos de jovens homens e mulheres, incluindo a leccionação da Bíblia. Mas viu a necessidade de orientar este último para contactar o Graal em Maputo, a fim de analisarem que actividades poderiam desenvolver em conjunto. Uma vez que tínhamos a responsabilidade de atingir ou abraçar outras mulheres para se juntarem ao nosso movimento, através da Ábida e da Ida, direccionámos as nossas atenções para esse grupo…um presente de Deus!

Nos primeiros encontros participaram 13 jovens com idades compreendidas entre 16 e 31 anos. Depois dessas sessões, que datam de Outubro de 2013, algumas dessas jovens, foram convidadas a irem aos encontros anuais realizados pelo grupo do Graal em Maputo. Paralelamente a isso foi decorrendo um processo de formação nos quais foi apresentada a "lenda do Graal", a história do Graal como movimento internacional de mulheres cristãs, a sua missão, os seus símbolos e sua visão.

Hoje o grupo é constituído por cerca de 25 universitárias, muito interessadas em alimentar o seu espírito, através do trabalho que têm desenvolvido com o padre Ferreira, mas também sedentas de alargar os seus horizontes na sua participação como cidadãs moçambicanas realizando as mesmas actividades que têm vindo a assistir no Graal em Maputo. Elas iniciaram, em 2014, a realização de "Conversas de Sexta", no mesmo formato que em Maputo. Para além desta actividade têm mantido, entre si e com o poio do Graal em Maputo, encontros com o intuito de pertencerem ao movimento internacional do Graal.

The Grail-Mozambique, widening spaces and the span of our activities (English version)

Back in 1997, when Maria Carlos challenged us to open a space of public dialogue in our Centre, in Maputo, nothing could have made us foresee the sociocultural impact and projection that it would have in our society.

The idea of the name: "*Conversas de Sexta*" ("*Friday Chats*"), that suggested something not so formal and that not even required a specific space to take place, generated scepticism about the initiative given that for many, a chat could happen at any moment, at any place! Worse still, it was to take place on a Friday?! Day on which

people need to rest, relax and carry out a less intellectual activity?! Many were flabbergasted. However, no, the doubts did not supersede the initiative.

Regardless of that designation, on that day of the week, we decided to "go against the tide"; we gathered people in our space and we invited experts from several fields of knowledge to talk informally about subjects of our interest. On those sessions, first, the experts addressed the theme chosen by us and, subsequently, we all dialogued. It means that as if "playing"… we were gradually learning to be alert about our country, the problems that we faced, to take a stance regarding them and, mainly, to intervene in a responsible manner and publicly.

We did not have big pretensions to solve problems, but to be aware of them, to know them. Through our speakers/facilitators, we built up ideas about how to act in the small spaces we went to, stayed, lived, studied or worked. And we observed that the simple fact that each one of us had started to change her/his behaviour meant that those chats that apparently did not presuppose the provision of proposals of solutions, already were a solution, considering our way of acting and being in the society.

We became different individuals, contacted on several occasions to intervene in various fronts of our society. We became a reference! Schools, churches, parents and many of our friends considered us as important resource persons to address some sociocultural issues and it has been like that, since then, and it still is presently.

Today, we see debates multiplying in the media, dialogues that, like ours, help us to have a better society, more critical and that intervenes more with regard to the context in which it lives. As citizens, we are all more expeditious! We denounce, alert and have an opinion about the issues. We no longer accept what exists, the *status quo*, we intervene and influence in the decision-making with regard to the functioning of our country. However, this phenomenon only happens in the cities. In the rural and suburban areas, either having or not knowledge and desire to intervene, people do not have these centres of debate with the possibility of changing or not their fortunes … they have to consent to or conform to what exists.

The cities have different dynamics! Some formal, others not; but there, people easily create spaces for the raising of awareness about the moments they are living and they even project the future. It is there were the majority of the Universities are! It is there where the big centres of knowledge and construction of thought are.

Some examples of the results of the "*Friday Chats*" have to do with our posture towards handling of waste: how to store it, where, periodicity of collection in the cities. Erstwhile, rubbish strewn around bins throughout the city seemed to be part of its panorama. Moreover, today we are conscious of and make sure that people vote responsibly in order to change something in the life of their country. We know clearly the impact of a blank vote, of an invalid vote, or of not turning up at the polling station. We know the difference that it makes and the importance of resorting or not to either way. Besides, when there is a power shortage, what happens with some frequency, we make sure that we contact the competent entities to solve the problem, we do not conform to the situation as we used to before! We are aware that we have duties and responsibilities in our city. We no longer see our government as the "father" that has to be attentive to the needs of his "children" and decide how and when to attend to them … we also impose ourselves and choose our destinies! It has not been easy but we have been achieving it gradually! We do not suffer in silence!

The Jesuit Father Manuel Ferreira took part in many of those gatherings. He not only identified himself with the initiative but also motivated his students to take part in them and suggested themes for debate. With time, this Father also became a spiritual guide for our group. However, later he had to return to Beira, a city 1,200 km away from Maputo, where he had always worked.

In that city, one of his activities has been the spiritual orientation of groups of young men and women including through Bible studies. To carry on the latter he saw the need of contacting the Grail in Maputo, to see which activities they could develop together. Once we had the responsibility of outreaching other women to join our movement, through Ábida and Ida, we directed out attentions to that group…a gift from God!

The first meetings were attended by 13 young people aged 16 to 31. After those sessions that were held in October 2013, some of those young people were invited to attend the annual meetings of the Grail in Maputo. At the same time, a formation process, in which "The Grail Legend", the history of the Grail as an international movement of Christian women, its mission, symbols and vision were imparted, was carried out.

Today the group comprises about 25 undergraduates, very interested in growing spiritually through the work that they have been carrying out with Father Ferreira, but also eager to enlarge their horizons in their participation as Mozambican citizens, carrying out the same activities that they have been witnessing in the Grail in Maputo. In 2014, they started carrying out "*Conversas de Sexta*", in the same format as in Maputo. Besides this activity, and with the support of the Grail – Maputo, they have been having meetings among themselves, with the aim of being part of the international movement of the Grail.

The "*Conversas de Sexta*" has been a space and moment of public debate; being something rare in that city, they may, who knows, sustain the wish of many Mozambicans, especially of some writers and journalist from Beira, namely Adelino Timóteo, Mia Couto and Carlos Cardoso, of having a space and openness to speak freely of what one thinks. Beira has been known as a region of rebellious people, since the colonial era. Nevertheless, some voices have been silent, for freedom of expression is not yet a reality in Mozambique. The extent of participation of the public seems promising given that the number of people that go to that space of discussion has been increasing every day. However, there is still the challenge of finding speakers.

Some of these women have been part of the group that Maria Carlos has been training at Beira Diocese upon invitation of the Bishop of that region, Dom Claúdio Zuana. This formation aims at contributing for the creation of a generation of Christian women that are motivated and capable of leading local and community development processes, promoting new and creative forms of intervention and active participation in the construction of peace and democracy in local communities and churches, based on the Gospel and Social Doctrine of the Church.

Other women of this Group were integrated in the "Training for Transformation" carried out in Portuguese language and organised by the Grail in Maputo. Sally Timmel of the Grail South Africa was the main promoter of those sessions that were facilitated by Ábida, Ntombi, Ginoca and Inês Prata. The aim was to address the development of religious organisations and groups, through the formation of their community development agents, building up their leadership capacity and creating tools for them to collaborate with government bodies to improve the daily lives of the communities.

From the Grail in the Philippines, *Jeanette V. Loanzon*

Dear Grail Friends,

A joyful Easter season from the Philippines (this article was written on 10th April 2015)! With a deep sense of gratitude for your love and generosity, we would like to share with you many seeds of new life among us!

On March 28-30,2015, thanks to funds provided by the ILT, we held *Paglaum* (hope) 7 at St. Elizabeth Retreat House at Tacloban City, Leyte, Eastern Visayas. *Paglaum* is a series of young women's leadership seminars we began in April, 2008 at Lawa an, Eastern Samar. The order of Sisters of St. Francis provided us warm hospitality.

There were ten participants, six education students from the Eastern Samar State University in Guiuan, E. Samar while three preschool teachers came from Dolores, E. Samar. The tenth came from Miriam College, a graduating student who also served as a resource person on women's issues from the rights perspective. She gave a very comprehensive slide presentation on women's rights ranging from the Millennium Development Goals, the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to the Philippine Constitution.

There was a request to have livelihoods skills training by *Paglaum* 6 members with a seminar held October 2014 and a follow up on January 2015. In response, Ermie Sotillo, NLT member from Dipolog, Western Mindanao, came to do a soap making demonstration for *Paglaum* 7. She shared this skill as well for Training for Transformation workshop held in PNG in 2013.

For their plan of action realized in April-May, 2015, the Guiuan *Paglaum* 7 graduates taught soap making to 36 women from three villages. As an incentive, they will provide snacks. The Dolores *Paglaum* graduates conducted a supplementary nutrition and values formation program for 24 street children. Aside from nutritious snacks, they plan to help form positive values among the street children and ultimately encourage them to return to school. These children roam Dolores, begging or even stealing for subsistence. Often, they have been abandoned or neglected by their parents.

The *Paglaum* 7 group appreciated learning more about their relationship with the Creator through bible sharing. Aside from the *Lectio Divina*, we introduced them to *Biblio-drama*, where they need to identify with which Biblical character was portrayed in the reading. Christa Werner taught this mode to us in 2010. We chose the March 25 Annunciation feast where they could choose among the roles of Mary, the Angel Gabriel and the narrator. This was our opening prayer and we felt it seemed appropriate to communicate that the Grail is a movement focused on women's role in society and spiritual search.

Upon my return to Manila, a faculty colleague from Miriam College, the present Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, volunteered without any prodding to teach livelihood skills using arts and crafts. We had some conversations in the past about the E. Visayas project. Hence, a follow up for *Paglaum* 7 seems so providential, with a tentative title, "Arts in Bridging the Search for more Life".

From the Grail in Portugal, *Lidia Martins*

Terraço em Diálogo

Terraço em Diálogo brought around a series of debates to the Grail Centre in Lisbon, Terraço. This initiative reinforced Terraço as an open space, that welcomes and that has been blessed, for more than 30 years, with the presence of many and by the will for sharing, the search for a collective consciousness and by the way of acting towards the construction of a fairer and happier society, in the light of the Gospel.

Usually around 6pm of the last Thursday of every month, each Terraço em Diálogo begins with the presentation of a guest speaker that then enters a conversation and is questioned by a moderator. After a break for a simple meal shared amongst all the participants, the meeting continues when the conversation is opened for everybody to have the chance to take part in the discussion.

The first Terraço em Diálogo reflected about "Finitude of the World and the Evil". The second dialogue challenged us to think about the peripheries of our time and the elderly. "Islam today" held the third dialogue, followed by a conversation around "Espinosa: a philosopher ahead of his time?" The fifth Terraço em Diálogo faced the conditions of Justice in Portugal and the 6th and 7th were both dedicated to the question "Does art transform?", bringing together the voice of two different generations of artists. Overall, these series of debates gathered around 145 people and surely revived a space open and dedicated to new themes of dialogue and reflection at the Grail Centre in Lisbon.

Entra em Ação, pela Igualdade, contra a violência no namoro (Take a stand and preventing Violence in Dating)

The project "Take a stand for Equality, Against Violence in Dating" and "Take a stand " are projects promoted by Graal, in Portugal, aiming to contribute for to the prevention and eradication of violence in dating.
The severity of the problem on violence in dating and its prevalence is worrying in Portuguese society *, as well as recognition of the significant impact in the short and long-term on the victims, were the reason of these projects, financed by European funds and government (POPH / CIG).

Over the past five years, the Graal has developed several awareness actions in residential mode in the Graal Centre at Golegã, preparing groups of boys and girls being engage with awareness of other for the problem of dating violence.

The initiatives spearheaded by young people multiplied: dozens of awareness sessions took place; flash mobs, concerts and parties against violence in dating, exhibitions, and awareness meetings open

to the community... In these initiatives were involved about 2000 young people from the district of Santarém.

During these projects were produced positioning documents, flyers, videos and two publications that are available in the Graal website, in which we share group dynamics and reflections that have been developed along this route which we make a very positive balance!

*according to a Minho University study, in 2008, 1 in every 4 young people, with ages between 13 and 29 years old, was already, at least once, victim of an abusive behaviour in their dating relationships.

GIRA| Creating Initiatives and Alternative Realities,

A project promoted by the Grail in Portugal, for the empowerment, capacity and alternative building for unemployed women. Implemented in Coimbra, between 2013 and 2014, with a local network of public and private organizations was possible to create synergies for reflection and action, in many meetings, training sessions and public events.
An informal training program with 60 hours, with 2 groups of women who share this problem but have different backgrounds, was oriented to participative citizenship and Gender Equality. It was based in the participants' reality - and their critical analysis - to search for transformative solutions for their lives and for the community.
In the end of the project, a Public Audition and a booklet of the experience "Challenges for women's (un)employment" gave voice to the participant women, institutional partners, academics and the community.

From the Grail Tanzania, *Margarita Shirima*

Writing this to share with you what we are doing, trying to live our Grail call and mission. Our call according to our Founder who founded the Grail Movement in 1921 Rev. Fr Jacques van Ginneken was "To Convert the whole world for Christ" i.e. to make it a better place of peace, love and being in solidarity with poor.

From 1970 when it was officially started at the Kisekibaha Grail Centre, the Grail Tanzania has aimed at the preparation of young women to become future Church and Community Leaders. This year in May 2015 the Grail Tanzania is 45 years old still with the same aim but with some modifications on how to prepare the young women according to the Signs of the Time.

Our Mission as Grail Women of different culture and background has mainly focused on "Women's Liberation" and in a special way the vulnerable groups. For more than 15 years now we have been working with Pastoralist Society on awareness-raising programs as well as girl child education. Raising awareness on the effects of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) on women's life and education of the girls to understand what are their true rights, and to transform what is not good in their culture such as FGM practice, early marriage etc.Most of them now are aware of FGM and early marriage effects. They see the importance of girl child education. At Kisekibaha we have a girl child education program from Nursery school to Secondary school level for those who cannot get chance in their home place to access education as the schools are very far from their home and

there are other environmental problems. This program involves 22 girls of 5-14 years old who live at the Chekechea Kisekibaha. They attend different school during the day and in the evening come back. We have girls at different level of education, Kindergarten, primary and secondary school….Photo of the girls with a Grail member who takes care of the girls.

The Grail members live with them, take care of what they eat to maintain good health and make sure they get proper education. Their parents contribute very little for food and education as some are from poor family and some they never see the value of girl's education because they want them to marry and get some cows. We thank all Grail women from different countries and Grail friends, who have given their support to make this program possible.

The aim of this program is to prepare young Masai women who will take role of leadership and become catalysts in their own society especially to help the women of their culture and tradition and to show them what is good to hold on to and what needs to be transformed among them today. It is to help women to be self-reliant, and to educate the whole society to be more co-operate in educating the girl child.

The Grail Tanzania and the society around, the church and the government are very positive as the progress shows that these aims will have good effect to the Masai women. It has been an eye opener for them all. It is the Grail mission to overcome poverty. Poverty will be overcome through education and self-reliance.

St. Elizabeth Vocational Secondary School Ggulama, Uganda *Maria Nantege*

Updates of the above school formerly known as Ggulama Social Centre.

Since the beginning of 2015, the school has incorporated in a secondary in addition to the vocation school. The current student population is 154 with a staff of 20 teachers and 5 support staff. The school is both day and boarding. So far the school is promising. Here pictured are some of the students.

The Grail in the United States, *Maureen Tate*

We appreciate the opportunity to share some of what we are experiencing within the Grail in the United States. It won't be long before we will gather to share more at the International Council meeting. For now, I offer a brief overview of our life and work.

It has been exactly one year since our last General Assembly and the time since has passed quickly as we work on follow up. A consistent theme at the GA was the need to once again focus on spiritual community and there was a strong desire among members to connect at a deeper level. We had a unique opportunity for pre GA days of reflection and education on Contemplative Dialogue and recognized its potential to further understanding and community in the Grail and as a practice we could bring to our work for transformation. A new Spirituality Committee is now up and running and is already preparing resources to deepen our appreciation of contemplative dialogue and support our spiritual deepening as a community.

One of the difficult conversations we anticipated for the GA concerned the future of our beloved national center at Grailville. Many countries have reported a decrease in members in their international reports and the US is no different in this regard. We have struggled for many years to sustain Grailville and to meet the challenge of leadership, financing program and staff, upkeep of an aging facility and responsible stewardship of the land. In preparation for the GA, a team worked to invite input on possible future scenarios for Grailville. At the GA, support was expressed from those present to: protect the Oratory and Cemetery as one of our Spiritual Home Places; protect and use our agricultural acreage for organic food production; ease out of the work of running a retreat center by June of this year; and explore Partnerships. A Grailville Future Committee was proposed, and formed, to oversee a process of requests for proposals for Grailville and to evaluate and make recommendations to the US council regarding the most beneficial and viable options for its future. This process has taken place over the last year and we are awaiting the committee's recommendations. Many members participated in generating proposals and many others were received from other entities. We appreciate the knowledge, skills, minds and hearts that our members have brought to this process. It has not been an easy road and the anxiety and concern of our members is an expression of their love and care for Grailville and its place in our future. We ask for the prayers of our Grail sisters around the world that this work may bear fruit and that we may come to a point of decision that speaks well of us, energizes us and enables us to build a more sustainable future for Grailville. So many from other countries have participated in meetings and programs at Grailville and we know you share our love of place and desire to take the best steps forward that will allow us to continue to express the Grail's mission and vision at Grailville.

In past months, our members have been energized by participation in the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). US Members of the Grail Link to the UN Network continue to participate in UN briefings and meetings to further the Grail's capacity and presence at the UN. We are excited that our Cornwall center will be hosting an international Sacred Activism program this summer from June 30-July 18. The program intends to build a cohort of engaged, younger Grail members for the future of the international work of the Grail. Participants will live in an international community of 22 women who will experience community life, explore the integration of spirituality and activism, learn how the UN works and discern the value of the Grail's work in the CSW. We look forward to welcoming women from Australia, Brazil, Mexico, Mozambique, Papua New Guinea, Portugal and South Africa. We are especially pleased to have two

participants from Ecuador, who were made aware of the program through one of our members, as well as two participants from the U.S. There is much preparation underway and many US Grail members will serve as resource persons and support team to make the program happen. We look forward to this opportunity to support and experience our international dimension.

Our Membership Development and Enrichment Team is very active and, with their encouragement and hard work, many women are being welcomed into the Grail. We have Grail circles meeting regularly throughout the country and they are a vital consultation link with our national leadership (the Council and National Director) on emerging issues. Many circles participated in the Blessing the Space Between Us Process that has resulted in meaningful reflection on commitment, as well as on the role of the Nucleus.

At the same time we have experienced the loss of too many members of our founding generation.
Our Elder Care Work Group continues to monitor the needs and care of our elders who continue to grace us with their presence, wisdom and still generous and active participation in so many aspects of our community life.

Members are engaged in mission related work that continues to be inspiring and challenging. Many are involved in earth advocacy efforts, some directly as part of the anti-fracking movement and others relating to issues of climate change, food security and threats to water quality. Others are active in sustainable agriculture. We have many involved in justice issues related to immigration, economic inequality, human rights, poverty and US military engagement. Still others are engaged in religious ministry and leadership, study and spiritual deepening. We continue to struggle to articulate mission related work that is done collectively. This is an issue we have identified for future discernment.

We look forward to ongoing opportunities to learn and support one another internationally. We see that we have mutual concerns regarding membership, commitment, mission and spirituality. We trust in the guidance of the Spirit and our genuine affection and regard for one another and the vision we have to offer our world.

In Memory of Carolyn Gratton, *Marian Ronan*

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Carolyn Gratton, Professor, author, spiritual guide, radiant friend. Born on March 5, 1930, in Toronto; died on Dec. 24, 2014, in Toronto, following several strokes, aged 84.

Carolyn Gratton, the only child of Eleanor and James Gratton, grew up in Toronto and earned a bachelor of arts in English and a master's degree in library science from the University of Toronto. A gorgeous young woman and committed Catholic, she might well have spent her life as a devoted wife and mother, or a librarian, or as a member of a vowed community of religious sisters.

But when she was 23 she visited Grailville, a farm and conference centre near Cincinnati, Ohio, and the North American headquarters of the Grail, an international Catholic laywomen's movement. Carolyn attended a summer program on women's role in society and was so fascinated by the ideas she encountered that she returned in the fall for the Grail's year-long formation program, which prepared her for deeper participation in Catholic lay leadership. Within three years, she was a member of the Grail's staff in North America and by the 1960s was leading Grail projects and programs across the United States and Canada. Wherever she went,

people fell in love with her: her radiant smile and cracker-jack sense of humour, but especially her profound spiritual wisdom, surprising in a relatively young woman.

These were years of lively intellectual ferment within Catholicism and in Western societies. To deepen her own thinking on the burning questions of the time, she earned a master's degree in theoretical anthropology in 1967. The life of academic inquiry suited her well, and Carolyn went on for a doctorate in phenomenological psychology from Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, which she completed in 1975. She then taught at Duquesne's Institute of Formative Spirituality until the early 1990s.

During her teaching years Carolyn also had a strong impact on spiritual searchers throughout the world, leading ecumenical contemplative retreats and spiritual formation programs in Canada, the United States, Thailand, the Netherlands, Australia, East Africa, and other places. She also published two books and numerous articles aimed at spiritual directors and spiritual seekers. During these years she also served as a mentor to many individuals, myself included. As a result of our conversations with her about spirituality, life choices and faith, we were never the same again.

In the early 1990s, after retiring from teaching, Carolyn moved back to Toronto. She continued to travel abroad, leading spiritual programs for the increasingly ecumenical Grail movement, and other groups. But her main focus was on building Centering Prayer groups throughout Ontario. Centering Prayer is a branch of Contemplative Outreach, a movement founded by Cistercian monk Thomas Keating to spread the practice of contemplative prayer beyond monastery walls. Thanks to her passionate leadership, there are now 45 such groups in Ontario.

Carolyn was extraordinarily gifted in relating to people of all cultures and classes. During a 2005 Grail visit to Oaxaca, Mexico, she was paired at a village meeting with a woman named Efigenia, a barely literate member of the indigenous community. Efigenia came back from their conversation glowing with pride, explaining that the two women had much in common: They were both catechists (something like a Sunday school teacher), she explained. Carolyn had not mentioned that she held a doctorate, or was a noted professor and author. Instead, she focused on what she and Efigenia had in common – the work of spiritual outreach. This was the remarkable woman whose death elicited messages and memories from people across North America and around the world. We will never forget her.

***From the editor*:** the Grail in the U.S. also mourns the loss of the following Grail members who have died recently; Penny Carr, Ruth Chisholm, Josephine Drebek, Bernice Belaire Sisson, Judith Cox, Kay King Jacob, and Maria Sanchez. If you would like to see tributes and memories of any of these that have been printed in Gumbo please search in your favorite search engine on the internet using the words *Grail* and *Gumbo.*