Grail National Meeting – October 31-November 2, 2015

We made it! We are at another bend in our Grail Journey. It's important to remember that as we travel on our evolutionary Grail journey, as we transcend and include the cycles of the past, we can't always see what's ahead. On Friday night (11/30/15), a few dozen of us gathered in the Oratory and then set off on a tour of three of our proposers: Finn Meadows Farm, Turner Farm and First Step Home before arriving at St. Anne's to settle in for the night. For some of us it was the first opportunity to put faces and live images to everything we have been reading about and studying over the last several months.

We deeply appreciate everyone – 60 people in all - who managed to pull her life together to attend the meeting. We have been working on this for a very long time. Thank you to those who worked to bring proposals to last year's GA, to those who attended the 2014 GA, to those who took on the work of the Grailville Future Committee, to the Grailville Home Place group, to everyone who participated in a circle meeting, a reflective group, who talked to one other person and those who have prayed about this meeting, this process and the decisions that need to happen. We thank Council and those from the Grailville Implementation Committee who planned the meeting and those who worked on the logistics to get us all there and fed! We also thank those who were not able to attend, but whose presence was felt. We know that there were a lot of members lighting candles and sitting with us.

This journey didn't start just two years ago, and we know that we aren't going to end 2015 with everything completely solved. However, we also know that we need to take some action. Communication via phone and emails can be difficult – we long to be face to face to have these difficult and important conversations. We know that we care deeply about each other and the Grail.

One of the many things to become apparent is the fine line between being reactive and being responsive in our communications. The meeting planning team felt great responsibility to read, hear and understand members' input; this made it challenging to plan the agenda for the meeting. We acknowledged the questions, concerns and discussions that needed clarifications and that were keeping us from moving forward. We realized that we needed to approach this meeting differently than we initially imagined.

We asked Sr. Nancy Sylvester, IHM, to help us. She helped set the stage for last year's General Assembly by grounding us in a crash course in contemplative dialogue, a mode of conversation we felt would continue to serve us well at this stage of our discernment.

Last year, we were able to have difficult conversations. We gained a lot from Nancy's presence, the process of contemplative dialogue and "taking a long loving look at the real." We were able to better hear each other. This process enables everyone to have a voice and to have the freedom to speak or not to speak. It's not a way to silence disagreements, but allows different views to be heard. We also know that all of us are emotionally invested in Grailville and it helped to have someone not as invested in the same way to facilitate our discussion.

We made a few assumptions: that everyone was familiar with the recommendations the Grailville Future Committee generated and distributed last June. We assumed that everyone did her "homework" – The Grailville Discussion Materials – prior to coming to the meeting. We assumed there were still questions that needed to be asked, and things that needed clarification.

Our main goals for the meeting were:

- Reestablish trust through a contemplative process that encourages openness to each other, dialogue and synergy for working together
- Come to a clearer understanding of the Future process from the perspectives of the Council, the Grailville Future Committee (GVFC), and the work of the Grail at Grailville/Home Place Team (GGHT) and how they affected each other.
- Determine next steps for moving forward our conversations about the GVFC recommendations and the future of Grail at Grailville.
- Engage in a process to achieve what we determine.
- Prepare a recommendation to the full membership.

These goals were changed from the ones the Council published prior to the meeting. We realized that during the Future Process there were those who were offering proposals regarding Grail at Grailville who did not feel adequately heard. This sentiment was also expressed by other members via our listserv, etc. We felt the process needed to begin with gaining greater understanding of what happened and from there have those gathered determine how we wanted to move forward.

Our first morning was spent settling into a contemplative space and reconnecting in a circle of trust. Nancy invited us to sit in contemplative silence and then asked us what our hopes and concerns were for this meeting. We shared these with each other both in small groups and then as a litany for all to hear.

The afternoon began with Nancy reminding us how to listen and speak from a contemplative heart. We used a "fishbowl" process that included two members from Council (Loretta Rokey and Maureen Tate), two members from the Grailville Future Committee (Cherie Holman and Mary Kay Delgado) and two members from the Grailville Home Place Group (Joy France and Joyce Minkler). Our main goal with the fishbowl conversation was to listen as representatives of the various groups spoke about the Future Process: how they envisioned it and how they experienced the process over the last year. Members were invited to join the fishbowl to ask clarifying questions. We all reflected with appreciation for what was shared and the honesty with which each person spoke. We then noted any questions that needed to be addressed in order to move forward.

Late Saturday afternoon we had four mini-presentations from some of the proposers whom the Grailville Future Committee recommended for consideration. We heard representatives from

Turner Farm, First Step Home, Bloomfield Schon and **Finn Meadows Farm.** Members had time to ask questions and chat with the presenters informally.

After supper we met again for a short time to determine the direction of our meeting for Sunday. We were given three options:

1) I want to re-open the process and begin again by using this meeting to envision Grail at Grailville in as much detail as we can. This means that work on the Grailville Future Committee Recommendations and the Grailville Implementation Committee would be suspended until after decisions are made about Grail at Grailville. An implication of this is that most likely we will lose some of the current proposers.
2) I want to spend some time exploring our common vision of the Grail at Grailville, framing it in relation to some of the major concerns raised by the members and continue the GVFC/GVIC process. This means we would not develop Grail at Grailville in all its specificity and so would need an ongoing group to continue what we begin. It would also mean we would address the recommendations in light of our conversation and common understanding of what we desire for Grail at Grailville.
3) I want to acknowledge what we've heard about what has happened in the Grailville Future process and proceed to discuss the GVFC/GVIC recommendations without spending time discussing Grail at Grailville at this meeting but assume an ongoing group would be named to do that work.

Most of the 50+ members attending this session chose option #2. A couple chose #1, and a few wavered between 1 and 2 and between 2 and 3. We listened to the minority opinions and why they thought those directions should be taken. On Sunday morning we would enter into a process to work on both the Grail at Grailville and the recommendations made by the Grailville Future Committee.

On Saturday evening we were treated to a presentation from the Heritage Group (a sub-committee of the Collections Committee). Grail members, T. Rose Holdcraft, Becky Hill and Joyce Minkler put together pictures from the inventory of Grailville treasures that Kendall Trotter, Terrie Puckett and a team of volunteers completed this year. It was an opportunity to hear Grail history from the perspective of objects in our collection.

On Sunday morning we began by discussing our common vision of Grail at Grailville within the context of what we heard on Saturday. Three questions, which were based on the key issues raised during the fishbowl, were given to the group:

1) We believe the future Grail at Grailville's mission includes…….
   In order to accomplish this we need these kinds of spaces…..please give reasons.
2) We know the use of our lands expresses our values and commitment to Earth and an integrated lifestyle. We see this happening in the future Grail at Grailville in these ways…..because….
3) The southwest woodlands can best serve the Grail in the following ways….why……

The group was divided into nine groups of six each. Each group was given a different primary question, so that all three questions received full focus from a minimum of three groups. In the afternoon we reported back identifying and discussing the areas that had strong agreements and those that had strong disagreements. We ended the session with each member in the room naming a point of wisdom they heard during the day.

In the evening the planning team was joined by members of the Grailville Future Committee and Implementation Committee to distill what we heard over the course of the day as it pertained to the proposed GVFC recommendations. These would be brought to the whole group Monday morning for affirmation. We also celebrated the Grail's 94th Birthday, with skits, singing, dancing and much laughter!

On Monday morning, Nancy gave an overview of where we were in the process and the next steps. First, the Council would write a report to the membership about this meeting in order to understand what we reviewed and accomplished; this would be sent out with the ballot. Second, members of the Implementation Team would respond to the questions that were raised on some of the recommendations and finances; and third, we would review the statements that the planning committee felt they heard the body say and which would be given to the full membership to inform their decisions.

After the questions were answered Nancy presented what was heard as shared thinking from the meeting discussions and process. Each statement was presented for clarification, discussion and affirmation. For each statement there was overwhelming affirmation although there was a small number who expressed either non-affirmation or no position on the statements.

Affirmations from the 2015 National Meeting

Conservation Easements

- We heard that there is general agreement on the sale of land for conservation easements as identified on the eastern edge of the North and South sides for the Clermont County Park District.

We affirmed this observation.

Bloomfield Schon

(When the planning group reflected on what they heard, they saw some new possibilities with Bloomfield Schon. For instance there was not support for residential housing as originally discussed with them but the Grail members gathered talked about generating income using the land by State Route 48 as a housing development. There was strong support for First Step which is also connected to B/S. This affirmation puts together some of these understandings asking the Implementation Team to continue their negotiating with these possibilities.)

- We heard there is lot of support for Bloomfield Schon related to First Step Home
- We heard there are reservations regarding the construction of homes in the woodlands

- We heard there is interest in the Episcopal Retirement Community and Angel Care Alzheimer's program
- We also heard there is interest in the use of land on State Route 48 for potential development and revenue generating purposes (this parcel is currently included in the Finn Meadow proposal; it is not part of the currently certified organic acreage).

We affirmed that the Grailville Implementation Team explore these changes with Bloomfield Schon.

Turner Farm

- In light of the Grail's desire for a larger footprint on the North Side for the Grail at Grailville, we do not support the current proposed boundaries for Turner Farm.

We affirmed that the Grailville Implementation Team explore boundary changes with Turner Farm.

South Side (of O'Bannonville Road) Agricultural Land

- Our sense is that there was no clear direction regarding the sale vs. retaining ownership of the agricultural land on the South Side.

We affirmed the Grailville Implementation Team to continue conversation /discussion with all parties concerning the agricultural land on the South Side.

St. Columban and Paumiers

- We did not discuss the sale of property to St. Columban (about 6 acres) and the Paumiers (about 2 acres). However, based on pre-meeting homework, responses from membership, we affirmed these two recommendations.

We affirmed this observation.

Grail at Grailville

We affirmed that, by the end of the year, the Council would draft a job description, define the skill set desired, ask for volunteers and name a committee to address Grail at Grailville through a planning process.

Nancy brought the meeting to a close reminding everyone that the Council will be writing the report; Noreen will edit the affirmations based on what we said this morning and send them out to those gathered; and that the Implementation Team will take what we affirmed and figure out how it will be incorporated into the ballot which will be sent to the whole membership together with the report.

2015 Grail National Meeting
St. Anne Retreat Center, Melbourne, KY
Participants & Rooms

Julia Almaguer, Commuter
Joyce Asfour, Room: 311
Teagan Blackburn, Room: 212
Judith Blackburn, Room: 408
Mindy Burger, Room: 407
Terri Carter, Room: 112
Rose Mary Clark, Room: 318
Mary Ellen Clifford, Room: 411
Pamela Cobey, Room: 406
Vivian Corres, Room: 213
Mary Therese Coyle, Room: 409
Theresa Czerwinski, Room: 304
Maria de Groot, Room: 204
Mary Kay Delgado, Commuter
Kate Devlin, Room: 113
Jackie DiSalvo, Room: 105
Mary DiVito, Room: 303
Mary Farrell, Room: 404
Joy France, Room: 203
Joy Garland, Room: 106
Margaret Goederer, Room: 405
Marian April Goering, Room: 403
Pamela Hall, Room: 315
Una Mae Hargrave, Room: 207
Martha Heidkamp, Room: 314
Mary Heidkamp, Room: 110
Laura Hershberger, Commuter
Rebecca Kremer Hill, Room: 316
T. Rose Holdcraft, Room: 414
Cherie Holman, Room: 307
Lucy Jones, Room: 415
Mary Lu Lageman, Room: 210
Terry Marshall, Room: 209
Frances Martin, Room: 309
Anne Mercier, Commuter
Joyce Minkler, Room: 214
Elizabeth Murphy, Room: 215
Trina Paulus, Room: 211
Shirley Piazza, Room: 109
Maria-Emilia Ponce-Thomas, Room: 206
Terrie Puckett, Room: 115
Nancy Richardson, Commuter
Loretta Rokey, Commuter
Beth Rosen, Room: 406
Helena Schaareman, Room: 312
Debora Schak, Room: 308
Elizabeth Schickel-Robinson, Room: 205
Marian Schwab, Room: 107
Kathleen Sellers, Commuter
Carol Siemering, Room: 302
Carol Skyrm, Room: 108
Emily Snyder, Commuter
Deborah Sullivan, Room: 313
Linda Suter, Room: 417
Nancy Sylvester, Room: 0
Maureen Tate, Room: 111
Sally Timmel, Room: 412
Duanne Welsch, Room: 114
Nicole Westrick, Room: 416
Noreen Willhelm, Room: 116
Jean Wilson, Commuter
Sharon Wood, Room: 31