

April 9, 2019

To the U.S. Grail Council and Terrie:

Thank you for your April 2 response to our invitation: *“You request a face-to-face meeting between Council members, yourselves, and New York region Grail members interested in Cornwall. As you surely know, such a meeting will require logistics planning. As we understand from what you wrote, you expect that meeting face-to-face will improve communication among us. In order to consider this request, could you please formulate your questions and concerns for the meeting. It would help us to know more clearly what you anticipate the results of the meeting, your desired outcomes, will be.”*

We hope the below statements will help explain our need and desire for a meeting at Cornwall.

Respectfully,

The Cornwall Transition Team, with input from other Grail members

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The Grail was made for a time like this. Born after the First Great War, continuing to grow in wisdom and strength during and after the Second War, it is now confronting an even greater Wasteland of multiple social and ecological crises.

Grail women know how to ask “What ails thee?” For many years, they have been working in numerous ways to offer healing in the world. A time has now come when the U.S. Grail is asking itself, “What ails thee?”

In our region, the desire to keep Cornwall has woken the sleeping giants, as it were. “Giants” in the sense of Grail women’s inner powers of vision, mission and action. With the exception of the Bronx Grail, for some years we have engaged mostly in individual missions, occasionally meeting to support each other through the beautiful Grail traditions. Facing loss of our physical Place for community life, we have realized the utter necessity – for our personal lives and for our mission in the world – to continue cultivating the combined power that lies in community and having a place to meet together, train together, support Grail and one another’s initiatives face to face, and restore personal well-being together as community.

The challenges – in the world and in the Grail -- are so great that unity of purpose is more important than ever. Those of us on the Cornwall Transition Team therefore wish to meet with Council and Terrie, in the spirit of Community and collaboration, at Cornwall to discuss, in depth, questions, options, and hopes for the future.

Some questions may find answers more quickly and clearly than others, but let’s at least make a start. Much depends on the courage to do so. Of course, we look forward to questions posed by you, as well.

**Leadership.** The Grail is an organization of leaders, and we all know from experience the danger of members becoming passive when depending too much on leaders, especially very competent ones. Such dependence unfairly burdens the elected leaders and disempowers the membership.

- If this has happened even in the U.S. Grail, what is needed to correct the balance of power?
- Should regional councils be formed to re-activate the leadership skills of all members?
- Can we agree that empowering of women is needed now, even in the U.S., more than ever?

- Is collaboration and support (skills and finances) with Council possible for a re-purposed Cornwall?

**Centers.** Historically, the Grail has grown around Centers, physical Places for inviting people in and working together. Technology or short, small group meetings in the chaos of the city do not fully replace coming together for extended periods at Cornwall. Many Grail centers, including Cornwall, have been gifts from donors believing in these spaces serving Grail's mission of transforming the world.

- Can the U.S. Grail sustain itself without Centers for community experience?
- Why the big hurry in selling Cornwall?
- Have the relatively small deficits which have existed in recent years at Cornwall been insurmountable?
- What has really changed since the retirement of the previous managers?
- What opportunities exist now for creating new paradigms of management, financial, staffing, and usage of the precious facilities we own?
- Is the Council willing to sit down and collaborate with the growing group of members who want to re-envision Cornwall but who may not have participated in the Dream Quest?
- What is the Grail's attitude toward ownership of land – and toward land itself?
- What is the real situation regarding a sale? (E.g., with Lyn Pentecost? We have abided with Council's injunction against negotiating with her, so we'd really like to know.)
- Will the current membership beyond just a small group have a chance to weigh in and have decision making power?
- Does the Council have plans for Cornwall? If so, what are they?
- Will the Council collaborate with the desire of a growing number of members to use Cornwall for the next year who want to work with you to create a plan to pilot some new programs and staffing structures in a way that breaks even financially?
- If not, and if the current Council feels that they have done all they can, and wants to sell, a willing and available group of local members wants to use Cornwall for the summer season and await the election of new council members representing our region to collaborate with.

### **Hoped-for Outcomes for Cornwall.** By Mary Kay Louchart

We are committed Grail members, some of us for decades, others more recent. Inspired by our Grail vision, we have been working together to continue the life of the Grail at Cornwall. We really see it as a way to continue the Grail—and we believe the Grail still has a mission in the world and much to give to new generations. So we want the Grail to continue.

We have many ideas and dreams and have been honing them to see what is realistic to begin. We are ready to 'put our bodies on the line'. Who is the 'we'? It is a small group that has been able to meet face to face, others via email and telephone conference. Some of us have committed to be at Cornwall for weekends and weeks and months. One of us and perhaps more are ready to live there. There are others who are interested and excited about the possibilities of what we could do together there.

What we know is: the Grail has land and buildings in Cornwall. What an asset! What a 'forever' loss if we sell what we know as the Cornwall Grail. Why not give us a chance to see if we can flesh out our ideas? It will not be the same as the former staffs/teams have done. They did an admirable job. Now we would like the chance to try another way. We cannot guarantee the outcome. But we are not blindly, superficially entering into this.

We were not part of the Dream Quest and other groups, so did not put forward our proposal sooner. But we are here now. We would like the national Grail to hold on to Cornwall for at least a year. At the end of the year we could see if what we have proposed and achieved has a possibility to grow. If it does we would work out a fuller, solid plan. If after a year of trying out our idea we find it just isn't 'going to fly' we could then make a new decision regarding Cornwall.

**Addenda:** 1) Letter from Mpanda Kalala (attached). 2) Video to suggest avenues to build diversity in the Grail (below). 3) Letter of support for Cornwall from the Sustainable Communities Affinity Group (attached). 4) Sustainable Communities Affinity Group Report (attached).

For a very long time, the U.S. Grail has seen the need for greater diversity in membership – especially regarding younger generations of women and women of color, such as add vitality to the Grail in other countries. We have been inspired by the vision for Cornwall by a letter written by Mpanda Kalala, who has put her finger on vital needs by the U.S. Grail. We have been inspired by her letter and include it here. Mpanda is still offering to live at Cornwall as housekeeper and welcoming presence. Her daughter Tina Kalala, a member of the Young Grail Women's Group, agrees with the substance of Mpanda's letter, and is developing a vision of a more inclusive Grail serving the needs of younger women and their families. This was mentioned in our letter of March 29.

In addition, we recommend the viewing of a 16-minute video titled "Prayer of Gratitude for Black-Indigenous Earthkeepers." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6TPb4vFfSRQ> It features Leah Penniman, founder of Soul Fire Farm in upstate New York, and author of *Farming While Black: Soul Fire Farm's Practical Guide to Liberation on the Land.* We believe that she, and other people of color, will lead many people who are less connected to their origins toward a viable future. She writes: "Stewarding our own land, growing our own food, educating our own youth, participating in our own healthcare and justice systems – this is the source of real power and dignity." You will notice the white people in her audience. Leah's work is attracting enormous interest in people of all ages and backgrounds. In its anti-racism efforts, the Grail too is learning that we have a great deal to learn from women of color. Submitting to their wisdom, full participation and leadership may be the Grail's salvation.

We also attach the Letter of Support and the Report of the Sustainable Communities Affinity Group because they affirm the Cornwall Transition Group's goals.