

March 29, 2019

To members of the U.S. Grail Council and Terrie,

We cannot at this time submit the Cornwall Proposal you expected by today. However, we are extending a proposal to you that will be explained later in this letter.

You wrote in your Jan. 28 Response to our last proposal: "We would like you to develop your proposal further within the next 60 days and submit revised material by March 29, 2019. We ask that you respond to specific issues in areas that did not seem to us to be fully formed. These include goals; reporting, responsibilities, and evaluation; project demand analysis; budget; Grail staffing; and partners."

Your "deadline" actually created a new "lifeline" of support for the Cornwall Grail -- and perhaps for the existence of the U.S. Grail itself. We set to work immediately after receiving the new guidelines, reaching out anew to the NY region Grail members and conducting numerous meetings and work sessions.

Two weeks after receiving your Response, a NY regional Grail meeting was held on Feb. 9. In our letter to you on Feb. 14 requesting meeting space at Cornwall for a permaculture planning session, we cited the region's resolution of support for our Cornwall project:

*"The region affirmed the direction of the Cornwall proposal team, and will serve as resources as the new proposal is prepared. The region affirmed the proposal that Cornwall be made available a) for planning meetings and meetings with potential partners, and b) for a Lower East Side Girls' Club Mother/Daughter retreat this Spring, under leadership of the Cornwall proposal team."*

However, our request for meeting space in the Grey House (while offering to pay all extra expenses), even for a few days of permaculture program planning, was absolutely denied -- because Cornwall was now closed. Joy and I had a phone conference on Feb. 20 with Terrie and Council liaisons, April and Lucy, to try to understand this refusal. The only reason given was: "Cornwall is closed in preparation for what is to come." We could freely walk the grounds but planning meetings would have to be held elsewhere, perhaps in a public library or in the nearby (and expensive) Camp Olmstead. When we asked, What is Council's business plan for covering maintenance expenses at Cornwall during an indefinite period of closure, with no income of any kind, even from use by Grail groups? -- the answer was that we had no right to "throw" this question at them, and that closing was "the cheapest way to lose money."

We cite this episode as an exceptionally vivid example of the strange, and strained, relationship we have been experiencing with Council over the past year, starting with Council's reluctance to present our alternative plan at the time of the Land Ballot in May, 2018, continuing with its denial of a transition year of retreat income while we worked on other forms of funding, and ending with disruption of a promising collaboration at Cornwall.

On the one hand, we love and honor the Council members as individuals, as Grail sisters. We struggle to keep believing that in seeking to sell the only remaining Grail centers in the U.S., they feel they are doing the right thing for the Grail as a whole. But something has gone wrong in the Council's process -- perhaps not in terms

of business sense, but surely in terms of Grail values and the Grail mission to transform the world through women's empowerment. We have felt distrusted and disempowered in many instances, yet have tried to keep alive faith in our common Grail values, interpreting everything in a positive way. In effect: trying to avoid painful conflict. Wishing not to add to the pain still remaining after the Grailville conflicts.

During the aforementioned phone conference of Feb. 20, we did not bring up the painful issue of the letter (dated Feb. 12) written to Lyn Pentecost of the Lower Eastside Girls Club, by Deborah Sullivan on behalf of the Council. This letter stated that neither our planning group nor any other individual Grail members were authorized to represent the U.S. Grail in plans for collaboration, and that interactions with any but Council could be a conflict of interest regarding intentions to buy Cornwall.

Nor was this letter brought up during the phone conference of Feb. 25 among Joy, Ieva, April, Lucy and Terrie. However, it seems clear to us that this letter had a lot to do with the disruption of a good relationship with Lyn Pentecost, and possible disruption of any collaboration in the future with the LESGC and Middle Church, thus cutting off another avenue for creating a viable business plan in time for the March 29 due date.

There were mistakes on our part, as well. Hampered by the extremely busy schedule of Lyn Pentecost, who was involved with other acquisitions at the time, plus her two-week trip to Mexico just as our Proposal was due in January, we failed to consult adequately with Lyn regarding our proposal. As a result, when we did send it to her after she received Deborah Sullivan's letter on Feb. 19, she was repelled by the proposal which seemed to be mainly for the benefit of the Grail, not reflecting an equal partnership. We tried to explain that this impression of inequality resulted from trying to follow the guidelines of the Council, and asked to meet for clarification. But it seems that by then Lyn was no longer willing to participate in this messy situation, and elected to deal with Council alone.

So the Cornwall Transition Team is again left on its own, at present relying primarily on Grail resources – on the Grail legacy, on Council, and on the membership. This may be a good thing. It will test our capacity for mission amidst the existential challenges of climate catastrophe and other crises in the world.

Near the end of our last proposal, we stated:

“We pledge to develop much better communication skills than most of us ever thought necessary. They are necessary, as evidenced unmistakably by the confusion and conflict in our own society and elsewhere.

Perhaps foremost, we intend to improve communications with every Grail member, beginning with those in our region but ending internationally. We do not believe any Grail woman is too old or too young to contribute to the Cornwall venture or any other Grail project. Everyone who ever took the trouble to join the Grail is extraordinary and remains so.”

We have begun this outreach, and see an awakening among Grail members too long taking the Grail for granted. Due to numerous in-person meetings and work sessions, many more of us are realizing how precious the Grail is to us and how much good empowered Grail women can still do. One instance of revived Grail participation in the NY region was the Grail Anti-Racism forum held on Feb. 28 at the LESGC, with over 30 women attending.

There is growing awareness of an existential challenge to the U.S. Grail, for Grail history indicates that no national Grail can exist without Grail centers. Individual Grail work cannot be long sustained without community experiences at Grail centers. We need real Places for the Grail to grow anew, to share our ideals and personal matters, and to heal the hurt of past years experienced by many within the Grail.

At our March 23 meeting in the Bronx, Tina Kalala shared a perspective of young Grail women that suggested a new direction for the Grail and also a need for Grail centers that allowed for living in community for longer or shorter periods. She said that young women like herself do not want to separate family life from Grail life. They want a community place where their children can grow up with the Grail, as she did herself in the Bronx and at Cornwall. They want a center closer to nature, along with city centers, a center like Cornwall to which they would feel free to bring their children and husbands to Grail events, and not just special family weekends such as Emily Thomas organizes. She agrees that there would also be special women-only events, and that women's leadership would never be curtailed, but rather would keep evolving. Such inclusivity would also allow for one or two resident families at Cornwall, a possibility that was rejected during the Dream Quest.

This testifies to the younger generations' need for a grounded reality that is missing in the dominant virtual realities created by technology.

Similarly, we are feeling a strong need for better communication with Council. Email, newsletters, and even phone conversations have proven to be inadequate for real understanding and unity of purpose.

Therefore, we are proposing a face-to-face meeting among members of the Council, Terrie, and Grail women of the NY region – to be held during a weekend at Cornwall, as soon as possible. We feel this is needed for the future of the entire Grail, even internationally. We will offer further reasons and testimonies to support this claim, but for now wish to submit this letter today.

We hope you will accept our invitation to meet and will let us know how soon it can be arranged according to your schedules.

With faith, hope and love,

Ieva and Joy,

On behalf of the Cornwall Transition Team