

The Shape of Now
Profiles of the Youngest US Grail Women
Fall 2019

Interview Questions:

What brings you joy?

What has shaped your spirituality? How would you describe your spirituality?

What is the work that you love?

What does community mean to you?

What does commitment mean to you?

What are your priorities?

What is your greatest concern for our world?

Method: zoom interview about an hour in length. Took notes during interview. This is a memorandum of understanding rather than a verbatim as such. Each set of notes reviewed by the participant for use with the Council. Other uses will be discussed with participants should we decide to use this material more broadly. No consents have been signed.

Laura Hirschberger:

What brings you joy?

Being a parent. Watching my son grow. Spending time with him. Introducing my son to the world. Relationships with people I care about. Getting to experience different places and different kinds of people. Connecting to people with similar values. Nature.

Sunshine.

Applied to Grail:

In person time together. Ritual is what I love about the Grail. Being with a group of women with similar beliefs and values. Celebrating that together. So many inspiring women. It serves as validation for my life. Community.

What has shaped your spirituality?

Catholicism. Shaped by it regardless of how much I practice it. Specifically Jesuit spirituality. Liberation theology. Value of community. Appreciate Laudato Si and Catholic theology on the environment but my earth based spirituality comes less from Catholic influence than by my experience in nature. Annie Dillard's *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*. Also somewhat by time with indigenous and ecological groups. I have become more contemplative with time and with the experience of mindfulness practice. Time for meditation can be a challenge—competing with work and family. It is difficult to participate in a regular spiritual community. It is easier to stick to mindfulness. Mindfulness is also such a part of my profession now. The Grail has influenced my spirituality related to the earth.

Describe you current spirituality.

Contemplative. Less of seeing God as a being. More of a sense of the spirituality in everything. The divine in all the world. There is a shift from the language of Christianity. More of a language of goodness in the world. What brings me back to Christianity is

liberation theology and its sense of resurrection as an ongoing belief that life prevails over death. With nature I experience evolutionary spirituality. Life evolves and continues but you don't know what it will look like. It is a cycle of nature. As a therapist I see resilience in this light. People demonstrate the ability to keep going and to love even after experiencing mistreatment. Nature is inspiring. Seasons change. Life comes back around with spring. I hike past a swimming pool that must be a hundred years old. It is filled with plants. Nature can be violent and we cannot control it. My husband and I share beliefs. The Catholic Church is limiting for me. When I want to feel connected, I go to Bellarmine Chapel, which is Jesuit. We are not raising our son Catholic – my son came to me the other day and said, I don't think Jesus did all that magic, but he was a good guy. What we take from Christianity is the teachings about love, about doing the right thing even when it is hard, about trying to live alternatively. It's a challenge.

How does your spirituality relate to the Grail?

There is spiritual community in the Grail, but it's hard for many my age. There is familiarity with Catholicism, which is helpful because of my background. The Grail is not rigid like the Catholic Church. New age spirituality is not a fit for me and the Grail is a better fit, somewhat in the middle. I like ritual and the Grail understands ritual. Ritual is a great way to celebrate spirituality in community. It's a shared value system.

What is the work that you love?

I love my profession of social work. It's stressful but I have a better work/life balance than I had in the past. I am able to incorporate spirituality and introspection into my life as a social worker. I see people in their homes, in the community, in the neighborhoods. I work with all different kinds of people. Working in El Salvador as a Maryknoll lay missionary was really out of the box for me. I volunteer for a friend who has a program in El Salvador with trauma-informed care. I meet with her staff twice a month by Skype. That keeps me connected to work in Latin America and the international dimension. I love the environmental piece of social work. It's how I see the world, through that lens. I love working at my son's school, a public Montessori, where the population is very diverse. He also enjoys me participating at school.

Related to the Grail.

The focus on women's issues, justice issues, international issues. The Grail is a great way to stay connected and participate in advocacy. Love the Grail's connection to the United Nations. I participate in the WhatsApp group in Ecuador. I love getting updates from people who are on the ground in other places and this is a support for one another.

What does community mean to you?

I am a very community minded person – on the Enneagram, my subtype is “social.” I am a group person. It's how I relate to the world. Community is important in how I build my relationships. My work as a social worker helps because social interaction fills me back up and re-energizes me. Community for me is the idea of being held and supported by people who care about you and share something. It could be anything, a neighbor group or a school group. Community means being an active participant and caring. My son's school is a great community.

Related to the Grail

The Grail is a source of community with a chance for inter-generational relationship.

In my age we relate differently. We want community. The Grail knows how to do community for a different generation, but not mine. We are at risk of isolation. Community meant something for the Grail years ago, but they have not figured out how to do it for my generation. We are less likely to call each other now. Maybe it's because we are so busy with work. Technology makes it both harder and easier. Email is not good for community in the Grail. One thing that really does work is the monthly Zoom calls we do for the Young Women's Initiative along with the face-to-face meetings. The calls are really good. I enjoy them and they rejuvenate me. I feel we all get a sense of being connected to one another. I also Skype every month with a group of six people who live together in El Salvador. We have been a support group since I came back from El Salvador. We have been doing this monthly, 1.5 hours for several years. Video chats are a good use of technology for great community. I like the in person meetings with the Young Women's Initiative, and the calls are also very good.

What does commitment mean to you?

It's doing what you say you are going to do. There is a sense of duty. It's knowing that there is a greater good for the reason that you are doing it. It's agreeing to invest yourself because you believe it is worthwhile. It's sticking to it even when it's hard.

Related to the Grail.

I am not sure. Maybe it's different for older generations in the Grail. I wonder if that's what makes it hard for my generation, for the way the Grail functions with younger people. My generation is over-committed and we don't want to quit. We have a sense of duty. But I usually choose family first. Regional meetings are hard for me with all my other commitments. I don't know if the Grail understands that when I say I will do something, I will do it. But there are expectations that I did not choose and I don't necessarily do them. Sometimes I do them and sometimes not. Regional meetings are an example. Sometimes I am able to read Grail materials and sometimes I am not able to keep up with it. There are some things in the Grail that are a priority for me, such as the Young Women's Initiative, and I will keep up with them.

What are your priorities?

My son, my husband, my household. I have to work to make money. In addition, I do other things like tutoring, providing on-line therapy. I don't want to be dependent on my parents. Keeping these priorities sometimes makes my life a little rigid, but it is important because it provides stability for my son. I am not free to get up and go any time. My sister Rachel is freer in that way than I am. After time with family and work, my next priorities are the things I care about with people.

Related to the Grail.

International issues. Peace and justice issues. I am a 9 on the Enneagram, so I find conflict draining. I don't want the Grail to drain me.

What is your greatest concern for our world?

The environment. Growing isolation in the world. How we are living our lives is pulling us apart. That has a very negative impact on our mental health. Another concern is growing social iniquity. In my generation, we are less likely to get benefits. We work multiple jobs.

Related to the Grail: Same

Danette Wilkins:*What brings you joy?*

Being in Community with people. Activities. Hobbies. Music. Diverse types of music. Being a DJ for a local radio station. Performing. Supporting other artists. Cultural exchange around music with people from different backgrounds. Travel—it is a big part of my life. I am from a military family. We moved a lot and starting over has been a big part of my life.

Related to the Grail:

I am learning so much about the Grail still. The Grail means different things to different people. I enjoy meeting with others from different cultures. It is life-giving. Learning from each other from our different cultural backgrounds.

What has shaped your spirituality?

I am pseudo-spiritual. I do not have a honed spiritual practice. It is my personality. I grew up in a religious household. Rituals can still feel welcoming and familiar. Being in community with people where I feel more fulfilled. Friends with practices. Not practicing does not mean I am not spiritual. I don't strongly identify as spiritual.

How would you describe your spirituality?

I feel spiritual when engaging with people with intentionality. With activities with friends. I feel spiritual with music and dance. Dance is deeply emotional for me whether I am appreciating it, attending an event or dancing. My spirituality is embodied.

What is the work that you love?

Working in public health. Right now I am working in an office but that is not why I chose public health. I would like to do more direct work with people. Working with youth on sexual education and empowering them in their own decision-making. Transferring knowledge and skills and better access to resources. In North Carolina I find strong social justice efforts happening all around me. I like to empower others to do the work themselves. Health education in schools. Writing grants for it. Creating a space. Lobbying for comprehensive sexual education. Working with parents and guardians. Broad and interdisciplinary.

Related to the Grail:

I appreciate the opportunity to speak more directly to young women internationally. The Grail looks so different to everyone. Country to country. It's very interesting. It is interesting to see how the umbrella organizations holds so many divergent perspectives and cultures.

What does community mean to you?

Knowing your neighbors—the buck stops there. So often we don't know them. Being invested in people around you. Supporting them. Knowing them. Not calling police first. Borrowing salt and pepper. Shoveling drives for each other. Helping people in the community who are struggling. Saying hello. As a very mobile person, it is intentionally trying wherever I am to be community. I am nostalgic for what I saw growing up. We have concentric circles of relationships that reach farther and farther out. It is important to surround oneself with all types of people to know what is really happening. I

participate in community meetings. Put myself out there. Get to know what is happening and why. I am privileged. I could choose not to be aware and not know. I have to seek it out—choose to be in spaces without my privilege.

Related to the Grail:

I am curious to hear about the experience of being a young woman today. It is a different world now. This difference impacts socialization. I want to hear *What is your day like? How is it with your relationships?* It might be similar or very different. I am inspired by youth today—how they are plugged in across generations; their involvement in beautiful ways. They are standing up to ICE, confederate imagery. They are volunteering and serving. I learn a lot from them. That is the ethos of the Young Women's Initiative—to amplify what young people are already doing.

What does commitment mean to you?

Boundaries are important. It is easy to commit but you cannot lose site of yourself. So you need boundaries. I see a lot of burnout due to over-commitment. Without boundaries fear will lessen the commitment. Give what you can knowing someone else can come in if needed. Do not be indispensable. Commitment has to be sustainable. Community is a support for commitment. People give so much of themselves and lose commitment with the cannot live up to expectations.

Related to the Grail:

I am looking at a gender perspective. There are social expectations of women. What does a women-led organization look like? Women are over-committed to the point of burnout. How are women socialized to give all they can of themselves and more? What is it like for young women today in their social context in organizations? How do they show up and what influences them?

What are your priorities?

In the past five years, since I have been leaving my twenties, I am so much more focused on relationships. This is different from earlier years. I crave deep relationship. I can let go of superficial and toxic relationships. I go forward with healthy and life-giving relationships. Relationships are my focus going forward. Why else are we here on this planet? I am finding ways to put my knowledge and skills out there to help people.

Related to the Grail/YWI:

I want to support young women by giving them a platform with ownership and stock in the direction and visioning of an organization. The intergenerational aspect of the Grail is very exciting. There are ways to bring women together across generations and cultures—it is enriching and scary. We are co-creating a new direction while managing reaction. We are going to be behind the scenes women for young women—connecting them, guiding them but not being a roadblock for them. Youth today are speaking out—I am so impressed to see them use their voice.

What is your greatest concern for our world?

For me it is when people are apathetic and disinterested. It is scary. When making connections across difference ceases and learning stops. The creation of silos and bubbles. There is a breakdown in building relationship. The dehumanization of those we don't know. The social myopia. When we don't know others' realities we think we are

not impacted by them. But we are. There is a breakdown in love for humankind. We have stopped putting ourselves in the shoes of others. There is economic segregation. No society can function like this. How do we fix it? Economics is a huge contributor to segregation. Kids only get to be with kids like them. It is important to pay attention to young women—to guide them and work with them. Who am I in my community? How can I be connected in my community?

Related to the Grail/YWI:

The women in the YWI are so perceptive and articulate about the issues in their communities. I am impressed by the questions of youth. I went to a youth camp a few weeks ago. Their questions were about healthy relationships and healthy friendships. Teens have a depth not often accessed due to stereotypes about them. I am touched by their intellects and reflections. The young need affirmation. They need to know it is ok to ask embarrassing questions and to trust that they will be received.

Tina Kalala*What brings you joy?*

Community. Interaction with family and friends. Doing positive work with others and through volunteering for unpaid work that I have a passion for. Children. They are so innocent. Funny. Curious in fresh sincere ways. Like sponges. Waiting to learn things. As we get older that curiosity can disappear.

Related to the Grail:

As a whole—mission. There is an idea of community there. But the Grail is not really so open and is not really working together. On the surface, yes. Try curiosity; joy; something new. Be a sponge. That is missing because of members' experiences. Try on a new idea for a moment and see how it makes you feel. Move through it. That's what we do in the Young Women's Initiative.

What has shaped your spirituality? How would you describe your spirituality?

My parents. I have experienced a spiritual connection for as long as I can remember. It was never forced. It is pure desire. At eight or nine years old I started religious education. I loved it.

I have had mentors along the way—mentors that have had a spirituality and a religion. Spirituality was not driven by religion. Doctrines can keep a person away from the experience of actual spirituality.

I have a few friends who are spiritual who look to me for spiritual guidance. It makes me feel like I have to be responsible to attend to my own spirituality. The way I live my life inspires them.

My experiences of life and death. Birthing. When life comes into the world—even animals or nature. See how a seed grows into something you can appreciate or use. Death. The agony and struggle. There is no way to get through it without some sort of spirituality. Even seeing how others have dealt with death. There is a spirit there driving them to take another step another day.

How would you describe your spirituality?

Real. Live. I can't and do not want to live without it. It strengthens me. It gives me peace when troubled or when happy. I feel much more fulfilled with it. It sustains me. Otherwise it is hard to deal with life. It comes back because I need and want it. I give in because it is almost inevitable. *Surrender?* Yes.

Related to the Grail:

I've been very lucky to experience different spiritualities within the Grail. I am hoping and praying that it remains open—that there is an openness for each person to experience their own spirituality without being looked down upon for their beliefs or practice. That each person feels honored. I hope that the Grail will find a door—a common ground. A space for “out of the box.”

What is the work that you love?

There is not a “one thing” that I love doing. Of all the things it is human connection. I find people trying to be more solitary. Human connection recharges me. Be a light for people. Be healing. Give love. Be a conduit for the divine. It is the feeling that people experience and the connection that people remember.

Related to the Grail:

The links across cultures and language barriers. The links across ages.

What does community mean to you?

One word: energy. Human connection—it charges us when we come together. Spirit to spirit. We are meant to be among other people and be sometimes alone. Connection can be continuous whether we are physically present or not. When we are able we can share with others and it re-energizes/recharges with new energy. With getting older responsibilities can get in the way. But we are connected regardless.

Related to the Grail:

Same.

What does commitment mean to you?

A vow that one makes. It can be personal or with someone else. You have to work at it. Remind yourself that you made this promise to behave in a certain way and need to honor it. Honor it. Still have an active role in that commitment. It does not have to be verbal. You can just make it yourself.

Related to the Grail:

Membership is a commitment. How long is it for you? Some members are not active. What does that mean? Some cannot be active physically. What does that mean? It is a challenge. How do I assure that I am an active member? Is paying dues all there is? How can I fulfill my commitment? Fulfillment of commitment is not one thing or one role in any organization. How do I stay on my toes spiritually? How do I challenge myself in different areas of the Grail? Do something else that I am not comfortable with and grow at the same time. I want to be flexible in my active participation in the Grail.

What are your priorities?

My spiritual health, physical health, mental health. I would like to be as healthy as I can so I can do what I need to to be effective. As long as I work on myself things will be ok. I will not be able to be of use if I am not healthy.

Related to the Grail:

The antiracism workshop is fresh. A lot has happened because of not caring for or loving ourselves. It is difficult to love others if you don't love yourself. It is difficult to do anything healing when you are in need of healing...a lot of healing is needed in the Grail. Even the way we speak to each other is scary. It needs to change. We need to honor ourselves. If you don't heal, how do you do good work? If you don't heal, how do you treat each other better?

What is your greatest concern for our world?

People—especially women—are not honoring themselves or each other. We are the future. We need to find the spaces where we can respect each other and not feel like

someone is trying to take our place. In the Young Women's Initiative it happened that some thought we were trying to take their place. We need to treat each other better. It happened at work too. I am very good with computers. It is easy for me. An older coworker was threatened by me and she was hurtful. I was not there to move her out. I was there to work with her. We need mature women and younger women to work together. Knowledge is shared in both directions. We have different knowledge that can be shared. We can respect all knowledge.

Related to the Grail:

It is the same. When the YWI was created there was some backlash. People asked "What about the rest of us?" That was not the idea. They were difficult words for young women to hear. We want to work together. "Nasty Council" shouldn't be a thing. We are sisters in this group. We are human. We have feelings. There has been venom. We need to honor each other. We need to consider: How would you like to receive this message?

Tiffany Curtis*What brings you joy?*

Being with people who I resonate with and love. I am relationally oriented. Dancing. Hiking. Being in nature. Art. Especially visual art. Color and shape. It is more contemplative for me than verbal art. I like to laugh. I love contemplative time but it is different from being joyful.

Related to Grail

Carol Siemering. People who are so full of life and contagious joy. My experience of time with people in the Grail is somewhat limited but some of the gatherings in Boston were joyful. There were some joyful parts to the GA—women laughing, dancing and being silly. My experience with the formation workshop in Ecuador was very joyful. There was beautiful sharing, movement, embodiment and laughter. The YWI group is joyful as well.

What has shaped your spirituality?

My childhood. My household was very religious and spiritual. It was foundational. My parents are still very spiritual. We talk about prayer. We still exchange. It is still formational even though I am an adult. My parents are more charismatic. That is also part of my foundation.

My experience of going to different churches over the years. The way I used my tradition and scripture. A big turning point was when I went to a Presbyterian church in high school on my own because I wanted to be a part of their youth group. They provided service-learning opportunities. We worked with migrant workers in the Central Valley. We went to the border. We learned about NAFTA. We went to Belize to visit an ecological justice group with the Mennonites. I didn't grow up in an environment with resources but that church had them. My theology shifted toward liberation theology. It was very influential to be able to see and do that kind of theology.

There were transitions in college. I started a new group on progressive Christian dialogue. I used process theology. Similarly in college I participated in faith-based service learning trips. I went to South Africa and India. It was theology in context and very foundational.

Divinity School was huge. I wanted to do human rights law but got interested in divinity school. It was so rich. So much exploration of faith traditions and practices was available and I took as much opportunity for that as I could. The breadth of experience of different traditions was very influential though I have chosen to remain in my own tradition. I led a women's spirituality group. I became involved with it, was transformed by it and then became a core leader for the rest of my time in school. I had never experienced a women's spirituality space before. It was radically transformative in terms of truth spoken with power and joy.

After Divinity School, serving as a chaplain. The whole process of CPE was very intense. A lot of self-reflective work. Facing death head on. Bearing witness to death and

processing it. It deeply impacted my spirituality and my spiritual leadership. It was an incredible amount of personal growth, a reckoning. Having to face the suffering of life and the ways I try to avoid those things and the reality of suffering and death for all. Diving in to Zen and practicing it seriously has been important too. Looking at suffering in a head on and practical way through Zen. My journey to do chaplaincy was influenced by my year in Ecuador where I spent time with a number of shamanic people, including midwives. I observed their work and role, and connected more with the idea of spiritual leadership in the role of healing. Chaplaincy is a version of being a healer, allowing one the space to accompany others. Spirituality is my life.

How would you describe your spirituality?

Hopefully, embodied, feminist, liberative, post-colonial, rooted in Christianity with a passion for multi-faith inter-spirituality.

Related to Grail

When we have been able to gather, I have been renewed by others' spirituality. There are a lot of deep souls in the Grail doing their own work. I wonder a lot about how we share spiritually in a very geographically disbursed movement. If spirituality is not embodied, how do you grow? How do you embody spirituality as a group when we are so geographically disbursed?

What is the work that you love?

I love working with teens, interpreting their dynamics, working on group communication, growing together. I love writing. It's a very different energy. I like to be directly working with people to have embodied experience with people, really being present. An example is when I went to the border and visited people in detention, helped people find their busses and sat with them until the bus came. I like doing spiritual direction. I like coaching others one-on-one and walking with them as they move toward growth and purpose. Accompaniment.

Related to Grail

Right now I am giving to the Grail through the Young Women's Initiative. It's team work. I like that the work is not totally remote.

What does community mean to you?

Joy. Happiness. Accountability. Diversity. Difference. Mutual support. Growth.

Related to Grail

I like the intergenerational aspect of women's community. I appreciate the wisdom of other women. I like the international aspect of the Grail. The Grail is a quest that we are undertaking together.

What does commitment mean to you?

Showing up and following through, even when I don't feel like it. Accountability to others. Love – all commitment is relational commitment. It's an opportunity for deeper growth. Community really is about love. Putting your love in action.

Related to Grail

It's similar. There's an opportunity to grow by staying present and showing up when you are too busy and you don't want to. You are learning and going deeper in community to learn from the experience of others. It's trying to say yes to what you can do and to be stretched by that. In terms of the Grail as whole, it's interesting. Some countries have very intense commitment. It doesn't seem to be that way in the US. Does commitment have to be membership, if showing up is commitment? In the context of my church community (where I am pastor), I have shifted from voting with membership to a consensus model with those who show up (members and non-members), unless the issue is serious, for example, about money or buildings.

What are your priorities?

Personal and spiritual growth in all I do and as much as I can. My relationship with family and partner, growing in that. Friendship is super-important to me. Finding purpose in whatever work I am doing. Physical health and well-being, emotional, spiritual, psychological health. How and where I spend my time.

Related to Grail

Spiritual growth and friendship. Community. Spiritual friendship. Finding that in ways that are unexpected with a variety of people.

What is your greatest concern for our world?

Everything is so interconnected, but we are in this time period of late stage capitalism and dystopia. How the world is trying to reach economic growth at the expense of the planet and people. Capitalism is an ongoing outgrowth of colonialism. Racism and misogyny are ways that capitalism is still playing out. Climate change is very related to this. It's sad to think about all the people impacted by climate change – those who are most impacted are related to race, income, and gender. It's hard to see that the wealthiest will survive while others are sacrificed. The world is a very hard place.

Related to Grail

I am part of three international networks in the Grail – spirituality, migration, and climate change (environment). It provides a lot of cross pollination for my thinking. In theory I like them, but because it is just email/listserv, it's kind of overwhelming. I wish we would do a long in-person retreat of people in the networks to focus on how to do work from our own different locations and be a spiritual activist from across the world. The Grail's great strength is that it is global movement with connections to women all over the world. That is in itself encouraging and hope-filled. But the format of listserv is disembodied. They have no idea who I am and I have no idea who they are. The ideas and information would be more meaningful if we knew each other. I appreciate that most of the US Grail members I speak to have a passion for international work. I think of quitting the Grail, but then I think its internationality and I am filled with hope. The Young Women's Initiative would really like to gather in Mexico at the same time as the international young Grail women in Mexico. We understand we are older than the women gathering and the meeting is not for us. However, we want to be able to meet

with women younger than us to gain understanding of their concerns and what draws them to the Grail. We have tried to get a listing of all younger women in the Grail internationally, but not succeeded yet.

Shannon Rokey*What brings you joy?*

Human interactions. Being around people. Laughing with people. Helping people. Working with people to help them advocate for themselves. Genuine relationships and connections.

Related to Grail

I want to take part in the international Grail to gain perspective and to bring it back. I want to meet young girls from all over the world so that we can work together across cultures. I love shared experiences working with younger women in Grail programs. For example, there is a young woman from Mexico who worked with Lisa and she has done a lot of things I would like to do.

What has shaped your spirituality?

I was raised Catholic and have some objections to Catholicism, especially how they devalue women. School gave me a good basis on world religions and helped me to be open to other people's perspectives. I am currently working toward having a more personal relationship with God and recently joined a young adult group with Crossroads. It provides support. I feel like I am in a transition phase looking for what spirituality is for me. I am choosing my direction and seeking my own role and peace. I am trying to unburden myself. I have struggled with eyesight, I have hated God for that. But I am trying to see my purpose. Certain hardships can move a person toward purpose. I am learning to embrace that hardship. I am learning to play on purpose. I have some anxiety and personal issues, but I enjoy what I am doing now. I am finding God in the present moment. I am finding purpose by following God. Adults stop playing, but play is important. Take a break and get refueled.

How would you describe your spirituality?

Finding play and purpose. My spiritual was tied to rules and religion, but that is changed. Now it is more relevant to my life. I experience moments of purpose throughout the day as long as I am calm and slow and stops to pay attention. A reflective life. An intentional life.

Related to Grail

Not asked

What is the work that you love?

Working with underserved populations, refugees and immigrants. People have their own voice if you allow room for them, they will speak. I am studying ESL. I like advocacy. I like people to be able to use their own words to fight for their own rights. "You can give people a fish and they will eat for a day. But teach them to fish and they'll eat for a lifetime." I like to teach people how to become more self-sufficient. The issue with many nonprofits is that they create dependency rather than self-sufficiency. I have seen first-hand how altruism can change and people working in the system can become jaded. The work can be exhausting. How can you serve when everything is against you? I have

always had a very good support system. I was raised to advocate for myself and it's second nature for me because my parents instilled it. It's not a privilege, but rather a right to ask for the things I need.

What does community mean to you?

I have lost community and tried to redefine community. Community is the reason I joined the young adults group at Crossroads. There's a book called Lost Connections about my generation and our detachment related to our use of media, doing things on auto-pilot and in isolation. Community is a huge issue for me and my generation, perhaps the whole world. If community were a value, we would protect each other more. Ideally, community should be living in a way that promotes value and belief to serve the whole community. Community should protect everyone's ideas and thoughts and livelihoods. My next step is finishing college. I am in the slump of individual grind. I can lose the community aspect and lose purpose. We are from tribes. We are lost. Then we feel isolated and people get depression. In their isolation they become fearful of others and are too afraid to let them in. Neighborhoods are more gated than ever. Mixed income neighborhoods would work best. We are not building up the whole community. Isolation amidst segregation. We don't see our neighbors struggling. It used to be that when a soldier died, the families neighbors knew it and responded but not now.

Related to Grail

The Grail brings women together who are trying to build a better world. Being intergenerational is a value. At the same time I wish there was more diversity and more people from younger generations. The Grail can provide a platform for women to normalize women discussing women's issues. My aunt worked as a sales manager for a company. When she interviewed for the job she was asked "Why should we hire you?" She replied "because you can get me for a woman's wages." I have not experienced such explicit conversations, but the Grail can provide a platform for discussing women's issues together. Diving in to those issues can be safe, also overwhelming, and ultimately helpful.

What does commitment mean to you?

Following through with promises. Not giving up if it is difficult. I felt a little overwhelmed and jaded after Americorps. I can't forget what I saw. I fight through the discomfort. I continue to achieve good in the world. Continuing take steps that go forward even when you don't yet see what you are trying to achieve and it may not be perfect. A lot of Americans are unfamiliar with being uncomfortable. Growing is uncomfortable. Change is uncomfortable. Even if the change is good. Uncertainty is scary. The unknown is scary. You need room for changing your mind. Later the commitment you made may not be healthy. The goal or mission can change. New information comes in and you have to adapt. The original plan may not work later. So when the goal changes you have to adapt to whatever is needed.

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I am out of the loop. It's hard to be committed right now because I am a student and I am working. I don't drive. In a way, I can isolate myself. The Grail is in Loveland and a lot of the issues related to the underserved populations are not in Loveland. It's difficult to

get to Loveland. I would like to participate more. If the Grail wants more diversity, you have to go where it is. There is lack of access and diversity in Loveland. White people are uncomfortable talking to each other, but they should talk about white people issues. In my experience with Americorps, I travelled by the metro. There was one point when my boss asked me to stand and wait for the bus because it would stop for a white person but might not for Black youth. Black youth are seen as “little terrors.” I am checking my privilege. The Grail is coming to a place of understanding and working out their racism. In my millennial generation, it’s called being “woke.” If you don’t acknowledge your prejudice, it’s just denial, avoiding being uncomfortable.

What are your priorities?

Personal – relationships with family and friends. Close relationships. With a support system you know you will be okay.

Education – I have had opportunities from attending a very good high school with a lot of honors and AP opportunities and that made going to college not that difficult. There needs to be equal education for all. At Woodward, I saw gaps in educational foundation so that even if kids get into college they don’t have a strong foundation resulting in negative impact on retention. Kids need to be able to speak in a way that they can advocate for themselves to get quality education. Kids speak Eubonics – a recognized speaking pattern with its own rules. But they have to learn to be bilingual so they can be taken seriously. We all need to learn to respect language and dialects. Education affords people the ability to speak academic English so they are taken seriously.

Positive sense of self worth – That’s really important. To be independent when having a disability in a world that doesn’t accept it, I have learned that I have to over-prove myself and advocate for myself. It’s like a battle with self worth. My disability has always made things harder for me. But really the only limits I have are the ones I put on myself. I can’t take put downs to heart. I have to feel my own independence and capability.

Sometimes with instagram it’s hard because it’s a way of seeking other people’s validation. I want happiness, purpose, and confidence for myself. Women are treated differently. Sexual harassment, assault and rape are almost normal and that impacts a sense of self-confidence and self worth. I hear the worst things and then people are in a downward spiral because they cannot see their self worth and potential. They think this is a good as it gets. There are women like my mother who are different. But things can get overwhelming and it’s a struggle to work on self-care if what you bring home can paralyze you. Things that are helpful for self-care are playing on purpose to refuel, refill and nurture yourself. Gratitude is really important. Gratefulness is more important when you don’t have so many things.

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Getting younger women involved. Internationally there are younger women. Who is going to be there to adapt the movement for the future. I have met with some younger women – Laura Herschberger and Terrie. When I am with people who are younger, I see that they don’t have as traditional a perspective.

What is your greatest concern for our world?

That’s a loaded question. It’s ignorance and fear. Fear is the core of where issues begin. For example, global warming – you can look at the core of the issue as fear. Fear of

others. We sweep things under the rug. We isolate. Fear is the root of human rights issues. Making mental shifts is difficult.

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Fear is at play in the Grail. Grail women were pioneers and progressive in their time, although they did underpay women. That's not okay. They need to bridge the gap. Tradition does not mean things are okay. The Grail needs to make mental shifts. People can be apathetic and tired of fighting as they get older. They need the new energy of younger women.

Lisa Petro*What brings you joy?*

Relationships. Social Connections. Being a connector for others. Creating networks. Seeing people thrive, build love and camaraderie. This is why my work is my world. I am building and honoring intercultural networks.

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During the last meeting of the Young Women's Initiative, we had a prompt about what we want to see for young women – using music, painting, weaving, poetry. We talked about our intentions and commonalities. I am good at making networks and being interconnected. This was a very tangible interconnection. We looked at re-envisioning mission to create a new reality for how to serve.

What has shaped your spirituality?

I was shaped by a duality – there was a pull toward the unknown and intuition from one part of my family and then I was also raised in a Catholic family. It was a very “forced” Catholicism – it was both positive and negative. My mother was more traditionally Catholic and my step-mother was more intuitive. When my father re-married, my step mother was more earth based. That experience led me on a quest to understand. These were such opposite poles.

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Not asked.

How would you describe your spirituality?

When I met the Grail, I was exploring what it means to be a spiritual person given all these differences. Now spirituality for me includes nature as my church. All of us in the Young Women's Initiative share this appreciation of nature as spiritual.

The second pillar of my spirituality is intuition, the voice of God through the universe to infinitive openness to acceptance and love. It's not about right or wrong, but what is.

What is the work that you love?

Interculturalism is key to all my work.

What does community mean to you?

I just started thinking about this in the last year. That might be due to my work in Latin American that exposed me to a different way than US individualism. In the US, there is an expectation that people will be self-sufficient and able to retire well. In Mexico, families come together. They help each other with medical bills. Community is a lot about having a network and being committed to a community of care for each other. It's more of an existential experience of never having to feel alone. We struggle with existential aloneness due to individualism. With community, there is an existential sense of belonging to one another.

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In the Young Women's Initiative, we are building connections that can last a lifetime. It's very nice. Not just a task, but a foundation. I want to be friends with these women whether we agree or disagree. I feel that all of us agree with the importance of this

connections. We all care about each other. It's less about creating an outcome and more about the experience. There's no script. There's no right answer. When you have a team attached to the outcome, it kills the process. So we are honoring the space we are in and showing up as we are. That is the work. We are using emergent therapy and it's very helpful.

Back full circle to the Grail – the real work is how we are treating each other. We are putting our experience to the test to be mindful of how we treat each other without the stakes being so high. We are giving ourselves over to the process. My experience is caring.

What does commitment mean to you?

I don't like to commit unless I can see it through. I learned a lot from my experience in Mexico. Relationships are central to commitment. For example, for my work in Mexico, I had to change my plans and that was acceptable because of the relationships and respect I have with others. Integrity is important and more important than commitment. Commitment has hidden traps. You can be committed to being right. But integrity is more important. Three days ago I was offered a good and different job (Tony Blair Foundation). I spoke with my colleagues and the Young Women's Initiative. I am committed to transparency about where I am, and that's integrity. I have a commitment to see things through, but there is integrity in handling it with utmost care and transparency. The group decided together how to go forward. They all felt like my relationship with the Tony Blair Foundation could be beneficial to the Grail in the long run.

What are your priorities?

Love. Compassion. Communication. Integrity. I am trying to prioritize balance of physical, mental, relational, and spiritual.

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The Grail has contributed a lot to me. I have known the Grail for nine years. It's a sisterhood. I want to contribute in a sustainable way to a caring network for community. In my own family, I saw a lot of abusive women and treating women as objects. In the Grail, I see women who are empowered and I gained a new definition of women. This gave me a deep understanding and opportunity to practice new beliefs. I have found love and support all over the world in the Grail. It's given me a community and ways to go into the unknown, including the work and process and intensity of the Young Women's Initiative

What is your greatest concern for our world?

Climate change. I would have loved to go to the Climate Summit. Young activists are captivating right now.

Break down in intercultural communication with inability to understand differences.

Things that I am doing – I stopped eating red meat. And I used my skills of intercultural dialogue to impact climate change.