



RE-VISIONING STRUCTURE

an Invitation....

Dear Grail Sisters,

The Re-Visioning Structure Team needs your feedback.

We have been meeting regularly (since July, 26, 2020) to examine the organizational set up in the U.S.Grail. We have been doing this because there has been a great deal of discord in the past few years about decisions and directions. We feel that an improvement in the method we use to interact and move forward could go a long way to restoring harmony and productivity. We have studied many different systems: Sociocracy, Emergent Strategy, Church Women United, Heterarchy, and the Gift Economy, as well as the various historical Grail systems, as possible models to learn from.

These Grail members have participated at some point in this process: Elizabeth Murphy, Terry Marshall, Mary Lu Lageman, Lebe Robinson, Peggy Goederer, Martha Heidkamp, Judy Alves, Sharon Wood, Carol Barton, Jody Grundy, Ieva Zadina, Trina Paulus, Sally Timmel, Mary Farrell, T. Rose Holdcraft, Anne Hurley, Joy Garland, Duanne Welsh, Carol Skyrn, Marian April Goering, Sharon Thomson, Viana Mueller, Judith DeFour Howard, Cynthia Cheyne, Vivian Corres, Mary Kay Louchart, Sharon Joslyn, Jackie DiSalvo

We have drafted a synthesis of what we felt were the best aspects of these systems adapted for the current Grail reality. We want to share this with all of you. We need and want your feedback. When we all decide how we want to be doing things, we will then examine our bylaws to see if any adjustments need to be made. This is a matter for Council and membership together.

We are setting up an **ADVISORY FORUM** on ZOOM and *encouraging everyone to join in*. The goal is to hear from whoever wants to give input. But we also want anyone who just want to listen to come too.

ADVISORY FORUM: Re-Visioning Structure Sunday November 22, 2020 4pm

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://zoom.us/j/9921636128>

Meeting ID: 992 163 6128

877 853 5247 US Toll-free

888 788 0099 US Toll-free

Included below is the text of the draft document that we are putting forth.

It is long but important. (It is also included as an attachment.)

First: a general description of an approach to operating an organization.

We use what we think of as *LAYERS*.

The largest group, or first layer includes everyone as individuals.

The next layer is a more focused group or groups specifically related to needs of the organization or to the focus of the individuals doing the mission work of the organization. This layer includes everyone, but organizes by work /interest.

Then there is a medium sized functional layer where representatives of the different work/interest areas meet to share information about their work progress and needs, to solve problems, to articulate the needs of their interest group and advocate for an overall organizational policy which is communicated to the whole organization.

The smallest layer is a few individuals who have accepted the task of getting accomplished certain technical things that support the activity of the groups doing mission work.

Ultimately the layer of individuals determine policy, but they are informed by communications among all groups. The interest/work groups are fluid and individuals may work in several areas or change their focus. As in nature individuals may relate in many ways, for example the small executive team are also individual with interests/work and who naturally have a say in policy decisions.

Shared knowledge of others' work and needs is essential for the organization to function as one organism, as is an acceptance of differences and a commitment to balance the degree to which all needs can be fulfilled.

There is not a strict hierarchy, top to bottom, powerful to less powerful. There is some uniting aspect which draws diverse individuals to wish to be together, cooperate and share resources and work. The size of this heart-united group determines how many of these layers develop.

Second: To get more concrete we have tried to describe what we are thinking about how all this might work in the Grail in the U.S.

The U.S. Grail has a medium small number of members. Bigger than a family but smaller than many churches. We are drawn together by the uniting sense of the Gift of God being translated by the gifts we bring to the world through our work and way of being with each other. There is a strong sense of individuality, both in our personhood and our relationship to God the mystery of our lives.

We have been given immense gifts – we have intelligent, caring, hard-working, empathetic women, we have beautiful places (land and buildings) which we own and control and may use as we see best to do, we have fungible financial assets with which to support our work, and we have been touched by the power of that which is greater than ourselves and drawn forward, sheltered in its care.

We have experience of many decades of group activities. We have struggled to adapt as the world around us has changed and places different demands on us to be an official organization with a specific description and rules to abide by that are enforced by the rest of the society we live in. (read legal requirements of 501-c-3, tax laws, etc.). We have in many ways been pushed off our center of strength, by following these new dictates without realizing how they were changing our way of being as Grail. The last few years have shown a group of women in emotional and organizational crisis. However our pain and struggling have brought us to the realization that what we had drifted into was not good for what we wanted to be.

This elbow in time which has pushed us off course also has gifted us technology which will allow us to reconnect and operate more like a healthy organism we want to be than a machine.

We think that first we need to look at what we have actually doing in recent years. Make a map of our interests and work. Examine our current policies together at the EVERYONE layer, see how EVERYONE layer is naturally *grouping* itself. Determine if our policies (that which describes our goals at a given time) are what we like. Adjust as needed.

The GROUP layer will meet as groups to define and focus what they are doing. These groups are responsible for planning and budgeting. If they need use of assets (money, land, buildings etc.) they will need to prepare a proposal and get the approval of EVERYONE for major expenses. In the beginning this will be big work to define and plan. Going forward this will get more streamlined as the REPRESENTATIVE layer develops. Planning, overall budgeting and any coordination of resources and work will be worked out here. The REPRESENTIVES will meet as needed, probably several times a year. Any and all communications beyond this are encouraged.

The EXECUTIVE team will work closely with the REPRESENTATIVES to keep them apprised of legal issues, and most importantly financial information. The job of managing any paid staff will be jointly handled by the EXECUTIVE and REPRESENTATIVE layers.

Emergency decisions should be handled at the most basic possible level where competency exists. For example: I am working in the Oratory. I see smoke coming out of the furnace area. I do not call a committee meeting, I call the fire department myself. OR: I am working in the Oratory and I really feel that the exterior doors should be repainted because the paint is flaking and they need to be more joyous in their welcome of guests. I bring this to my group doing liturgical work (which may meet and coordinate in its own best determined way) we discuss it and bring our decision and a request/proposal to the next GROUP layer meeting for approval and budgeting of whatever is needed. OR I am working in the Oratory with the liturgical group and we want to plan a huge celebration of 250 people. We take our proposal to the GROUP layer who likes the idea but then connects to the EXECUTIVE layer to see if there are restrictions we must abide by – fire marshal, building codes etc.

There will be a type of platform for discussion, planning and/or problem resolution which will be called a FORUM. It is a way for to address things which do not fit conveniently into the usual layers processes. Any person or group may call for and schedule a FORUM.

ABOUT the FORUM concept:

The purpose of Grail FORUMs is to establish a protocol for fostering the participation of All Grail Members in decision making situations and in community sharing moments. The establishment of these focused events will be a way to carry into the present time the older tradition of decision making through broad group discussion at a GA (General Assembly).

We expect that the interactions at Forums will help us all to know one another better and to support each other in many ways. Forums will hopefully decrease the unwelcome circumstance of Grail members feeling disconnected, sidelined or left out. We also expect that decision makers will welcome the input from a broader range of voices and be moved by what they hear when they are crafting policy.

The medium is ZOOM. One of the Grail's ZOOM licenses would be the platform for these events.

There would be two basic types of Forums.

1. Individual – one or several Grail members are moved to call to the whole membership to invite them to participate in a community connecting get together. An example of this is the Soul Moment. The individual forums may be a one off, or a regular repeating event.
2. Advisory – these would be on subject matter that the membership wishes to consult with each other and/or with other groups about. Perhaps it is a new project, perhaps a problem with some aspect of a plan or work. The REPRESENTATIVE layer or EXECUTIVE layer may want to bring a matter before the membership for guidance in planning. It would be requested that some members of the REPRESENTATIVE layer and EXECUTIVE layer participate in the Advisory type of forum.

There will be a group of 2 or 3 Grail members (Forum Managers) who will handle the nuts and bolts of scheduling and promoting (by supplying links to a ZOOM room) and notifying the office of a scheduled Forum so that further publicity can go out. The Forum Managers will keep a schedule so the room is not double booked by accident. Therefore anyone who wants to hold a forum should contact them during the planning process. Any Grail member (or group of members) can initiate this process but it is a good idea to talk with several other Grail members first to refine the topic.

The number of members who participate in any Forum is entirely determined by who is interested. In other words, whoever self-selects is considered welcome and to be active on that topic. If the topic is complicated or controversial or evolving it is probably best to think in terms of several sequential forums to work on it.

To sum up, there are many ways to hybridize different organizational systems. Ultimately the Grail will have to choose how it wants to be. There were a few clear things which we kept homing in on. That strict hierarchy of authority was not the most productive way for us to be. Much energy is lost and members feel disconnected. With shared authority more responsibility flows to the grassroots level which encourages participation. When decisions are made in by a fairly large, more inclusive, representative group issues are less apt to be overlooked and plans will be better able to reflect the desires of all.