The Grail

Blessing the Space Between Us
Stage II
International Grail Vision Statement

We are an international movement and community of women of different cultures, social backgrounds and generations. We trust in the Spirit of God, Mystery and Source of Life.

We are called to create a sustainable world, transforming our planet into a place of peace and justice.

We acknowledge that we are part of the whole of creation, striving to live simply and to nurture a culture of care for all the earth.

We are determined to look for signs of hope in a complex world.

We are strengthened by the compassionate energy and creative action of women.

Born in the Catholic tradition, the movement is grounded in the Christian faith and challenged by the radical call of the teachings of Jesus. Today we are women of various religious traditions and on life-giving spiritual journeys. And we share the same Grail vision. We recognize that in each of our Grail countries, our expressions of faith, religion and spirituality reflect our own realities and cultures. We respect and acknowledge these differences.

Recognizing the global realities we confront, we are committed to growing together and learning from one another’s wisdom, experience and spiritual search.

Affirmed by the International General Assembly, Kleinmond, South Africa, September 2011
Dear Grail Women all over the World,

We have come to the end of the time frame of the second phase of our international process on commitment in which Grail women of all life choices were invited to share, after discussing with each other, our present motivations, situations, difficulties as well as the commitments and contributions we are able to make at this time to the Grail from within our specific life choices.

Attached you will find – as promised – excerpts and summaries of Stages I and II in a publication. (The full texts of stage I are published on our web site www.thegrail.org under “Members.”) Stage I is a most wonderful collection of life stories, desires and future dreams from different cultures and is an absolutely worthwhile resource for each of us Grail woman to use for reflection and growth in our knowledge and understanding of one another.

The texts provided here are the bases of the process for the Stage III - starting now. Each country is asked to meet in small groups to provide your responses and reactions to the material received from stages I and II from the perspective of your own situation. Do give yourselves time to discuss the material leisurely and in detail, guided by the questions attached. Please use these questions as the basis of what you then share with the team.

The “Commitment Team” will be meeting in June in Mülheim, Germany. Kindly send your reactions and suggestions to us via Mary Omedo, international secretariat, no later than May 15th 2015. This will enable us to structure them for use in our meeting.

We are hopeful that we all, in our common efforts, will grow in our abilities to provide a blessed space for all in our international community!

With many greetings and love,

Regina Bashaasha, Lorna Bowman, Martha Heidkamp, Bibi Helgeson, Lucy Kimaro, Joyce Minkler, Maria Carlos Ramos and Christa Werner
Fairy tales, full of symbolic language and thrilling inspirations, touch our hearts and bring us understanding of the turns life can take. Yet, no tale or mystery story is as exciting or teaches us more than people opening up and sharing their paths.

It is a deeply rewarding meditation to go into the stories of women from 14 countries all over the world, written as a response to the Stage I request to reflect on our life journeys in the Grail. (They are found on the Grail web site at www.thegrail.org under “Members.”)

Motivation and attraction, the struggle to answer a call from God in one’s very own unique way, reaching out to friends who have been examples to us, feeling the power of a women’s community standing authentically against injustice and oppressive trends, deep rootedness in faith and in each one’s readiness to put talents, time and work at the disposal of the community, are all described or presented between the lines of psalms, prayers, poems and letters. No matter what life style a Grail woman chose, no matter what the local Grail reality, these responses show how commitment is an attitude that intimately shapes our lives as women in the Grail and becomes second nature, penetrating all decisions and actions.

“Blessing the Space Between Us” was born out of many discussions and reflections in different meetings over a long period of time. The empty page B in our international structure documents, needing to be filled with the basic knowledge and procedures about the Nucleus vocation, prompted the ILT and a chosen Team to give an opportunity for each woman in the Grail, including all life choices, to share herself and her deepest motivations for serving and belonging to the international Grail.

Four steps were seen as necessary to run through the process of realizing the space between us:

- to learn about the realities of lives in different countries;
- to admire the attempts to save the world right on the spot where we are;
- to break down barriers of understanding and to grow a culture of respect and sisterhood throughout all continents, among the various ways of living a Grail commitment;
- to say “yes” to a future for the international community, different though it might be, but full of values and challenges, reaching out to an aim of witnessing the coming of the Reign of God.

For Stage II, two sets of questions were sent to each country – one specifically addressed to nucleus members and the other to all Grail women.
(They can be found on page 5.) After the personal reflections of Stage I, group discussions were requested in Stage II, where all Grail women, including nucleus members (women who have made a dedication involving the evangelical counsels) would share their situations and what they offer to the Grail community from the perspective of their specific life choice. Some countries sent responses for Parts A (the nucleus) and B (all others), and others for only one part, given their Grail reality. Although the length of contributions was uneven, the texts are rich and informative. A graphic, showing numbers, ages and dates of those countries where the Grail is present, is found at the end of the booklet and provides ideas at a glance about the basic situations and the future perspectives in each country.

Besides the touching and interesting lessons hidden in this publication, the texts provide the ground on which we should go forward to Stage III, helping us to discover what we have in common globally, including the values and desires that unite us across borders, age, concerns, cultures and beliefs. Where do we need to work hard to overcome prejudice and mistrust? How do we see the Nucleus with its own specific call and value incorporated in our international Grail reality as one expression of membership? How do we express that Nucleus reality in our international structures? And, what new possibilities do we have for Grail commitment for the future?

A blessed and inspired time to you reading and sharing the texts and a real growth in tolerance and understanding, we the Commitment Team wish to you.
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II - STAGE OF SHARING

Part A 1 - The nucleus will share with all the movement

- Facts (numbers; ages, etc - )
- Process to became a nucleus member in your country
- Is there a formation process? Where? And how?
- Who is coming to the nucleus now in your country?
- How do women join now?
- How has your culture or contextual situation changed the way the Grail thinks about this commitment in your country?
- What promises are made at the time of dedication?
- Are there named criteria for nucleus membership or is the situation more fluid in your country?
- Does joining the nucleus bring with it a particular commitment to or responsibility for the Grail itself?
- Do you see the nucleus continuing in your country? Why or why not?
- What role do you see for the nucleus in the future in your country?

Part A 2—Sharing about the movement in each country

(The NLT of each country may decide on the method used)

- Information about the numbers, ages, life choices of those who are not members of the nucleus.
- What is the process to become a Grail member in your country?
- What is the formation to become a Grail member in your country?
- Who is attracted to the Grail in your country?
- Has your culture and/or your contextual situation changed the way the Grail thinks about commitment in your country?
- What commitment is made at the time of Grail commitment in your country? Is there a common text that each person says, or questions they respond to or ritual, etc.
- Anything else you would like to contribute.

Part B - We will all share with each other the current expressions of commitment in the Grail in our countries (after the responses to A1 and A2)
These questions below are meant to stimulate discussion. They do not need to be answered one by one. We ask that each country send a summary of key points/ thoughts/ ideas that come from your discussions.

- Are there different names for different kinds of commitments in the Grail in your country? If so, what are they?
- Do you still use the 3 named life choices (nucleus, married, single) when you talk about commitment in the Grail. Are these terms relevant in the Grail in your country? Are there other categories?
- Why do we make/did you make a commitment in the Grail? For what purpose?
- How do/did the Grail vision and mission influence your commitment in the Grail?
- How important is the international nature of the Grail to your commitment in the Grail?
- What did you commit to when you joined the Grail? Did/does it include contributing financial resources? Taking responsibility for the movement? Making promises to God?
- What are the different ways in which members live out their commitment in the Grail in your country?
- Do these commitments change, go up and down – are they seen as flexible and adaptable? How do you see it in your own group or country? Does each one have some responsibility for the Grail now and into the future?
- Are there expectations for participation?
- How do Grail members in your country live out our commitment to the transformation of the world?
- Should we be working towards a more common understanding of the meaning of commitment, responsibility, and participation in our own countries and in the international Grail?
- Are you confident that the commitments that you make to each other in your country will carry the vision of the Grail into the future? What are your hopes? What are your fears?
- How we all are challenged internationally and in our countries by the changes we see happening in the nature of membership and commitment in the Grail?

These are collected and shared. Also additional questions about the nucleus can be raised here if new ones emerge.
Australia

Summary: A-1
Nucleus members: 6. Currently 4 are active members, 2 are in retirement situations. Ages: 70's-90's. The last dedication was in 1979. Others have explored this possibility, but not gone further.

Cultural Context: a shift happened during the 1960's-70's influenced by the social revolution among young people, the women’s movement and Vatican II. A woman did not necessarily need to make a commitment to God in in the Grail as a celibate nucleus member; there were many other ways of building the Kingdom. As the decades have rolled on and into the 21st century, we noted the reluctance among younger women to marry or to make a lasting commitment of any sort. They seem to be much more confident that they can make a difference in the world and often find that they can do this in particular professions. Some also through setting up NGOs that focus on building a healthy, just, peaceful world and recognizing the importance of the sacred, especially in relation to the whole of creation.

There is no specific process to become a nucleus member currently, but a there is a formation process to become a Grail member and “carry the memory” of the Grail in Australia. Historically nucleus members played key roles in staffing centers and in providing financial capital for the work of the Grail. Nucleus members demonstrate the centrality of the Grail in their lives, which encourages others to do the same.

IT WAS AGREED that the Grail in Australia would remain open to being inclusive of all life choices and welcome and journey with a woman who expressed the wish to become a nucleus member of the Grail in the future.

In the immediate future, active nucleus members will continue to take part in the Grail mission in Australia and internationally and to run the Grail Centre in Sydney. We will retain a commitment to maintaining the Grail for as long we are able and offering support to those who now take on leadership and other roles in the Grail. We will continue to share about our overseas experiences.

Summary: A-2
Women attracted to the Grail tend to be ages 40-60, searching for community, spiritual depth and shared experience with like-minded others. Often they are disenchanted with Church structures and concerned about the world and Gospel values.

Courage, Faith, Vision, Risk Searching to find Striving to build, to give, to share Friendship, solidarity, love Amid cycles of death and new life Always on the move Yet planted in the Mystery Cupping fragile Joy in our hands All of this Like a flower unfolding petal by petal towards the sun.
Process of becoming a Grail member begins with attending programs, personal invitations, and formation experiences. There is a process of six sessions which helps a new woman become familiar with Grail history, values and spirituality. Women participate in on-going Grail meetings. At the time of commitment there is a common text or ritual followed by a meal. The commitment is broad.

Cultural shift in thinking about commitment? No, but we cannot make the same assumptions about activities or about shared beliefs. Our context is now Christian rather than Catholic only.

**Brazil**

“My journey in the Grail is like the process of a butterfly, sometimes in the cocoon, collected, and in other moments flying, searching for a new life…”

**Summary**

Membership: Most are ages 40-55 with children, professionally involved in education, health, social justice and church related work. There is a process of one-two years to become a member, with local monthly meetings and bi-annual regional meetings. A new initiative works with potential members “at a distance.” Exposure to history, mission and vision of the Grail; political and cultural context sharing; and participation in celebrations and spiritually based exchange is all part of the formation process. Women who are socially aware are interested in the Grail and recently some daughters of members.

*Cultural Context:* “In our culture the choice of celibacy is an unusual situation and we don’t have women who have made a commitment in the Nucleus. Even so, the initial formation with the first of us, and that still influences today in our commitment, had strong components that guide the life of the nucleus: spiritual reflection, collective work, community life. This experience enabled the development of a type of commitment that leads us to see the Grail as the center of our lives and we are dedicated to keeping alive the flame of the Grail. Nowadays, even though we don’t have large groups living in community, we maintain the social and Christian values, we continue united and we feed this source.”

There is a commitment celebration at our Annual Meeting.

**Other Comments:**
- A request was made to have information on how to proceed when we have people interested in the Nucleus.
- We live also with the challenge of getting to other regions of Brazil, where we have no presence.
It is important to be reflected by the International Grail new ways to live the option for the Nucleus in today’s society.

**Canada**

**Summary: A-1**
4 nucleus members; no process for formation or commitment since no one has ever made a nucleus commitment in Canada. All current nucleus members made dedications in other Grail countries. No one has asked to join the nucleus. The cultural context has very little to do with making a commitment to Christ. It has not changed our perspective. Promises of poverty, chastity and obedience were made. Nucleus members have a particular responsibility for the Grail both in leadership on issues, spiritual depth, and the witness of a lifelong commitment. Nucleus continuing? No guarantee that there would be support for new people. Future role of the nucleus? We still see the nucleus as a spiritual heart within the movement, not set above or below any other form of commitment. We would like to have another nucleus gathering, like Frascati, where nucleus members could discuss present and on-going life.

**Summary: A-2**
*Membership:* total number 14: 4 nucleus, 10 other, 7 of whom responded to this process via email. Respondents were in the 70-80's age group. There is no formal process for formation for becoming a Grail member in Canada but on-going growth happens through Grail meetings, discussion and sharing. Some participated in formation experiences in other Grail countries. In 1997 a member of the IPT came to Canada and a formal commitment of new and recommitment of all members (nucleus and non-nucleus) was made. People prepared for this with workshops and a retreat on the meaning of commitment. The last commitment was in 2006. An individualized formation program was carried out by a team of four. Preparation included participation in Women of the Americas. Many respondents mentioned tensions within the Canadian group and the age of participants, which makes new growth difficult.

**Germany**

**Summary: A-1**
5 nucleus members, ages 71-85. Last dedication was in 1983. Process and formation for nucleus: individually tailored to the person, including two nucleus companions accompany the person in her discernment, national and...
international Grail experience, consultation with appropriate Grail local, national and international teams before acceptance and a Eucharistic celebration of dedication. No one has joined in many years.

*Cultural Context:* women have many possibilities and the culture does not encourage binding, long term obligations. We cannot offer community living. Promises: the evangelical counsels and a commitment of availability.

*Criteria:* unmarried, Catholic, available, good health, etc.

*Responsibilities:* availability, care, financial responsibility for the Grail. Do not see nucleus continuing in Germany. Nucleus provides continuity and spiritual depth nationally and internationally. The nucleus is a call and response.

**Summary: A-2**

*Membership:* 9 single, 6 married, 19 friends. Process: individualized, participate in Grail programs. Formation involves 2 Grail members accompanying a new person as she discerns. Then consultation with local and national teams for acceptance and commitment. Few women join now, mostly middle aged and in social service professions.

*Statement:* Obligations and responsibilities of Grail commitment:

To know aims, tasks and actions of the Grail, and shoulder them together with the others. To support and promote new developments. To live Grail values in our everyday life. Financial solidarity. To practice mutual acceptance, sharing, informing, supporting, interconnection through prayers, acceptance of the others as they are. Participation and working together for meetings, gatherings and actions. Shared interest in the signs of the time. Continuity of involvement. A conscious and public "yes" to the community. Practice of the English language would be a wish.

**Italy**

“Life in the Grail is like a tree: beginning, development, flower time, bearing fruit, and then autumn”

**Summary**

*Membership:* Ages: 2 between 30-40; 2 between 40-50; 6 between 50-60; 2 between 60-70; 3 between 70-80. Ten are
married or widowed; 4 are single; one nucleus member. Interested women join a Grail program or study group, and, if interested in the Grail, are exposed to the vision, history, spirituality, justice and earth issues. Members live out their Grail commitment in their family and professional lives. We don’t have a formal commitment ritual but are thinking about developing one.

Kenya

Summary: A1
Nucleus: 3 No information provided.

Summary: A2
Membership: 35, ages 31-72; 24 are married and 11 single. Formation occurs initially at the local and regional level, followed by formation at the national level with participants from other teams. Full participation in Grail activities for four years, followed by a formal commitment is required for full membership in the Grail. The purpose of formation is for interested women to understand the Grail and the Grail vision, mission and life choices through identifying their talents and also becoming familiar with the roles of women in the Bible. Women of different age groups and cultural backgrounds are attracted to the Grail. Our culture / contextual situation has not changed the way the Grail thinks.

Mozambique

Summary: A-2
Membership: 44 (30 in Maputo and 14 in Beira); composed of single, married, single mothers and widows. Mozambique has an informal process for becoming a Grail member that includes participation in meetings every 5 weeks. The person attends meetings and becomes engaged in the activities until she feels the time has come to express her commitment with the group. There is no formal formation program; interested sisters follow the group’s yearly ongoing formation program plus activities related to the international and other activities (social events related to each of the members). Mostly youth we encounter though our living contexts from the urban area are attracted to the Grail. These specific groups usually are finalists of the secondary school, university students and professionals. Importantly, the Grail also attracts boys interested in our programmes (human formation – youth group, Friday talks, tertulias); it is clear to them that they are not Grail members; boys do not attend our regular meetings and we consider them “resource persons” and Grail friends. Our welcoming process is very important and helps the person to feel at home. Here, the culture and/or contextual situation have an important influence. Commitment is very important to us because it helps us to be more cohesive. The multicultural environment also helps us to cope with one another peacefully. At the time of Grail commitment, we have a commitment ritual during the annual meeting. Basically, one is invited to express the desire/commitment to become a Grail member,
verbalizing “you can count on me”. This ritual is both for new members and also for those that want to renew their commitments. We believe that the persons should feel free and not under pressure to become a Grail member.

**Netherlands**

**Summary: A-1**

13 nucleus members, age range 70’s-90’s. The history of the Grail in the Netherlands is different in that the nucleus (Women of Nazareth) formed the Grail from the beginning and was a relatively closed community. Nucleus members were in charge of teams and projects and many served overseas.

Years ago there was a structured three year formation process for nucleus candidates. The last dedication was in 1982 but the person was released in 1991. Prior to that, the last dedication was in 1968. The ritual took place within a Eucharist and the person promised to live in virginity, apostolic poverty and swore obedience to the international president. There was a fixed text, but in 1968 the person used her own words.

*Cultural Context:* our culture has changed. People no longer bind themselves in a life commitment. Church and society have changed. We no longer live and work in teams and we have no projects. Nucleus members care for each other as best we can. We do not see the nucleus continuing here but we try to be available for any tasks we can still fulfill.

**Papua New Guinea**

**Summary**

*Membership:* Age range: 30-60 years; single, married and one nucleus. There is a formal process to become a Grail member involving exposure to history, vision, mission, Grail documents, biblical reflection and spiritual celebrations, personal growth and skill building opportunities. Working women and friends of members are attracted to our groups. Our culture has not changed the way we think about commitment. There is a ritual for Grail commitment.

Psalm 139:5-10

You protect me with your power.  
Your knowledge of me is too deep;  
It is beyond my understanding.  
Where could I go to escape from you?  
Where could I get away from your presence?  
It I went up to heaven, you would be there;  
If I lay down in the world of the dead, you would be there.  
If I blew away beyond the east or lived in the furthest place in the west  
You would be there to help me.  

Psalm 139:5-10
Philippines

“The uniqueness of each one contributes to this community; one’s weakness is filled in by the strength of the others. Thus, everyone is affirmed.”

Summary: A-2
Membership: 35 total spread over 3 island groups, with 7 overseas. Ages: 3 are 21-30; 5 are 31-40; 14 are 41-50; 6 are 51-60; 5 are 61-70; 2 are 71-80.

Life choices: 17 single, 18 married. Process: informal, presumes participation in Grail gatherings/programs for at least one year. Formation happens with involvement in Grail activities. Women joining the Grail: mature and married; young professional; young idealists from the regions.

Cultural Context: What keeps the Filipino Grail members together is our unified interest to enrich our spirituality and faith in God through religious activities such as Bible reflections and recollections. This is also an influence of Catholicism in the Philippines, which is its predominant religion, where most Filipinos are devout followers and believers of Jesus Christ.

Grail members of the Philippines are family-oriented. This is one of the reasons why there is likely to be no need for a Grail center in the country, members living together in community. We are not yet ready to assume a life with other Grail members, even if some are single. In a sense there is more challenge as well an opportunity to live the Grail mission of an active lay participation. This situation makes us penetrate society at all levels. We carry out Grail activities as we perform our duties and responsibilities in our own families or at work.

A commitment ceremony is held within the context of a Catholic Mass, using a common commitment statement, supplemented by the individual person’s statement. Examples:

Beloved Grail members and our friends, I gladly present to you a woman who through the promptings of the Holy Spirit desires to commit herself to the Grail Movement in order to follow Christ in His love of people especially the poor. Believing her sincerity to work with God’s people, I beg you to accept her in our Grail Movement. (She will express her desire to be a Grail member. She reads her commitment statement.)

May God our loving Creator confirm you in His love and may Christ accept you to His service in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. In the name of the Holy Trinity, we will welcome you to the Grail Movement.

Let us pray…

Heavenly Father, you call all who believe in you to continue the work of your son, Jesus Christ. Grant that their fervent desire to serve you in the Grail Movement would manifest in their way of life as they do their tasks and
responsibilities in the transformation of the world towards love, justice and peace. We ask this in the name of Jesus, our Brother. Amen.

Giving of Grail cup, Bible and Cross: (to be assigned to other Grail members present) The community affirms the new Grail member with an embrace of love and peace. We use a uniform format for the commitment statement:

"With the grace of the Blessed Trinity, a perfect union of love, I unite myself with Grail members worldwide today, 25th of February 2012, Saturday after Ash Wednesday. I commit myself to God with a heart filled with gratitude for the great love showered upon me and hereby promise to (Member shall give their own pledge / promise on what they can contribute to the Grail).

The following are sample commitment statements of some of our members:

- With the grace of the Blessed Trinity, a perfect union of love, I unite myself with Grail members worldwide today, 29th day of November 2009, first Sunday of Advent. I commit myself to God with a heart filled with gratitude for the great love showered upon me and hereby promise to support the Grail in its advocacy for responsible citizenship especially in reaching out to the needy. I promise to respect and serve with utmost dedication and put the good of the community above all else.

- With the grace of the Blessed Trinity, a perfect union of love, I unite myself with Grail members worldwide today, 29th day of November 2009, first Sunday of Advent. I commit myself to God with a heart filled with gratitude for the great love showered upon me and hereby promise to be a humble servant and fulfill duties to our neighbors with sincerity, respect and love. I promise to know Christ, grow in Christ and share Christ with the world. As the passage from the Bible tells us "Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass." (Psalm 37:5). And by this commitment I ask God to pour grace upon us.

- With the grace of the Blessed Trinity, a perfect union of love, I unite myself with Grail members worldwide today, 29th day of November 2009, first Sunday of Advent. I commit myself to God with a heart filled with gratitude for the great love showered upon me and hereby promise to use the talents and energy that I have to contribute to the mission of the Grail, to be more productive by helping communities and other women, imparting to them the knowledge that I have, helping them and being with them in our journey through life with Christ. I promise to help the group fulfill its vision, mission and goals and if needed, use the skills that I have of new technologies to help spread the Good News of God to more people.
Portugal

“Being Grail is, for me returning to the same places, always with a new look. Thanks to experiences and learning.”

Summary: A-1
Membership: 14, ages 49-82. The last dedications were in 2013. The process begins with self-knowledge, and a desire to commit one’s life to God, choosing the Grail to be central in one’s life. The formation process has been individualized, with the following elements in the process that led to dedications in 2013: participation and discussion in nucleus meetings with other nucleus members, clarifying their desire and the nucleus reality; reflection in the meetings on spiritual search and life choice; strengthening the experience and reality of community and mutual care; two nucleus members were chosen to specifically accompany the two who were choosing the nucleus as questions and insights arose; conversation with the international nucleus reference person and the candidates. Presently no one is investigating nucleus commitment for herself.

How do women join now?

- to be a Grail- Nucleus member the person must accept and decide to choose the Grail as the centre of her life project.
- to be GN member is to live a life focused in God and focused on spiritual values within the context of the Christian tradition, encompassing the needs she sees in the world.
- to be a GN member is to become part of an international network of people of different nationalities and cultural roots, with specific affinity ties, whose members seek to articulate their lives among new and creative community spaces and individual spaces, so to ensure both individual growth as to answer to social, cultural, political commitments in freedom and without constraints.
- To be a GN member is living celibacy as an attitude that predisposes to an inner freedom and to a growing openness to the risk, to mobility and to multiple relationships.
- To be a GN member supposes to work for the vision and mission of the Grail attentive to the evolution of the Grail history itself.
- To be a GN member is to deepen the relationship with the world in terms of a growing universality, welcoming and sharing new cultures and environments.

Cultural Context: The nucleus has changed as understandings have evolved. We are living in a society where commitments are lived in a very unstable way.
At a dedication, the person makes a statement of a life commitment centred in a permanent spiritual search, in the implementation of the vision and mission of the Grail, in a frugal and shared life-style, and marked by the responsibility and care by one another. We do see the nucleus continuing in Portugal...working for the continuity of the Grail, completely immersed in the world.

“The Grail is a cup which is open to receive but which is also asked to give and care.”

**Summary: A-2**

**Membership:** 62, ages 20-80. Most have professional level education.

Membership process includes participation in events and Grail programs, then integration into one of the six “belonging groups” and participating in Grail life in this group until formal membership is mutually recognized. There is a small ceremony at the National Assembly for new members.

The process to become a member is not pre-defined but individualized with many different experiences and sharing history, vision and mission of the Grail in many ways. Women attracted to the Grail are spiritually grounded, looking for life’s meaning in deep ways, feeling a commitment to the transformation of the world, having a spirit of openness to the new, concerned about women's issues and environmental and social sustainability.

**Cultural Context:** Yes, it has changed. Members ages 43-55 are responsible for younger and older family members and economic and professional changes have us working very long hours with less time for Grail activity. Development of Grail projects and experiences depends upon funding which has become increasingly complex to find.

There is no common text for commitment in the Grail, just a personal statement within the context of the National Assembly, with recognition and acceptance by the Movement.

Anything else you would like to contribute or ask?

“In the opinion of some participants, it would be important that all Grail reflect on the nucleus. It was also suggested to create an “Erasmus” type program in the Grail, that is, increase mobility of young people programs, taking advantage of programs that already exist, at the European and intercontinental level, to more easily and with less cost we can develop the international dimension, since this dimension of the Grail is one of its essential resources. It was suggested the promotion of inter-religious programs in Europe aimed at approaching women of different religious traditions. This suggestion intersects with several issues, particularly with the demographic situation in Europe where there is a sharp decrease in the birth rate and a
strong immigration from Islamic background culture which may have consequences for the reference picture of the situation of women and religious frame of reference.”

South Africa

“Sometimes I wish my eyes hadn’t been opened . . . But now that I’ve seen with my eyes, I can’t close them, because deep inside me somewhere I’d still know the road that my sisters and I have to travel: My heart would say ‘Yes.’ And my feet would say ‘Go!’”

Summary: A-1

Nucleus members: 5, ages mid-70s to mid-80s. Last dedications were in 1969 and 1979, made by women who had been committed Grail members for some time. Formation was individualized, living in community and with significant international experience built in. Both had psychological assessments as part of their preparation. One 36 year old has expressed a vague interested in the nucleus and is discerning, but no others since 1979.

Cultural Context: only recently has a nucleus choice been spoken about in KwaZulu Natal. If any young Zulu woman would be interested, the cultural contextualization would have to be very carefully thought through. Nucleus members are represented on the national leadership team and report 2x year on personal situations.

Dedication promises: the three evangelical counsels were expressed this way by Marilyn Aitken:

“Almighty and Eternal God, I MARILYN AITKEN, wishing to dedicate my life entirely to your service in the International Grail Movement, affirm my belief in the vision of the Grail and its mission in the world. Responding to a personal call I freely choose a life of celibacy for the sake of Jesus Christ and His Kingdom. I wish to give my life and all my resources to the common mission of the Grail, while at all times striving to remain open to its developing reality. Trusting in your love and faithfulness Lord and witnessed by EMILIA CHARBONNEAU and MARY EMMA KUHN, who represent SIMONE TAGHER, the International President, I swear to live out my commitment to you within the international nucleus of the Grail in communion with all who form the Grail Movement, accepting its designated authority now and in the years to come. So help me God Almighty”

Criteria: No contemporary criteria but in practice, criteria include: prayer, ongoing spiritual search, committed Catholic, vocation to celibacy, professional involvement and good education, ability to live alone as well as in community, self-knowledge and personal growth work, stable personality.
Nucleus members have provided consistent leadership and financial stability for the movement in SA. Attempts to hand over responsibility to others have been difficult. Continuation of nucleus: difficult given the ages of present nucleus members but good support would be found among general membership if someone was interested. Role of Nucleus: has provided depth of spiritual dimension, continuity in the SA Grail and availability for works.

“Most of us are busy women, with busy and full lives, in most cases with families and children, and our Grail meetings offer the chance to reflect and be refreshed.”

Summary, A-2:
Membership: total number 42: 5 nucleus, 13 married, 12 widowed/divorced, 12 single. Ages: 6 are 20-29; 1 is 30-39; 5 are 40-49; 7 are 50-59; 10 are 60-69; 8 are 70-79; 5 are 80-100.

Process and Formation: attend a local Grail event. In KZN a program in which Grail women are employed attracts young women to explore by meeting SA and international Grail members, travel to Mozambique, etc. One to one follow up with an interested woman and then involvement in programs for new women with older Grail members. Continuing formation in local groups, resulting in a local commitment. A national commitment can be made after 2-3 years of involvement locally, taking responsibility, and international awareness/experience if possible.

Interested women: want to deepen spiritually, are hungry for justice and peace; responsive to needs around them; have a broad worldwide vision; are brave and want to transform the world; want growth in knowledge.

Cultural Context: Through our Grail commitment we carry responsibility for developing and enhancing the vision of the Grail. We not only strive to live gospel (Grail) values we also pass them on to our children, the next generation and those whose lives we influence, thereby striving to create a better world for all.

South Africa celebrated 20 years of democracy this year. We have a new constitution which stresses equality of all people. However economically and educationally this has not been fully realised as yet. Many of our members struggle financially and often carry heavy family and financial responsibilities. We need continually to be attuned to the South African context – the political, social, economic and environmental situation and the implications – to live our Grail commitment responsibly.

Respect is a very important value in our African culture and it is a Grail value. Respect extends to all areas of life toward all people, especially those who are most vulnerable - the poor and homeless, the elderly, children as well as those who differ in colour, religion, etc.

We seek to educate ourselves and our social environment to become responsive to the needs around us, e.g. giving workshops on alternatives to
violence with young people in the townships, or assisting farmers to learn financial skills.

We strive to live – individually and as a movement – the society we long for by working to break down barriers between groups be they religious, ethnic or racial. “Ask not for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee…”

We are committed to justice, peace, stability and sustainability of all that is loving and Godly in our lives.

In our individualistic society we as Grail value community and strive to create communities of care in whichever way we are able – family, parish, neighbourhood as well as our coming together as Grail.

The Grail provides a space and platform for its members to express or discuss African, feminist, eco and indigenous spirituality. Over the years the Grail in South Africa has become ‘the rainbow nation’. At our meetings we celebrate our diversity in prayer and in song. Already in the 60s we moved from being a purely Catholic organisation to being ecumenical and this has enriched us as we learn

**Sweden**

**Summary**

*Membership*: Ages 45-55, including married, divorced, and single women. Other dimensions of our life commitments may be more important parts of our identity than these traditional categories. We have a very open approach, beginning as a group of friends, influenced by visits from Portuguese Grail members. New members are gradually socialized into the group. International Grail contact is very important for our membership and members are all involved in demanding professional work. We have no formal process of commitment now, but are exploring as some wish this and others do not. We have remained faithful to the Grail and to each other for 25 years and find that an important fact of our commitment.

“We feel that it is women who are open to others, to the world and to deeper dimensions of our reality are attracted to us (i.e., open-mindedness is a distinguishing feature). We often speak of the three pillars: being an international community of women, interested in and engaged in social change processes and committed to spiritual search/expression of faith. We want to support each other to grow, and also respond to the challenges in the world around us. Most of us identify as Christian, however we belong to different churches and denominations and some are more church-goers than others. A couple are ordained ministers of the Church of Sweden.”
Tanzania

“I said to Jesus on the cross. Show me the way Lord and WOW what a wonderful way he showed to me as he led me to the Grail vocation.”

Summary: A-1

**Nucleus Membership:** 61. Ages: 11 between 60-76; 35 between 40-59; 5 between 35-39.

**Nucleus process:** formation program for 3 years; different life experiences in Grail teams and higher education for 5 years; application for nucleus after 5 or more years of living/working with Grail teams and acquiring a profession. On-going formation experiences every year after commitment. Application is made to the nucleus national team and is considered with the national team, and decisions are made. Church and society still support consecrated life but globalization and materialism present challenges to young people in the culture. Poverty, chastity and obedience are the promises made. Criteria for nucleus membership are specific, including commitment to community life, prayer, Eucharist, study and works, financial contributions, availability and care for each other. Young women continue to be interested in nucleus membership. Role of the nucleus: to ensure the continuation of the Movement; to convert the world, facilitate peace, alleviate poverty; help women who suffer; be involved in religious dialogue.

“Through national and international Grail my dreams have been realized as I have gradually grown spiritually, mentally and intellectually.”

Summary: A-2

**Movement Membership:** 88; 61 nucleus; 4 married, 22 in school or working in teams.

**Process for becoming a member:** application to the national leadership team; a one month orientation; four years of formation. They are young Catholic women. Formation has specific content.

Uganda

“Being voices of the voiceless as a mother does for her children”

Summary: A-1

**Recruitment:** young women under 35 years of age, Catholic, single, with basic level of education.

**Formation:** 2 years initially; then 2 years of community experience ending in a first commitment for 2 years; a renewal of this commitment for 5 years and
then a life commitment and dedication. Formation process for the nucleus is clearly structured and takes no less than 10 years. Formation is done in community circles and sometimes we send our women to Tanzania for international community experience.

*Promises*: obedience, celibacy and poverty of heart (sharing resources).

*Process*: application locally with feedback from local and national teams and then application internationally for nucleus membership. Public dedication is preceded by a two month preparation.

*Cultural Context*: In our culture (Baganda and Banyankole) we have a belief of two vocations mainly Married and Religious lives. By the virtue of our promises, people see us as religious (all consecrated people are religious).

Joining the nucleus brings ownership of Grail resources and the presumption of availability for Grail work,

*Role and future of the nucleus*: We are visible through publicity in schools, working in social situations, one-to-one relationships and simplicity of lifestyle and good example. We do expect the nucleus to continue in Uganda. There is one person currently in the process of becoming a nucleus member.

“Commitment to me means living with different people of different colours and cultures. Like different flowers in a vase, to transform this world into a peaceful and beautiful place.”

**Summary: A-2**

*Membership*: Total of 50, 17 are nucleus members; others are married and single. Ages range from 23-75. There is a structured formation process. The first “Come and See” stage invites women to a 1-3 week Grail experience. Stage 2 is a yearlong formation program. The third stage is a year of Grail community experience after which they are eligible to make a first Grail commitment.

Most women attracted to the Grail are young (18 years and up) coming from secondary school. Occasionally there are professional women and an individualized formation program is created for them.

*Cultural Context:*
We have a mixed culture. However, culture has not affected the way the Grail thinks about commitment in our country. Though the contextual situation is changing the way the Grail thinks about commitment in Uganda. This is because there are many new responsibilities for all people and this in a way affects the commitment. This is reflected in attendance of Grail meetings and feasts.

A commitment is made to serve God in the context of the Grail vision. We have a common text for the commitment ritual which is done within a Catholic Eucharistic celebration.
United States

Summary: A-1

Nucleus members: 22. Ages: 1 is 67-69; 4 are 70-79; 8 are 80-89; 9 are 90-99. The last dedication of a current member was in 1975. In 1990’s another dedication was made but the person was released after several years.

A formation process was set up specifically for each individual involving: small group meetings, community living, international experience, psychological evaluation, demonstrated commitment to Grail vision/mission.

Nucleus members have serious concerns about any new membership into this aging nucleus community.

Cultural Context: key changes which affect life choice are rapid cultural change, longer life span, new understandings of sexuality, and expanded roles for women.

Within the Grail significant aspects or changes include:

- Grail’s very broad vision and mission, almost unlimited ways of expressing that in daily life;
- US Grail movement’s understanding of all Grail commitment as life-long;
- Most new US Grail members are in mid-life and already have a life commitment with a spouse or partner.

Paradoxically, the US Grail movement’s understanding of all Grail commitment as life-long, eliminates one of the elements that otherwise might distinguish the nucleus dedication from other forms of Grail commitment.

Promises are made to God/Christ, responding to a personal call. Half the membership felt called to the transformation of the world and accepted celibacy as part of that call. The other half felt called to a life of prayer/celibacy and accepted transformative action as part of the call.

Criteria: we accept the historical criteria but are open to exploring with a non-Catholic woman; exploring this commitment for a shorter period of time; considering a younger group of women making this commitment together.

Responsibility: until the mid-1960’s nucleus members carried most of the leadership roles. Since then leadership has been shared. Now very few nucleus members are in responsible roles.

Commitment: For survival the US Grail needs continuity, stability and member availability for both leadership roles and maintenance roles. “Committed core”
is a term which has been used over the past 10-15 years to indicate the group taking personal responsibility for the Grail as a priority. It identifies those who, for a given period, can be “counted on” to attend National Meetings and General Assemblies, to accept formal roles of leadership and staffing, etc. This has never moved from concept and discussion to implementation.

We do not expect the nucleus in the US to continue.

“Helped by gentle hands, small flames begin to flicker, lighting the darkness.”

Summary: A-2
Membership: 221 total. Ages: 4 are 20-29; 6 are 30-39; 15 are 40-49; 20 are 50-59; 55 are 60-69; 57 are 70-79; 40 are 80-89-10 are 90-99. Don’t know about 13. Membership process: Explorer stage, person accompanied by a group or individual using The Mentoring Guide with a specific curriculum. The person is expected to attend a local group, engaged in Grail activities, know Grail members and explorers, volunteer, take responsibility, attend national meetings, and become familiar with the international Grail. A commitment ceremony takes place locally and nationally. Outreach is purposeful through specific programs. New women are attracted by spirituality, commitment to social justice, women bonding, and care for the earth and represent many different practices of faith and spirituality. There is a wide variety of ages, life choices and professions.

Cultural Context: Membership has been understood differently, with various categories over 70 years. Currently all members are considered fully responsible and encouraged to participate fully locally and nationally. All make a financial contribution. Memberships is understood to be life-long with the level of active involvement conditioned by the life circumstances of each member.

A Grail commitment ceremony is always done in a local and/or national community setting with a ritual designed by the individual and her team. There is not a standard formula for commitment. Members commit to: live out the Grail's mission/vision, vote, contribute financially, and stay informed about Grail issues.

“As she raises her face to the brightness and warmth of the sun, the sunflower realizes she is not alone but one of many like herself, all looking up to the sky. When the wind blows, she will not break, but bend with the united strength and support of her sisters.”
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>40: ages 26-80</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Inspired by early nucleus leadership</td>
<td>How to proceed if someone is interested in the nucleus</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>4; no info. on ages</td>
<td>13 plus 2 friends; 40’s-80’s</td>
<td>Never had one in Canada</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No: always dedication to Christ</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>5; ages 71-84</td>
<td>15 plus 19 friends</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>Yes, but tailored to individual</td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15: ages 38-77</td>
<td>Around 1970</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes; no emphasis on lifetime commitment</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>38; ages 24-78</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No effect on Grail thinking</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mozambique</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>44, all ages from youth to mature adults</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Multicultural context is important</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>13; ages 80s-90s</td>
<td>41 as well as friends</td>
<td>1982 released in 1991; 1968 last dedic.</td>
<td>In the past; not now</td>
<td>Yes; no emphasis on lifetime commitment</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>No nucleus currently</td>
<td>35; ages 21-80</td>
<td>1968 last dedic.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No; common spiritual base, family oriented</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>PNG</td>
<td>1; age 60</td>
<td>53; ages 30-60</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Yes: First become a Grail Member</td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>“Not Yet”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>14, ages 49-82</td>
<td>76; ages 20-82</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Yes, individualized</td>
<td>Yes, members ages 43-55 responsible for older and younger family members limiting availability to Grail</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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## Blessing the Space: Stage 2 Statistics, page 2

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>5; ages 70's-80's</td>
<td>37; ages 20's-90's</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>Yes, in past</td>
<td></td>
<td>One person age 36 &quot;vaguely interested&quot;</td>
<td>Age of group seems to preclude this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13; ages 45-55</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No context for nucleus choice</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No, no history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>61; ages 35-76</td>
<td>88; 4 are married</td>
<td>No info.</td>
<td>Yes, 5 years</td>
<td>Yes, church and society support consecrated life</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>50; ages 23-75</td>
<td>No info</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No, but new cultural influences</td>
<td>One person in process</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>22; ages 67-90's</td>
<td>197; ages 20's-90's</td>
<td>mid 1990's-released; last dedication in 1975</td>
<td>Yes, in past</td>
<td>Yes, lifetime commitment not popular; women join Grail already committed</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
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Questions for Stage III Process
“Blessing the Space Between Us”

The questions below are based on Stages I and II and are meant as a tool to discuss the contributions of Grail women from different countries around the world. Use them as it is appropriate in your group.

The information in Part “A”, however, is needed to provide perspective for the future of the Grail and should be completed by all groups. Part B provides more open ones but we would very much like your responses. Your thoughts and opinions are very important for the work of the team.

Do not forget: Deadline for the returns is the 15 May 2015 via Mary Omedo.

A: In your country...

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| 1. | Are nucleus, single married still used when talking about commitment in the Grail | Yes:  
No: | Are they still relevant in your country? |
| 2. | What did you commit to when you joined the Grail | Taking responsibility  
Contributing financially  
A promise to God | Other commitments? |
| 3. | Did vision and mission statement influence your commitment in the Grail | Yes:  
No: | How? |
| 4. | Will the commitments you made carry the vision of the Grail into the future? | Yes:  
No: | Your hopes and fears |

B: In your country...

During the early days of the Grail, nucleus members were the primary leaders in the international Grail. They lived in community, were available for the work of the Grail nationally and internationally, and shared all their money and resources. In many countries this changed and in others there have never been nucleus members.

You are asked to read and reflect in small groups on the materials from Stages I and II.

1. What differences do you notice among the different countries? What do you notice about the differing understandings of commitment and dedication around the world? What is the situation in your country? What for you are the key behaviours and values which you look for in your members’ commitments? If the nucleus is important in your country, describe why. Please be specific.
2. How has the understanding of who is a committed member of the Grail in your country changed over time? How would you describe your country's understanding of how the Grail community grows, is supported and continuity is maintained both nationally and internationally?

3. We are aware that today the nucleus is growing only in some countries. In other countries, most of the members are older.
   
i. What are the challenges for the growth of the Grail in your country?
   
ii. If the nucleus is important for your reality, please tell us how this is so. What are the challenges for the growth of the nucleus in your country? In what ways is it a challenge for you internationally that the nucleus is not found in some countries and has mostly older members in other countries?
   
iii. If your country has only older nucleus members, what are the challenges for your broader membership?
   
iv. If your country does not have nucleus members, how does the presence of the nucleus in other countries challenge you?
   
v. For some women, particularly those rooted in the Catholic tradition, the nucleus is a vocational response to God. How might such women from countries that do not foster this life choice be accommodated in our international structures?
   
vi. Internationally, Grail women reflect diverse cultures and life choices. How is this a richness for the Grail in your country? As a nucleus member, how is it important that you are part of an international movement where there are members who have made other life choices? For others, how is the presence of the nucleus in the international Grail important to you?

I bless the space between us because my Grail commitment spans that space.
Political news, environmental issues, and personal stories: Events are not faceless.
I care, hold in The Light, appreciate. (USA)