



LEADERSHIP RETREAT REPORT

May 29, 2015

Brothers,

Earlier this month we had 34 men gather at Triangle Y Ranch in Arizona for our annual Leadership Retreat. This is the second year that Illuman has hosted this retreat.

The Leadership Retreat is designed to address organizational issues previously covered in our annual Soularize meeting. The Leadership Retreat participants include only the Wisdom Elders and the Board. This year, we also invited 15 men nominated by their chapters to participate. Most of these men represented a younger generation of men who are actively engaged in our work.

Consistent with a focus on deepening how Council is integrated into our work, we spent the first two days in training with our brothers from the Center for Council and the Ojai Foundation. I will write more about our commitment to Council later in this update.

Our two days of Council training provided the lubrication for in-depth, spirited, and very smooth meetings. Our pattern is for the Board and Wisdom Elders to meet separately for a day and then meet together to share their findings, recommendations, and next steps. Our Council trainers tell us that when we work in Council, a “third force” is evident. For us, that third force is clearly the presence of God or the Holy Spirit or spirit. Well, whatever name we use, the third force was surely with us. While we met in separate groups and had similar topics to discuss, the outcomes of those conversations were remarkably aligned.

This report is an overview of the topics covered and decisions made. Since the Wisdom Elders and Board work closely together, this report does not break out which group worked on what.

1. Operational Issues

We will continue to develop and implement processes that will ensure our smooth management of business. We will be producing a document outlining our standard operating procedures and publishing a yearly calendar of key dates. Board members have taken responsibility for specific areas of our business as follows:

- Tim McIntee: US and international legal
- Damien Faughnan: Marketing and communications (interim), programs, executive committee
- Robin Anker-Peterson: International relationships
- Joe Hebert: Finance
- Michael Dunne: MROP manual and support for emerging chapters
- Andy Gray: Technology
- Terry Symens-Bucher: Council
- Bob Colaresi: Development of Illuman resources to sustain our future

This will allow the Board to demonstrate accountability for work commitments.

The Wisdom Elders will be adding two members to their group to allow for greater representation. This group also endorsed a policy of rotating it's membership. This group consists of current and former Weavers, Conveners, and Ritual Elders. The consensus is that this group should be comprised of 10-12 elders.

2. MROPs

The Board has responsibility for the scheduling and management of MROPs. While our goal is to increase the number of MROPs offered across the world, it is a complex undertaking. Our international brothers are doing a terrific job of self-managing the scheduling of MROPs. In the US, scheduling requires special consideration to ensure that there is sufficient time between events. Men are most likely to attend an MROP based on their schedule. For a significant number of men, schedule is more important than location, hence the need to ensure we do not schedule too many MROPs in close proximity to each other.

Here's a quick recap of the number of MROPs in the US by year:

2014 – 2
2015 – 3
2016 – 4
2017 – 5-6

The deadline to host a 2017 MROP in the US has passed. However, we have created a grace period, and the Board will consider all MROP hosting requests at the July 11th Board meeting. Late applications will not be considered (hot edges!) and please remember that a Chapter must submit an event budget with their MROP request.

The Board will create a model to support those emerging chapters who wish to host an MROP.

The Wisdom Elders identified the need to have additional Weavers available to lead the growing number of MROPs.

There continues to be concern about the lack of men of color and minority men in our work. This has been a recurring concern for Illuman. Previous attempts to engage with Hispanic men proved challenging and we hope to make another attempt by hosting a bilingual MROP in 2017.

3. Leadership Model

The Board adopted a model for leadership (see Appendix A) that is both aspirational and practical. All men are called to leadership in various ways. Our model allows us to provide men who aspire to leadership with a guide to what leadership looks like. It also provides us with a framework for working with men who act out of a vision that is smaller than required to meet Illuman's mission. This model also serves as a guide for helping men understand where they need to grow. We should have men show up to our programs who are wounded; we want these men to belong in our work. Since they often aspire to leadership positions, it is important that we highlight the fact that some men have wounds which lead them to challenge perceived hierarchy, authority, and power.

Whether aspirational or corrective, this model allows us to help a man understand where he might need to grow as a leader.

4. Board President Succession

Damien Faughnan has indicated his desire to step down as Board President after Soularize in 2016. The Board will seek a successor in an orderly process that begins immediately. A nomination committee of three Board members (Joe Hebert (Chair), Bob Colaresi, and Michael Dunne) and two Wisdom Elders (Kevin Anderson and Jim Taylor) will work on a succession plan. Damien's successor can be one of the existing Board members or a man recruited from outside the existing Board. We expect that this man will become Board Vice-President at Soularize 2015 and shadow Damien for a year before assuming the Board President role.

To effect an orderly transition, the Board will endeavor to ensure that some clear operating efficiencies are in place by the time the incoming Board President assumes his role.

5. Strategic Initiative 1: Program Committee

This committee will consist of four Weavers and the Board President. It is designed to manage all current programs and evaluate both programs created in the Chapters (for wider distribution) and programs to be developed by Illuman. This committee will determine an approach to making as much programming available to our men as possible.

The Wisdom Elders and the young men in the witness circle affirmed that we should remain committed to our core programs for a second-half-of-life spirituality. While we looked at further developing our programs, the message is clear; we need to improve what we already do and extend that work before we branch out into offering additional programs. This is consistent with the last several Soularize events where, when new offerings were considered, the collective wisdom suggested that keeping our focus on the JOI, MROP, and second-half-of-life programs is our best way forward.

6. Strategic Initiative 2: Personnel Committee

Our history requires that men who seek leadership roles be assessed and developed. Our small organization has used an organic approach in the past. Today we need a disciplined and thoughtful process to support a man who feels called to leadership in roles such as Weaver, Convener, and Ritual Elder. This committee will be formed to build on the excellent work of Jim Clarke, Jim Taylor, Stephen Gambill, and Adrian Scott. The Board takes this work seriously and will likely contract with an Elder to oversee the process.

We will immediately seek to add Weavers in the US. The Wisdom Elders expect that we will need two more Weavers to meet the demand for MROPs.

The Board also agreed that a man who has served as a Weaver or Ritual Artist would be invited and encouraged to attend our annual Leadership Retreat in perpetuity. This is in the spirit of honoring our elders.

The personnel committee will also address any personnel issues that a Chapter has failed to resolve and review cases where men act out of a vision that is smaller than required to meet Illuman's mission

7. Strategic Initiative 3: Document Management

We will implement a document management system before June 30, 2015. This will allow authorized users to access MROP documents and other programs (e.g. Firmings) that we are authorized to share.

Related to the implementation of a document management system, we will create and implement a data policy that will allow us to comply with the law and best practices for data-sharing.

8. Strategic Initiative 4: Approach to Council

We are wholeheartedly committed to the full integration of the Way of Council into our work. It is now an important lineage for us and we acknowledge that we are integrating wisdom from the Ojai Foundation and the Center for Council.

We will continue to develop a Council format that reflects what we know facilitates the transformation of men. Our version of Council will ideally incorporate nature and ritual.

The Wisdom Elders created a document to capture our deep commitment to Council – please see the attached statement: “Preamble to the Illuman Way of Council”.

It is also fully recognized that men think they know Council when, in reality, there is much that we still collectively have to learn. It is important that we build a shared understanding of Council so that we can distinguish between what is and what is not Council.

We will not conduct trainings or certify Council Carriers. We will rely on other parties (Center for Council) to do any certification. We will, however, fully explore how we can conduct Council workshops to learn what works and does not work to support men in the Journey of Illumination. And, in truth, men are trained in Council by being in Council.

As an organization, we are committed to continue the building of our relationship with the Center for Council to more fully understand and integrate Council into the Journey of Illumination.

We have much to learn.

9. Strategic Initiative 5: Development

A new Board committee, under the leadership of Bob Colaresi, will focus on supporting efforts to raise funds for the development of our work. We are heavily dependent on donations and are particularly interested in pursuing grants and funding from foundations.

10. Budget

The Board will create and distribute a budget by mid-summer.

Finally, the young men who attended the Leadership Retreat were amazing. They affirmed that our work should continue to focus on men who are doing their second-half-of-life work.

11. Journey of Illumination (JOI)

Both the Board and Wisdom Elders confirmed that the JOI remains our primary focus: To call men into and an intentional spiritual journey. To form communities or small groups that support men on their spiritual journey. We confirm our commitment to offering programs that support and reinforce the JOI.

Illuman Leadership Model

For the past 20 years we have seen leaders of our men's work come and go. We've learned a lot about men who aspire to leadership roles—both what makes for a good leader and also some of the typical pitfalls for men who have emerged to lead our work.

It's safe to say that leaders are made, not born. It takes discipline, persistence, passion, courage, vision, and commitment to become a leader. No man is the complete package. Our men's work affords a man the opportunity to grow as a leader by developing his leadership skills. This work will also expose a man's weaknesses; any hint that a man is not doing his spiritual work is often evident to the men in our organization. Leaders of any spiritual work should, rightfully, face intense scrutiny to ensure that their stated values match their actions in the world. Authentic, service-oriented men have emerged from our work and we must continue to foster the emergence of men, young and old, who will lead us into the future.

We embrace a model of servant leadership. This ancient model of leadership is found in many religious and philosophical texts. For our purposes, we simply think of servant leadership as a model where a man seeks to be of service. He rises to a leadership role because he seeks to serve first instead of aspiring to occupy a power role. The difference is obvious in our work—we have men in leadership roles who, having experienced the deepening of their spiritual journey, are keen to ensure that other men have an opportunity to do their spiritual work. These generative men serve other men in a way that makes the men involved wiser, freer, healthier, and more likely themselves to embrace service.

The Center for Servant Leadership defines servant leadership as a lifelong journey that includes discovery of one's self, a desire to serve others, and a commitment to lead. Servant-leaders continually strive to be trustworthy, self-aware, humble, caring, visionary, empowering, relational, competent, good stewards, and community builders.

This model of leadership stands in contrast to typical hierarchical leadership models. Men operating in more typical models usually aspire to acquire status and/or power through leadership positions. In contrast, men who have a deep service orientation do not propose themselves for key roles and rarely engage in self-promotion or advocate that they take a Weaver, Teacher, or Ritual Elder role. Other men usually notice a man's gifts and invite him into a leadership role.

A man who aspires to be an Illuman leader understands that his ego is both a catalyst and a potential obstacle. He understands that "high" ego is as detrimental as "low" ego. Such a man is self-aware and has a realistic self-assessment of his gifts and shortcomings, and is in active discernment about "his work in the world." He understands that his shadow and golden shadow both impact how he shows up and works with others.

There are five characteristics of Illuman leaders:

1. Walk the Talk. Illuman leaders walk their talk. It is evident to other men that their behavior is aligned with their values. Other men can see that they model a commitment to the Journey of Illumination. Their life is a personal example of the pursuit of spiritual wisdom, not just as an intellectual exercise, but as a way of life. They model the journey into which they invite other men. All men understand that, at times, any of us might be out of sync with how we aspire to live and lead.

2. Share a Big Vision. An Illuman leader can hold a big vision for our men's work. It is not his vision, but a shared vision. He understands that every local expression of our work is deeply connected to a larger vision of a world where men are doing their spiritual work. He helps other men connect to and be part of this bigger vision. In this way, he extends and multiplies our work. Such a man understands that our vision will evolve as we respond to the needs of our times.

Our leaders understand and respect that while our work is largely grounded in the Judeo-Christian tradition, we hold ourselves open to all wisdom traditions. [Our bigger vision](#) includes *all* men who are genuinely searching for a deeper spiritual life. We welcome men from all spiritual traditions and no spiritual tradition—any

man who is seeking a life-changing spirituality. We are fed by the wisdom traditions of forgiveness and radical inclusivity.

3. Challenge Respectfully to Keep “Hot Edges.” Illuman leaders commit to learning how to challenge from a place of love and wisdom. They understand that, in a spiritual organization, leaders are often reluctant to challenge processes and people. Yet we know that men won’t take us seriously if we are not serious about learning from each other. So we lead with a model of “keeping the edges hot.”

Illuman men commit to keeping “hot edges” by learning the art of providing, soliciting, and accepting feedback—both about our personal lives and about our work. All leaders must learn to challenge from a place of humility and love. When done well, this differentiates Illuman from leaders of other men’s spiritual organizations.

4. Support Others to Grow Spiritually. Illuman leaders are committed to growing with the men with whom they work. We are not looking for leaders who are “good administrators”; we look to our leaders to develop the skills needed to support other men in their journey. Our leaders are supportive and practical in helping men on their spiritual journey. Some pastoral or spiritual direction training is ideal, but not a requirement. An Illuman leader can only lead other men as far as he has gone on his own spiritual journey.

5. Lead With Love. An Illuman leader should always communicate from a place of love for his brothers. We are all broken; if we are not now, then we will be at some point in the future. For this truly to be a community of brothers, men who lead need to be able to reach into their hearts and stand from a place of love. In our core program, the MROP, it is learning that we are loved that changes everything. We model this disposition—even when it’s the hardest thing we might ever do. We will not give up on a man and the possibility of reconciliation and forgiveness.

This is the model of servant leadership to which we aspire. We understand that all men fall short. We hold this model as aspirational and turn to God, our higher power, or whatever source of wisdom we need, to support us in this ongoing journey toward leadership maturity and wisdom.

Preamble to the Illuman Way of Council

Illuman understands the Way of Council as a communal contemplative practice. It affirms the importance of listening and speaking from the heart within a circle of men, but it also recognizes the circle as being more than the sum of its parts. Illuman wants to be open to the mystery of the Spirit that arises within the wisdom and discernment of the Council. It recognizes that we run out of words in the presence of something larger than ourselves. This necessarily widens the circumference of the circle of men, extending our vision to a wider community to which we also have to listen.

Our Implementation of Council

The Way of Council is an essential practice of Illuman, implemented at all levels of our work, from rites of passage to chapter meetings, from our homes to our wider communities. We respect this process enough to equip men to do it well, but we also acknowledge that Council emerges apart from our efforts to control it. Circles have an archetypal life of their own. Council is the best teacher of Council.