

My Journey

By Joel Blunk

Joel Blunk is Associate Pastor of the State College Presbyterian Church in Central Pennsylvania, Convener of *the WheelHouse*, which seeks to join role with soul, and a Wisdom Elder and Weaver with Illuman.

How and when were you introduced to male spirituality? Believe it or not, it came from my father. He had Rohr and Bly books on his shelf and attended men's circles in the latter 1980s; he even had his own drum. I thought he was crazy. Then my first son was born and everything changed. I read Moore and Gillette's *King, Warrior, Magician, Lover*, was invited to join a men's group at church, and began to dream about a new future for my sons, myself, and the world.

How has participation in male spirituality impacted your life? Friendships, new habits, authentic living, deeper connection with the natural world... I'm a more prayerful person. I have more courage to be myself. I'm leading men's circles, including a yearlong program known as Men4Directions, which meets seasonally in the woods and includes a vision quest. This May our local men's group will conduct the 7th annual Crossings: Marking the Move to Manhood, a rite of passage we designed ourselves for boys becoming men.

Describe a recent Illuman/M.A.L.E.s event you attended. What was the impact on you? My first event as a Wisdom Elder with Illuman was an organizational meeting last February in Oracle, AZ. Leaders from the Center for Council facilitated the first three days, introducing us to Council, a powerful way of forming community involving a circle, talking piece, and a willingness to "listening with the ears of a rabbit." Afterward, we split up into groups, as the Illuman Board and Wisdom Elders, to complete long lists of tasks. The council we had done, and continued to do on our own, provided amazing focus and synergy, paving the way to creativity that exceeded expectations for our work. It was remarkable, further affirming the path we're on together.

Is there a book about male spirituality you can recommend? Why? I was recently invited to join a local group of men who are reading James O'Dea's *Creative Stress: a path for evolving souls living through personal and planetary upheaval*. It's not exclusively a male spirituality book, but it clearly covers the subject. Written for a wide and diverse audience, it speaks of issues familiar to our Illuman men's work—like true self/false self, ego, soul,

calling, and community—in ways that I find refreshing and helpful. In a nutshell, O'Dea reveals that stress is not always bad or the enemy, but the very source of our growth and creativity, worthy of embracing if we hope to live large.

What's one thing you'd recommend to a man starting on the spiritual journey? Trust it. There are so many distractions, competing demands, naysayers both around us and within our own heads, but the truth is, it's worth the adventure. Your "one wild and precious life" depends on it. Start by taking one step: meet with a friend, read a book on the subject, venture outside, offer a prayer. If it's true, you'll know, and be on your way.