



BUILDING
THE NEXT
FIVE
GENERATIONS
OF AUSTRALIAN
MEN



July 2009

Reflections- Rob Jones 2009 MROP Weaver

Words cannot adequately describe the change in my being that began back in 2005 when I attended the Men's Rites in Arizona.

After serving for 10 years as a pastor, I was tired, burnt out – numb. I had served the Lord with all my heart. What started out with passion and excitement, gradually over the years turned to running on empty and eventually one day I could not get out of bed. I remember in that state of exhaustion, reading a book called "Everything Belongs" by Richard Rohr and in my pain and despair, I emailed him. Something about this man's writings told me he knew the way forward. His words gave meaning to what my heart was trying to show me. Richard did reply to me and soon I was attending the Arizona MROP.

The last thing I wanted was another seminar or talkfest—

and what I received was a joy to behold. Powerful ritual together with safe meaningful sharing opened up a space within me to begin processing a lifetime of pain and grief. Much of my drivenness, passion and need for certitudes were really a mask covering deep insecurities and fatherhood wounds. Somehow I had become disconnected from myself and life itself. At the MROP I was guided into stillness, solitude and being attentive to what is. This shift was initially very difficult, but in time the Great I Am has enabled me to find an inner security (inner witness) that has enabled me to serve again, this time with greater freedom, clarity and love. I see MROP as sort of "Depth Charge". It goes in, drops down and then goes off. Initially things may even seem worse. Running away is counter productive. I have learned to stay with the pain until it has taught me what it needs to teach me.

When the heart is cut or cracked or broken, do not clutch it. Let the wound lie open. Let the wind from the good old sea blow in to bathe the wound with salt— and let it sting. Let a stray dog lick it. Let a bird lean in the hole and sing. –a simple song like a tiny bell.-and let it ring. Let it go. Let it out. Let it all unravel. Let it free and it will be a path on which to travel. (Michael Leunig)

Men, if you sense from what I have shared, that you would like to be considered for MROP this year – give us a call at MTM or fill in the application form downloadable from the web.

2009 Special Men's Rites of Passage Issue



Building The Next Five Generations of Men

Dear Friends and Supporters,

Excitement is growing as we approach this year's Men's Rites of Passage at Camp Somerset. This will be the third rite we have held in Australia and we are expecting our largest group yet.

The MROP leadership team recently spent a weekend camped alongside one of the streams at Camp Somerset in preparation for this year's event. The aim of the weekend was to spiritually prepare the team for the week long event. A great time was had in contemplative prayer, ritual, good fellowship, walking over the site and good food. As Weaver of this year's event, I am overjoyed by the quality and depth of the team. This year will be another very special transformative time. I am in the privileged position to monitor the spiritual progress of men before and post MROP. I am continually humbled at the work God does through us and indeed in spite of us.

You may have noticed the phrase (Building the next five generations of Australian Men). This is constant reminder of the enormous work ahead to pass this wisdom not only to this generation but also to future generations. It will take at least five generations to see fruit so everything is for the long haul. Very seldom does one see the greater work done in individual lives. This is a great test for the ego.

Rob Jones
MTM Australia



Steve Freeman, Graham Endicott, Max Dickman, Bill Sweeney and Ron Nix



Steve Freeman 2009 MROP Ritual Elder

The problem with talking about my experience of MROP is that mere words are insufficient. I've spoken to a lot of guys who have experienced the MROP and "life changing" seems to be the unanimous verdict and I certainly agree.

I guess in reality you cannot devote five days of your life to intentionally seek God for yourself experientially and hope to come back the same. That would not be in keeping with reality. And if I had to say what has changed for me the most I would have to say my relationship to "what is".

The MROP was for me a profound encounter with reality. After the time of peeling back the layers of the identity I have made for myself, of what I do and who I say I am, I could see myself in a clearer light. Initially my pain and neediness were most apparent, I struggled with my

inability to feel the pain I knew to be near but couldn't quite grasp. My years of successful pain avoidance stopped me from going where I could see I needed to go. Finally through the frustration and sadness of this I wept over my inability to weep, and this opened my heart to the reality of my pain and I touched it. Here Isaiah 43: 18-19 became very real to me: "Forget the former things; do not dwell in the past. See I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it. I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland"

There I was in a dry desert streambed, with a new thing springing up; a stream was flowing from me there in that wasteland. Throughout this grief time and also my time in the wilderness the following day I encountered a level of truth that was both simple and beautiful. My pain & brokenness, and my gift & strength were both there at the same time and it was all OK; it just was.

I see this as an outworking of how God refers to Himself as I AM. He can't be anything more or less, He is who He is, and I, as His beloved son, made in His image, sustained by His breath, am the same.

Life since 2005 has been very interesting and has headed in a very different direction than I thought it would. When I went to the MROP I was a counselling student on Austudy heading for a life of "full time ministry", but since coming home I have been lead back out into the workforce and "onto the tools", and have finished my studies and have continued to work in counselling part-time.

By no means has my life been "solved", but now I look at it from a different vantage point.



Neil Roberts— 2009 MROP Teaching Elder



I have been fortunate enough to be both a participant of and a teaching elder with the MROP. My initial involvement came in 2007 when I attended the MROP at Camp Somerset, and I still remember the sense of anticipation and excitement I had on arrival. For me the MROP was the culmination of a long journey with the thoughts and ideas of Richard Rohr and others. This was the opportunity to try and integrate what I had learnt in my head, but had not yet really let filter down into my heart and body. The initiation process that I was about to undertake was I believed the mechanism to help this happen. The experience was powerful, and begun with the awareness of what it was like to be with such a large gathering of men sharing a common goal, and the sense of us all journeying together. For me the greatest gift of the process was the invitation to silence, and this was ritualised in the daily morning and evening meditations we shared as a group. It was like a breath of fresh air (and the air was often fresh!!) ,

in the context of my busy life. I also enjoyed and benefited from the wise leadings and counsel of Rob 's team of elders, something I was privileged to be part of as an elder the next year. They prepared us all gently but deliberately for the "Great Silence " that was to come. The rituals have to be experienced to be understood but they played a significant part in being able to release much pain from both my spirit and my body. All of the preparation for the day of initiation was important as we all set of on our own for our day in the bush. The questions I wrestled with on the day of initiation were profound and moving leading to a real encounter with God and a sense of deep change by the time we all met together for the evening celebration around the camp fire. Words can never do justice to that kind of meeting with God and along with the rituals will remain part of the mystery of my life.

Last year I was fortunate enough to be invited to attend the MROP again, but this time as a teaching elder. If it was a privilege to partake in the rights as an initiate, then for me it was even more memorable to be there in the role of leading and guiding other men towards the great silence and their meeting with God. To watch, listen and come alongside the men was an opportunity to learn again with a "beginners mind " from their lives and experiences. In some ways to experience the rituals as an observer not a participant was every bit as confronting, moving and transforming as the year before. I look forward again this year, to sharing the journey with a new group of men seeking to explore this profound process of transformation into manhood. The remarkable thing for me is that I will share this time with men who range from the age of 25 to 70 all seeking to know God, themselves and each other at a deeper level. This experience of MROP is an invitation to freedom and relationship which has deepened my life and the lives of those who have attended.

Neil Roberts

Jim Bryan— 2009 MROP Teaching Elder



My marriage broke up, and I felt gutted, I really needed to refocus my life. So I started meeting with Rob, and he suggested (STRONGLY!) that I go to the MROP.

It was just what I needed. It was great to be with other men who were open about their struggles, it was a very safe place to be.

I felt rejected as a man. I needed my masculinity to be reaffirmed. The speakers often said the things I wish my father had told me. I needed a healthy idea of what human life is like: that life is hard (for everyone, not just me. That is normal.) That I grow through the hard times and can help other people through their hard times if I deal openly and honestly with my own. That I am not in control of my life and never can be in control of life. We learn through the things that happen to us in life.

At the camp we often dealt with things through

actions instead of just talking about them. There were powerful wordless dramas, which somehow snuck past my mind and really hit me hard. I found myself in tears several times. I needed a way to get close to God that didn 't feel so " churchy " . We reconnected with God through actions rather than words.

There was a time when we could " grieve " . I didn 't feel sad, so I just sat back and watched. But I don't think I have grieved over the breakdown of my marriage and how it affected my children, so this year I am just going to try some of the actions and see if the feelings will come when I act it out.

We spent some time alone in the bush. I really couldn 't express my feelings about my marriage break up so I took a drawing pad, pencil and I used the green from leaves and blood to express my feelings in pictures. I have always been obsessed about size (or lack thereof) and I found a powerful way to finally lay that spectre to rest.

My life has change drastically since I attended the camp. After the camp I felt like my mind was clear and I could make some good decisions. I left my old job where I just didn 't fit in and got a new job where my talents shine and I feel good and am helping other people, and I found a partner and got married. I feel good about myself so I have also lost weight and gotten fit again.

Yes for me the MROP was life changing.

In some strange way each person has his own camp that uniquely suits him.

I strongly encourage anyone to attend the MROP.

Jim Bryan

Graham Endicott— 2009 MROP Teaching Elder

MROP Reflections

What is this all about?
Headaches deep headaches!
Tablets not working...
I'd heard testimonies of changed
lives!

I'm trusting the process
Tablets not working...
Grief ritual, not much happening,
An hours silence...What do I do?

A moment of enlightenment.
Me, writing a poem?
**"Can I grieve the wasted years?
Not being who I could or should
have been.
To accept that the veneer, the mask,
So carefully maintained, should
never have been!"**

I cannot access the grief,
A sense of, "What is this all about",
I'd heard testimonies of changed
lives!
I'm trusting the process.

MROP for me was 2 years ago. At
that time I had no idea what, if
anything had happened at MROP.
What I do have now is a testimony
of a changed life and how I do 'life'
differently. This I can contribute to my MROP experience and yes, I've begun to grieve.

Graham Endicott



Men as Learner's and Elders Groups 2009

We are almost halfway through the M.A.L.E.S program for 2009 and what a wonderful journey it is becoming. Every Monday night from 7pm to 9:30pm during school terms about 50 men come together at the Brookfield Centre to explore their masculinity, challenge themselves, learn about the spiritual path of life and most of all support each other along life 's road. Approximately half the men join the Centering Prayer group and half join the M.A.L.E.s group.



The M.A.L.E.s program aims to introduce men to a range of spiritual and personal issues that may be impacting on their lives. One of the programs strengths for me and one of the things that make it so rich is the range of experiences that the men bring to the gathering. Stories of challenge, success, relationships, love and grief are shared and without exception I feel richer for each night with the group. The men always seem eager to connect with friends and colleagues, and are keen to learn and challenge themselves (and sometimes others!). This process is supported by several men in the group who have completed both the M.A.L.E.S. program and the 'Men 's Rites of Passage ' previously.

The group is informal and tries to find the balance between introducing new information while providing a space for sharing, discussion and a bit of fun. We usually start by 'checking-in ' sitting in circle which gives every man an opportunity to share how he is feeling on the night, and we then spend some time together as a whole group sharing the topic of the night and may then break into smaller groups to share and discuss relevant issues more deeply.

So far we have covered topics such as father hunger, authentic masculinity, the male spiritual journey, and the mother connection. Commencing on Monday July 13 the second half of the program will look at male initiation and it 's five promises, and eldership. Every four or five meetings we have a chapel service which is combined with Rob Jones ' Centering Prayer group providing a great opportunity for all men to experience the warmth and safety of gathering as a group in God 's grace.

One of the key aims of the program is to prepare and challenge men to undertake the Men 's Rites of Passage that is run by M.T.M each year in August. By introducing men to a range of issues impacting on their lives, and engaging uniquely masculine spiritual issues we hope to start a process that will ultimately lead men to authentic masculinity recognised by formal initiation.

Graham Legg



2009 Calendar

men
transforming
men

Date	Event
Fri 17 and Sat 18th Jul 09	Richard Rohr Men's Conference
Sunday 19th July 09	Richard Rohr General Admission: Silence in the City
Monday 20th July 09	Men's Rites of Passage Leadership Training (Closed)
Sunday 9th August 09	Supporters Luncheon
Tues 25 - Sat 29 August 09	Men's Rites of Passage 5 day retreat
Saturday 12th September 09	Men's Community Breakfast
Saturday 10th October 09	Silent Prayer Day
Sunday 1st November 09	Supporters Luncheon
Fri 13-Sun 15 November 09	Tasmanian Men's Retreat: A Journey into Manhood
Saturday 5th December 09	Men's Community Breakfast

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