



**BUILDING
THE NEXT
FIVE
GENERATIONS
OF AUSTRALIAN
MEN**



July 2011

Reflections- Rob Jones 2011 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.

2011 Special Men's Rites of Passage Issue

Steve Freeman 2011 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 2011 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



William Diplock 2011 MROP Teaching Elder



MROP put life, and my life specifically into a genuine perspective, and it is a perspective I continue to return to all the time, because at the end of the day that is where life is, that is where love is, that is where joy is, that is where God is, and that is where I want to be. It is like a gyroscope that continues to keep balancing me back to what are the important things in life.

There are many aspects of MROP that are way too difficult to put into words and that is good because MROP is a transformational experience that is beyond words, and my experience will be different from your experience. However some of the things that impacted me were being with men that despite creed, religion, sexual orientations, and many other things, we were able to support one another to be the

men we are called to be. To see and experience men being able to do this with one another was amazing. The drumming was brilliant and the way in which community was formed through the drumming was mind blowing.

The times of silence and, times spent in nature were healing and assisted me to see and hear the things I was missing in being so busy and task focussed. I discovered life and death everywhere, I realised the big questions I had in life were really not the big questions even though I was so attached to them, I also discovered the little questions were not the little questions even though I didn't give them the attention they were desperately trying to call out for.

I have come to believe that suffering and grief are some of my best teachers. I believe life is good. I believe in the mystery of paradox and holding together the tension of things together that I would normally want to dismiss is very freeing. I have discovered there is more to be gained by letting go than holding on. Life is sacred. And silence has much to teach us. Every circumstance offers an opportunity to learn from even if it is painful. The two things I need to learn the most in life is to love and let go.

MROP provides a homecoming. Coming home to who I always was and always will be, however knowing it in a very different way than I did before. In being able to share I want to finish by honouring all those men from different tribes and cultures who have paved the way for us in the 21st Century, May God Bless Them All.



Richard Fay 2011 MROP Teaching Elder



MROP found me burned out by pastoral life, seemingly on the scrap heap after over a decade of very successful ministry. I was bewildered how God could let this happen when I had been so faithful, diligent and prayerful. MROP was a wonderful place to explore these questions openly without fear of judgment or correction. Oh, the comfort of being truly heard, not given pat answers or another technique to follow! Better still, the rites themselves, wrapped in paradox, mystery and silence, found ways through my rational, “theological” defences. There I discovered a profoundly deeper life waiting for me.

The journey since MROP has not been easy for me. MROP will not ‘fix’ anything. It may make your life more challenging. I cannot return to the game

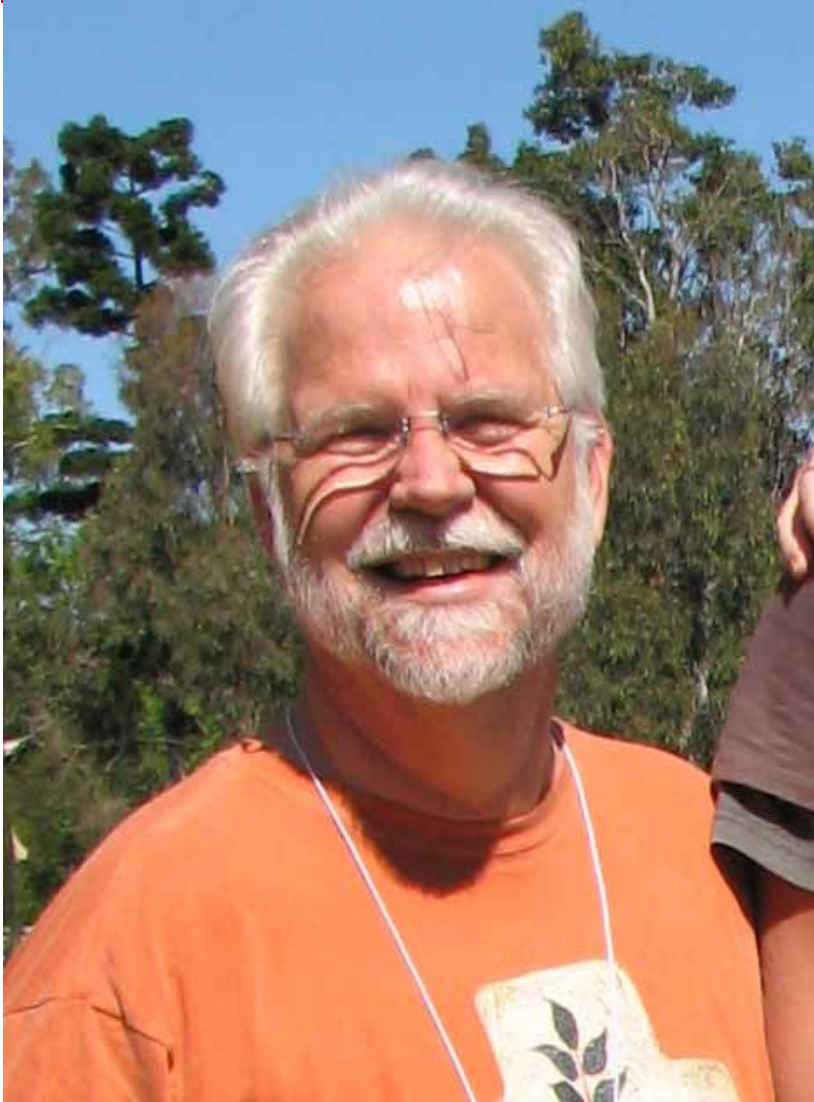
I once played because I now see it for what it is. I guess the game no longer holds any appeal. I am learning not to judge the dance of the false self (in myself or others) but to accept what I cannot control.

MROP is nothing I think anyone can explain. It can only be experienced. It is merely a container, but the essence within, beautiful, formless and empty of self, is what this world-weary soul now drinks from daily. The tools I have gained through this journey are the most precious things I will carry with me for the rest of my life.

Richard Fay



Max Dickman 2011 MROP Logistics Elder



Men's Rites of Passage (MROP) is an experience not a program.

There are a range of men's workshops, seminars, programs and weekends away available in both the Christian and the secular arena which attempt to fix the problem in the modern male by telling him what he has to do to change. There are a range of life coaches, health gurus and personal development programs out there trying to give modern man that silver bullet that will fix everything. That is not what MROP is about!

MROP for me was unlike any of those things. It is a watershed experience I will always be grateful for. It is not yet another person telling me I have to do this or that...change that aspect of my personality...stop being angry... I 'm a failure in this or that. Men generally get enough of that in their lives from their wives or partners, their mothers, their boss or the modern world. Most of us have had distant or absent fathers or a decided lack of really mature men in our

lives to initiate us into this vague thing called manhood. Not many men have had the luxury of an older man in our lives answering the question have I got what it takes?...am I ok?...am I truly an authentic male?

MROP was an opportunity for me in a safe and secure community of men to see what I had been missing in my life through the experiences of my journey. It did not fix the problem. It gave me the tools to understand what was going on around me....and to develop the "eyes to see" what was happening in my life.

For me I recognise that MROP requires an open and honest approach and being prepared to trust in the the process. Don't come to be preached at, lectured to, told what to change....that is not what it is about. Come with sense of curiosity and leave your pre-conceived expectations at home.

Mens Rites of Passage (MROP) is about an initiation into an ancient wisdom that the modern world has forgotten and that we are the poorer for in the twenty-first century. It is about getting to know what makes you tick.....what precipitates those feelings inside that cause us so much grief in the modern world when life throws us off from what we want most...a really authentic masculinity, a true sense of who we are as men that gives contentment and inner peace. Come on guys.....you won't regret it.

Felipe Oliveira MROP 2011

Are you tired? Bored? Thinking there is now way out, or that life is just the way it is, and we have to keep going happy or unhappy. It doesn ' t really matter anymore!

Just like I was 7 years ago.

My dear friend...

Maybe it is time

Maybe it is a invitation of doing everything different from now on.

But how? When? Where? What if I lose the rest of my heart?

What if I lose money?

What if I explode in anger?

What if.....?

That is when we all need a safe place

A safe place to be just our own shit selves.

A place with no judgments

A place with no feelings against you or anybody else.

A place in nature.



Ron Nix MROP 2011

MROP was a very rich experience for me, and I found that there was a deep "Truth" about life and faith which ran through it all. I felt affirmed and truly VALUED by brothers , many of whom I had never met before, and very likely I will not see again. (Though importantly, I have close fellowship with brothers on the same journey, closer to home!)

I had absolutely no doubt, that my Loving Creator was at work through the whole process, giving me new understandings of Himself, His awesome Creation, and my special place in it all. There are a handful of unique and personal ways that I was touched by God, that I shall never forget.

MROP made an "opening" in my soul, through which new understandings came - and have continued to come since. Life is much less "Black and White" and I have a greater capacity to enjoy the Mystery and wonder of life in this world. This is not to say life is now "easy", or that I am somehow "fixed" or "healed" but that's OK - the journey continues, and it is GOOD!



Bill Sweeny MROP 2011

For me, someone who has come through the Catholic system and the Pentecostal system the MROP experience was a great release.



My comprehension of religious things, scriptures etc had me in a state of sound head knowledge but still lacking the reality of what the very scriptures had to offer example, joy, peace, etc. The MROP brought all these things together for me showing me that I was not the only one with these issues and that there was a bigger picture that I was a part of. It gave me some tools that I didn ' t previously have to deal with life and a different perspective on things.

For anyone who is ready I highly recommend it ...it ' s a great ride.

Men as Learner's and Elders Groups 2011



We are almost halfway through the M.A.L.E.S program for 2011 and what a wonderful journey it is becoming. Every Monday night from 7pm to 9:30pm during school terms about 40 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 a 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 12 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 Richard Fays' 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 by 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



What men are saying about men's rites of passage

"Thank you for caring enough to be part of such a life-changing experience. I have come away – not battered or bruised or exhausted, but truly settled in my whole being – physically, emotionally and within my heart."

"Thank you sincerely for the work you are doing with men. As I participated I felt connected and enlivened by my connection to like brothers – brothers in the truest sense of the word. I discovered things in my self and my life that I have been missing or perhaps just misplaced! The settling into silence was a blessing for myself and my overworked mind. I loved it."

"It was so simple and yet so profound. I was pushed beyond my level of comfort in many ways and yet the sense of how it was all 'so right' brought me through. I found brothers I never had or felt I deserved and re-embraced my own life I nearly gave up on earlier this year. Last week at Somerset – I began to trust others again. Thank you for caring for me and guiding me to take this step."



men's rites of passage 2011

date: 23 - 27 August

venue: Camp Somerset, Stanley Pocket Rd via Esk Queensland.

cost: \$650, which includes accommodation, meals, materials and transport from Brisbane CBD.



men **ALIVE**



MEN TRANSFORMING MEN

Unit 2, 17 Bluestone Circuit, Seventeen Mile Rocks, Qld 4073
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Email: admin@mtmaustralia.org.au

www.mtmaustralia.org.au
www.malespirituality.org

men's rites of passage 2011

no sign will be given except the sign of jonaH

luke 11:29



reclaiming the spiritual initiation of men through experiential journeying into the true self, creating a tradition for future generations.



What is the men's rites of passage?

MROP is a five-day/four night deeply prayerful and soulful experience that builds on the classic patterns of male initiation through simple and moving rituals and teaching. Each day includes group prayer, major teachings on central masculine spirituality themes, quiet time for reflection and sharing in the context of a home group'. In the words of the program's founder – Fr Richard Rohr: "Men are asked to come with a willingness to participate from beginning to end and not as an observer. All participants begin at point zero with no agendas to live up to or down to. All that is required is for a man to come with a "beginner's mind" and the readiness of a young novice seeking wisdom. Ultimately, initiation, like life itself, is not a spectator sport."

MROP is

- A personal discovery about masculine spirituality and 'the Holy Mystery'.
- A time to savour the healing and awesome power of nature.
- A process to address issues of loss, grief and relationships with father, other men and others.
- An opportunity to examine life's priorities and ask courageous questions about your 'next step'.
- An invitation to listen to the "quiet voice of God".
- A chance to return to life with a renewed commitment to your gifts.

MROP is not

- Traditional lecture-based retreat.
- An informational workshop about men's spirituality.
- A sensitivity training or deprivation experience.
- A threatening process that requires participants to engage in anything strange or unsafe.
- A test of physical stamina



steps to take

Step one - Pray and Prepare

The MROP is not just another event to attend, nor is it something to "fix" some condition in your life. It is a decision that should come out of prayer; you should know in your "gut" that God is inviting you into it. You might also talk to others who have gone through the MROP. If you don't know someone, email admin@mtmaustralia.org.au or call the office and we can connect you with someone in your area.

Step two - Get an Application

So, you feel ready? Applications are available from MTM Seventeen Mile Rocks or online at www.mtmaustralia.org.au or by phoning MTM (07) 3376 1120

Step three - Mail Application and Deposit

With your completed application, mail it and a \$100 deposit to the address on your application. If accepted, the deposit becomes non-refundable and is applicable to the final payment. If not accepted, your deposit will be refunded.

Step four - Wait and Pray

You will be notified that your application has been received and then re-notified if you have been accepted, not accepted, or placed on a waiting list. If accepted, a full confirmation packet will be sent to you with payment and event instructions.



MROP 2007



MROP 2008



MROP 2009



MROP 2010



men's rites of passage 2011

Mail with payment to:
MEN TRANSFORMING MEN
 MEN PO Box 3284, Darra
 QLD 4076. Registration and
 payment due by Friday
 5th August.

- I enclose \$110 for Friday to Saturday (1 day)
- I enclose \$135 for Friday to Sunday (2 days)
- I would like to sponsor another person.

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY

STATE.....POSTCODE..... COUNTRY.....

EMAIL

HM PHONE()

WORK PHONE()

MOBILE PHONE

YEAR YOU DID MROP

DATE OF BIRTH

METHOD OF PAYMENT

- Cheque made out to MTM Australia
- Visa
- MasterCard

Name on Card

Credit Card No.

Signature

Exp. date

Total Amount \$

men's rites of passage 2011

date: 26 - 27 August

venue: Camp Somerset, Stanley Pocket Rd
 via Esk Queensland.

cost: \$110 which includes:
 accomodation and meals.



men **ALIVE**



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a call to return

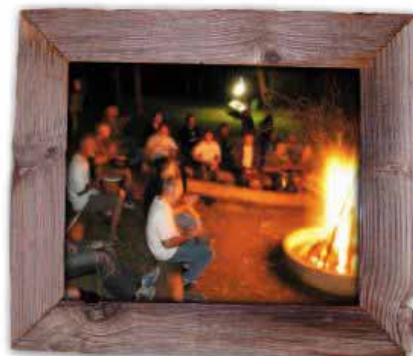
2011 mrop gathering of initiated men

reclaiming the spiritual initiation of men through experiential journeying into the true self, creating a tradition for future generations.



Why return to mrop?

As an MROP initiate, you can have a unique place in building our future generations of initiated men. The aim of the reunion is to gather MROP initiates from around Australia and to encourage each other on their personal walks as men and brothers. You will have the opportunity to inspire and support this year's MROP participants as they begin their own unique journeys. The reunion will also give past initiates a chance to revisit their links to the MROP experience and perhaps seek further growth in their journey through the annual Firming Rites.



testimonials

My experience with MROP was profound and meaningful. Although my life changed significantly during the initiation, getting back into everyday life also presented its challenges. Participating in a subsequent MROP, this time as a returning initiate, will enable me to reconnect with this sacred and vital aspect of my life. I can see I have much more to learn. Returning to MROP is part of that continuing journey.

After receiving so much from my own MROP, I cannot think of a better way to give to my brothers than to stand with them as they begin their new celebration as beloved sons of God.

