

My Journey

By Chris O'Donnell

Chris O'Donnell is the UK Convener.

How and when were you introduced to male spirituality?

I historically worked with adolescent boys and young men who were involved in crime and gangs. I felt my work was limited from a psychological/psychiatric perspective as these guys were seeking belonging and connection which I couldn't prescribe within the limits of my job. I began to explore ways of spiritually working with these boys and men, which led me to men's work around twelve years ago.

How has your participation in Illuman/M.A.L.Es fostered the use and development of your gifts?

Although I have been aware of Rites of Passage for several years, my own MROP was a long time in the making. I finally made the journey to Scotland in 2015. Since then I have been nurtured by the organization in the UK and have been able to put my clinical experience and more recent ministry experience to good use, synthesizing them into the basis of emerging eldership. I am not a natural organizer and the role of convener has stretched and developed that particular gift!

Describe a recent Illuman/M.A.L.Es event you attended. What was the impact on you?

The last event I attended was the UK Moot, which took place over a weekend in October and was open to all initiated men. I convened the event and was initially in my head with the logistics, so it took a little time to land. But once I fully engaged with my fellow brothers, I found it to be hugely beneficial. The theme was around growth, connection, and shadow, and we did some very powerful organizational shadow work that has left us with much to work with over the next twelve months and beyond. It also rekindled the desire to keep up with regular personal shadow work too, which I tend to avoid when the going gets tough.

What's one thing you'd recommend to a man starting on the spiritual journey?

I'd recommend journeying with others. Create a network in a form that works for you. It may be one of the Illuman Council groups or it may be a group of men that you already know and want to go deeper with. As well as group work, I've found 1-1 support to be

hugely beneficial too, be it spiritual direction or mentorship. The combination of 1-1 and group work has kept me focused and on the journey.

What's the best thing about doing this work?

Seeing the work we do as men ripple out beyond our organization into the wider world. This includes my family, which has an improving father and husband, and the great work done by many men to challenge the misuse of power by men who are not actively seeking transformation.

Concluding thoughts?

I'd love to see us take our work even further, both geographically and systemically. We have dabbled with work in prisons and I'd love to see this develop further. I personally want to take MROP and Way of Council to Israel/Palestine and add just a little to the peace process there. There are so many possibilities. The world feels like missionary territory!