

The Gift of Something Amazing and Unexpected

by Steve Conroy, Illuman Ritual Elder

It was a beautiful meeting with lots of sharing and lots of laughter. There was some deep sharing and tears but mostly light-hearted and uplifting stories. I think most of the men said they were from Peoria and most told us a little about their life there. We heard dramatic testimonies about how God, faith, or their Church helped them. We heard many miraculous and marvelous heartfelt stories.

We shared with them our desire to become more inclusive and that we were trying to figure that out as an organization. We told them we are mostly white and we are concerned about how we may be part of the problem and about our own blindness to white privilege.

We were amazed to hear one of the younger men respond that he recently did some research at school about some of the men who were fighting slavery, back before it was abolished. He told us that many of those men were white and that they used their "white privilege" for good instead of bad. In his words, white privilege was not a bad thing. To which I thought, "True...but it was mostly white men causing the problem in the first place." Still, it was a positive sentiment which I thought was remarkable and healthy.

Another man stood and told us that we don't really need to figure out how to be more inclusive. He said that we were doing it right here in the meeting. He said, "Just talk to us. Don't be afraid of us." To which we all said "Ho!!" And I thought, "Amen, Brother. Let's talk."