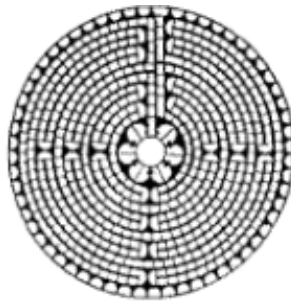




Pathways On The Common Ground



...the journey that men make, to find themselves.
If they fail in this it doesn't matter what else they find.
--James Michener

The Pathways Booklet

On The Common Ground
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Welcome to Pathways On The Common Ground

Men's personal soul work operates in us 24/7. There are only two alternatives: know it or not know it; live life well or live it by accident. PATHWAYS MEETINGS make a Man's personal work consistently available in town, reliably, and at a low cost. PATHWAY MEETINGS are often fun and are a great way to discover real friends in the VILLAGE OF BROTHERS -- a great group of men.
All Men Welcome.

There is a deep call at the heart of Men's Soul Work - a call vital to men, and to our society as a whole. It is the call to our own personal authenticity, to our own souls, discovered by being in communion with one another. I hope many-even all-of my brothers may hear this call and enrich their lives by responding to it in the decades to come. I hope the whole earth will flourish from the gifts they will bring forth in the process. And, I hope PATHWAYS ON THE COMMON GROUND will be a real help for any man who wants to take up this great quest for himself.

All of us men hold our deep maleness and our humanity in common. We share a COMMON GROUND. Yet, every man must discover his own definition of himself. There can be no prescriptions, no dogmas, no definitive models for what constitutes a "real man." Each of us discovers that for himself. If, at bottom, we are one, each of us can realize that only by following his own unique PATHWAY to it, according to his own manner.

So PATHWAYS ON THE COMMON GROUND certainly does not aspire to lay down definitive rules or impose judgments. It helps to suggest - and only suggest - some broad and important area a man may consider in his desire to discover who he is and who his brothers are. The CHALLENGE is for each man to respond as he needs to, as a part of his work as he is doing it - or not at all, if that is his authentic response. May each of us be blessed by himself as he walks his PATHWAY.

May each of us spread his blessing to others as part of receiving his own.

John Guarnaschelli

We are eager to spread pathway meetings to make them regularly available to men everywhere. Feel free to use this pathways booklet to start new meetings. If you do, we request three things: please use the booklet and ritual exactly as it is so men will be received in a familiar place when they come to a meeting. Please keep admission free or very low. And, please inform us at the address below of when and where your meetings take place-- we'd like to create a directory for men looking for a meeting. Any group that informs us about establishing their pathway meetings will be added to the directory and will receive periodic updates of it.
Thanks and Godspeed.

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*Furthermore, we have not only to risk the adventure alone;
for the heroes of all time have gone before us;
the LABYRINTH is thoroughly known;
we have only to follow the thread of the hero-path.
And where we had thought to find an abomination,
we shall find a god;
where we thought to slay another, we shall slay ourselves;
where we had thought to travel outward,
we shall come to the center of our own existence,
where we had thought to be alone, we shall be with all the world.*

—Joseph Campbell
Hero with a Thousand Faces

Change comes from the unfinished areas, not from pretensions of wholeness.

—Michael Meade
Men and the Water of Life

All of the truly important battles are waged within the self.

—Sheldon B. Kopp
If You Meet the Buddha on the Road, Kill Him

I. THE CALL

In every age, men have set out on pilgrimages, on spiritual journeys, on personal quests. Driven by pain, drawn by longing, lifted by hope, singly and in groups they come in search of relief, enlightenment, peace, power, joy or they know not what...This should not surprise us. Crises marked by anxiety, doubt, and despair. . . occur. . . when a man is sufficiently unsettled to have an opportunity for personal growth. . . So. . .the. . .longing for growth is the central force of his pilgrimage.

—Sheldon B. Kopp

I. Am I open to going inside myself to understand myself and the events of my life? What do I have to learn today?

...I wept. I said to my soul, "What have you done with the garden entrusted to you"

—Antonio Machado
tr. R. Bly

...nothing can be sole or whole that has not first been rent!

—William Butler Yeats

For him who confesses, shams are over and realities have begun...

—William James

The way out of the labyrinth is to keep your hand on the cold, damp, shuddering wall of your humiliation.

—Nor Hall

II. In what ways does my story make me want to understand myself? Do I achieve what I want for myself? What hopes, difficulties, or needs bring me to where I am?

It so happens I am sick of my feet and my nails and my hair and my shadow.

It so happens I am sick of being a man.

Still it would be marvelous
to terrify a law clerk with a cut lily,
or...go through the streets with a green knife
letting out yells until I died of the cold.

—Pablo Neruda
tr. R. Bly

The...psyche knows both its limits and its potential. If the former are...exceeded, or the latter not realized, a breakdown occurs.

—Daryl Sharp

When we are so wounded...nothing else will avail, when we find we can do nothing...that will restore ...meaning to our lives, then we reluctantly go to our souls.

—Robert Johnson

I never suspected...I would have to learn how to live-- that there were specific disciplines and ways of seeing ...I had to master before I could awaken to...life.

—Dan Millman

III. Do I believe I can ask for, and receive, support in finding my way? Where can I get the help I need? What do I need help for?

Communication leads to community--that is, to understanding, intimacy and mutual valuing.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Behind an able man there are always other able men.

—Chinese Proverb

...psychoanalysis has no monopoly on the power to heal. ...Art and poetry have always been altering our ways of sensing and feeling-- that is to say, altering the human body.

—Norman O. Brown

Accepting an initiatory task is more important than succeeding or failing at it...initiation truly means to expand sideways into the glory of oaks, mountains, glaciers, horses, lions, grasses, waterfalls, deer. We need wilderness and extravagance.

—Robert Bly

II. DEPARTURE / ENTRY

One had better not challenge the watcher of the established bounds. And yet--it is only by advancing beyond those bounds...that the individual passes...into a new zone of existence...The adventure is always and everywhere a passage beyond the veil of the known into the unknown; the powers that watch at the boundary are dangerous; to deal with them is risky; yet. . . with competence and courage the danger fades.

—Joseph Campbell

I. What specific people, activities, ideas, or things do I use to avoid knowing what my feelings are, or that I even have feelings?

There was the door for which I had no key.
There was the veil through which I could not see.

—Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam
tr. E. Fitzgerald

No one told me
it would lead to this.
No one said
there would be secrets
I would not want to know.

—David Whyte

There are two equally dangerous extremes
-- to shut reason out, and to let nothing else in.

—Blaise Pascal

How sweet it were, hearing the downward stream...to dream and
dream.

—Alfred Lord Tennyson

I feel, therefore I feel lousy.
I don't feel, so I feel fine.

—Jack Kammer

II. How untrusting, afraid, or ashamed do I feel about showing different parts of myself? How can I benefit from sharing my inner life and experiences with other men?

Loneliness is the way by which destiny endeavors to lead a man to himself.

—Herman Hesse

We are all in this together--by ourselves

—Lily Tomlin

How good and how pleasant it is that brothers sit together.

—Psalm 133

Too much agreement kills a chat.

—Eldridge Cleaver

III. How aware am I of the deeper underlying causes within myself that create the emotions I feel? In my everyday life, do I know the difference between having an emotion or feeling, and acting on it?

I am not I.

I am this one

Walking beside me whom I do not see,
Whom at times I manage to visit,
And at other times forget.

—Juan Ramon Jimenez
tr. R. Bly

And he was the demon of my dreams...
...the flames that fell
from his torch like drops
lit up the deep dungeon of the soul.
...his iron hand took mine.
...And in my dream I walked
blinded by his red torch.
In the dungeon I heard the sound of chains
and the stirrings of beasts that were in cages.

—Antonio Machado
tr. R. Bly

No one told me about seeing,
seeing brought me
loss and a darkness I could not hold.

—David Whyte

We are betrayed by what is false within.

—George Meredith

III. THE ONE GUIDE

...the pilgrim learns through the telling of his own tale. Each man 's identity [emerges from] the myths, rituals, and. . . legends of his culture, compounded with the epic of his own personal history...The paradoxical...power and vulnerability, which make a man most human, rests on his knowing who he is right now, because he can remember who he has been, and because he knows who he hopes to become...each man must work at telling his own story if he is to. . . reclaim his personal identity.

—Sheldon B. Kopp

I. What am I allowed/entitled to? By gradually learning to recognize, accept, and even trust, my gifts and my weaknesses, how will what I now feel about my own power change?

"Who are you really, wanderer?"--
and the answer you have to give
no matter how dark and cold
the world around you, is:
"Maybe I'm a king."

—William Stafford

Humility is just as much the opposite of self abasement as it is of
self exaltation.

—Dag Hammerskjold

The turning point in the process of growing up is when you
discover the core of strength within you that survives all hurt.

—Max Lerner

Strength comes from self-connectedness.

—John Bradshaw

Nobody can give you freedom.
Nobody can give you equality or justice or anything. If you're a
man, you take it.

—Malcolm X

II. How aware am I that my own inner feelings really determine what I believe about myself, other people, and what happens? Can I name the underlying feelings within me that really lead me to think, say, or do even the most usual things of every day?

Others triggered us by their actions but the interpretation was our
own. The consequent feeling was not caused by others'

behavior...They are accountable for setting a process in motion but not for the final feeling. That is our responsibility alone.

—David Richo

The images we invent
could change into wild beasts
and tear us to pieces!

—Rumi
tr. C. Barks

If only I could throw away the urge
to trace my patterns in your heart
I could really see you.

—David Brandon

All seems infected that th'infected spy.
All things look yellow to the jaundiced eye.

—Alexander Pope

III. Can I accept each of my feelings, no matter how positively or negatively I, or other people, judge it? Can I also name the real, deeper need or needs each of my feelings actually aims to care for? What gods in me create each feeling?

The true teacher...
...is the one who is
At home. He sits in my chair
Calmly;...He loves to feel
His own body around him;
He does not leave his house.

—Francisco Albanez
tr. R. Bly

Only after painfully experiencing and accepting our own truth can we
be...free...

—Alice Miller

Good and bad are in my heart
But I cannot tell to you--
For they never are apart--
Which is better of the two...
So I shelter love and hate
Like twin brothers in a nest;
Lest I find when it's too late,
That the other was the best.

—James Stephens

We...destroy ourselves by violence masquerading as love.

—R.D. Laing

"Honesty" without compassion and understanding is not honest, but
subtle hostility.

—Rose N. Franzblau

IV. TRIAL

I felt that I would suffocate and drown any time I approached my own sorrow, or anyone else's sorrow, or the sorrow of the world. Since I couldn't live in my own sorrow, I couldn't touch anyone else 's...For a man...the wall around his heart must be broken open without breaking his spirit...Part of the functions of initiations...was to open their hearts to sorrow and release the fire of their spirit. Both water and fire need to come out.

—Michael Meade

I. Can I name specific ways I was physically, emotionally, or sexually hurt or abused now or in the past? Can I express what I feel about how I was treated? How do I continue on now with the feelings it produced?

There is a pain--so utter
It swallows substance up--
Then covers the abyss with trance--
So memory can step
Around--across--upon it

—Emily Dickinson

Children will not remember...the material things provided but...the feeling that you cherished them.

—Gail Grenier Sweet

Only boys keep their cheeks dry.
Only boys are afraid to cry.
Men thank God for tears
Alone with the memory of their dead,
Alone with lost years.

—Vachel Lindsay

The destruction that brings an eagle from heaven is better than mercy.

—Robinson Jeffers

II. Can I name the unmet needs that my recurring difficulties with people and my addictions are trying to take care of? What about boundaries: how free am I about allowing other people to say yes or no to my requests or needs; or about allowing myself to say yes or no as I wish to theirs?

We try so hard to get from others what once we missed.
—David Richo

We tend to long sexually for whatever is lacking in our
...development.
—John Sanford

In practice it means...the woman of your choice represents your
own task that you did not understand.
—Carl Jung

The human animal needs...freedom from intrusion. privacy quite as
much as...understanding.
—Phyllis McGinley

III. What particular images about being myself, being a man, or having my male sexuality, do I carry from my father, my mother, other people in my life, or from experiencing my society's expectations? Do I define myself through other people or things-- in what ways?

Go back to yourself. For nothing can begin from nothing, and it is
from your past, and from what you are at this moment, that what
you are going to be must spring.
—Andre Gide
tr. John Russell

The hero idealizes his absent father; this gives the heroic son a
taste for performance that knows no limits...In extreme cases, only
the trauma...from some catastrophic event...can put a stop to it.
—Guy Corneau

If dad's first love was his work, we take our job to be our full-time
mistress and wonder if Dad is watching from his grave as we work
ourselves into an early one.
—John Lee

I grew up to have my father's looks, my father's speech patterns,
my father's posture, my father's walk, my father's opinions and my
mother's contempt for my father.
—Jules Feiffer

Denying what actually happened between his longings and his
father's reactions to him keeps to [a man] returning to his father...A
man has to get out of his parents' village with his longing intact.
Facing the wound from the father makes clear the unfulfilled
longing and makes a man's inner life more real.
—Michael Meade

V. PASSAGE

The...powers sought and dangerously won are revealed to have been within the heart...all the time. He...has come to know who he is and therewith has entered into the exercise of his proper power.

—Joseph Campbell

I. As an adult man, how can the feelings in my body, my own perceptions, and my own understanding, now guide me in figuring out whatever I must do to achieve genuinely positive fulfillment of my unmet needs?

Somewhere in the heart of experience, there is an order and a coherence which we might surprise if we were attentive.
loving...patient.

—Lawrence Durrell

Though you can fashion everything
From nothing every day, and teach
The morning stars to sing,
You have lacked articulate speech
To tell your simplest want

—William Butler Yeats

Power without love is reckless and abusive,
love without power is sentimental and anemic.

—Martin Luther King

The struggle of the male to learn to listen to and respect his own intuitive inner promptings is the greatest challenge of all.

—Herb Goldberg

The first skill needed...is called "letting it happen" ...gradually building a trust in your body's innate ability to learn and to perform.

—W. Timothy Gallwey

II. As an adult man, how clearly do I see that I already am everything I am, and already own everything I need, without having to "do" anything?

We shall not cease from exploration.
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

—T. S. Elliot

"You are accepted!"...accepted by that which is greater than you...the name of which you do not know. Do not ask the name now, perhaps you will know it later. Do not try to do anything, perhaps later you will do much. Do not seek for name now, perhaps you will know it later. Do not try to do anything, perhaps later you will do much. Do not seek for anything, do not perform anything, do not intend anything. Simply accept the fact that you are accepted.

—Paul Tillich

A man cannot be comfortable without his own approval.

—Mark Twain

If you can just observe what you are
and move with it, then you will find
it is possible to go infinitely far.

—J. Krishnamurti

III. As an adult man, do I lovingly respect the sacredness and beauty of my own body and that of other men?

Have you ever thought you might need more sensuality in your life?

—James Thomas

You cannot devalue the body and value the soul--or...anything else.

—Wendell Berry

If anything is sacred, the human body is...

—Walt Whitman

Often the wisdom of the body clarifies the despair of the spirit.

—Marion Woodman

IV. RETURN

The hero...has been reborn. His second solemn task and deed. . . is to return then to us, transfigured, and teach the lesson he has learned of life renewed. . . to complete [his] adventure, [he] must survive the impact of the world. . . Powerful. . . calm and free in action. . . [he] is the conscious vehicle of the terrible, wonderful Law, whether his work be. . . butcher, jockey, or king.

—Joseph Campbell

I. Which of my own deepest, most personal qualities as a man link me with other men and women as we go through life together?

Friendship with oneself is all-important,...without it one cannot be friends with anyone else in the world.

—Eleanor Roosevelt

Friendship and community are, first of all, inner qualities.

—Henri J.M. Nouwen

Compassion is...the way we treat all there is in life-- ourselves, our bodies, our imaginations and dreams, our neighbors, our enemies...
Compassion is... treating all creation as holy and as divine.

—Matthew Fox

Any idea, person or object can be a...mirror for a man. The tiniest flower can be such...as can a wolf, a story, a touch, a religion, or a mountaintop.

—Hyemeyohsts Storm



II. How may I express my genuine qualities as an adult man to nurture other men, women, children, animals, and the earth? What gifts for myself and my soul may I in turn receive from other people and from the earth?

If I am not for myself, who is for me?
And if I am only for myself, What am I?
And if not now, When?

—Hillel

Despite all my revulsions over its ugliness and injustice, and my bitterness over defeat at its hands, the world remains lovable anyway.

—James Hillman

It takes a Gothic Christ, torn by modern anguish to face the sufferings of this absurd world; a ridiculous Christ of our own neighborhood, created by a sorrowful imagination...

—Jose Ortega y Gasset tr. E. Rugg and D. Marin

When such as I cast out remorse
So great a sweetness flows into the breast
We must laugh and we must sing,
We are blest by every thing,
Every thing we look on is blest.

—William Butler Yeats

III. Aware that everyone's life expresses his or her truth, what can I learn about myself, or about the world, from things other people say or do, that I dislike, don't understand, or disagree with?

No one can get rid of the spirit of judgment by an effort of the will

—Paul Tournier

Hatred is never anything but fear--
if you feared no one, you would hate no one.

—Hugh Downs

Only when my heart freezes
do I covet the power
to hurt an enemy

—Alden Nowlan

It is by experiencing aspects of my friends that are different from me that I expand my humanity.

—John Bradshaw

VII. HOME

Full circle, from the tomb of the womb to the womb of the tomb, we come: an ambiguous, enigmatical incursion into a world of solid matter that is soon to melt from us, like the substance of a dream. And, looking back at what had promised to be our own unique, unpredictable, and dangerous adventure, all we find in the end is such a series of standard metamorphoses as men and women have undergone in every quarter of the world, in all recorded centuries, and under every odd disguise of civilization.

—Joseph Campbell

I. Recognizing it as the voice of what I really feel in my body as a man, how does my awakening spirituality connect me with the earth and with the ground of my being, however I understand that? In what ways am I learning to fully walk my own soul's story?

There is nothing but water in the holy pools.
I know, I have been swimming in them.
All the gods sculpted of wood or ivory can't say a word.
I know, I have been crying out to them.
The Sacred Books...are nothing but words...
What Kabir talks of is only what he has lived through.
If you have not lived through something, it is not true.

—Kabir
version R. Bly

Soul sticks to the realm of experience and reflection within experience.

—James Hillman

...there is only one inevitable duty--the duty of prayer-- the daily recognition of the unseen and eternal...no need for...one day in seven as a holy day,...all days are God's.

—Ohiyesa, Santee Dakota

If the only prayer you say
in your whole life is "thank you",
that would be enough.

—Meister Eckhart

II. Do I accept my certain death as the limit against which I may measure the real size of what I feel, say, and do each day?

Some future day in the heat of noon,
I shall be carried shoulder high
Through the village of the dead.

—Kuba, Zaire
tr. U. Beier

...where...
Shall Time's best jewel from Time's chest lie hid?
Or what strong hand can hold his swift foot back?
Or who his spoil of beauty can forbid?

—William Shakespeare

Not to be attached to something is to be aware of its infinite value.

—Shunryu Suzuki

Granted that I must die,
how shall I live?

—Michael Novack

III. Knowing life can always come up with at least one more way of showing itself that I don't yet know about or understand, in what ways can I respect the uncertainty of every day, without having all the answers? --Do I know any good jokes?

Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart
And try to love the questions themselves.

—Rainer Maria Rilke

I am still learning.

—Michelangelo's Motto

The man who never alters his opinion
is like standing water,
and breeds reptiles of the mind.

—William Blake

God respects me when I work,
but he loves me when I sing.

—Rabindranath Tagore

Who's on first...?

—Abbott & Costello

The hero is the man of self-achieved submission. But submission to what? That precisely is the riddle...schism in the soul, schism in the body social, will not be resolved by any scheme of return to the good old days (archaism), or by programs guaranteed to render an ideal...future (futurism), or even by the most realistic, hardheaded work. . . Only birth can conquer death--the birth, not of the old thing again, but of something new. Within the soul, within the body social, there must be--if we are to experience long survival--a continuous "recurrence of birth"...to nullify the unremitting recurrences of death. For it is by means of our own victories, if we are not regenerated, that the work of Nemesis is wrought: doom breaks from the very shell of our virtue. Peace then is a snare; war is a snare; change is a snare; permanence a snare. When our day is come for the victory of death, death closes in; there is nothing we can do, except be crucified--and resurrected; dismembered totally, and then reborn.

...The first step, detachment or withdrawal, consists in a radical transfer of emphasis from the external to the internal world...a retreat from the desperation of the waste land to the peace of the everlasting realm. . . within. But this realm. . . is precisely the infantile unconscious. It is the realm that we enter in sleep. We carry it within ourselves forever. All the ogres and secret helpers of our nursery are there, all the magic of childhood. And more important, all the life-potentialities that we never managed to bring to adult realization, those other portions of ourself, are there; for such golden seeds do not die. If only a portion of that lost totality could be dredged up into the tight of day, we should experience a marvelous expansion of our powers, a vivid renewal of life...In a word: the first work of the hero is to retreat from the world scene of secondary effects to those causal zones of the psyche where the difficulties really reside, and there to clarify the difficulties, eradicate them in his own case (i.e. give battle to the nursery demons of his local culture) and break through to... undistorted, direct experience and assimilation of [fundamental human realities].

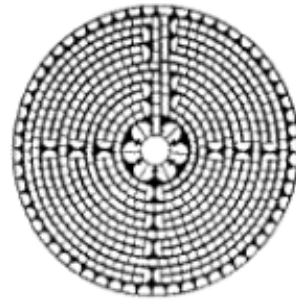
The hero, therefore, is the man or woman who has been able to battle past his personal and local...limitations to the generally valid, normally human forms. Such a one's visions, ideas, and inspirations, come...from the primary springs of human life and thought. Hence they are eloquent, not of the present, disintegrating society and psyche, but of the unquenched source through which society is reborn. . . His second solemn task and deed therefore... is to return then to us, transfigured, and teach the lessons he has learned of life renewed.

—Joseph Campbell
Hero With A Thousand Faces

Overall Outline of the Pathway Meeting

Duration: 2 hours

- 1. Opening Ritual** (4-5 minutes).
 - a. Defining the Sacred Space.
 - b. Introducing the Brother Talk.
- 2. The Brother Talk** (no more than 15 minutes).
- 3. The Brother Circles** (about 1 hour).
- 4. The Witnessing Ground** (about a half hour).
- 5. Closing Ritual**



1. Opening Ritual:

a. Defining the Sacred Space.

MY NAME IS _____, AND I'LL BE DOING THE JOB OF SYMBOLICALLY HOLDING THE TALKING STICK FOR OUR MEETING THIS EVENING.

--> WE WELCOME ALL MEN HERE, AND WE ASK WHATEVER POWER GREATER THAN OURSELVES THAT ANY OF US RECOGNIZES, TO ASSIST US WITH OUR WORK.

--> TONIGHT, WE ARE ENTERING OUR SPECIAL TIME AND SPACE, FOR US MEN TO WALK THE PATHWAYS ON THE COMMON GROUND TOGETHER.

WE'D LIKE TO BEGIN BY ASKING EACH MAN HERE TO INTRODUCE HIMSELF BY NAME INTO THE CIRCLE OF BROTHERS PRESENT FOR TONIGHT'S WORK.

(We'd like every man to say his name out loud so the whole group can hear it. We'd also like every man to say "I'm Bill or I'm John" So it's important for the Holder of the Stick to begin loud and clear: "I'm _____".)

BECAUSE OUR WORK IS SACRED, AND THIS MEETING IS TAKING PLACE IN A SACRED SPACE, WE ASK EVERYONE HERE TO ENTER INTO TWO BASIC AGREEMENTS WITH THE OTHER BROTHERS PRESENT:

PLEASE RESPECT EACH MAN'S RIGHT TO PERFECT PRIVACY, BY AGREEING NOT TO REPEAT HIS NAME TO ANYONE OUTSIDE THIS MEETING, UNLESS YOU HAVE HIS EXPLICIT PERMISSION TO DO THAT.

AND, PLEASE RESPECT THE SACREDNESS OF WHATEVER ANY MAN SAYS, BY AGREEING NOT TO REPEAT OR DISCUSS IT WITH ANYONE OUTSIDE THIS MEETING.

b. Introducing the Brother Talk.

--> AS YOU KNOW, THERE ARE SEVEN PATHWAYS FOR OUR JOURNEY AS MEN, AND THERE ARE THREE CHALLENGES ON EACH PATH.

--> TONIGHT WE'RE WALKING ON THE PATHWAY CALLED: (name it) .

WE'RE WORKING WITH THE CHALLENGE ON THAT PATHWAY, WHICH CAN BE FOUND ON PAGE (number) OF THE PATHWAYS BOOKLET. IT BEGINS WITH THE WORDS (read the first few words) .

CAN WE NOW ALL READ THAT CHALLENGE AND THE ATTACHED QUOTATIONS OUT LOUD TOGETHER?

(The Holder of The Talking Stick then leads everyone present in reading the Challenge and its Quotations.)

THE BROTHER TALK ABOUT THIS CHALLENGE WE'RE FACING TONIGHT WILL BE GIVEN TO US BY (name the man) .

2. The Brother Talk:

(There is no prescribed formula for the Brother Talk itself. The only request is that you talk from your heart about some aspect(s) of the Challenge that really touch you.)

(The Brother Talk, must not last longer than 12 minutes. And the Holder of the Talking Stick should indicate when the limit is getting near.)

(At the end, the Holder of the Talking Stick might thank the giver of the Brother Talk and offer applause to celebrate what he's done. Then, he introduces the Brother Circle:)

3. The Brother Circles:

TO PREPARE FOR THE BROTHER CIRCLES, WE WILL LOCK THE DOOR TO SECURE THE SPACE FOR OUR WORK TOGETHER.

(The man designated should now lock the door to the space.)

WE ASK YOU NOW TO OBSERVE A MOMENT OF SILENCE TO GET CLEAR ABOUT WHATEVER FEELINGS TONIGHT'S CHALLENGE AND BROTHER TALK BRING UP FOR YOU.

(The holder of the Talking Stick now times **90** seconds. At the end of it, he says:)

--> IN THE BROTHER CIRCLE, WE HAVE THE RIGHT TO TALK OPENLY TO EACH OTHER ABOUT WHATEVER TONIGHT'S CHALLENGE AND BROTHER TALK BRING UP FOR US. IF WE WISH TO, WE CAN ALSO REMAIN SILENT.

--> PLEASE REMEMBER THERE'S ABSOLUTELY NO RIGHT OR WRONG WAY TO DO THIS. WHAT'S IMPORTANT IN THE CIRCLE IS THAT EACH OF US STAYS WITH HIS OWN HONEST FEELINGS AS MUCH AS HE CAN.

--> EXPERIENCE TELLS US THE SUREST WAY TO STAY WITH FEELINGS IS BY USING "I STATEMENTS" WHEN WE SPEAK. SO WE ASK YOU TO DO THAT.

IF YOU'RE COMFORTABLE WITH IT, WE ASK YOU TO BEGIN BY INTRODUCING YOURSELF BY NAME TO THE MEN IN YOUR BROTHER CIRCLE.

YOU'LL NOTICE THE CHAIRS THIS EVENING HAVE BEEN ARRANGED IN GROUPS OF FOUR. PLEASE FORM A BROTHER CIRCLE NOW BY TURNING THEM SO YOU FACE EACH OTHER.

(IF THERE ARE ONE OR TWO EXTRA MEN, PLEASE FORM ONE OR TWO GROUPS OF FIVE.)

(At this point, the Talking Stick Holder will probably have to give some signal for the men to form their groups.)

(Both the Talking Stick Holder and the Giver of the Brother Talk should now join a Brother Circle.)

(After the hour is up, the Talking Stick Holder leaves his circle and goes to the **center** of the room:)

THE TIME WE HAVE FOR THE BROTHER CIRCLE IS NOW AT AN END. TONIGHT'S WORK CAN'T BE FINISHED, SO WE JUST HAVE TO END IT.

WE'LL ASK YOU NOW TO END WHATEVER CONVERSATION YOU'VE BEEN HAVING BY ACKNOWLEDGING THE MEN IN YOUR CIRCLE BY SOME SIGN THAT'S COMFORTABLE FOR YOU.

(If some groups are slow about doing this, the Talking Stick Holder should say something to move them--maybe with humor.)

WILL YOU NOW TURN YOUR CHAIRS TOWARD THE CENTER OF THE ROOM,
TO REJOIN THE WHOLE GROUP OF MEN PRESENT HERE TONIGHT?

4. The Witnessing Ground:

(When the men have settled down facing the center of the room [it shouldn't be a neat circle or anything neat]:)

--> ONE OF THE VITAL THINGS WE CAN DO FOR ONE ANOTHER AS MEN TOGETHER IS TO ACT AS WITNESSES--FIRST, TO WITNESS WHAT IS IN OUR OWN HEART, AND THEN, TO WITNESS WHAT IS IN OUR BROTHER'S HEART.

SO, FOR THE REMAINING TIME THIS EVENING, WE ASK THAT ALL OF US ENTER THE WITNESSING GROUND TOGETHER TO EXPRESS OUR COMMUNITY AS BROTHERS.

IF YOU'RE MOVED TO DO IT, PLEASE FEEL FREE TO STAND AND TALK ABOUT WHATEVER YOU WANT TO WITNESS IN YOUR OWN HEART--WHATEVER FEELINGS YOU WOULD LIKE THE OTHER MEN HERE TO WITNESS IN YOU.

AGAIN, THERE'S NO RIGHT OR WRONG WAY TO DO THIS. WHATEVER FEELING YOU HAVE IS YOURS TO EXPRESS AND IT'S WELCOME HERE.

--> BUT, WHILE WE'RE ON THE WITNESSING GROUND, WE ASK YOU TO STATE YOUR FEELINGS BRIEFLY; AND WE ASK YOU NOT TO COMMENT ON, OR CROSS TALK WITH, ANYTHING ANOTHER MAN HAS SAID.

PLEASE SPEAK YOUR OWN FEELINGS. PLEASE WITNESS WHAT OTHER MEN FEEL.

(Acting as the M.C. for the Witnessing Ground is the most difficult job the Holder of the Talking Stick has to perform during the entire Pathway Meeting.)

That's because he must do nothing!

(Sometimes the men will fall all over themselves in their haste to speak. Other times, the pace will be slow, or very slow--and every "care-taking" anxiety about "filling in the silences" will come up.)

(It's important not to act on such anxieties by speaking up yourself [unless, of course, it's your totally personal statement you want to contribute to the Witnessing Ground], by trying to force the pace, or closing prematurely.)

(The test here is to trust the silences by allowing each man his own speed for developing what he wishes to say.)

(So, regardless of what is or isn't said on the Witnessing Ground, the next time the Holder of the Talking Stick speaks **as the M.C.** must be about five minutes before closing time.)

[[Exception: every so often, a man isn't clear about the no comment-no cross talk rule. And he will try to comment-- approvingly or disapprovingly--on what another man has said. This calls for delicate judgment because the goal is not to shame either man. However, the Holder of the Talking Stick must be clear that he must **protect the space** for everyone. So, in these cases, he should interrupt as gently as possible by asking the man to speak only of himself. Or, he should say "TIME" when three minutes are up, and repeat "UNFORTUNATELY, YOUR TIME IS UP," if the man persists.]]

WE'RE NEAR THE END OF THE TIME WE HAVE TO SPEND ON THE WITNESSING GROUND TONIGHT. IF ANYONE WANTS TO SPEAK WHO HASN'T SPOKEN YET, THERE'S STILL A LITTLE TIME.

(Wait a few seconds--allowing one or two men more to speak.) (It's **very** important to respect the designated closing time.)

5. Closing Ritual:

OK. THEN, IF IT'S OK WITH YOU, CAN WE ALL JOIN HANDS ON THE COMMON GROUND TO CELEBRATE WHAT WE'VE ACCOMPLISHED TOGETHER THIS EVENING, AND TO PREPARE FOR RETURNING WITH WHAT WE HAVE TO OUR REGULAR TIME?

(After the circle or whatever ritual, it's probably good to end with a roar or applause, or any really "up" note to stir the spirit and celebrate what we've done together.)

Preparations for the Pathway Meeting:

The Meeting relies on two men to make it happen: the Holder of the Talking Stick (a literal talking stick is not necessary), who reads the Ritual; and another man prepared to give the Brother Talk.

Attendees can be many or few, since the breakdown into Brother Circles of four assures a reasonably intimate group for most of the Meeting no matter how many attend.

Any good sized, pleasant room which can be secured after the Brother Talk will work for the Meeting.

Before the Meeting begins, chairs should be arranged in **clear** groups of four. There should be a "fair distance" between the groups to allow the Brother Circles to form reasonably apart. There should also be a fair distance between the individual chairs, or the men won't sit four to a group.

When the men arrive, they usually don't sit in all four chairs of each group anyway. So, it's proven best to have a third man present who has the responsibility of locking the door after the Brother Talk, and helping the men form into Brother Circles of four.

Refreshments after the Meeting would be fun, and continue the spirit that's been established. However, probably not a good idea during the Meeting.

