

# MaleCall

Journal of the Unitarian Universalist Men's Network  
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Volume 10, Number 1

Autumn 2003

## A Strong UUMeN Presence at General Assembly 2003

To celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UU Men's Network, General Assembly (June 26-30 in Boston) included a great many efforts and activities that continued to put UUMeN on the map. Our exhibit area was better than ever, as veteran "Boothmeister" **Dave Woods** (Evanston, IL) spread out his carload of materials and integrated even more resources from other Steering Council members. **Jim Jaeger** (Madison, WI) again prepared a great PowerPoint presentation about UUMeN which played continuously on a large screen (and was rapidly updated with photos from workshops just the day before).

New at the booth this year was a 12-page "Resource Packet to Help Congregations Be More Boy-Friendly" (assembled by **Jaco ten Hove**, Greenbelt, MD), plus a portable laptop version of our UUMeN web site ([www.uumen.org](http://www.uumen.org)) and a brand new edition of our brochure (both produced by **Bob Hospadaruk**, Ann Arbor, MI).

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## Unitarian Universalist Men's Network 2003 Sermon Contest Winner:

### *Two of My Fathers*

Rev. Victoria Weinstein

Delivered April 6, 2003 at the  
First Parish Unitarian Church, Norwell MA

(This version abridged. Full version at  
[www.uumen.org](http://www.uumen.org))

Anniversaries of important events in our lives are like telescopes in time. It doesn't matter how far we are chronologically from the event; when the anniversary comes around, the distance between ourselves and the big event collapses and we stand fresh and raw and vulnerable in the present and the past, feeling it all over again.

It has been twenty years this week since my father died... In 1983, April 5th fell on a Tuesday. I came home from a dress rehearsal that night full of my own high school stardom, and figured that all the cars in the driveway were family members converging on our house to gather for my debut as the leading lady of our school's spring musical. That's how it is at seventeen years old. If the driveway is full of cars, it must be about you!

When I walked into the house, still in full theatrical make-up, my mother met me downstairs, took my hands in hers and said these simple and terrible words: "Honey, Daddy died."

What I remember next is being helped up the stairs by mom and my father's three older brothers, being passed from one set of arms to the next, looking into one stricken face after the next... All of those men. Those giants of my childhood, my father

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## About UUMeN

The Unitarian Universalist Men's Network is a continental membership organization for UU men (which also welcomes other gender allies). Our purpose is to build and sustain a mature, liberal religious masculinity. Our primary objectives are to: develop a continental resource network; support the personal and spiritual growth of men at the local, district and continental levels; and collaborate with other UU groups who share our interests and commitments. Members receive a quarterly newsletter, may vote at our Annual Meeting held in June at General Assembly, and are eligible for discounts on materials.

### 2003-2004 Steering Council

Neil Chethik (KY), president, 2004  
Jim Jaeger (WI), treasurer, 2005  
Bob Hospadaruk (MI), 2004  
Kenneth Beldon (FL), 2005  
Frank Robertson (MA), 2005  
Dave Woods (IL), 2005  
Drew Johnston (WA), 2006  
Todd Strickland (CO), 2006  
Dick Whitaker (IL), 2006

Tom Owen-Towle, President Emeritus

*UUMeN is a Sec. 501(c)(3)  
organization.*

## MaleCall

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*Please send all submissions and concerns via e-mail (uumen@usa.net) to:*

**Editor:** Jaco B. ten Hove

**Layout:** Bob Hospadaruk

**Address Changes:** Jim Jaeger

## From the (Newly Elected!) President, Neil Chethik



A 50-something man, in the midst of a brilliant but lonely career, once said: "I'm a self-made man. But if I had to do it again, I'd call in others."

This is food for thought for any man wanting to create a men's group, a men's worship service, or some other men's-oriented programming in his Unitarian Universalist congregation. Too often, we think we have to do it alone. The reality is that there is plenty of help out there, both from organizations like UUMeN, and quite often from others within your congregation.

The UU Men's Network is a wonderful first stop when you've got an inkling to create an event for men at your church. We're now 10 years old, and our nine-man Steering Council has decades of combined men's group experience. We've invented most wheels so that you don't have to. And we're available to help.

One of the perks of UUMeN membership is access to our toll-free phone number (800-227-6670), and to an e-mail advice service (uumen@usa.net). If your men's group is beginning to dissipate, or you want to create a men's retreat, or you want to know if there are other UU men's groups in your district, contact us and WE WILL HELP YOU. We've been there before, and are eager to respond to your needs. That's what "brothering" is about.

If you're just beginning to think about men's programming for the first time, you'll probably want to read the UUMeN-written booklet, "A Community of Men." Members are entitled to a free copy of this valuable resource (\$5 for non-members), which contains a discussion of the different styles of men's groups, and how to start and sustain them. The booklet also contains descriptions of numerous groups in other UU churches.

Our web site (uumen@uua.org) is a fabulous resource, too. Webmaster Bob Hospadaruk is adding new content regularly. Among many other things, you'll find a "how-to" about creating a one-time men's retreat for your church or district.

One of the main lessons I've learned in 17 years as a "men's-grouper" is that it's best never to try to start a group alone. I now look for a co-facilitator, a friend, a fellow congregant, who may have a similar passion. When I act alone, I am more likely to become lonely, to feel abandoned, to become frustrated, to lose my energy. It is better, I've learned, to delay the start of a group or event until a comrade is found.

So, if you're looking to create a men's group, a men's retreat, a men's worship service, ask for companionship. UUMeN is here for you, and so are many UU men.

In brotherhood,  
Neil Chethik

## “Male Bonding Band” Rocks Stately King’s Chapel

During the recent General Assembly in Boston, MA (June 26-30), a group of men from Bridgewater, MA, known collectively as the **Male Bonding Band**, presented a very upbeat mid-day concert at King’s Chapel, the first Unitarian Church in North America. They even drew in passing tourists who heard the band’s good-time sound.

“What impressed me,” said Dave Woods, UUMeN Steering Council member, “was that everyone in the group was really enjoying themselves. They are real talented and lots of fun. They performed very well because they obviously had played together a great number of times.”

The band currently has about 14 members and doubles as a men's group at First Parish Church in Bridgewater. This gives them a chance to get together for fun, fellowship, support, as well as providing a source of fundraising for their UU congregation. Most of their music is secular, including loads of “oldies” from the 40s, 50s, 60s and 70s. They also sing a few gospel numbers and four members create a barbershop-type quartet which generally does a couple of numbers at each concert.

According to Cindy Lyman (church secretary, whose spouse is in the band), two future Male Bonding Band concerts commanded healthy sums at First Parish's annual recent goods and services auction. Like many men’s groups in other congregations, the guys also contribute to the church in a variety of non-musical ways, such as helping people move, assisting with Buildings and Grounds projects, manning the grills at picnics, etc.

But for one early summer lunch hour, to the delight of UUs from around the country as well as curious passers-by, they were singing their hearts out in the heart of Boston.



*(Two of My Fathers - Continued from page 1)*

and his three older brothers. Even today, they are titanic in my memory and imagination...

You may wonder how my father died. He was only fifty years old, which seemed young to me at the time and which seems ridiculously young to me now. He had a heart attack, that is how. He had had his first heart trouble in his early thirties and was a veteran of open-heart surgery by his forties. Bum arteries, yes, but also a type A personality that might be more accurately described as “Type A+.”

**It isn’t so much how he died that stays with me. It’s why he did.** It’s why so many men get caught, as did my father, in an endless rat race of competition and stress and the feeling that they need to prove themselves to their wives, brothers, neighbors, ancestors, kids and the guys at the country club by the size of the house they have and the kind of car they drive and the kind of company they work for.

I well remember the little celebrations Mom would plan at home for each of my dad’s promotions as he rose the corporate ladder. What I also remember is sensing that he was trapped in workaholism, far too easily given to fits of rage over small things at home, and how I wished he could do what the doctor recommended: slow down, calm down, learn to relax a little bit.

One time we were together, the two of us, driving home from a dinner with relatives. This is a hard story to tell. We were having one of our typically intense father-daughter philosophical conversations, as we really loved to discuss all kinds of important topics out of a special *simpatico* and delight in each other’s minds. About ten minutes from home my dad pulled into the parking lot at a little store where he sometimes picked up the Sunday paper. The store was obviously closed as it was late at night, so I turned to question him why we had stopped. I saw that my father was sitting holding helplessly onto the steering wheel and crying.

I panicked. I asked “Dad, what’s wrong!?” I had only seen him cry twice before that I could remember... Through his tears, my father explained to me that he was so proud of me, he knew I was going to grow up to be such a terrific woman and he was so sorry that he wasn’t going to be around to see it.

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## THREE GREAT BOOKS AVAILABLE FROM UUMeN

If you're looking for resources to start or help sustain UU men's groups, UUMeN has some fabulous options.

*A Community of Men: A Guide to Men's Programming in UU Congregations* is available for \$5 -- free to members -- and offers basic information on how to organize new men's groups, and keep them vibrant and alive over time. For your copy, contact us at UUMeN@usa.net, or at our mailing address on the front page of this newsletter. There is no shipping or handling charge.

For a book with dozens of conversation-starters related to men, you can order *New Men, Deeper Hungers*, by Tom Owen-Towle. Owen-Towle is a founder of UUMeN, and author of many books. *New Men, Deeper Hungers* is available from UUMeN for \$15 (only \$10 for UUMeN members). Shipping and handling is \$2 per book. Make checks payable to UUMeN, and send our address.

A third book, *FatherLoss*, focuses on the father-son relationship. It comes with a study guide for men's groups. Chethik is a founding UMeN steering council member, and currently president. To order *FatherLoss*, make your check for \$14 to Neil Chethik, and then send to UUMeN/FatherLoss, PO Box 8071, Lexington, Ky. 40533. Proceeds from sales will be donated to UUMeN. There is no shipping or handling charge.

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*(Two of My Fathers - Continued from page 3)*

With a sinking heart I tried to reassure him. "Of course you will! You're just feeling mortal because you just had a heart attack, but you're going to be fine! You're going to live to be an old man, Dad!" But deep down I feared he was right. And he did leave us less than a year later.

Now, as the woman he didn't live to see, I'd like to play that scene over again. Because I have a few things to say to him. Like: "Carl, you just have to do whatever it takes to change your life! Don't cry: change!" He knew the need for this intellectually, but spiritually and emotionally he didn't have the resources to make that change.

This I grieve most especially: that any of us would feel so caught in our competitive, striving ways that we truly don't know how to stop, even when we know it might cost us our lives, and cost our children their parents. I love my father and that love hasn't gone away over the years—our relationship hasn't ended just because he's not physically here—but I feel anger occasionally about all that he has missed; all that we missed together. I feel cheated of the chance to see him mellow a bit with age. (He would have *had* to have mellowed some by now!) I grieve that my siblings and I have been deprived of his presence for so many of our important milestones. I'm incredibly sad that Uncle Carl isn't around to love a whole new generation of Weinstein cousins...

I have a photograph on my desk here at church; a pile of photographs, actually. One particularly sweet picture is of a friend standing with his tiny son in a snuggly holder on his back. Both of them look comfortable and happy. I cannot imagine, in a million years, my dad with a snuggly on his back. It just wasn't done. Photos of my father holding his small children are endearingly awkward, taken in an era when it was still considered appropriate for fathers to make cute helpless expressions and hand over crying or stinky diapered babies to their wives, and everyone would laugh (Nowadays most wives or partners would be just as likely to hand the baby right back!).

I am so grateful that fathering has changed and is evolving to something that I think is far more emotionally rich for dads and their kids. I am so glad that we have men teaching Religious Education right

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## *New UUMeN Steering Council Members!*

In the previous issue of MaleCall, two Steering Council members-elect were profiled, Todd Strickland (Colorado) and Forrest Gilmore (CA), but Forrest needed to withdraw from nomination. Joining Todd as newcomers to the Council, all elected at our Annual Meeting in June, are the two fellows profiled briefly below.

**Dick Whitaker** lives again in Evanston, IL, after a recent 16-month stint volunteering at the Himalayan Institute in PA. (He took early retirement after running a small trade association in the construction industry.) From the mid-1980s on, he was involved in the formation and development of the UU men's group in Evanston.



**Drew Johnston** graduated from Starr King School for Ministry in 1999 and then served as extension minister in Kennewick, WA, but is now the new minister at the UU Fellowship of Bainbridge Island and North Kitsap, WA (in the Puget Sound).



UUMeN Banner on display at Boston GA

*(GA Report Continued from page 1)*

Bob also created spiffy new UUMeN t-shirts that showed off our web site address. (One fellow bought 16 of them!) On the back wall of the booth a North American map once again helped visitors locate more men's groups across the continent. All in all, five great days of conversation and sharing of resources were extremely heartening, plus we took in nearly \$1200 and added upwards of 50 new members.

The GA Opening Ceremony included Bob Hospadaruk with Tim Shultheis (also from Ann Arbor) carrying the UUMeN banner. And then the first two GA program slots featured significant and very well-received presentations from **Tom Owen-Towle** (San Diego, CA) on "Men Graying Gracefully," and **Neil Chethik** (Lexington, KY) on "What Sons Need From Their Dads." Jaco ten Hove moderated both events, each of which were repeated the following day to even larger crowds (around 100 each time).

Likewise with our "Nuts and Bolts: Effective Programming for UU Men" workshop, ably led by Jim Jaeger and Bob Hospadaruk. At all but the first of these six UUMeN events, other Steering Council members prepared a resource table and sold or gave out our materials, adding to the flow of good info about UUMeN.

The winner of our annual Sermon Contest, **Victoria Weinstein** (minister of First Parish Unitarian in Norwell, MA), received a \$500 check during one of the "Nuts and Bolts" workshops, for her sermon entitled, "Two of My Fathers."

We also held a 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Reception in our UUMeN suite (generously hosted by Dave Woods and Jim Jaeger) and convened our Annual Meeting, which included an announcement that the "Brother Spirit Fund in honor of Tom Owen-Towle" had been launched with initial contributions of \$5,830 so far. (It will continue through next year's GA.)

We thanked departing Steering Council members Jaco ten Hove and **Abhi Janamanchi** (Clearwater, FL) and elected three new members for three-year terms: **Todd Strickland** (Golden, CO), **Dick Whitaker** (Evanston, IL) and **Drew Johnston** (Bainbridge Is., WA). The new Steering Council met, as usual, on the last morning of GA, to plan another great year for UUMeN, looking ahead to GA '04 in Long Beach, CA (June 24-28) •

## **UUMeN Now Officially a Non-Profit!**

As of May, 2003, The UU Men's Network is officially its own Sec. 501(c)(3) Organization, meaning that contributions are tax deductible under this name.

Previously, UUMeN used a financial structure embedded in the friendly First UU Church of San Diego to be a church-affiliated organization and thus covered under their tax-status umbrella. So contributions have always been tax-deductible, but now UUMeN is independent and covered by its own tax-status determination.

Great gratitude goes to our Treasurer, Jim Jaeger of Madison, Wisconsin, for facilitating this important transition, as well at the San Diego congregation for many years of good support.

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“I would rather be ashes than dust!

I would rather that my spark  
should burn out in a brilliant blaze  
than it be stifled by dry rot.

I would rather be a superb meteor,  
every atom of me in magnificent  
glow, than a sleepy and permanent  
planet.

The proper function of a man is to  
live, not to exist.

I shall not waste my days in trying  
to prolong them.

I shall use my time”

- Jack London

Got a poem or a reading? Send it to MaleCall via  
[uumen@usa.net](mailto:uumen@usa.net)

*(Two of My Fathers - Continued from page 4)*

now—something that was so rare when I was growing up as to be downright odd. Fathers are important religious educators of their own children. I think, for instance, of Jewish boys and their fathers studying the Torah together. I remember my father asking us what we thought of the sermon or Sunday School some weekends after church...

Spirituality and religious development have never been, and should never become, something we consider “women’s work.” I am so pleased that this church has many men in leadership positions and so many men in the pews on Sunday mornings. This is often not the case in other houses of worship.

Some other photos I have on my desk are of a men’s group gathering of last summer... What it looks like is a bunch of healthy, warm and friendly guys just hanging out together. What it is in reality is more than that: it is ministry to men, ministry between men. We have a woman’s support group that meets here regularly, and I want to encourage the men in the congregation to keep making efforts to sustain a men’s group. I will be happy to support it in any way I can, although obviously I am not the ideal gender to develop such programming...

Men’s ministry, like ministry to women, honors the ways that men experience the world from the perspective of their gendered reality. Men’s ministry provides space and time for them to process through the big and small events of their lives together, and encourages each man to seriously attend to the life of the spirit that is uniquely his.

I remember when my father’s father A.J. died, and my dad acted as though he was fine, but there was a terrible strained sadness in the house—until my father’s best friend John Rizos showed up with a bottle of something and took my dad home with him for a good, long visit. My father wasn’t a drinking man, but he had a few with John and I suppose he cried and got some of his grief out in a way that he didn’t know how to do with his wife and kids around.

I’m not suggesting that ministry to men should involve drinking, but I do think it would be a blessing for everyone concerned if men formed relationships of mutual care that allowed them to better navigate the difficult terrain of masculinity that is imposed on all men by our culture. Part of that ministry

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*(Two of My Fathers - Continued from page 6)*

would be to make room for the diverse ways that men are men: to free them from the limitations and tyrannies of masculinity as it is defined by the larger society.



Let me speak briefly about a man I greatly admire for having lived out a public leadership role that was characterized by gentleness, patience and nurturance—qualities that our culture has traditionally denied to men. While some dismissed him as a wimp, many more others felt deeply touched and cared for by his kindness. I speak, of course, of the Reverend Fred McFeely Rogers.

The only temper tantrum I ever remember having as a toddler, in fact, was when mom wouldn't let me watch "Mr. Rogers" one night. I had been sick with the flu and she wanted me in bed before the strains of that well-beloved theme song would come tinkling out of the television. I don't remember who won that particular battle but I always meant to write Mr. Rogers a love letter and tell him how much he meant to me. When I heard that he died recently at the age of 74, I felt terribly sad, as did millions of people; both those who had watched him as children and those who grew to admire him as adults.

He was such a good man, and so easy to love. I relied on him. Some people didn't get the appeal, but I did. Mr. Rogers, an ordained Presbyterian minister, had what I would later learn to call *pastoral presence*. Even from the television I felt he was really looking at me. Mr. Rogers was a father figure who never asked what grades we got and whether our team won the game. He practiced unconditional regard: he just wanted to know how you felt inside, and wanted to know that you felt valuable whomever and however you were.

He never raised his voice. (He was the only grown-up I knew who never did!) He changed into his play clothes when he got home. (His mother knitted those sweaters, which now reside at the Smithsonian.) And he spoke gently about real things, even things that sometimes scared me, like divorce or death—or being sucked down the drain while taking a bath. He did us a world of good. His show was 900 episodes of blessing.

So they are both gone into the Eternal now, both my beloved alpha male daddy and the gentle television father figure who provided me with my first alternative version of masculinity. Both have lessons to teach. Mr. Rogers said it all with his warm and kindly eyes: *I see you, and you matter to me*. And Mr. Weinstein says it all by his absence: *Live, and live well, because I didn't quite know how to, and the cost was very high*.

We let them go, because we have to, taking what wisdom we can from them about the nature of manhood, and of fatherhood and the question of how to have life more abundant. In their honor and in their memory, let us *choose life* ourselves, being fearless and honest about what that takes, and let us stand by our brothers, our uncles, our fathers, our sons as they do the same. Let us love our men. Let us support them in choosing life.

Amen. Shalom. They live in us.

## 2004 Sermon Award Now Open!

Ministers and laypersons of all genders are invited to submit sermons for the next annual UUMeN sermon contest. (Two of the last three winners have been female ministers.) The sermon should explore a men's issue related to the purposes and objectives of UUMeN. (See page 2.) It must be delivered in a UU congregation between April 1, 2003 and March 31, 2004. The submitted text should be single-spaced and less than 2,500 words.

Mail two copies (with a cover letter but no identifying mentions in the sermon copies) to **UUMeN, PO Box 3070, Madison, WI 53704-0070**, by the deadline of April 15, 2004. Rotating men's groups (supervised by a UUMeN Steering Council member) provide the judging process. The award winner will receive **\$500** and recognition at the UUA General Assembly in Long Beach, CA (need not be present).

# MaleCall

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## UUMeN Membership Application and Renewal Form

Membership is valid for twelve months following the date of dues donation. Please also consider making an additional tax-deductible gift.

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Please check each category above that applies to your tax-deductible financial contribution to UUMeN, and then complete the information requested to the right.

**Members receive *MaleCall*, a quarterly newsletter, may vote at the UUMeN Annual Meeting and are eligible for discounts on UUMeN materials and event registrations.**

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I support the purpose and objectives of the UUMeN and hereby apply for UUMeN membership.

Please renew my UUMeN membership.

**Make checks payable in US funds to UUMeN. Send this form together with your tax-deductible dues remittance and any supporting gift to UUMeN, P.O. Box 3070, Madison, Wisconsin 53704-0070.**