

# MaleCall

Journal of the Unitarian Universalist Men's Network  
UUMeN, 5307 NW 118th Ave., Coral Springs, FL 33076  
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Summer 2007



## The story of the gifts my father gave me

*From a sermon by the Rev. Dr. Linda Hart*

I spent most of my adolescence and early adulthood blaming my father for what was wrong in my life. It didn't much matter what was wrong, it was my father's fault.

Now I have come to see that my father gave me the gift of his brokenness. It is a gift that continues to offer me forgiveness and hope, and which deepens my sense of compassion.

Let me tell you some about my father and my journey toward love.



Rev. Dr. Linda Hart

Let me begin with his story. I want to acknowledge that this is my telling of his story and that others in my family, and my father might tell it wholly differently. However, as I look at my father, and especially the gifts he gave me, there are two factors that limited and wounded him.

The first was his alcoholism. It was typical in our home for the adults to come home at night, make a pre-dinner drink and then to continue to drink throughout the evening. Overall, it didn't have much impact upon me as a young child, because we would go to bed early in the evening, and my parents would usually drink their way to bedtime with little or no trouble. There were, however, those nights when they wouldn't find their way to bed happily. A fight would erupt and the two of them would yell and sometimes my mother would throw things. Twice their arguments went from a fight of words to physical violence. The first time, my mother, with a bloody nose, bundled my brother and I up in blankets, put us in the car, and drove to her sister's house where we stayed for a few weeks until she and Dad worked it out. The second time he came toward her eye

with a lit cigarette and we packed up again and never went back until he had moved out and to Florida.

The limitations became even more severe. Several years after my parents divorced, he was driving and drunk and was in a serious accident. It was only ever spoken of in hushed tones, and even though I was a teen at the time, I never heard the details. I only knew that someone – not my father – nearly died. And the accident was his fault.

My father at that time made a decision, it's clear to me. He chose to stop driving, and for the last 30 some years of his life he was never again behind the wheel of a car. For the all the backward reasoning that went into making that decision, I have to say that I admire that he made a decision. He chose to drink rather than to drive, and while many people choose other ways of resolving that dilemma, he made a choice, and never again endangered others lives by that behavior.

That choice limited him enormously. A professional writer by trade, by choice he worked only at temporary positions. As he moved from job to job, sometimes a few times a year, he could only take jobs that were on mass transit lines. When he came to visit us in the Washington, D.C., area, it would require that we ferry him around to most everywhere he needed to be. Someone else always needed to be on call to take care of Dad.

The alcohol bounded him, too, in all the ways you would expect. It put him in touch with his pain too much sometimes, and he would weep for the losses in his life after only a few drinks. Two marriages that failed, a child who died too young (my brother Patrick) and distance from his three surviving children who knew little about him and his life, who were far away from him in so many ways. Alcohol was also a barrier around him so that what love was available he could not receive.

*(Continued on page 6)*

## 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.

### 2006-2007 Steering Council

Dave Woods (IL), president, 2007  
Rev. Todd Strickland (CO), VP, 2007  
Roy Schwartz (FL), treasurer, 2008  
Bob Hospadaruk (MI), 2007  
Rich Wilson (WI), 2008  
Jack Ripple (AZ) 2008  
Rev. Chester McCall III (PA), 2009  
Frank Mundo (ME), 2009  
Rev. James 'Chip' Roush (MI), 2009  
Rev. Tom Owen-Towle, President Emeritus

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## MaleCall

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*Please send all submissions and con-  
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*Layout: Rich Wilson &  
Karen Carnabucci*

*Address Changes: Frank Mundo*

**WWW.UUMEN.ORG**

# President's Letter...



*Dave Woods*

Hey, UUMeN's Network Members:

It has been two years since I was elected your chief officer, and this is my last MaleCall President's letter. It's been a good term from my standpoint and the UUMeN's Network continues to stand strong (and actually grew a bit) during the past couple of years. It certainly was great to be preceded during my Steering Council tenure by past Presidents Rev Tom Owen-Towle, Rev Jaco ten-Hove and Neil Chethik. We've been represented well at all past General Assembly gatherings and will be again in Portland. By the way, our 20' x 10' Booth #366 is in a great location, facing the main entrance to the GA2007 Exhibit Hall. Do come and pay a visit there, get to know us and we'll have a lot to show you there.

Your UUMeN's Network Steering Council members, past and present, have worked hard during our 15-year existence to represent ALL men in our congregations, and we'll continue to do so. Men's work is not easy, takes some time & effort, but is quite rewarding to all involved.

Plan to attend our Annual Meeting GA2007 Breakfast at 8 a.m. Friday, June 22, (location information available at our Booth #366). Among other interesting business, including the presentation to our 2007 Sermon Award Winner, the election of Steering Council officers will be held. We are constantly looking for good candidates to represent us from all locations and walks of life. If you will be at GA2007 and have an interest in serving UUMeN with our governing board now, or in the near future, let me know. I'd be glad to explain responsibilities and duties of working more actively with our nine-member Steering Council.

My term ends after June 30, 2007. I intend to be around as the Immediate Past President; I will be passing the governing reins onto a newly elected chief officer and Steering Council.

My best in the brotherhood,  
**Dave Woods**  
**President, UUMeN**  
[dnwoods@ameritech.net](mailto:dnwoods@ameritech.net)

## YIKES!

Have you forgotten to renew your  
contribution to UUMeN?

Keep the faith and help the brothers out...  
**do it TODAY!**

It's now *easier than ever* to join, renew, contribute,  
**ONLINE at [www.uumen.org](http://www.uumen.org)**

Just use your credit card through our secure PayPal service. Or, mail in the form on the back of this newsletter.

**THANKS, Brother (or Sister) !**



# Check out the new online men's forum!



Bob Hospadaruk launched the online men's forum for UUMeN.

UUMeN has recently added a forum to the UUMeN Web site, thanks to Bob Hospadaruk, a member of the UUMeN's steering committee, who launched the site. This exciting new space is intended to

provide a place where UUMeN can seek or give advice and discuss topics that are particular to UUMeN.

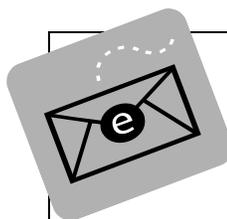
Right now there are relatively few forum members. Be a pioneer and a founding member and register as a user today! Registration is easy, free and confidential.

Here's how:

1. Go to [www.uumen.org](http://www.uumen.org) and follow link to Forum.
2. Click on the link to Register. You'll be taken to a registration screen where at a minimum you'll enter a username, password, e-mail address and location. You can just leave the other stuff blank or on default settings for now.
3. Click Submit. The Forum will send you an e-mail that you need to respond to. This is to prove that you're a real person (and not a spammer).
4. You're a member now! Visit the forums daily and start the building of a great UUMeN community!

So, go to [www.uumen.org](http://www.uumen.org), check it out, and make some posts. Don't worry; you shouldn't be able to break anything, and you can always edit or remove your own posts. The forum moderators will help if you ask. A wealth of information can be at our fingertips when we share in this new community. Do it today!

*Bob Hospadaruk is a lifelong UU, husband and father raised in southeast Michigan. He became interested in developing men's programming for his church after meeting with the UUMeN years ago in Indianapolis, Ga.*



## MaleCall Mail

In 2005 the Faith Communities Today did their study of congregations in the US. For those of you who don't remember, nearly 50% of the congregations in the UUA answered the questionnaire. They have recently released information about congregations that are growing and how they define themselves. It's hard to say which is chicken and which is egg, but here's the information on the percentage of women in the congregation and the percentage of those congregations that are growing:

- 59% of congregations with less than 40% women regularly participating are growing.
- 36% of congregations with between 41-60% women regularly participating are growing.
- 21% of congregations with more than 60% women regularly participating are growing.

The way I read this is that if your services/community is predominantly female, then men don't feel welcome. Or you're not doing things to support men in their religious quests. Most of the congregations I know have women's groups or offer programming specifically for women; it's a much lower percentage of our congregations that have men's groups or other activities designed for men. And the type of men's groups are usually the more traditionally supportive and therapeutic groups which (I'm sorry to say) is a more feminized understanding of the "real" man.

So my question to congregations these days is: What are you doing for the men? Are you providing them options for involvement beyond the sharing circle stuff? Are you expecting them to do the fix-it-up stuff? How are you feeding their spirit and soul? During the 1960s, '70s, '80s and '90s we were able to offset the predominantly male presence in our pulpit with programming for women, but what are we thinking of doing to offset the increasingly predominantly female presence in our pulpits to allow men to get what they want/need in religious community?

Not necessarily an easy thing to talk about, especially if you're a male! So I risk stating — because I'm not! — that we are doing a poor job of supporting a wide variety of ways to be male and not necessarily offering supportive and appropriate religious responses for them. — **the Rev. Lisa Presley, Interim District Executive, Heartland District of the UUA**

Send questions, concerns, or responses to previous articles to [info@uumen.org](mailto:info@uumen.org), or to UUMeN 5307 NW 118th Ave., Coral Springs, FL 33076.

# Thoughts on Father's Day

By Rev. James (Chip) Roush  
MaleCall Editor

Happy Father's Day!

Whether you are a father or not; whether you knew your father or not; whether he treated you well or not; whether adopted or abandoned, loved, lost or lonely—whatever your relationship with the concept of fatherhood, may this Father's Day bring you joy and healing.

I am not a father. While there is still time, it grows increasingly less likely, and I grieve that loss. However, I recognize that this is a choice I (and my wife) are making, and I realize that there are many who want children but cannot have them. I respect the greater depth of that grief.



Rev. James (Chip) Roush

Furthermore, the stepfather who demonstrated manhood for me is now long dead while my biological father and I take tentative steps toward reconciliation and understanding. These issues of family and fatherhood are complex. I know that we are all doing the best we can, and I honor that, while at the same time I wish that we could all do a little better, too. Again, may this Father's Day bring hope.

Along with several articles about fatherhood, this issue has a letter from the Rev. Lisa Presley, asking our UU congregations what we are doing to welcome and encourage male participation.

Please write to *MaleCall*, or participate in the online Forum at [www.uumen.org](http://www.uumen.org), to debate this interesting issue. You can easily arrange for an issue of *MaleCall* to be included in your church's newcomer packet.

With Spirit,  
Chip

## Questions & Conversation: Starters for Men's Groups

(This is a regular column—please submit questions and rituals that have deepened your Men's Group experiences to share with others in our movement.)

Talking about fathers is a good way to help men get to know each other in a men's group. It's also a good way for men to ponder the ways their fathers have influenced their lives with regard to family, work and community roles.

Conversation starters may focus on questions about fathers. Here are a few ideas:

- Tell about a time when you saw your father really laugh, and how you felt.
- Tell about a time when you saw your father cry, and how you felt then and how feel about that now.
- Tell about a summer activity that you enjoy, but don't get to do as often as you'd like. Did you learn this summer activity from your father?

Using poems (there are two poems in this newsletter that you may wish to borrow) or quotations also may invoke thoughts, memories, reflections and wishes. Here are two quotes that your men's group may wish to use:

- "At the end, I told my father that I would miss him. I did not say that I had always missed him." — Anatole Broyard, 1985
- "You have to dig deep to bury your father."  
—Romany proverb

You may wish to copy the poems for men to read. Whatever you discuss, be sure to give time for reflection before speaking.

## Nuts and Bolts!

### Tips on creating a men's group

**Q. Should we meet at the church, or in a home, or at a restaurant?**

A. Whatever works, is the short answer. However, the church will probably offer more privacy than would a restaurant. In a home, the host may be distracted by his role as host, and others may be distracted by the things in the room. So: the church is best, but meet wherever people are willing to go!

# 'Having a child has made me more of a humanist'

By Rev. Matthew C. Johnson-Doyle

I remarked to my wife, Morgan, the other day that having a child has made me more of a humanist. I do not mean that it has made me more of an atheist – humanism and atheism can go together but they don't have to. No, what I meant is that our daughter, Rosalie, is a powerful reminder to me of the majesty and wonder of life. There is nothing supernatural about her. She's just a human being, like all the rest of us. And yet I still feel that her presence in my life is wondrous.

This is the central claim of religious humanism: that people are wondrous without being supernatural. To be a religious humanist (as distinct from a secular humanist) is to say that there is powerful spiritual meaning in the world and in our everyday lives, that life is sacred, and that human life is sacred too, but that this sacredness is inherent in us. It need not be bestowed upon us from an outside force.

This isn't to say that humans are angels. The violence and tragedy at Virginia Tech, in Iraq, and in homes and battlefields around the world is more than enough evidence – far too much evidence – of our capacity for evil. When you are a religious humanist, you cannot turn away from this. We are not permitted to stick our heads in the sand. We have no choice but to say – this evil, too, doesn't not come from outside. This is not the devil's work, it is our doing.

Beauty and violence, wonder and tragedy: this is part of being human. Embracing the good and acknowledging the reality of evil are two of the things required of religious humanists. The third thing is this: to make the world better. When the word humanism is used outside the theological sphere, it usually means politics and institutions that support human dignity and welfare: social security, universal education, democracy, public support for the arts, to give just a few examples. But this kind of humanism is spiritual too – if good is part of us, and evil is part of us, then isn't it obvious that our obligation is to create more good and less evil?

How might we do such things? That's the harder part. Oh, yes, we can and should do things that serve the needy. We can and should advocate for policies that uphold human dignity for all, and support those legislators and executives who enact and vote for those policies. We can and should show compassion and love in our personal lives and raise our children to do the same. These are good things. But sometimes they seem like not enough. Sometimes we wish for some cure, some magic, to fix what is broken.

But if we are religious humanists, we will not rely on such supernatural hopes. We know that these longings can be dangerous, for they can permit the abuse of power in the name of our apocalyptic fantasies. Rather, it is the hard work – the human work – of service and witness and integrity that is necessary. For Rosalie's sake, and for the sake of all of our children and grandchildren, let us take to such work with purpose and with a hope grounded in reality.

*Rev. Matthew C. Johnson-Doyle is minister at High Plains Church, Unitarian Universalist in Colorado Springs, Colo. You may visit his blog at <http://revmjd.blogspot.com>.*

Parent  
By Brenda Shaw

Father, I know more about Mother  
than I do about you,  
and she died when I was a baby.  
I lived with you for eighteen years.

In all that time you seldom spoke.  
Your favorite words were "Oh my gosh!"  
said in three different tones  
for three different sorts of occasion:

In surprise  
at an unexpected pleasant happening.

In anxiety if I were proposing  
some crazy stunt and you were worried.

In despair if the worst  
that could possibly happen had happened.

I wonder—is that what you said  
when Mother died without warning,  
without saying goodbye?

Somewhere along the way  
I asked you questions—very few.  
One was, "What was Mother like?"  
but you couldn't find the words.

Another was "Which of your two wives  
did you like the best?"  
You said "The one who gave me you,"  
and choked up.

Later I asked  
"Do you believe in God?"  
You said "No, I guess I don't."  
On that, at least, we agreed.

We knew each other on a level  
beyond words.  
There were no divided loyalties.  
I knew you'd stand behind me or beside me  
whatever happened.

There was one question I never had to ask.  
The one sure thing in a nightmare world  
was the knowledge that you loved me.

*"Parent" by Brenda Shaw from Poems of Maine in the Nineteen Thirties and Forties: by one who lived through them. © Moon Pie Press. Reprinted with permission.*

*(Gifts from my father... Continued from page 1)*

It is a cautionary tale for me to think of the boundaries that his drinking put on his life. It speaks of his brokenness: the pain that I believe he sought to diminish with numbing alcohol. It speaks to his strength as well, that he made a choice, and stood strong with what was, in the end, a moral choice.

The second facet that limited him is more difficult to talk about. My father had what I gather was a lifelong love of women's clothes. He was not gay, so far as I could learn, but he loved to dress in women's clothing. I knew this about my father from a young age when I saw him dressed – with makeup and heels and a wig – when I was no more than 5. It was confirmed for me later when my brother and I read "Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Sex." Our mother, who had given us the book and recommended that we read it, sat us down one day and asked if we had any questions. My brother asked if Dad was a transvestite, finally having language and opportunity to ask the question. Mom acknowledged that Dad cross dressed in what was for the times the most non-judgmental way she could have. Having spoken about it then, we spoke of it rarely, and only when absolutely necessary.

When my brothers and I cleared out our father's apartment before his move into a nursing home, Mike opened the closet in Dad's bedroom and gasped. It was half filled with dresses and skirts, his dresser revealed panty hose and various other tools of the trade for looking like a woman. Neither of my brothers could be there in that room, and so I was the one who cleaned it all out, threw away what couldn't be given to Goodwill, and bagged up what could be used by someone else.

It was my father's dark, dark secret. It was something that he kept hidden, though it was obvious from his closet that it was a large part of his life. It was dark with good reason. No one, it seemed, could love that in my father: not his parents, nor his sister, none of the women in his life, and I'm sure he believed that none of his children could. Even today his story might be fodder for the likes of Jerry Springer, for talk shows that astound and disgust. My father, who died in 1996, would have been 93 on his next birthday. For his generation and in most of his life, there was even less tolerance, less acceptance, less space for him.

It was this secret that led him to an isolated life. And we shared his unhappy silence. My colleague Charlie Kast has said that the opposite of loneliness is telling the truth, and I believe it to be deeply true for my father, that the truth of his life he believed could not be spoken, thus he remained alone and unloved in a facet of his life that gave him pleasure.

I lost my shame around that part of him with the help of

friends who delight in the play of gender roles, that is to say, men I know who share that love of women's clothes. In conversation one day about the movie "Priscilla, Queen of the Desert", I commented that I was somewhat uncomfortable with it all because of my father's dark secret. One friend sought to help me with my issue. He talked at some length about how important it was for people to be able to express themselves, and that children especially need to be around people – no matter who they are – who are clear about who they are, who love themselves and their lives.

"Oh, no," I told him quickly. "My father was always deeply ashamed of his dressing."

"Linda," he said, looking me kindly and directly in the eye, "that's not *your* shame. You don't need to carry it."

At that moment I was freed from my father's secret shame, and in the weeks and months and now years that have followed, I have been able to welcome and love that part of my father.

For me, part of the religious quest has to be learning how to accept and love that which is placed before us, all the stories of love and loss, to learn to find peace with what we don't understand, and to be opened to others in the bonds of compassion and care.

My father's brokenness was deep and obvious to me: the pain of his life shuttered him away from his children, from friends, from the world. It took me a long time to see the other truths about it: he had his satisfactions and there was much he was content about in his life, as my brother reminds me.

And his gifts to me were not only those of his brokenness. In my early thirties, I became convinced that both he and my mother loved me deeply and unconditionally at a very early time in my life, and that love has strengthened and supported me through the traumas and tragedies that have come into my life. I do remember his laughter and joy when I pranced around in my oh-so-very-special white go-go boots that I wore nonstop for nearly a year of my life.

There are many stories to tell about fathers. The one I tell about my father is indeed a love story, for while there was so much that went wrong, there was such pain and too much estrangement, still his life and my life were held together by love that we could not escape.

His brokenness helps me to see my own, and to love it, too. And though there may be greater gifts to give, this is a precious one. One to be held in the heart, savored and praised.

*The Rev. Dr. Linda A. Hart is a lifelong Unitarian Universalist, serving the Richmond and Putney Unitarian Church on the outskirts of London, England.*

F Is For Firm  
By Nicholas Gordon

F is for firm.  
A is for absent.  
T is for time.  
H is for hurt.  
E is for even.  
R is for repeat.

Fathers Need Not Fathers Be  
By Nicholas Gordon

Fathers need not fathers be.  
All one needs to do is choose  
To love for life, and that embrace,  
Held long and hard, bestows the  
grace  
Each craves. For all in time must  
lose,  
Restored alone by memory.  
So now it is with you and me.

*For much of his working life,  
Nicholas Gordon taught English at  
New Jersey City University.*

*He describes himself this way:  
"Married too early, in midlife I went  
through a divorce, with all its  
attendant emotional and financial  
difficulties. I have worked at many  
odd jobs to try to make ends meet,  
including a waiter, a shipping clerk,  
a moving man, and a New York City  
cab driver. Now in retirement,  
married happily again, I can recollect  
my own life in tranquility and, I hope,  
find some words as well for the lives  
of others."*

*Mr. Gordon reserves the copyright,  
but he allows free use of his poems;  
for more poems and to receive his  
"poem of the day" by e-mail, see his  
Web site, [www.poemsforfree.com](http://www.poemsforfree.com).*

# News and notes

## UUMeN will meet at General Assembly

Our annual meeting at the 2007 UUA General Assembly in Portland, Ore., is scheduled for 8 a.m. Friday, June 22. We'll meet for breakfast. Location info will be available at our UUMeN Booth #366. See you there!

## Never renew your membership again!

With a UUMeN Life Membership, \$300 means you will never have to worry about renewing your membership again—and you will help us do the important work of supporting UU men and boys!

## Check out our logo contest for UUMeN

UUMeN is considering adopting a new logo. Here is our current logo, and here is one possible alternative. We are soliciting new designs as well — please send your design to [info@uumen.org](mailto:info@uumen.org) or to our snail mail address, UUMeN 5307 NW 118th Ave., Coral Springs, FL 33076. This is a great opportunity for a graphics art student to build or add to a portfolio or for a professional to contribute to the well being of UUMeN. We'll present the finalists at General Assembly—at our booth and the annual meeting.



## Make your RE program more boy-friendly

Plan at least one class per month outside the classroom — plan for adventure, discovery and some noise! Check out more suggestions at [http://www.uumen.org/boy\\_freindly\\_re.htm](http://www.uumen.org/boy_freindly_re.htm).



## Open call for MaleCall

We accept articles, reviews and original poems relating to men's experiences. If you have something to share, please submit your writing to our editor at [jroush@uuma.org](mailto:jroush@uuma.org). We are particularly interested in submissions on our upcoming themes: Success for the Fall 2007 issue (due Aug. 1) and Education for the Winter 2008 issue (due Nov. 1). Theme suggestions are also welcome.

## Resources for our readers

- See [www.operationrespect.org](http://www.operationrespect.org), which offers free anti-bullying resources and materials, including the video, "Don't Laugh At Me," to elementary and secondary educators.
- Another site with many resources: [www.menweb.org](http://www.menweb.org).
- And for fathers, see [www.fatherstuff.org](http://www.fatherstuff.org).
- Worth reading: "The Brain Diet: The Connection Between Nutrition, Mental Health and Intelligence" by Alan C. Logan and Martin Katzman.

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Unitarian Universalist Men's Network  
5307 NW 118th Ave.  
Coral Springs, FL 33076



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Membership is valid for 12 months following the date of dues donation. Please also consider making an additional tax-deductible gift. You can also join ONLINE at [www.uumen.org](http://www.uumen.org)!

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

Check if you would rather have MaleCall sent by e-mail, when available.

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- I am applying as a new UUMeN member.
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**Make checks payable in U.S. funds to UUMeN. Send this form together with your tax-deductible gift to:**

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Coral Springs, FL 33076**