

MaleCall

Journal of the Unitarian Universalist Men's Network
UUMeN, 5307 NW 118th Ave., Coral Springs, FL 33076
Web: www.uumen.org
E-mail: info@uumen.org

WINTER 2006



A Letter to Joseph: Father of Jesus

From a sermon by the Rev. Anthony David

Dear Joseph,

This is the night when Christians around the world remember the birth of your son, Jesus. All eyes are on him, or on his mother Mary, which makes it easy to forget about you. But tonight, you're on my mind, you who were in truth an integral part of things. This letter is to you.

I can see you with your carpenter's hands, holding the just-born baby Jesus, who was probably all purplish-colored, with a squashed face, squalling like a banshee. But I'll bet your smile was as big as mine was, when my own daughter was born! I see all this through my imagination, so perhaps I'm wrong. The stories give us only bits and pieces about you, and that's all we have to go on.

One thing we can be pretty sure of, though, is that you were a great protector of your family. The political ruler of your land, King Herod, was always on the lookout for people plotting to take away his power. When the Wise Men from the East came to him asking about the child who was destined to be a King of the Jews, King Herod was enraged. He decided then and there he was going to hunt you down and murder your son, destroy your family. Anything to protect his throne.

When news of this got back to you—an angel warned you—you did what you had to do. You got up and got out of there. Moved your family all the way to Egypt, for safety's sake. Only when you heard that King Herod was dead and the coast was clear did you return home to Nazareth.

So what was it like? I imagine it was so hard.... In my own life, perhaps the only thing that comes closest was when my own Dad moved me, my Mom, and my brothers all the way from Alberta Canada to Texas back in 1979. Dad was a medical doctor, and in his opinion, the government of Canada was making bad decisions about health care that would really mess up his practice. Not as bad as King Herod, I know, but it was bad enough for Dad to want to get us out of there.

The year, 1979, we celebrated Christmas with the family in Edmonton and then got on the road. It was so hard leaving them all behind us. And then, just outside of Great Falls, Montana, we ran into a blizzard. Snow was coming down in big flakes, swirling in the wind, and we couldn't see a thing, the windshield wipers couldn't cope with all the snow.

It got so bad that Dad just stuck his head out of the window to see the road, and I'll never forget how his beard caught snow as we crept forward. We passed one car after another that had spun out of control on the slick highway. We didn't stop—we were only five miles out of Great Falls, we just pressed on to get a hotel room for the night. And Dad did it. We made it safe and sound. He brought us through.

Of course, it's easy to protect someone when they are a helpless baby in your arms. It gets far more difficult when babies learn how to move around on their own, when they grow into children and then youth. All along the way, they're



(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.

2005-2006 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), 2006
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 concerns
via e-mail (info@uumen.org) to:*

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Layout: Bob Hospadaruk

Address Changes: Frank Mundo
WWW.UUMEN.ORG

From the President...

Hi UUMeN Members:

First, I remind everyone we're now receiving UUMeN Sermon Contest entries for winner to be announced at GA2007 in Portland, OR. Entries must reach us by April 15, 2007. This year, the UU Men's Group at Olympia Brown UU Church, Racine, WI, will be selecting the winner under guidance of Steering Council member Rich Wilson. The prize is \$500 for winner (Reverend, or layperson). More on the Sermon Contest topic in also in this MaleCall.

On January 18th thru 21st, 07, UUMeN Steering Council will hold an Annual Winter Meeting. This year, it will be held at the Valley UU Church, 6400 West Del Rio, Chandler, AZ 85228 (web www.vuu.org). On Sunday morning 1/21/07, we'll be doing the service there. If you're in the area, drop by and meet our UUMeN Steering Council.

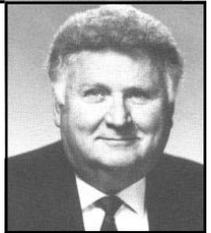
Also, this is a time when we plan next for next year. Besides further defining focus, assisting UU Congregations, preparing for GA2007, etc, we also solicit your input as well. Got ideas about improving UUMeN? We want thoughts about better serving you. I'll be creating an agenda shortly for this meeting and ask for your input. Send it via email to dnwoods@ameritech.net, or call (847) 864-7869.

Lastly, if you're not current with your annual membership donation (\$25), it's easy to take care of via website with credit card. Log into www.uumen.org & follow instructions. Also, consider becoming a lifetime UUMeN member for \$300. Then you'll not be asked to contribute yearly **ever again**. There's unfinished work to be performed for the good work we do, and we'll always need your help.

Best in the Brotherhood,



President, UUMeN, dnwoods@ameritech.net



Dave Woods

YIKES!

Have you forgotten to renew your contribution to UUMeN?

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

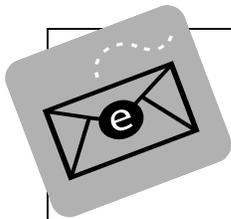
It's now *easier than ever* to join, renew, contribute,

ONLINE at www.uumen.org

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

THANKS, Brother (or Sister) !





MALECALL MAIL:

After I received the Fall 2006 Male Call, and read the sermon by Rev. Jan Christian, I knew I had to contact her. So, I found the website of the church in Ventura and wrote her a message indicating that I wanted to find her brother's name on the Vietnam Memorial...

Although I'd been to the Memorial a number of times, I've never searched for a specific name. With the assistance of a helpful ranger, I found her brother's name. I don't recall she included his name in her sermon--he was Robert Christian, Jr. I don't know much about him--just the material Jan included in her sermon, his birth and death dates, his rank (2nd Lt.). His name is on panel 27W.

In brotherhood, Gregg Grisa

Questions & Conversation - Starters for Men's Groups

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

Rev. Jaco ten Hove: A Winter/New Year's activity. Ask for each man to describe some important aspect of the previous year in one of three ways (choice helps, maybe write these options on an easel pad):

1. Speak of it in the third person, as a true myth that featured him as a character; or
2. Use some guiding metaphor or image that helps convey the importance of the aspect; or
3. Speak of it in terms of its emotional impact.

Bob Hospadaruk: Each man is invited to find something in his pocket and to explain something about himself related to that object.

Chip: Share an important beginning and an important ending from the previous year

As a young adult, when I became a stepfather, my first rule for parenting was, "Don't do what my father did," but a negative example isn't much to go on. I wasn't a very good father at first, but I was determined to give my children loving parenting. I looked to other parents for guidance and tried new techniques. In order to be a better father to my children, I had to learn from other fathers what fathers are supposed to do. I had to allow myself to be fathered, to experience trusting and being trusted... The things our parents taught us live on inside us. If some of what we learned from them doesn't work for us in today's world, we need to revisit those lessons and change how we react to them. Thich Nhat Hanh said, "Our mothers and fathers continue in us. Our liberation is their liberation. Whatever we do for our transformation is also for their transformation, and for our children and their children."

--from a sermon by the Rev. Bruce Russell-Jayne, Ogden Utah

Editor's Note

Hello. My name is Chip Roush, and it is my privilege to be the new *MaleCall* editor. I welcome your feedback, your letters, your ideas and your submissions (reviews, articles, sermons, poetry, etc.) I serve the UU Congregation of Grand Traverse as their Senior Minister; I am also a husband and an uncle.

I've been exploring life-affirming masculinity for most of my adult life. The first thing I did, after discovering the UU church in Columbus, Ohio, was join a Men's Group there. I am forever indebted to the men in that group, for teaching me that manhood is much wider than the version we're shown in most movies and television. While I admit that I have laughed at one or two of the "Man Law" commercials, they also make me cringe. Not only are they homophobic, misogynist, racist and ageist, they simply depict a stunted view of what it means to be a man.

On that topic, please read the article about men watching sports instead of going to the Emergency Room. Pay special attention to the list of "ER-worthy" symptoms at the end. As a man who once put off going to the ER to demonstrate "toughness," I humbly submit that mature masculinity involves being tough *and wise*.

In brotherhood, *Chip Roush*

MaleCall

An interview with the Rev. Dr. Daniel O'Connell

How long have you been a UUMeN member?

I believe I first joined in 1995. I was still a student in seminary, at Meadville, and I won the very first UUMeN Sermon Prize. As soon as I won the prize, it occurred to me that I probably ought to join the organization.

Why did you join?

I grew up UU, and when I growing up, my mom was in what they called a consciousness-raising group. This was a bunch of women who were basically doing small group ministry, exploring the then-emerging topic (this was the 1970s) of feminism, and how that empowered them. I always thought that this was pretty interesting. Then, at Meadville, I did my dissertation on gender initiation and religious education. Evangelicals had a pretty good idea that they were holding up, which evolved into the Promise Keepers, about what mature masculinity might be. So my question, in my dissertation and since then, is "does liberal religion, in general, and Unitarian Universalism, in particular, have something to say about what constitutes mature masculinity?"

Why did you become a Life Member?

I decided, after having been on the UUMeN Steering Committee, and having written various things for *MaleCall*, that I wanted to support UUMeN in a big way. For me, being able to be a Life Member was pretty easy. The cost is really not that much, when you think about it. And, it was easier for me to become a Life Member, than to have to remember to pay dues every year.

What is best/most satisfying about being a male in the 21st century?

I think there is the expansion of the gender role: men can cry, men can wear pink, men can be tender. Thirty years ago, if you did that, you better be married. It was a much tougher thing. The expansion of gender roles, for both men and women, is a very satisfying thing.

I also think, because of feminism, and then subsequently because of the men's movement, there's more recognition of what men can do, and contribute. The men's movement lifted up liberal religious male val-

ues. And people came to remember, or realize, that liberal religious men worked to help emancipate blacks, women, and gays and lesbians.

What is worst/most difficult about being a male in the 21st century?

Women's issues are much more visible, in some ways, than men's issues. Just as one example, think about the pink ribbon, think about breast cancer. Breast cancer is considered a killer, but testicular cancer is just as much a killer. If a child loses a mother to breast cancer, it's considered a tragedy, and yet the reality is that children lose their fathers more often than they lose their mothers. It's not quite as much a tragedy, because men are a little more expendable, at least in the popular media. So that's a little bit disappointing.

Another thing about being a man in the 21st century—it's probably a hold-over from the 20th century—is that single heterosexual men are seen as strange, and/or dangerous, in a way that single women or homosexual men are not. That's just a holdover, that single heterosexual men are dangerous.

Another thing—it doesn't apply to me, but it does to other men—is that men still have to ask women out, and risk rejection. But men who ask women out now risk more of a backlash than they did before.

A final thing would be that, since we're still in the transition from feminism to full equality, women (well, married, heterosexual women, at any rate) really have three choices: they can work full-time, they can work part time and be with their kids, or they can stay at home—they can be a stay-at-home mom. Men also have three choices, and they are work, work or work.

*What is best/most satisfying about being a *UU* male in the 21st century?*

One of the interesting things is that I am an official minority: a male UU minister. This means that it's harder for people to blame things on male ministers, since we're a minority. A truly emancipated man, free from gender stereotyping, is a valuable person at church and in the community, and everybody knows it, whether they say so or not. That's a pretty important thing about being a UU male in the 21st century, because church tends to be a women's place. So if you're a UU male, and you show up and you contrib-

(Continued on page 5)

Men Delay ER Trips to Watch Sports - Hospital Emergency Rooms Get Busier After Big Games, Study Shows

By Miranda Hitti, WebMD Medical News

Oct. 11, 2006 -- Some men may take their sports too seriously, delaying trips to hospital emergency rooms during major sports events.

So say researchers including David Jerrard, MD, of the University of Maryland Medical Center in Baltimore. Their findings will be presented next week in New Orleans at the 37th annual scientific session of the American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP).

"It's important for everyone to seek immediate medical attention when they are experiencing the symptoms of a medical emergency," Jerrard says in an ACEP news release. "Men should not risk their health by putting off going to the emergency room because they want to see the final results of a football game," he continues. "It could be the last game they ever see."

Jerrard's team studied the number of men admitted to the University of Maryland Medical Center in the four hours following nearly 800 televised games over three years.

The games were either postseason professional football games, major league baseball games, or Division I college football or basketball games.

For comparison, the researchers also tracked the number of men admitted to the same ER during the same hours on days without major, televised sports matches.

More men were seen in the hours after games than on non-game days, the study shows.

"In our previous study, we found that visits by men to emergency departments declined during televised sporting events," Jerrard says in an ACEP news release. He says the new study was designed to see "whether there was an increase in visits by men once games were over, and that's exactly what we found." The pattern doesn't seem to be limited to championship games, such as the Super Bowl, Jerrard notes.

When to Go to the Emergency Room

Do you know when to go to the emergency room? The American College of Emergency Physicians says these symptoms indicate a medical emergency:

- Difficulty breathing, shortness of breath
- Chest or upper abdominal pain or pressure
- Fainting, sudden dizziness, weakness
- Changes in vision
- Confusion or changes in mental status
- Any sudden or severe pain

- Uncontrolled bleeding
- Severe or persistent vomiting or diarrhea
- Coughing or vomiting blood
- Suicidal feelings
- Difficulty speaking
- Shortness of breath
- Unusual abdominal pain



(MaleCall Interview... Continued from page 4)

ute to your community, I think you get noticed.

*What is worst/most difficult about being a *UU* male in the 21st century?*

Probably one of the more difficult things is that there is still a subtle—mostly subtle, sometimes not so, more subtle as the years go by—there's still an anti-male bias in UU churches. Men have always been a minority in church, and now we're a minority in the pulpit. Church is often seen—and not just in UU churches—as a woman's place. That's because church is sometimes marketed as a safe place, a place of wound healing, a place of comfort—rather than church as a place of boldness, of courageousness, and of evangelical outreach, which are sort of more traditional male things.

What is a good question to discuss at a men's group meeting?

Here are three:

- When was the first time you thought that someone saw you as a man?
- Who has been a model for you, about good manhood?
- Part of being an American man means carrying certain burdens. What is the burden you would most like to lay down?

If you were asked to speak to a group of teenaged UU boys, what would you talk about?

Well, the answer is, whatever *they* wanted to talk about. This is especially important for a UU minister—ministers are always a bit suspect, and they are especially suspect to teenagers.

For example, a minister comes across a group of teenaged boys. He asks them what they're doing. They say that they're seeing who can tell the biggest lie about his sex life. He blusters, "when I was your age, I didn't think about sex at all!" And the boys say, "you win!"

Rev Dr. Dan O'Connell, Kirkwood, MO

(A Letter From Joseph... Continued from page 1)

making more and more decisions of their own, and we can't live their lives for them. I know you know what I'm talking about. A couple of stories come to mind which suggest as much.

The first one comes from a piece of writing called the Infancy Gospel of Thomas (which is ancient but not part of the official Bible). According to the story, there was a time when your son got into the habit of using his miraculous powers but to do bad things. How old was he at the time? Four? Five? He'd be playing with a playmate, and they'd start to annoy him, and when that happened, your son would strike them dead.

Just like that. The rest of the story says that the parents of Jesus' dead playmates, and others, were obviously upset with what was happening and so they went to you, pled with you to do something. Reign Jesus in. Teach him to use his miracle powers for good and not for ill.... And you tried. You sat Jesus down and reasoned with him, but he wouldn't listen, he was all fidgety and distracted and so you got irritated, you yanked his ear.

In response, Jesus growled at you and said in a voice big with warning: *Do Not Vex Me!*

That's the first story. Here's the second, and this one does appear in official Christian scriptures. In this story, Jesus is 12, and you and your wife Mary traveled to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover at the Temple. You went with a big caravan with lots of people and tents, so when you were on the return journey back home, you just assumed he was there somewhere, even if you didn't happen to see him. But soon enough, you realized your error. He wasn't with the caravan. You left him back in Jerusalem. And so panic struck both you and Mary. Your blood pressure went way up. You rushed back to the city and went looking for him. And finally, there he was: he's in the Temple, sitting with the teachers, asking them questions about ethics and religion and answering theirs. Do you remember what Mary said when you finally got to him? She said, "Jesus, we've been in a state of panic ever since we realized you weren't with the caravan. Why have you treated us like this? We've been looking all over for you!" And then Jesus, your twelve year old son, the one whose beard was just starting to come out in faint wisps, says, in that uppity way that many 12 year olds have perfected, "Why, mother, why were you search-

ing for me? Did you not know that I was in my Father's house?"

Oh, Joseph. I am reminded of another famous Dad, named Bill Cosby. When faced with his own sassy kids, and completely fed up, he once said to them, "I brought you into this world, and I can take you out!"

I just want you to know that I appreciate the stories where you are trying to teach Jesus ethics and a sense of thoughtfulness for others. It's one thing to be a protector, but it's another thing to teach your kids how to make good choices. It's the difference between fishing for them and teaching them how to fish for themselves. And clearly, you succeeded. If, as a child, Jesus used his powers recklessly and cruelly, when he was older he used them to heal the world. And, as a teenager, if Jesus wasn't very thoughtful about others, as an adult his example of thoughtfulness would transform billions of lives.

Fact is, all our children have powers. Maybe not miraculous powers, but powers that can still harm or heal. Joseph, teach us to be courageous in our parenting and mentoring, especially in those moments when our kids growl at us, *Do Not Vex Me!* Help us to lay out fair and clear boundaries and then consistently keep them. You know what's at stake.

It's about helping our children and youth learn how to use their freedom in a way that will be a blessing to the world. It just doesn't happen by itself.

Thanks for being such a great parent, both you and Mary.

Joseph, you fathered Jesus. Biology did not matter. Family, you knew, has more to do with love than with anything else. You took Jesus in, and because of your love and Mary's, Jesus grew to know that above all else, who he was, was a son of God. God's son, loved with a love that never ends. Teach us, Joseph, to help our children realize this love directly and unforgettably for themselves, too. That they are sons and daughters of God.

Blessings to you this Christmas Eve, Joseph, this holy night when your child was born.

I'm yours - sincerely, Anthony

*The Rev. Anthony David serves at
Pathways Church in Southlake, Texas*



WOMEN SERMON CONTEST \$500 PRIZE!

Sermons on men's issues usually help congregations deepen their ministry! Anyone (lay or clergy, any gender) can submit an entry for the annual UUMeN sermon contest—and maybe win \$500. It must be delivered in a UU congregation between April 1, 2006 and March 31, 2007. The submitted text should be single-spaced, between 2,000 and 2,500 words, and available electronically.

Mail two hard copies (with a cover letter but no identifying mentions in the sermon copies) to:

UUMeN
5307 NW 118th Ave.
Coral Springs, FL 33076

Or

Email sermon to: info@uumen.org

Mail by the deadline of April 15, 2007. Rotating men's groups (supervised by a UUMeN Steering Council member) conduct the judging process. The award winner will receive \$500 and recognition at the 2007 UUA General Assembly in Portland, OR (but need not be present).

Open Call for MaleCall

We accept articles, reviews and original poems relating to men's experiences. If you have something to share with your fellow readers, please submit your writing to our editor at jroush@uuma.org

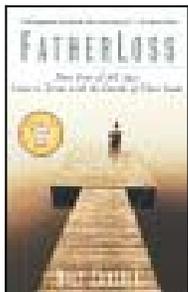
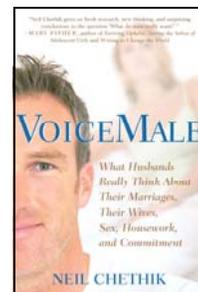


GREAT BOOKS FROM UUMeN



A Community of Men: A Guide to Men's Programming in UU Congregations is available free to new members (See membership form on back cover) or \$5.00

VoiceMale: What Husbands Really Think of Their Wives, Their Marriages, Sex, Housework and Commitment (Simon & Schuster). Written by former UUMeN president Neil Chethik, based on his original research of 350 American husbands, this book challenges many of the most-commonly held beliefs about men and marriage. It also offers men advice based on the wisdom of the husbands themselves. \$23.95



FatherLoss: How sons of all ages come to terms with the deaths of their dads, by Neil Chethik, focuses on the father-son relationship. It comes with a study guide for men's groups. \$14

To order any of the above books, make your check out to Neil Chethik, and then send to UUMeN/Books, PO Box 8071, Lexington, Ky. 40533. Proceeds from sales will be donated to UUMeN. There is no shipping or handling charge

SAVE THE MALES: Changing Men Changing the World, also by Tom Owen-Towle, boldly engages with stimulating topics such as men choosing to be brothers...men as religious beings...joining ethics and power...saying "yes" to aggression and "no" to violence; graying gracefully as elders. \$14.95 plus \$2.00 (shipping/handling)—order directly from Tom Owen-Towle, 3303 Second Ave., San Diego, CA 92103 (uutom@cox.net).



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