

## **Order of Service** (from Ted Hogg, [ted\\_fww@telus.net](mailto:ted_fww@telus.net))

Title: **Compassionately male**

Description: ***Compassion toward others begins with letting go of our self-judgements and finding the freedom to be who we truly are. Ted Hogg will share how his experiences with the men's movement have helped him on his journey of self-discovery toward compassionate freedom.***

[as people are arriving, play recorded song "Kothbiro" by Ayub Ogada; about 5 minutes long; see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LVvYmK04oG0>]

**Prelude**

**Westwood announcements**

**Welcome and Introductions**

**Opening words and chalice lighting:**

#451:

"Flame of fire, spark of the universe that warmed our ancestral hearth—  
agent of life and death, symbol of truth and freedom.

We strive to understand ourselves and our earthly home."

- *Leslie Pohl-Kosbau*

**Hymn #1026: If every woman in the world**

**Candles of concerns and celebration**

**Affirmation: "May the light of these candles.."**

**Offertory**

## Reading

For thousands of years, we men have been warriors. In tribal cultures, it was the warrior's role to protect women, children and community. Unfortunately, as technology and the ego-self developed, warriors became soldiers - - destroying and dominating in the service of a tyrant King. The word "warrior" came to represent those who needed to dominate and destroy to feel superior.

There has also been another kind of warrior; the one who knows that the toughest battle isn't with the perceived enemy "out there," but rather, the essential battles to be fought are the ones in our own hearts and minds.

This warrior takes responsibility for his own heart, mind, speech and action and makes a positive difference in the lives of his friends, family and community. Even though these types of warriors have been around for centuries, we call this the "new warrior."

*(These words have been adapted from the "Context Presentation" of the Mankind Project)*

### **Hymn #1017 Building a new way**

**Sermon** (see below)

### **Musical Meditation**

### **Hymn #1064 Blue boat home**

### **Extinguishing of candles**

### **Closing words (#698)**

"Take courage friends.  
The way is often hard, the path is never clear,  
and the stakes are very high.  
Take courage.  
For deep down, there is another truth:  
you are not alone."

### **Postlude**

**END**

**P1**

## **Sermon**

### **Introduction:**

Thanks Mitch. I'm a long-time friend of Westwood and I'm married to Christine Watts who's here today with her parents, Ken and Rene who are visiting from Ontario. I'd also like to welcome Ron, Brian and Lyndon who are here to support me from the Mankind Project, and our family friends Patti and Michael.

If you look in the order of service, you'll see that we are now at a section called "Sermon". But this will be more of a story than a sermon – a story of my life journey as a male and my involvement with a men's group called "The Mankind Project" or MKP.

So here's my story: Next Thursday I will be going to a rustic church camp on Buffalo Lake near Stettler, to join with a group of 30 or 40 men on a weekend called "The New Warrior Training Adventure".

It will be my 16th time and as usual, I'll be paying for the privilege of being there to support the new men who will be coming to experience the weekend for the first time.

There will be the sound of drums and the smell of sage and sweetgrass.

How did I become involved with such a men's group, and why do I keep coming back?

### **Male wounds: Midlife crisis and growing up**

Well, it goes back to the year 2000, to what I call my midlife crisis. I felt on a knife edge between being a doormat and a control freak. Feelings I'd stuffed down for years were beginning to surface as outbursts of anger, tears, and bouts of depression.

I was feeling increasingly anxious about social situations and cultural changes that in my imagination, might eventually make my role as a man, as a husband and as a father completely irrelevant.

But now I realize that my struggles had been with me for a long time.

I grew up in Alberta starting in the late 1950s. As a child, I remember hearing the old nursery rhyme:

*"What are little girls made of? X2; Sugar and spice and everything nice.  
That's what little girls are made of".*

*"What are little boys made of? X2; Slugs and snails and puppy-dogs' tails  
That's what little boys are made of.*

Now as a young boy, I thought bugs, slugs and snails were pretty cool. But the message I got from this nursery rhyme was that somehow, there was something wrong with being male.

It didn't help that once I turned 4, I was no longer cuddled or even touched at all except for the whoopings I got on a few occasions.

I didn't know it then, but as a little boy I wanted and needed nurturing, cuddling, affirmation and acceptance of who I was with all my quirks and unusual interests. I hated team sports but loved playing with numbers, making maps of fictitious cities, and exploring the wonder and beauty of nature.

I was a geek in a time when it wasn't cool, and I felt I had to hide my unusual interests. As I grew up, I was bullied for being different and learned that it wasn't safe to express my feelings.

As a teenager, I experienced the huge social changes of the late 60s – including the sexual revolution and the women's movement. I felt left behind and didn't know it then, but I felt a huge shame about being a male.

I got the message that men are supposed to apologize for being men.

I lived in Houston for a year back in 1972 during the Vietnam War. One day in my high school biology class, they turned on the radio so the guys could find out if they were going to be drafted based on their day of birth in a sort of males only lottery.

Now through the early feminist movement, I came to admire women for their courage in breaking free of societal stereotypes and constraints.

And yet I also saw that it was men who were getting the short end of the stick when it came to child custody rights, doing dangerous work, and the much higher rates of suicide and incarceration among men compared with women.

And so I felt a lot of resonance when I discovered the "men's movement", including the book by Warren Farrell entitled "The Myth of Male Power: Why Men are the Disposable Sex".

## **How I became involved**

For some reason, it seems that men have been a whole lot slower than women in giving voice to the legitimate issues that **they** face in adjusting to life's changes. Maybe it's because males are taught that talking about their problems and feelings is a sign of weakness. But by the time I got into my mid 40s, I was ready to be vulnerable and look for opportunities to connect with men at a deeper level.

My first opportunity was here at Westwood back in 2001 when Mitch and I did a Father's Day service together, and then a few of us went on to start the UU Guys group. As some of you might remember, we met for some very interesting social events like blacksmithing and wall-climbing, along with monthly meetings where we had a chance to speak from the heart.

Around that time, I was at a Summer Solstice gathering with Christine and her friends, where I met Lyndon and he talked with me about an intensive weekend training adventure put on by the Mankind Project. At first, I was

leery of doing the weekend because it sounded like a cult. Luckily, they had an open circle of men that met downtown on Monday nights.

I was invited to try it out, and the first night I was blown away when a man in the circle said: "Your anger is welcome here". Later on he said "Your tears are welcome here". It seemed so radically freeing that I opened up and started to trust these men. A few months later, in April 2002, I took the plunge and experienced the New Warrior Training Adventure at a camp on Pine Lake near Red Deer.

That weekend was one of the most powerful experiences of my life, and I was on a high for quite a few days afterward. It didn't solve all my problems, but I came away from that weekend feeling totally positive about being a man.

### **Overview of MKP:**

The Mankind Project, or MKP, is a global network of men supporting each other to lead meaningful lives of integrity, responsibility, and emotional intelligence.

It's a non-profit, charitable organization that's run almost entirely by volunteers. It's not connected with any particular religion or political movement. We celebrate diversity and welcome all kinds of men, regardless of age, ethnic origin or sexual orientation.

MKP has its roots in the mythopoetic men's movement of the early 1980s that aimed to liberate men from the constraints of the modern world that prevent them from being fully in touch with their true masculine nature.

The mythopoetic men's movement was inspired by the writings of Carl Jung, Joseph Campbell, Robert Bly and others who used legends and fairy tales such as "Iron John" as a way of rediscovering and reclaiming "the sacred masculine".

There was (and still is) a growing awareness that boys in our society have become alienated from their fathers and male ancestors who traditionally provided positive role models in tribal societies. And we all know what can happen when boys and young men have nowhere positive to put their

abundant male energies as they grow up –gangs, addictions, violence, or just plain old depression, anxiety and withdrawal.

MKP started in 1984 with the ideas of three men:

Bill Kauth, a psychologist;  
Ron Herring, an educator;  
and Rich Tosi, a former captain in the US Marines

They developed a men's weekend in Wisconsin that was initially called "The Wildman Adventure" that was intended as an initiation into manhood. On the weekend, they introduced the idea of the "New Warrior" – the grown up man who is REAL, powerful and respectful of others. They incorporated sacred rituals such as the sweat lodge ceremony that was gifted to MKP by the Lakota First Nations.

Today, we call this weekend event "the New Warrior Training Adventure".

From its roots in the US, MKP has expanded to 9 countries and over 50,000 men have gone through the weekend training. Here in Edmonton, our local MKP community goes back to 1993 and has since expanded across western Canada – from Vancouver Island to Winnipeg.

I'm especially grateful for the connections our community has developed over the years with men from First Nations communities, especially Maskwaciz - formerly known as Hobbema. Over 75 men from there have been involved in our weekend trainings and it has greatly enriched my experience of MKP.

### **What do we do on the NWTA?**

Some of you may be now wondering: what do we do on the New Warrior Training Adventure?

Well, it's an intense experience that begins on Friday in the late afternoon. It starts with what we call "the descent" – separating men from all the stuff

they're carrying from the outside world. We take a close look at what's working and what's not working in our lives. We introduce concepts such as "integrity", "accountability" and "the shadow".

Later on we do some visioning exercises, getting in touch with what we call archetypes that represent the different parts of our inner selves: the little boy, the wild man, the adventurer and the king. Each of us is invited to create a unique mission of service to co-create our vision of what a better future world would look like.

On Saturday, the new men have an opportunity to do some deep, inner work with the support of a strong circle of men – we call this "the hero's journey".

The training ends on Sunday with a purification ceremony and a celebration for the new men.

### **After the training:**

After going through the weekend, we offer a variety of follow up trainings and social events, but there's no pressure to continue.

Some of us are drawn to join with small groups of men who meet every two weeks to support each other on our life journeys.

A few men go on to develop their skills to the point that they become qualified to take on leadership roles on the weekend trainings.

Other men, those with grey hair like me, have an opportunity to go on a journey toward taking on the role of an elder in our community.

As I think about the prospect of turning 60 next month, I'm actually looking forward to learning about how to become an elder, rather than simply becoming elderly.

### **How it has helped me**



How has my experience with MKP helped?

Well, I still struggle with anxiety, but I also feel more grounded and authentic as a man. With the support of other men, I've gradually got the message that I'm worthy and I'm good enough as I am. I'm better able to speak my truth and set boundaries in a good way with my bosses and the bureaucracy at my work.

I've made peace with what happened in my childhood and I developed a more loving relationship with my Dad in the last few years before he passed away in 2011.

Overall, I think my men's work has made me a better husband and father, but I'd defer to Christine and Alice as to that.

## **Closing**

If you have any questions about what I've said today, or about how to get involved in MKP, I'll be glad to talk with you afterward. We also have a couple of web sites that I could point you to.

Now I recognize that what we do on the New Warrior Training Adventure is not the path that every man would choose to follow, but I think it's safe to say that everyone here – males and females alike, are on their own life journeys toward something like "compassionate freedom".

For myself, I've found that I'm able to be a lot more compassionate toward others when I manage to free myself from self-judgements and societal constraints to be who I am.. with all my strengths, weaknesses and idiosyncrasies.

So now I'd like to go back to the title of this talk: "Compassionately male".

How many of you have heard of the term "oxymoron"?

An oxymoron is a combination of words that appear to have opposite meanings.

Well, I am here to declare that the phrase "Compassionately male" is **NOT** an oxymoron.

We men have feelings too, even if we don't often show them. Men, like all of us humans, have a tremendous capacity for loving kindness and compassion.

Kermit the frog was once quoted as saying "It's not that easy being green".

Well, it's not that easy being male either.

So be nice to the males in your life.

<End>