



The Compassionate Friends

Topeka Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Published Bimonthly by The Topeka TCF Chapter

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NEWSLETTER - Volume 5, Issue No. 1
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www.compassionatefriends.org

Topeka TCF Chapter Website:
www.tcftopeka.org

January ~ February 2020
Editor: Susan Chan
3448 S.W. Mission Ave.
Topeka, KS 66614-3629
(785) 272-4895

JANUARY MEETING

Monday, January 27, 2020
Most Pure Heart of Mary Church
3601 S.W. 17th St., Topeka, KS
7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

New Beginnings - It is a new year but we may feel as though we are still wandering somewhere in the past. How do we make a New Beginning" after the death of our child, grandchild or sibling? Part of what we do in our grief work is to redefine who we are now, in this new reality that none of us would have willingly chosen. We will talk about strategies for moving forward in the new year, continuing to do our grief work and taking with us the memories and the love of that special child. You can feel free to ask questions of our more seasoned members who have found through experience that it is possible to move forward following such a tragic loss.

FEBRUARY MEETING

Monday, February 24, 2020
Most Pure Heart of Mary Church
3601 S.W. 17th St., Topeka, KS
7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

Music, Poetry & Grief - For many bereaved people solace and emotional release may be found in music or in reading poetry about grief and loss. Music in particular has an emotional connection for many of us and certain songs may remind us of the person who has died. Other songs speak to us of hope that our lives will not always be so torn apart. You are encouraged to bring a CD of any music that has had special meaning to you or a poem that has spoken to your heart as you have walked your grief journey.

Meetings are always held on the fourth Monday of each month unless otherwise noted. Listen to radio & TV for cancellations due to severe weather conditions.

This newsletter is sponsored by:

*Tad and Margaret Kramar in loving memory of her son,
Spenser Thomas Good who was born on January 30th*

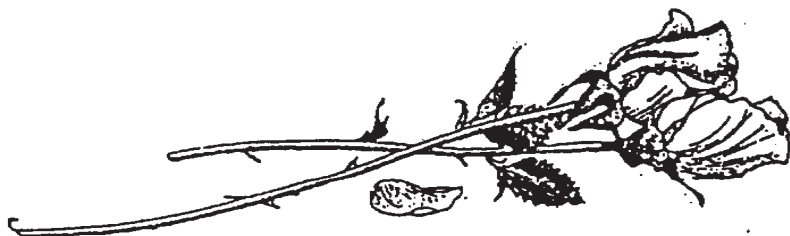
*Ralph and Judy Lundin in loving memory of their
daughter Amy Lundin who was born on February 16th*

*Todd and Kathleen Williams in loving memory of their son,
Baby Boy Williams who was stillborn on February 23rd*



The Compassionate Friends is a self-help organization offering friendship and understanding to bereaved parents. The purposes are to promote and aid parents in the positive resolution of the grief experience following the death of a child of any age, from any cause; and to foster the physical and emotional health of all bereaved parents, grandparents and surviving siblings.

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We Need Not Walk Alone

From the Newsletter Editor

Dear Compassionate Friends Family,

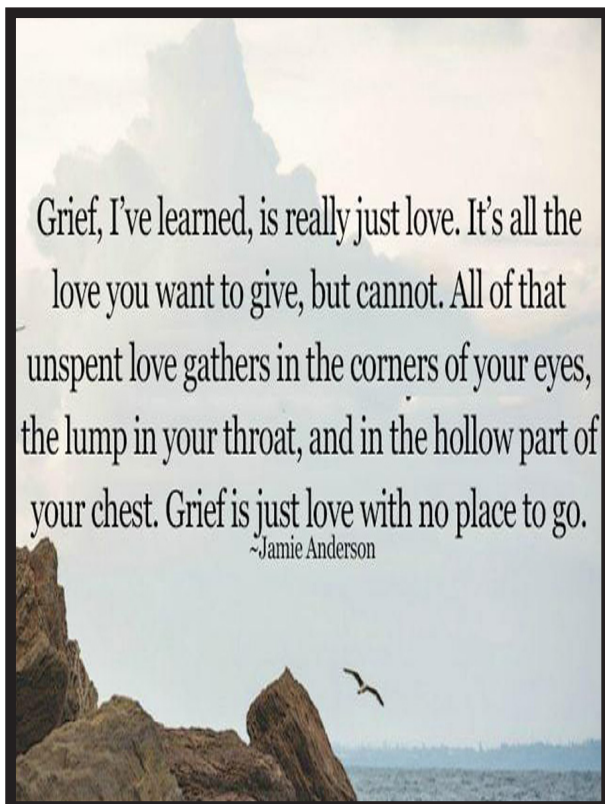
As we come into this New Year and a new decade I wanted to share with you something I found on the website www.whatsyourgrief.com. I thought it was so true and appropriate for how we might want to think about our grief journey as we begin to navigate 2020. I would encourage you, if you are a computer person, to check out this site--it has lots of interesting articles about all kinds of aspects of grief submitted by people from all over. The two women who operate the site are also bereaved individuals and frequently include such thoughtful observations on their blog. The item I mentioned is below in quotes:

“The change to a new year, to a new decade, it seems to increase the internet’s collective chorus of “don’t look back” and “let go so you can move on” sound bites. So this is just a little friendly reminder from your grief-friends: that isn’t how life works. We don’t forget the past to make room for the future. We weave our past into our future. We hold space for those we’ve lost, while we make space for those who are still with us, or who will come along down the line. We don’t shed the weight of our losses. We don’t shake them off and leave them behind us. Instead, we get stronger and we learn to carry them. We are all the better for it. The world is all the better for it.” Source: www.whatsyourgrief.com

REMINDER - Within this newsletter is the yellow Annual Newsletter Renewal Form to let us know if you would still like to continue receiving the newsletter in the coming year. We want everyone who wishes to receive the newsletter and finds it helpful to receive it - either in print form or electronically, whichever works best. Our Chapter does not charge any dues or fees to receive the newsletter, but the Renewal Form does offer you the opportunity to send in a Newsletter Sponsorship or a Love Gift in memory of your loved one. Being a nonprofit group, we rely on such donations to pay for printing this newsletter, postage for mailing it, as well as materials for monthly support group meetings and expenses associated with special memorial events. The Renewal Form also offers you the opportunity to have your child listed in the We Remember section of the newsletter. Those individuals who became bereaved in 2019 will continue to receive the newsletter throughout 2020. Everyone else is asked to let us know if they still wish to receive it. **Please return the form by March 1, 2020** to remain on the database. We will cull the mailing list beginning with the May/June newsletter mailing.

Until next time, be gentle with yourself and let the healing happen.
Remember, We Need Not Walk Alone.

~ Susan Chan, Rachael's Mom



Love Gifts

**Your Love Gifts Help Spread
the Message of Hope & Healing ~ Won't You Help Today?**

What is a Love Gift? A Love Gift is a gift of money (or books, etc.) to The Compassionate Friends. It is usually in memory of a child, grandchild or sibling who has died, but it may be from individuals who wish to honor a relative or friend who has died, a gift of thanks that their children are alive, or simply a gift from someone who wants to help. The Compassionate Friends charges *no individual dues* or fees and depends on such Love Gifts to meet the Chapter's expenses, including the printing and mailing of this newsletter. **When you make a donation, make sure to check to see if your employer may have a "matching gifts" program** as this could double the amount of your donation. If you are not sure whether your company has such a program, check with your Personnel Department. This month we thank the following:

♥ Penny Lumpkin in loving memory of her son Henry William (Hank) Lumpkin

♥ Mary Harrington in loving memory of her son John Carl Harrington and daughter Jaime M. Harrington

♥ Bert and Elaine Bandstra in loving memory of their daughter Diane Joy Bandstra

Your gifts enable us to print this newsletter and reach out to newly bereaved families. Donations are our only source of income and are **tax deductible**. If you would like to sponsor a newsletter, the cost is \$30.00. If we have more than one sponsor, we recognize all of them. If you wish to send a Love Gift, any amount is appreciated. It is whatever you feel you can give. Donations of books that you have found helpful to the Topeka Chapter Library are also greatly appreciated, and it is a nice way to remember your child or other loved one. If you would like to send a Love Gift or a Newsletter Sponsorship, you may do so by sending it to: The Compassionate Friends, c/o Susan Chan, 3448 SW Mission Ave., Topeka, KS 66614-3629. For Newsletter Sponsorships, please indicate which issue you wish to sponsor (Jan/Feb, March/April, May/June, July/August, September/October, or November/December). Makes checks payable to "TCF".

Our Thanks to: Midland Care Connection for giving us a mailbox and Most Pure Heart of Mary Church for allowing us to meet at their facility. A special Thank You to ProPrint for helping to underwrite the printing cost of this newsletter.

*"It is so much darker when a light goes out than it
would have been
if it had never shown."
~ John Steinbeck*

TCF National Office e-mail:
nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org

Compassionate Friends web address:
www.compassionatefriends.org

Topeka TCF Chapter web and e-mail addresses:
www.tcftopeka.org tcftopeka@gmail.com

Kansas Regional Coordinator:
Marty & Renda Weaver - (785) 823-7191
mweaver@cox.net

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Dillions Community Rewards Program Helps Fund Chapter Expenses - A REMINDER - Have you signed up for the Dillions Community Rewards Program yet? If not, we encourage you to do so as it really helps to bring income into our Chapter to help meet expenses. The more participants we have, the more income we can generate. I encourage you to go to www.dillions.com/community rewards and click on "Register" at the top of the page. When you enroll you will be asked to designate which charity you wish to support. **The Topeka Compassionate Friends Chapter NPO number is TC248.** Once you have done so and have a Dillons Shopper's Card, every time you make a purchase at Dillons a portion of your total will be donated to the Topeka TCF Chapter. Participating in this program **costs you nothing and does not affect your fuel points** for gasoline purchases. If you need assistance in setting up your account, call toll-free at 1-800-576-4377 and select Option 3.

Upcoming Events/Dates to Remember

TCF Regional Conference in Honolulu, HI - March 27-28 2020. "Hope, Healing and Aloha". For information go to www.compassionatefriends.org/events

43rd National TCF Conference in Atlanta, GA - July 24-26, 2020. Theme: "Sharing Sweet Memories of Love".

Sites of Future National TCF Conferences:

2021 ~ Detroit, MI

2022 ~ Houston, TX

Pro
Print

DIGITAL PRINT AND COPY SERVICES

**838 MASSACHUSETTS ST
LAWRENCE, KS 66044
785.842.3610**

**1033 SW GAGE BLVD, STE 200
TOPEKA, KS 66604
785.272.0070**

And We Remember.....

*Because of the potential for the hurtful crime of identity theft, TCF Chapter Newsletters will now only publish the date of a child's birth or death without listing the year of each event. This is a directive from the National TCF Office to protect all TCF members. **Due to space constraints, only those families who remain current on our newsletter mailing list will be included in the We Remember section***

Charlie Allen, son of Tanya Allen, who was born on February 6th

Carlie Almond, daughter of Brad and Amy Almond, who was born on February 24th

Tyler James Baker, son of Barbara Baker, who died on March 6th

Brian Lynn Blecha, son of Lynn and Alice Blecha, born February 9th

Monty Brentlinger, son of Don and Carolyn Brentlinger, born on February 6th

Rachael Renée Chan, daughter of Gary & Susan Chan, who died on March 17th

Christian K. Charay, son of Alfred Charay and Laurie Charay who died on February 27th

Cotton Christenson, son of Tracy Christenson, who was born on March 19th

Patrick Cummings, son of Carol Cummings, born March 30th

Wendi Sue Cushing, daughter of Scott and Denise Cushing; sister of Deana and Dylan Cushing, born March 17th

Evan Douglas Epoch, son of Nancy S. Epoch, born March 10th

Rex McCarthy, son of Janet Hamilton, who died in February.

John Carl Harrington, son of Mary Harrington who died March 18th

Jaime M. Harrington, daughter of Mary Harrington, born and died February 3rd

Nason John Hobelman, son of Dee Hobelman, who was born on February 14th

Zachary James Hudec, son of Greg and Liz Hudec, died March 25th

Bradley "Brad" Hurla, son of Mike and Judy Hurla, who died on February 15th

Karen Kay Karnes, daughter of Wilson and Maxine Karnes, who was born March 2nd

Ben Lake, grandson of Patty Lake, who was born on March 21st

Richard L. "Rick" Linder Jr., son of Richard and Patricia Linder, who died February 15th

Gylnn Guerry Lough, son of Billy D. and Inez G. Lough, died Feb. 21st

Billy Lucas, son of Bernie and Jeanette Bialek, who died on February 18th

Juan Adan Lucio, son of Dalia Sanchez and Roberto Lucio, who was born on February 15th

William Henry "Hank" Lumpkin, son of Joe and Penny Lumpkin, who was born on February 1st

Amy Lundin, daughter of Ralph and Judy Lundin, who was born on February 16th

Belinda Meier, daughter of Maggie Walshire, who died on March 20th

Cecil L. Miller, Jr., brother of Brenda Bissey, who died on February 4th

Madison "Maddie" Rae Naill, daughter of Lori Neddermeyer and Eric Naill; step-daughter of Mark Neddermeyer; sister of Jesse and Allie Naill; step-sister of Cale and Braden Neddermeyer; and granddaughter of Bruce and Ginny Miller and Allan and Marge Neddermeyer, who died on March 19th

Tracie Nelson, daughter of Shari Brandenburg, who was born on March 18th

Jeremy Joseph Pechanee, son of Pamela Pechanee, who died on February 22nd

Alisha Marie Quigley, daughter of Karen Leiker, who was born on March 1st and died on March 12th

Kiley Ramey, daughter of Gary and Linda Ramey, born February 28th

Pamela Jaye (Luthye) Rodriguez, daughter of the late Dale Luthye and Elma Luthye, who died on March 1st

Otto G. Schnellbacher, son of Mary Therese Sanders, who died on February 20th

Brittany Nicole Tucker, daughter of Damon and Collene Tucker, who died on March 11th

Carmen Cristina Urdaneta, daughter of Leonel and Judy Urdaneta, born February 13th; died February 3rd

Jason R. VanDam, son of Will and Kay Hasty, born on March 25th

Mary Jane Varner, daughter of Will and Kay Hasty, born February 8th

Michael Scott Watson, son of Warren and Beth Watson, who died on February 23rd

Taylor William Clay Watson, son of Terry and Kathy Watson, who died on March 16th

Christopher Wempe, son of Dan and JoAnn Wempe, born March 9th

Joseph White, son of Karen White, who was born on February 28th and died on February 7th

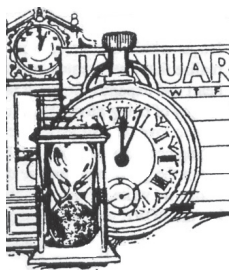
Baby Boy Williams, son of Todd and Kathleen Williams, stillborn February 23rd

George Winter, son of Cindy Taylor and brother of Elizabeth and Jolene Winter, who died on February 15th

(Use the form on opposite page to submit your listing if you have not already done so. Once you have submitted your listing you **do not** have to do so every year as long as you remain active on our mailing list. Your child's name and dates will remain on the We Remember database unless you request their removal or choose to discontinue receiving this newsletter. (This month's listing includes birth and death anniversary dates for February and March)

For the New Year . . .

Instead of the old kind of New Year's resolutions we used to make and break, let's make some this year and really try to keep them.



~ try not to imagine the future; take one day at a time.

~ allow yourself time to cry, both alone and with your loved ones.

~ try to be realistic about your expectations of yourself, your spouse, and the other family members and friends. If each of us is unique and different, how can there be perfect understanding?

~ when a good day comes, relish it. Don't feel guilty and don't be discouraged because it doesn't last. They will come again and multiply.

~ take care of your health, even though the mind might not care, a sick body will only compound your troubles. Drink lots of water, take stress-type vitamins, rest (even if you can't sleep), and get moderate exercise. Help your body to heal as well as your mind.

~ share your feelings with other compassionate friends and let them share with you. You will find that as you begin caring about the pain of others, you will start to come out of your shell - a very healthy sign.

I know that following these resolutions won't be easy, but what has been? It is worth a try. There is nothing to lose and perhaps much to gain.

~ Mary Ehmann, TCF, Valley Forge, PA

The Holidays Are Behind Us

It is the new year. The holidays are behind us. We did with them what we could. Whether they were a time of sorrow, a time of joy, or a combination of both, they are now a part of our memories. In a strange way, as a memory in our hearts and in our minds, our child's place is there among all the other memories of the season. There is hurt along with memory, but also a thankfulness for the memory.

Now we look out on a winter landscape. The earth is cold, the land sharply defined. Yet underneath the hard crust, the energy and warmth of our earth is guarding and providing life to all that grows. We may personally know the coldness and hardness of a grief so fresh that we feel numb - a grief so hurtful that our body feels physically hard, our throats tight from tears shed or unshed, our chests banded tightly by our mourning hearts.

If we are not now experiencing it, our memories recollect so easily those early days. Yet as we live these days, like the earth from which we receive our sustenance, we too, in our searchings, find places of warmth and change and love and growth deep within. Let our hearts and minds dwell in these places and be warmed and renewed by them, and let us have the courage and love to share them with our loved ones, to talk about even that first dim shape of new hope or of new acceptance or of new understanding or of new love.

These are the new roots, born of our love for our child, that are forming and stirring within, gathering strength so that our lives, at the right time, can blossom once again and be fruitful in a new and deeper way.

~ Marie Andrews, TCF, South Maryland Chapter

(Use the form below to submit your listing if you have not already done so. Once you have submitted your listing you **do not** have to do so every year as long as you remain active on our mailing list. Your child's name and dates will remain on the We Remember database unless you request their removal or choose to discontinue receiving this newsletter.)

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And We Remember - If you wish your child, grandchild or sibling included in the We Remember section of this newsletter, please fill out the form below and return to: Susan Chan, 3448 S.W. Mission Ave., Topeka, KS 66614-3629. You may also email the information to chanx2@cox.net< We do not automatically list your information just because you are receiving this newsletter. We only list information for those parents requesting it. If you have previously submitted your child's information and it has appeared in the newsletter during the past year, you **do not** need to resubmit it. If you have just begun receiving this newsletter, or have never submitted this information, you will need to do so in order for it to be included. **Please type or print clearly.**

Child's Name _____ Son__ Daughter__ Grandchild__ Brother__ Sister__

Date of Birth _____ Date of Death _____

Father _____ Mother _____

Note: Please list your address and phone number. You will only be contacted if there is a question about your listing.

Is this a change of address for you? (please circle) YES NO

A Special and Important Message to Our New Compassionate Friends

If you are newly bereaved and have recently attended your first Compassionate Friends meeting, you may have left the meeting feeling overwhelmed and emotionally drained. With the heavy load of grief you are carrying, you cannot bear to hear about all the pain shared at meetings. Consequently, you may have decided not to return. We would like to let you know that these feelings are common to all our members, many of whom resolved not to expose themselves to such anguish again, but were drawn back by the knowledge that they were among those who "know how you feel".

Please give us at least **three** tries before you decide whether or not the meetings are for you. You will find a network of caring and support which will help you as you travel your grief journey, and most assuredly, you will find hope along the way. We truly care about you and want to make certain that no bereaved parent ever needs to walk this path alone.

---Topeka TCF Chapter Steering Committee

Additional Support Group Resources

HEALs - Healing after loss of suicide offers support to all survivors affected by the loss of a loved one to suicide. Meetings are at 6:30-8:00 p.m. on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month. Pozez Center (north side of Stormont Vail). Contact Information: Sandy Reams 785-249-3792 or email TopekaHeals@gmail.com

Pregnancy and Infant Loss Group - Meets 1st and 3rd Thursdays of the month from 6-8 p.m. at the Pozez Education Center. The group, which has regular meetings to share information and experiences, also has a blog for members that offers communication, resources and support. If you are interested in learning more about the blog, please email lrosen@stormontvail.org. For information call (785) 354-5225.

From Victims to Survivors - Support group for families who have had a loved one murdered. The group meets the fourth or last Wednesday of each month at Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, 4775 S.W. 21st. For more information, call Bill Lucero at 232-5958 or see <http://fromvictimstosurvivors.com>.

Are You Moving?

If you move, please let us know your new address so you can continue to receive this newsletter. It costs the Chapter 71 cents every time a newsletter is returned by the Post Office with an outdated address. Please send address changes to: Susan Chan, 3448 SW Mission Ave., Topeka, KS 66614-3629. You may email address changes to chanx2@cox.net. We appreciate your cooperation as this will save the Chapter money which can be better spent on bereavement outreach. If, for any reason, you wish to have your name removed from our mailing list, please drop me a note or email and I will take your name off the list.

TCF Mission Statement: When a child dies, at any age, the family suffers intense pain and may feel hopeless and isolated. The Compassionate Friends provides highly personal comfort, hope, and support to every family experiencing the death of a son or a daughter, a brother or a sister, or a grandchild, and helps others better assist the grieving family.

TCF National Magazine

We Need Not Walk Alone Available Free Online

The Compassionate Friends national magazine, *We Need Not Walk Alone*®, is available for free online. The magazine remains available in print free with any patron donation or when ordered by paid subscription through TCF's online store.

We Need Not Walk Alone provides comfort and support to bereaved parents, siblings, and grandparents through stories, poems, advice columns, and much more. It has been referred to as "a support group in print" and is published three times a year.

Sign-up for a free online subscription through our website, compassionatefriends.org. It can be read online or downloaded to your computer for personal use.

Sign up for Compassionate Friends E-Newsletter

The Compassionate Friends National Office publishes a monthly e-newsletter designed to keep you up-to-date on what's going on with the organization and its chapters.

The e-newsletter includes information on such things as TCF National Conferences, the Walk to Remember, the Worldwide Candle Lighting, regional conferences, and other events of importance.

All you have to do to receive The Compassionate Friends e-newsletter is sign up for it online by visiting The Compassionate Friends national website at www.compassionatefriends.org and filling out the request to sign-up at the bottom of the page.



TCF National Page (open group)

<https://www.facebook.com/TCFUSA/>

Los Amigos Compasivos/USA

<https://www.facebook.com/LACUSA/>

TCF Private Facebook Groups

<https://www.compassionatefriends.org/find-support/online-communities/private-facebook-groups/>

Loss of a Child

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/407123299460580/>

Sounds of the Siblings (bereaved siblings only)

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/21358475781/>

Loss of a Grandchild

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/421759177998317/>

President's Day Reminds Us Grief Can Strike Anyone

Abraham Lincoln is the president we think of as being a bereaved parent. But there were many Presidents, eighteen in all, who knew the heartbreak and agony of losing a child; several children; or all their children.

In observance of President's Day on February 19, we not only remember our past presidents, but we remember and acknowledge their children; which we're sure would please them more.

John and Abigail Adams had 5 children (3 boys and 2 girls). One year old **Susanna** died.

Thomas and Martha Jefferson had 6 children (5 girls and 1 boy). Five of the six children died: including a 5 month old daughter, a 2 ½ week old son, 5 month old **Jane**, 25 year old **Mary**, and 3 year old **Lucy**.

James and Elizabeth Monroe had 3 children (2 girls, 1 boy). The son died at the age of 1 year.

John Quincy and Louisa Adams had 4 children (3 boys and 1 girl). One year old **Louisa** died.

William Henry and Anna Harrison had 10 children (6 boys and 4 girls). Baby **James** died May 15, 1814.

John and Letitia Tyler had 8 children (5 girls and 3 boys). Baby **Anne** died April 5, 1825.

Zachary and Margaret Taylor had 6 children (5 girls and 1 boy). Three year old **Octavia** and one year old **Margaret** died from virulent fever.

Franklin and Jane Pierce had 3 sons. All three died: Three day old **Franklin**, 4 year old **Frank Robert**, and ten year old **Benjamin**.

Abraham and Mary Lincoln had 4 sons. Three died: Three year old

Edward Baker; Eleven year old **William Wallace**, and Eighteen year old **Thomas (Tad)**.

In this sad world of ours, sorrow comes to all....It comes with bitterest agony.... Perfect relief is not possible, except with time.

You cannot now realize that you will ever feel better...And yet this is a mistake. You are sure to be happy again. To know this, which is certainly true, will make you come less miserable now. I have experienced enough to know what I say.

Abraham Lincoln

Rutherford and Lucy Hayes had 8 children (7 boys, 1 girl). Three died: Two year old **Joseph Thompson**, Two year old **George Crook**; and One year old **Manning Force**.

James and Lucretia Garfield had 7 children (5 boys and 2 girls). Two died; Three year old **Eliza** and Two year old **Edward**.

Chester and Ellen Arthur had 3 children (2 boys and 1 girl). One died: Two-year-old **William Lewis Herndon**.

William and Ida McKinley had 2 girls. Both children died: Four year old **Katherine** and Four month old **Ida**.

Calvin and Grace Anna Coolidge had 2 sons. One died: Sixteen year old **Calvin, Jr.**

"When he went, the power and glory of the presidency went with him." --President Coolidge

Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt had 6 children (5 boys and 1 girl). One died: Eight month old **Franklin Delano**, 1909. In 1914 when another son was born, they named him **Franklin Delano** also).

Dwight and Mamie Eisenhower had 2 sons. One died: Three year old **Doud Dwight**.

John and Jackie Kennedy had 3 children (2 boys, 1 girl). Two day old **Patrick Bouvier** died.

George and Barbara Bush's three year old daughter, **Robin**, died of leukemia.

The death of a child is so painful, both emotionally and spiritually, that I truly wondered if my own heart and spirit would ever heal....I soon learned that I could help myself best by helping others....It wasn't until Robin died that I truly threw myself into volunteer work. That precious little girl left our family a great legacy: I know George and I care more for every living person because of her. We learned firsthand the importance of reaching out to help because others had reached out to us during that crucial time."

Barbara Bush

Excerpted from **THE GREATEST LESSON** by Vonette Zachary Bright

The Season of the Heart

This is the Season of the Heart! Yet many of us will be asking how to live during this season with a heart that is broken. Just what is it that our hearts know during these days? What are the feelings that pulsate and ebb and flow? Is it:

- ~ The Heart that catches its breath on a memory and is overwhelmed?
- ~ The Heart where hope seems absent?
- ~ The Heart that feels it absolutely cannot hold one more ounce of pain?
- ~ The Heart that knows the fleeting smile of a loved one?
- ~ The Heart that catches a fragment of joy and is warmed?
- ~ The Heart that knows pain but keeps on loving?
- ~ The Heart that is tempted to lie still and lonely?
- ~ The Heart that searches for the acceptance of a friend?
- ~ The Heart that is one day, suddenly, surprisingly singing?

Questions arise! Why is a heart red, and why does it have two lobes? A response might be:

- ~ A Heart is so vulnerable, so easily bloodied.
- ~ A Heart consists of opposites, changed by sorrow & joy.
- ~ A Heart, when whole, includes all emotions.
- ~ A Heart can lie cold and sad and broken...
- ~ A Heart can grow and heal and love...

We each have our choices to make!

~ Marie Andrews, Southern Maryland TCF

A Valentine Waiting for You

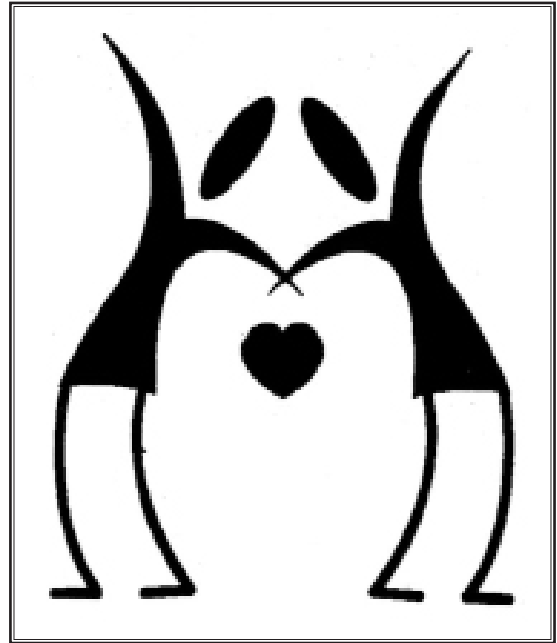
There's a valentine waiting for you
That's different from all the others.
It's there every month at our meetings
For fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers.



Its envelope is made of caring
The glue of understanding seals it tight.
This non-judgemental group who've been there
Help take away your fear and fright.

So come join with us together,
Read your loving message printed clear,
In not only this month's valentine,
But all those throughout the year.

~ Mary Cleckley, Atlanta, GA



SEASONED GRIEF

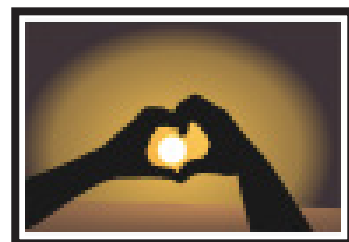
There used to be a point to summing up a year just past, not as a personal accomplishment, but as a reflection. Leaving previous hurts behind was welcomed and the sensible thing to do. I thought I was getting wiser as I was getting older.

With new years clean and full of possibilities, becoming another person seemed simple, another chance at getting it right, like a redemption, being forgiven for having blundered or been found wanting.

But death changed everything, without permission. Resolutions, made sincerely, broken quickly, offended my need to hold on to the past, to rewind life, fast backwards, so I could capture what I had lost.

Still, time went on, regardless of my pleas. And when exhaustion set in, as eventually it must, I understood there would be another future, not the one I thought I had the right to expect but one where I dared carry hope in my heart again.

~ Eva Lager, TCF, Perth, Western Australia



The Greatest Grief

TCF Blog: Posted on October 11th, 2019

A sudden accident killed your child.
That terrible phone call changed your life
with no warning – you didn't get to say goodbye –
this has to be the most terrible loss of all.

Your child died by suicide –
you feel you should have been able to prevent it.
Your guilt is devastating.
How can you live with such an incomprehensible tragedy?

You only had one child –
now you have none and your focus in life is gone.
What's the point of living?
What could be more devastating?

You've experienced the deaths of more than
one of your children – will it happen again?
How does one survive this pain again?

When your baby died, your dreams died
you have few memories and you're too
young to be suffering like this – this loss
is the most unfair.

Someone murdered your child – an
unbelievable violation – you're angry and your frustration
with the legal system feeds your anger.
This must be the very worst.

You're a single parent – your child has
died and you have no one to lean on, no
one to share your grief – surely your
suffering is the most painful.

The unbelievable has happened – your
adult child died – you had invested so
much in that child – now who's going to
care for you in your old age?

You had to watch your child suffer
bravely through a long illness –
you were helpless to ease his pain and to prevent his death –
how do you erase those horrible images?
Yours must be the greatest grief.

The truth is that the death of any child is the greatest loss,
regardless of the cause, regardless of the age.

Our own experience is far more painful than we had
ever previously envisioned, so how could we possibly
comprehend what others have undergone.

To make comparisons between our own suffering and the
pain of others is an exercise in futility. It accomplishes
nothing and sometimes can be hurtful to others. To say that
one type of death produces a greater or deeper grief than
another tends to place different values on the children who
have died.

Each child is worth 100% of our grief, each person's sorrow
is 100% and each loss is 100% of our being. I can't imagine
wanting to walk in the shoes of any other bereaved parent,
can you?

~ Peggy Gibson, TCF, Nashville, TN

One Moment in Time

TCF Blog: Posted on September 22nd, 2018

As bereaved parents, we have a line of demarcation in our lives.
This line is like no other. Other people define their lives by that
one big career step, move or degree. But in other people's lives,
things are different. We are not like other people.

We experienced a clearly defined moment in time when
everything changed. The tectonic plates of our lives shifted
at one moment on one date of one year. Nothing will ever be
the same. We definitively mark the time before and after our
child died. Life was different before our child died. It was easy;
it was filled with promises of tomorrow, accomplishments,
setbacks, goals set and achieved and happiness that abounds
in the natural order of life. But our basic assumptions were
shattered and our world turned inside out at that one moment in
time when our child died.

Can we ever feel as optimistic about life as we did before that
moment in time? Will we ever again believe that one day we
will feel balanced, optimistic and serene?

We certainly can, and most parents certainly do. As you read
the articles in this month's newsletter about the journey through
grief, consider the gentle optimism that presents itself in these
parents' words. Each of these parents has walked this lonely
road. Each has come through the darkest, rockiest valley into
a gauzy sort of light which gradually crystallized into a true
sunshine as time moved forward. How did they do it?

Insight is offered in these parents' stories. We must do our grief
work, face our demons and stand them down. We must talk
with others, set limits on what we will tolerate, and hold our
line. We must seek counseling, attend seminars, attend TCF
meetings or other offerings that give us the support of parents
who have lost a child or help us in acquiring skills to cope with
our pain and loss.

We must take grief breaks in the beginning and for the first year
or two. We must take care of ourselves physically, mentally,
and emotionally.

But most of all we must keep our child with us as we complete
our life's journey. How we choose to complete our journey is
unique. The common denominator that all of us share is the
need to find a precious flicker of hope which we can nurture
and coax to a radiant glow. We all find it in different ways and
at different times on our grief journey. But, rest assured, we all
find it. I call it "my little light."

One day you will feel the burden lifting. You will laugh about
things your child said or did. That moment will gently envelop
you. There is hope. Let your little light glimmer and then glow.

~ Annette Mennen Baldwin, Katy, TX TCF Chapter

Just Beyond the Thawing Point

I gaze on the snow-covered landscape, and remember. Trees bend under the ice, and long, lonely stretches of snow show no prints -- no sign of human habitation. Power lines literally snap in the record-breaking freezing temperatures and we are without electricity -- sometimes for seconds, sometimes for hours. Schools have been closed down; stores are closed.... (we are) in a state of emergency.

I gaze on the snow-covered landscape and remember: A feeling as desolate and lonely five years ago when our little girl died. Even though the world somehow seemed to go on around me, I did not. My life stopped for a while in a wintry grief-shocked silence, and I was only slightly conscious of the machinations of humankind. The schools did not close. The roads were still open. And after long periods of blankness, the TV shows were still the same. Even though my heart was frozen, the world seemed to revolve on its own accord, unaware of the tortured soul of one grieving mother.



I gaze on the snow-covered landscape, and remember. This expanse of utter desolation will cease. There will come a thawing-out time when the world will go on, and the rhythm of life will pick up again. In the deep depths of grief I couldn't imagine a day of sunshine and warmth, but it happened. I fought it for awhile, but I once again became a part of life. My thawing-out time came, and my eyes opened to the wonders of the world around us. My mind accepted the presence of other human beings who cared, others who were hurting. And after a (LONG) period of mourning, I even came to a certain acceptance of our daughter's death.

When we let grief do its work, we see a melting down of barriers and roadblocks that stand in the way of our healing. When we allow ourselves to feel the pain as well as the love, there will come a moment when we begin to realize that life does go on. Our life. Our new life. Hold on, dear friends, life without that precious child does exist: Just beyond the thawing point.

~ Dana Gensler, So. Central KY TCF Chapter

CROCUS

In the front garden,
close by the door,
Bloom golden crocus,
they've been there before.



When you were quite little, so young
and so small, we planted some dozen
one day in the Fall.

They slept over the winter,
there under the snow,
Then in the Springtime,
bloomed with a glow.

You learned about flowers,
how they sleep and how they grow.
You loved so to find them
peeking out from the snow.

You had such a wonder,
you loved life so much!
Do these early blossoms
remember your touch?

They'll bloom there again,
year after year,
A small drop of sunshine,
a small golden tear.

~Joan Schmidt, TCF/Central Jersey

Learning to Live Again

Our stories may be different
but inside we're all the same,
struggling to find new meaning,
trying to ease the pain.

With courage we face tomorrow
and try to understand.

Though death has left its sorrow
we honor our children's memories
by learning to live again.

~ Debbie Dickinson, TCF Naperville, IL

Instinctively Alone

Where does a man go to grieve his woundedness,
especially when society sees it as a weakness,
to be self pity?

I desperately need validation,
so I can be with my pain,

so I can embrace the truth of my life.

I can't believe how well I've been trained to
stoically stash the losses in my life.

I feel like a wounded animal, instinctively
returning to the graveyard of my ancestors to die.

Hush!

As a boy I was ordered to travel alone.

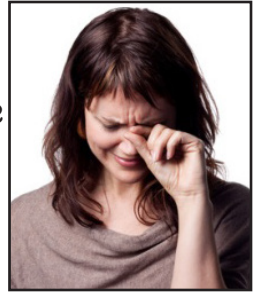
Now suffer the agony of manhood,
as I enter the garden of stone.

~ R.M. Hastie, TCF/Kamloops Chapter



The Storms of Grief

When I grieve in your presence
I open a window to my soul.
The turbulence, the thrashing,
the tears, the bitterness
will not destroy me
unless they are forced inside.
Help me get the pain out
by being patient, by listening,
by showing me with your eyes
that you'll weather the storm.
Please do not say too much.
Just let me be.
I'll show you the way.
Then, please feel important
when I can laugh and play again,
for you are a catalyst
in my learning to live again.



~ Elizabeth Farnsworth, TCF, Lynchburg, VA

Valley of the Butterflies

There is a green sun-drenched valley
Light with the scent of clover and lilacs
Where the butterflies dance.
Leaping and swooping, they reflect colors
Of every hue and dimension.
There are monarchs and skippers,
Swallowtails and delicate spring azures.
Each dances its unique pattern
Of flits, circles and dives.
Stretching its fragile wings towards the clouds
Or brushing its feet on the succulent grass.



There are no roads, paths, or gates
To broach the valley's entrance;
Yet it is visited often in thoughts and dreams.
Every parent who has sent forth a child
and vainly waited for its return
Comes seeking in the valley of the butterflies
And there finds a beautiful spirit,
Stretching its wings to the clouds
and brushing its feet on the grass,
Dancing in swoops, flits and dives,
Drying its dewey wings in the warm sunshine
of forever.



~Marcia Alig, TCF, Princeton Jct., NJ

The Compassionate Friends

Topeka Chapter, c/o Midland Hospice Care., Inc.
200 S.W. Frazier Circle, Topeka, KS 66606-2800

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We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends.
We reach out to each other with love, with understanding, and with hope.

The children we mourn have died at all ages and from many different causes, but our love for them unites us.
Your pain becomes my pain, just as your hope becomes my hope.

We come together from all walks of life, from many different circumstances.
We are a unique family because we represent many races, creeds, and relationships.
We are young, and we are old. Some of us are far along in our grief,
but others still feel a grief so fresh and so intensely painful that they feel helpless and see no hope.

Some of us have found our faith to be a source of strength, while some of us are struggling to find answers.
Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in deep depression, while others radiate an inner peace.
But whatever pain we bring to this gathering of The Compassionate Friends, it is pain we will share,
just as we share with each other our love for the children who have died.

We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building a future together.
We reach out to each other in love to share the pain as well as the joy, share the anger as well as the peace,
share the faith as well as the doubts, and help each other to grieve as well as to grow.

We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends.