



The Compassionate Friends *of Northwest Houston* Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Welcome to The Compassionate Friends. We are sorry for the reason you are here, but are glad that you found us. You Need Not Walk Alone, we are The Compassionate Friends.

DECEMBER 2017

HOUSTON NORTHWEST CHAPTER

www.houstonnorthwesttcf.org

Cypress Creek Christian Church Community Center
6823 Cypresswood Drive, Room 20
Spring, Texas 77379

**We meet the second Tuesday of each month at 7:00pm.
(Our next meeting is Tuesday, Dec. 12th)**

**Because of the flooding at Cypress Creek Christian Church our meeting this month will be held once again at the home of Mark and Debbie Rambis. Their address is:
3607 Bainbridge Estates Dr.
Spring, TX 77388**

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THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS 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.

To the Newly Bereaved

As the years pass, we see new members come into the chapter, and we try to help them with their grief as we progress in our own. Over and over again, I have seen newly bereaved parents come to their first meeting totally devastated and convinced that their lives are over. Through the months (and years) I have seen them struggle and suffer and try to find meaning in their lives again. And they do! Through all the anger, pain and tears, somehow the human spirit is able to survive and flower again in a new life – perhaps a changed life and possibly a sadder one, but a stronger one nevertheless.

We feel so weak and crushed when our beloved children die, but I know because I have seen it countless times in the years I've been involved with The Compassionate Friends that we can make it together. When you walked through the door for the first meeting, you were frightened and nervous; but with that step you made a statement about your life. With that first step through the door, you said you wanted to try, you wanted to find a reason for living again, that you weren't willing to be swallowed by your grief. You wanted to go forward, and those first steps into The Compassionate Friends began your journey.

The journey will be a long one, for you loved your child with all your heart and soul. When that child died, a part of you was ripped away. It takes a long time to repair that large hole. The journey will not always be steady or constant; there will be many setbacks. Those of us who have taken the journey before you can assure you that, while there may be no rainbow at the other end, there is indeed "light at the end of the tunnel."

We want to help you as we were helped, but in the beginning and in the long run, you must help yourself. You have to want to get better, to talk about your loss, to struggle through the grief. We will listen, suggest, share and laugh and cry with you; and we hope, at this time next year, you'll be several steps along in your personal journey through grief. Then you can begin to help others.





Lighting a candle, cherishing a birth.....

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- 1989 - Alex Flood, Son of John & Alice Flood
1985 - Jerry Dwight Tanksley, Jr., Son of Virginia Tanksley
1980- Garrett Conrad Ford, Son of Leigh Heard
1986- Lance Anderson, Son of John & Dianna Brumley
2006- Logan Xavier Venegas, Son of Rochelle Snyder
1990- Kevin Thrift, Son of Stephanie & Tim Thrift
1985- Danny Ewing, Son of Steffani L. Ewing
1975- Tiffany Gower, Daughter of Brenda Whitworth
1985- Lauren Ovelgonne Tenney, Daughter of Steve & Carol Ovelgonne
1992- Grant Goodwin, Son of Linda Foraker
1990- Ryan Bennett, Son of Dan & Cindy Bennett
1990- Zack "Moose" Triplett, Son of Trina Cash
1984- Cameron Clark, Son of Rhonda & Ellie Holden
2003- Milana Ramirez, Daughter of Dean & Hannah Ramirez
1983- Peter Ly, Brother of Kimberly Ly
1963- Ginger Ware, Daughter of Roberta Ware
1995 - David Arthur, Son of Cathy Arthur
2008 - Angel Joseph Vasquez, Son of Mary Vasquez and Jose Herrera
2013 - Ariel Suniga, Daughter of Selena Suniga
2016 - Harmony Faith Hamilton, Daughter of Roslen Smith Hamilton



The Birth and Death of our loved ones are always very difficult. Especially during this holiday season. Please remember to include these families in your thoughts and prayers on their very difficult days.



Lighting a candle, remembering a life

DECEMBER ANGEL DATES

- 2008- Alexander Gene Davis, Son of Janice Davis**
2007 -Tara Michelle Rose, Daughter of Angie Rose
2009 -Kayla Lower, Daughter of Lori Morris
2009 -Van Holland, Son of James & Olivia Holland
2009- Liam Young, Son of Jill Young
1999 -Kevin Donat, Son of Diane Donat
2002- Grant Koval, Son of Linda Koval
2007-Kyle Black, Son of Lisa Black
2011- Travis George, Son of Kathy George
2011- Michael Vincent Ledwig, Son of Jim & Mary Ann Ledwig
2011- Rikki Ashley Brown, Daughter of Mike & Gwen Williams
2013- Jenny Ryan, Daughter of John & Debbie Ryan
2013- Cameron Clark, Son of Rhonda & Ellie Holden
1999- Christopher Gibler, Son of Susan Gibler
2012- Katrina Martinez, Daughter of Amy Kohl
2013 - James (Jimi) Nicholas, Son of Linda Nicholas
2012 - Amelia Tayloe, Daughter of Matthew & Misty Tayloe
2015 - Steven Jackman, Son of Deborah Jackman
2016 - Harmony Faith Hamilton, Daughter of Roslen Smith Hamilton

YOU ARE NOT FORGOTTEN

**You are not forgotten, loved one
Nor will you ever be,
As long as life and memory last
We will remember thee.
We miss you now.
As time goes by
We'll miss you more.
Your loving smile, your gentle face
No one can fill your vacant place.**

Written by the family of Odessa Anne Box

CHAPTER NEWS

Our next meeting is Tuesday, December 12th at 7pm. Please join us at the home of Mark & Debbie Rambis, 3607 Bainbridge Estates Dr., Spring 77388. Don't forget to attend our chapter's Candle Lighting Services, Sunday, December 10th at 6:45pm at the Jersey Village High School. The candle lighting will take place before our regular meeting.

Mark your calendars, Dr. B. Glenn Wilkerson will be our guest speaker at our January meeting

Our warmest welcome to our new members, Joshua Pietrzak, lost his son Anthony September of this year; Faye Cook, lost her son Bryce in October of this year; Stacy Ottnat, lost her daughter Reagan in October of this year and Cindy Smith, lost her son Brian July of 2015. We understand how difficult it is to walk through the doors to a TCF meeting. We have all taken that first step and we reach out to you in friendship and support.



Our Chapter Candle Lighting Service will be held:

WHEN: Sunday, December 10, 2017

7:00 pm (please arrive at 6:45)

WHERE: Jersey Village High School
7600 Solomon

Houston, TX 77040

(The high school is at Beltway 8 and Hwy 290)

Food, sodas, coffee will be provided. There will be readings, performances and the candle lighting. A message board for you to leave your child a message will also be available and there will also be a balloon release. If you wish to bring a picture of your child to display, please feel free to do so (you can take the picture home when the program is finished).



SPECIAL REMEMBRANCE

SEAN WEINSTEIN

2/18/97 - 11/29/15

Sherry and I held a fun tennis tournament at our local tennis club to honor our beloved son, Sean on his two year anniversary date. Many of the people that were there have know us for years. They were there when we fell in love, when we got married and when we had our baby boy. They watched him grow through the years to become this thoughtful and caring young man. Some of them got to know him better when he worked one summer there. He would talk at length with them about many different subjects and it would come back to us about how much they enjoyed their conversations with him.

We had a great turn out and it was a great comfort to see so many of our friends who came to support us and honor Sean. We were so surprised and pleased with the generosity of our friends as we raised over a thousand dollars for The Compassionate Friends. This organization has been a lifeline to us - especially in the beginning stages of our grief journey. This makes us feel very fortunate as we are able to give something back to an organization that has given so much to us.

Steve Weinstein, Sean's Dad

Steve and Sherry first attended our chapters Compassionate Friends meeting in January, 2016 a short six weeks after Sean died in a tragic automobile accident.

Their faithful attendance and contribution in our meetings has been a blessing for our chapter. Their idea of a tennis tournament and donating the proceeds to The Compassionate Friends shows their deep caring for other bereaved parents.

Sean attended Jersey Village High School, the site of our annual candle lighting service. I hope to see lots of folks there this Sunday. Thanks to Steve and Sherry for making a generous donation to not only to our local chapter, but to the TCF National Office as well.

David





Lights of Love

Can you see our candles
Burning in the night?
Lights of love we send you
Rays of purest white

Children we remember
Though missing from our sight.
In honor and remembrance
We light candles in the night

All across the big blue marble
Spinning out in space
Can you see the candles burning
From this human place?

Oh, angels gone before us
Who taught us perfect love
This night the world lights candles
That you may see them from above

Tonight the globe is lit by love
Of those who know great sorrow,
But as we remember our yesterdays Let's
light one candle for tomorrow

We will not forget,
And every year in deep December
On Earth we will light candles
As.....we remember
By: Jacqueline Brown~Peace Valley TCF

To Start a New Year

If I can concentrate on the moral and spiritual side of the holidays I can make it through.

If I can absorb the love and warmth that was the beginning I can give love back.

If I can share the grief and love that is in me through these holidays I can start a New Year. - Tom Spray, TCF Ventura, CA -



**"I HEARD THE BELLS ON CHRISTMAS DAY"
By Henry Wadsworth Longfellow**

*I heard the bells on Christmas Day
Their old, familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet
The words repeat
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!*

*And thought how, as the day had come,
The belfries of all Christendom
Had rolled along
The unbroken song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!*

*Till ringing, singing on its way,
The world revolved from night to day,
A voice, a chime,
A chant sublime
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!*

*And in despair I bowed my head;
"There is no peace on earth," I said;
"For hate is strong,
And mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!"*

*Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
"God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;
The Wrong shall fail,
The Right prevail,
With peace on earth, good-will to men."*

"I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day" is a Christmas Carol based on the 1863 poem "Christmas Bells" by American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. The song tells of his despair, upon hearing Christmas bells, that "hate is strong and mocks the song of peace on earth, good will to men". The carol concludes with the bells carrying renewed hope for peace among mankind.

When I was a child, the words symbolized the spirit of the season for me. Peace and good will were the order of the day. Gifts were made or bought - then hidden then given; and we were reminded of how much we loved and needed each other. This was the time of reflection and celebration - of families coming together, setting aside discord and rancor, singing, sharing and rejoicing in the pleasure of being together and the promise of peace and new beginnings.

After the death of our daughter Rhonda, I thought I would never again recapture that feeling. The pain of losing her was made even more intense by the beauty of the season. The sound of bells brought tears to my eyes, and I braced myself against the moment I would hear this lovely song again. The words were just an empty promise now. "This is reality" I thought. "All of my peace and

joy are in the past. How can I ever again hear the music and message of peace on earth, when I am tormented by this longing for my child?"

When our child died, the difference between major pain and minor grievance was instantly defined. Our lives were irrevocably divided into two parts; before and after. We could not control our child's death; and in our weakest moments, we believed we could not control anything in our lives - that we had no further responsibility for anything that happens to us or anyone else. Yet we know this isn't true. We still have control over our own words and our own behavior, and we work at controlling our thoughts.

Longfellow's words are both a plea and a promise. I put myself in his place; the pursuit of peace became a personal quest when our child died. Yet how can we find personal peace when each day brings fresh rumors and reports of conspiracy, bigotry, violence, hunger and strife? Our lives are filled with dismal reminders of how tragic the consequences can be when we lose sight of our real mission on this earth; to love and live in harmony with one another.

Words can hurt; words can ignite anger; words can destroy lives. But words can heal; and words can inspire and light fires of friendship and hope.

This year, when we hear the plea for peace and good will, perhaps each of us can, in some small way, help someone realize the promise the words embody. Let's do it in memory of our children.

~ Joyce Andrews, Regional Coordinator Southeast, Texas 1996



Holiday Lights

During the holiday season, both Christian and Jew light candles in celebration of their respective faiths, and as they do so even the darkest of rooms become warm and bright from the glow of the candle. Then, we can ask ourselves how powerful and sinister can the darkness be if it can be overcome by the light of one little candle.

There is then a message in this for all of us. When the darkness seems to overwhelm us, and it can be a mental and spiritual darkness as well as the darkness of winter night, we need to be reminded that it is powerless to withstand the smallest bit of illumination.

So as the world grows colder and darker during these winter months, we as Compassionate Friends must do what people of many faiths have been taught to do at this season. Light a candle in someone's life to make the darkness and fears flee. A little bit of light is all that most of us need, but, oh, we need that little bit so badly.

So, let us all in The Compassionate Friends extend a candle of light and hope not only to each other, but to the unfortunate people who, for whatever reason, become one of us this winter and will be in need of that light. It's the least we can do and it accomplishes so much. Together we can make it.

Bettye and Sam Rosenberg
TCF Louisville, KY

Looking for Your Gift

Bereaved families often face the holidays with fear and trepidation. Just the fact, holidays continue to go on, can cause outrage. Our sadness is monumental, and causes our bodies to resist moving on. We need to be gentle with ourselves; we are going through an emotional rehabilitation. Holidays often renew our grief, even if we are a distance from fresh grief.

We need to selectively choose what traditions are important to our family. If we over commit, we set our selves up for a let down when we cannot meet our goals. If you have some traditions that are very important and you are not physically up to doing them, you will find friends and extended family will feel honored if you ask for their help. Most people want to help you get through the holidays, but don't know what to do. Give them the opportunity to feel they are helpful in your healing.

Grieving cannot be put on the shelf until the holidays are over. We need to take time to feel our grief, and express our sadness. We also need to take time to try and put a bit of normality in our lives. We must remember it is not disrespectful to laugh. I'm sure our loved one would want us to surround ourselves with caring people who can help us through the holidays. A caring supportive person is one who encourages us to be the best we can be, not one who expects us to be as we used to be.

Our healing will eventually cause our pain to move out and make room for our loved ones memories. We learn to make a new life for ourselves. Holidays get better and we learn how to live again.

We tend to think of life's richest moments as being the joyous, fun filled, carefree days prior to losing our children and siblings. But, as I search for the most meaningful things that have given me strength and a real appreciation for life, they certainly do include the pain, overcoming my despair, losing my son, grandson, and six siblings. We cherish the friendships that doesn't always demand a smiling face, and those with the warm touch that says, "share your pain, let me be a part of your grief, don't worry about making us uneasy with tears, we have all been there." Much healing can take place through sharing as we learn to be very honest and courageous with our feelings, which helps us to find hope. Hope helps to restore our love for life, and gives us the strength to survive.

This holiday we will all miss our loved ones, who are no longer with us. Though it has been through much pain, you probably have never been so close to your child or sibling, or shared such a large part of your life with them. We hope the memories that ache with pain, can also bring you thoughts of love. For those of us who are further removed from our early grief, who can look back and appreciate the strength for our struggle, the compassion from seeing other's pain, wanting to become functional human beings again so we can contribute to making a better world, are gifts our children and siblings have given to us for our survival. These gifts are greater than any fancy bow tied box can contain. Look for your gifts and cherish them.

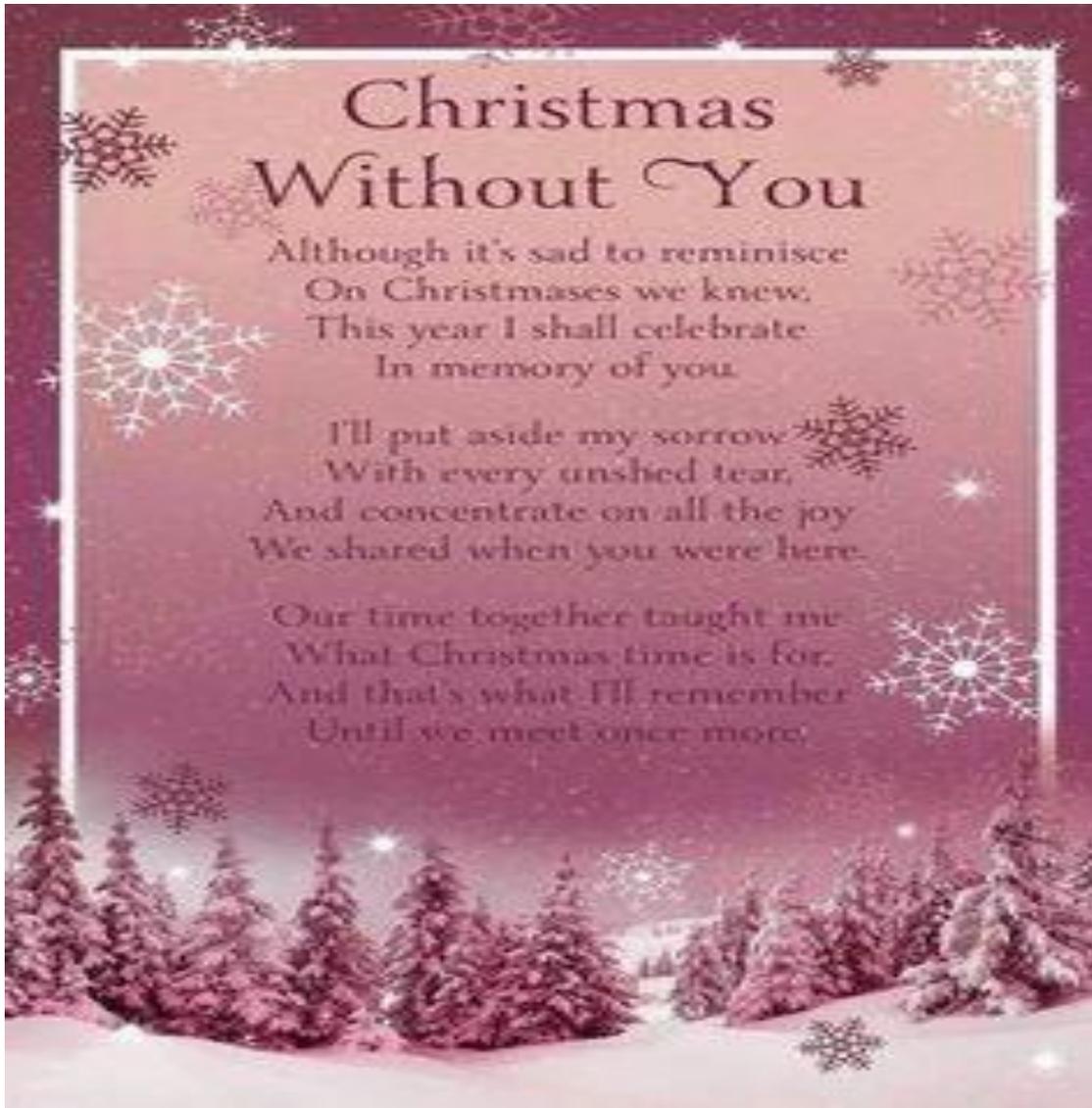
Marie Hofmockel
TCF Valley Forge, PA

Christmas Without You

Although it's sad to reminisce
On Christmases we knew,
This year I shall celebrate
In memory of you.

I'll put aside my sorrow
With every unshed tear,
And concentrate on all the joy
We shared when you were here.

Our time together taught me
What Christmas time is for,
And that's what I'll remember
Until we meet once more.



*May Peace be your gift at
Christmas and your blessing
all year through!*



Phone Friends

All of the people on the following list are bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings. They understand what you are going through and have all wished to be included in this list in the hope that anyone who needs to talk will reach out to them. They are willing to talk with you at any time you need their support. Some have listed the specific area in which they have personal experience but they do not intend to imply that that is the only topic they wish to talk about. We all have experienced this journey through grief and it encompasses much more than the specifics surrounding our individual loss. Having a compassionate person to listen when you are having a bad day or just need someone to reach out to when you feel overwhelmed can make the difference in getting through one more day. We have all been there and understand, please feel free to contact any one of us.

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