



# *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 2021**

**HOUSTON NORTHWEST CHAPTER**

[www.houstonnorthwesttcf.org](http://www.houstonnorthwesttcf.org)

**We meet the second Tuesday of each month at 7:00pm.**

**Our next meeting is Tuesday, December 14th.**

at

**Trinity Lutheran Church  
Family Life Center, Room #204  
5201 Spring Cypress Rd.  
Spring, Texas 77379**

The Church is located on the corner of Spring Cypress Road and Klein Church Rd. Please enter off Spring Cypress Road. The meetings are held in the Family Life Center Room 204.

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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  
1984- Zach Doss, Son of Susan Doss  
2001- Stephen Verdell Jr., Son of Stephen Verdell and Melinda Nagle



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  
2017- Victor Alberto Renteria Jr., Son of Carla Renteria  
2011 - Kelsey Jackowski, Daughter of Camille Jackowski  
2003 - Aaron Kirby O'Neal, Son of Sylvia Ann Roushion  
2019 - Bryan Pfluger, Son of Penny McElhaney  
2020 - Rachel Livingston, Daughter of Beth Rosler  
2020 - Kaylee Welch, Daughter of Joel Welch & Brandy Brandt

### **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 regular meeting will be held on Tuesday, December 14th, at 7pm.  
There is no virtual zoom meeting this month.

*Thanks to everyone that came to our Candle Lighting Service last night. It was a very special evening during this difficult time of year for all of us grieving the loss of our children.*

*A very special thanks goes to Jean Smith, Director/ Serve Ministries and Trinity Lutheran Church for setting everything up and allowing us to have the Candle Light Service at Trinity.*

*I'd also like to thank Darryl Heino for the slide show of our children and helping to coordinate with the Church. Thank you to Beth Crocker and the Klein Collins drama students for their great performance that made the evening so very special. Thank you everyone! David*

### A Warm Welcome to Our New Members - We're Glad You Found Us.

We offer our warmest welcome to our new members **Nelda Hanzi, lost her son Matthew in July; Bill & Lisa Miluszusky, lost their son Brayden, in October; Gerri Tsaftarides, lost her son Elijah, in June; and Bitsy Hatch, lost her daughter Shawna Merchant, in May.** If you have walked through the door to a TCF meeting, we understand how traumatic and difficult that is to do...we have all taken that step and reach out to you in friendship and support.

Please give us at least three tries before you decide if these meetings are for you.

We hope you will find our meetings and newsletters to be a source of comfort, a place where tears are allowed, no judgments are made and the support which will help you travel this journey of grief, and we can once again find hope and meaning in our lives.

**SAVE THE DATE**  
**45th TCF National Conference**  
**August 5, 2022 - August 7, 2022**  
**HOUSTON, TEXAS**  
**Marriott Marquis Houston**  
**1777 Walker St**  
**Houston, TX 77010**



## On a Night in December

As days moved on towards winter,  
and trees were going bare,  
we were faced with shopping malls  
where carols filled the air.

And thoughts all turned to loved ones,  
those present, and those not.  
For us, whose lives were drained of light,  
it was solace that we sought.

And so began a journey  
of candles round the earth  
bringing light to darkness  
and honoring the worth

of children held so dear to us  
but never to grow old,  
whose lives filled our life tapestries,  
with threads of finest gold.

Now we gather on this night  
and watch the candles burn  
see their pictures, say their names  
one by one, in turn.

And our children, brothers, sisters,  
for whom we gather here,  
let us know, in the candles glow,  
that they are always near.

Their light will still surrounds us;  
their love will always flow.  
As we leave may we remember,  
that this is ever so.

From *Catching the Light – Coming Back to Life after the Death of a Child*  
by Genesse Bourdeau Gentry  
Written for TCF Marin's  
2003 Candle Lighting Service



## Tradition, Tradition, Tradition

Even in normal times, tradition isn't what it is always cracked up to be, and sometimes "tradition" gets in the way of sanity. Often we cling to tradition because it's easier, we don't want to offend others, we don't want to be embarrassed, or we don't know what else to do. When you are a grieving parent, giving in to tradition can drive you over the edge.

I found myself in the "tradition predicament" regarding putting up a tree the first Christmas holiday after my son, Chad died. I didn't want, need, or have the energy to put up a tree. Yet other family members wanted a tree and they wanted it as it always had been, big, bright, and decorated with ornaments they had purchased or made through the years. What eventually took place, with regard to a tree, changed our holiday forever and it has been a good thing for everyone involved.

I don't know the exact circumstances of how our "new tradition" came into being that first year. But I do remember frustration, tears, and upset people. I also remember my daughter saying to me it was her Christmas too and she needed a tree. It was her older brother, the one she remembered getting up with every Christmas morning when she was little that was dead, and she had to have something so she could deal with the emptiness. So she came up with a plan. She and her father would go find a tree and she would take care of the decorations all by herself.

That was ten Christmases ago and this year, once again, my husband and my daughter will leave early in the morning, a week before Christmas, and hunt for a tree, just the two of them. When they come home, I will prepare breakfast, while they get the tree in the holder, and move the furniture. We will sit down together and enjoy our meal and then my husband and I will leave for several hours. During that time we will do whatever we feel like doing. We have gone to the cemetery, gone for walks, gone to the bookstore, visited friends, etc. When we return, my daughter will have decorated our Christmas tree, and the whole house!

Every year the tree has been different, limited only to my daughter's imagination and the budget we keep her on. She didn't use our regular ornaments for a while and when she did, she told me ahead of time and said how meaningful it was for her to be the one who put Chad's ornaments back on the tree. We have continued this "new tradition" to this day. Now, I find angel ornaments to put on the tree to honor our missing angel, and enjoy with my husband, sons, and family, my daughter's traditional tribute to her brother. This "changing tradition" has been so healing. Our family has had the brightness and beauty that a lighted tree can provide, and I have been able to save my energy for other things I wanted to do.

During the next few weeks, I hope you will make the activities of the season as stress free as you can. I hope that you will feel free to experiment with new traditions, knowing there is no "right way" to go through this season, only "your way." I hope that you will remember Christmas is only one day and that the time leading up to that "one day" will probably be more difficult than the actual day. And finally, I hope for peace in your hearts, if not today then tomorrow, or the tomorrow after, or the tomorrow after that.

Sue Anderson  
TCF, South Bend, IN  
In Memory of my son, Chad  
October 30, 2012





## The Circle of Love

Together, we shall join hearts and hands across the earth and decorate the world with hope and healing and remembered laughter. We shall remain forever linked through the love of our absent children, parents, husbands and wives, siblings, grandparents, friends — all of our loved ones who dance across the rainbows ahead of us. WE ARE A FAMILY CIRCLE — BROKEN BY DEATH, MENDED BY LOVE! May this day, and every day, be days for us to laugh and sing, to dance and dream. May this day, and every day, be days of celebration and the chance to give one more hug, to say one more, "I love you."

MAY LOVE BE WHAT YOU REMEMBER MOST!

*by Darcie Sims*



## 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 ourselves up for a letdown 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.

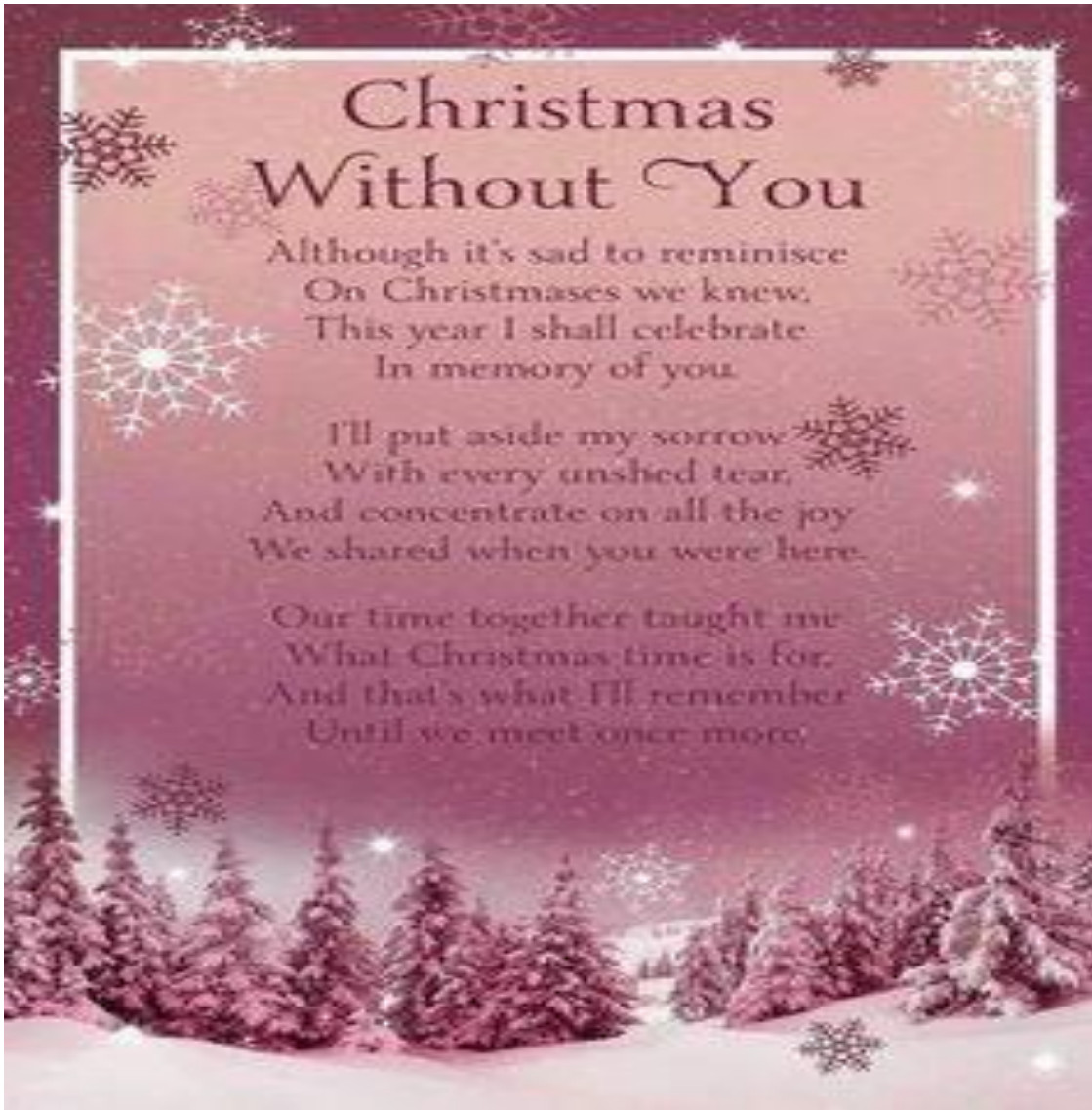
Marie Hofmockel  
TCF Valley Forge, PA

# 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

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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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