



# *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.*

**JANUARY 2023**

**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, January 10th.**

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.



## JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

**Eric Reiland, Son of Kimberly Crawford and Grandson of Janet Heilman**

**Anthony Boras, Son of Walter Boras**

**Ava Helena Wallheimer, Daughter of Angela Wallheimer**

**Patrick Williams, Son of Poppy & Steve Williams**

**Syrina Snow Salazar, Daughter of April R. Torres**

**Ronald Lee, Son of Ana Castellanos**

**Samantha Dawn Quesada, Daughter of Albert & Dawn Quesada**

**Amber Eileen Schulze, Daughter of Lisa Schulze**

**Patrick Noel Jernigan, Son of Juanice Jernigan**

**Amanda Jane Franklin, Daughter of Jane Draycott**

**Christy Wempe, Daughter of Ann & Lance Parks**

**Karen Crawford, Daughter of Kim Crawford**

**Shane Woodson, Son of Theresa Woodson**

**Lucy Gale, Daughter of Steve & Jackie Sanders**

**Braiden Mainor, Grandson of Barbara Herring**

**Christina, Granddaughter of Barbara Thomas**

**Kailey Massey, Daughter of Terry & Wendy Massey**

**Matthew Coers, Son of Michelle Guerrero**

**Mark Cook, Son of Bill and Joanne Cook**

**Sean Anthony May, Son of David & Ann May**

**Joshua Bell, Son of Steve and Donna Bell**

**Reagan Ottnat, Daughter of Stacy Ottnat**

**Elijah James Knight, Son of Stephen and Courtney Knight**

**Chantal Warfield, Daughter of Jacqueline Smith**

**Matthew Hanzi, son of Nelda Hanzi**



*If we choose to move forward*

*Acknowledging the sorrow and sadness*

*But also the love and laughter*

*Then hope travels with us*

## JANUARY ANGEL DATES

**Ryan David Dodson, Son of Diane & David Dodson**  
**Alex John Piniewski, Son of Bob & Christi Piniewski**  
**Hugo Alberto DeLeon, Son of Lupita DeLeon**  
**Kenneth Ray Roberts, III, Son of Brenda Johnson**  
**Darrell Wayne McSpadden, Son of Janet & Robert McSpadden**  
**Brandon Miller Estes, Son of Holly Olive**  
**Derek Johns, Son of Shauna & Jeff Cook**  
**Devin Giblin, Son of Tanya Giblin**  
**Tiffany Gower, Daughter of Brenda Whitworth**  
**Patrick Burns, Son of Ray & Amanda Burns**  
**Adam Kujawa, Son of Larry & Sara Kujawa**  
**Kailey Massey, Daughter of Terry & Wendy Massey**  
**Jasmins Potter Jr., Son of Jasmins & Erika Potter**  
**Joel Sloan, Son of Jim & Glenna Sloan**  
**Kathy Degen, Sister of Clare Watkins**  
**Joshua Pham, Son of Tony & Peach Pham**  
**Catherine Breeding, Daughter of Barbara Breeding**  
**Sean Anthony May, Son of David and Ann May**  
**Jared Mayfield, Son of Robbie Lampkins**  
**Stephen Verdell Jr., Son of Stephen Verdell and Melinda Nagle**  
**Jessica Nicole Driskell, Daughter of Patricia Ann Tull**  
**Bryan Selby, Son of Dennis Selby**  
**Chad Moyer, Son of Valli Moyer**  
**Nicole Speir, Daughter of Sue Speir**  
**John Taylor Hill, Son of Debbie Stasney**  
**Lucy Schaefer, Daughter of Amy Croston**  
**David Brace, Son of Julia Hine**



***A new year brings time to reflect on the children we love,  
those who remain with us and those for whom we grieve ~  
Wayne Loder***

## CHAPTER NEWS

**Our next meeting is Tuesday, January 10th. 7pm. at Trinity Lutheran Church, Family Life Center #204.**

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

We offer our warmest welcome to our new members. 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.

As our TCF Credo says, *"We come from different walks of life..."*, but the common bond we now share is the death of a beloved child, grandchild, or sibling. Others cannot understand the terrifying and debilitating emotional issues that occur in our daily lives once this event happens; a TCF member can and does!

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 hope that through this trauma, we can once again find hope and meaning in our lives.

### ***"A Special Remembrance"***

Please consider submitting an article about your child for our newsletter. Send your articles to me, Linda Brewer at [llbrewer67@hotmail.com](mailto:llbrewer67@hotmail.com). It's a wonderful tribute to your child to share a writing about him or her so that everyone may get to know them. Tell us what he or she liked. Did they have siblings? What were their hobbies? Where did they go to school or worked? Please let us hear from you.

### **Love Gifts – A Way to Remember**

There are no dues to belong to Compassionate Friends, because we have already paid the ultimate price; the loss of our loved one(s). A Love Gift is a gift of money given in honor of a child, who has died, or a gift of thanksgiving that their own children are alive and well, or simply a gift from someone who wants to help support our Chapter. Your gifts are tax deductible and are used to reach out to other bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings. Your gifts support this newsletter, our TCF Library, and other Chapter expenses.



## Healing and Hope

For a long time after the death of a child, bereaved parents are convinced that healing will never occur, and that the loneliness, anger, guilt and despair, which control life so completely, will never change. This feeling is so strong that when others try to reassure the grieving one, the response is usually, "It's different with me! You don't understand!" This is the "normal" response to what is probably the most severe stress a human will ever face.

Fortunately, there are compassionate friends who once felt this same way who have learned that, out of this morass of loneliness, anger, guilt and despair, there finally arises a ray of hope. Though small and fleeting at first, this hope becomes the light which leads the wounded parents through the dark valley and into acceptance of their child's death. And this healing will occur even though there is still no understanding of "Why?"

It is by working through our guilt (both real and imagined), facing our anger including anger at God and even at the dead child, crying our way through our despair (with carefully chosen professional help if necessary), that the loneliness will lessen, and hope will be seen as surviving when it was thought gone forever. Each one must use one's spiritual beliefs in his or her own way to assist in this process.

Full recovery—in the sense that the effects of grief will finally disappear never to return—return not occur, although the term "recovery" is used. I prefer the term "healing," a process whereby our lives come to a new "normal." Healing implies (a) our accepting the unacceptable (the death of our child), and (b) our slowly learning to resume productive relationships with others. This is done all while we continue to love and miss the dead child.

Since we still love the children who have died, we will still experience grief, but it will no longer control our lives. Just as we cannot stop the flashbacks which occur so suddenly and unexpectedly during grief, neither can we prevent healing from occurring. We may slow the process by failing to do our grief work, but we cannot stop it!! One of the greatest hindrances to our healing is the fear that our dead children will be forgotten. We will not forget them, nor will they be forgotten by others, even though we may not realize it at the time! Perhaps the greatest obstacle to healing is the failure to forgive—ourselves, the dead child, others involved with the child's death, even God if we hold Him responsible. For only through forgiveness and forgiving are we truly able to handle our guilt and the anger that comes from the guilt we presume in others.

We enhance the healing process when we do our grief work, when we have gratitude for the time we had with our child, when we recall the happy times we experienced with our child (or during pregnancy, if that's all we had), and when we pick up the shattered pieces of our existence (as our child would want us to do), slowly resuming productive living.

No matter where you are in your journey toward healing, bolster the hope that arises within you. Your healing is probably the best memorial you may erect to your dead child!

Robert Gloor  
TCF Tuscaloosa, AL



## The Truth

What does one do with “the truth?” When I am asked, “How are you? How are you really?” my **true** answer would be “I wish I were dead.” Such a response, however true it may be, is a conversation stopper of epic proportions.

If the conversation doesn’t end immediately, then I have to be prepared for a barrage of “You don’t mean that! You can’t mean that! What about your husband and daughter? Jordan would not want for you to feel that way!” And so on. While I know people probably mean well, it is not helpful to require me to lie.

When Jordan was in his mid-teens, we made it compulsory for him to attend confirmation classes at our church. When the classes were concluded, he advised us that he was not ready to be confirmed. My husband, a “cradle Episcopalian,” was horrified and planned to demand that Jordan go through with confirmation. One of the youth ministers took Jeff aside and advised, “You do realize you’re requiring him to stand up in front of the whole church and lie?” So, we stayed home that day. We didn’t require him to lie; we were sad, we were disappointed. We missed out on a rite of passage that had mattered to us. But how could you require someone you love to lie?

Is this something we’re promoting as a culture? We’re lied to regularly by elected officials, by business leaders, by institutions of higher education...usually with money and power as the motivation. So, is that why our culture is okay with expecting bereaved parents to lie about how we feel? We’re certainly not motivated by money or power.

But how do I answer the “How are you?” question? I answer, “I’m okay.” At least the conversation doesn’t stop. At least I’m not further isolated.

Peggi Johnson  
TCF Piedmont Chapter, VA



## Resolutions

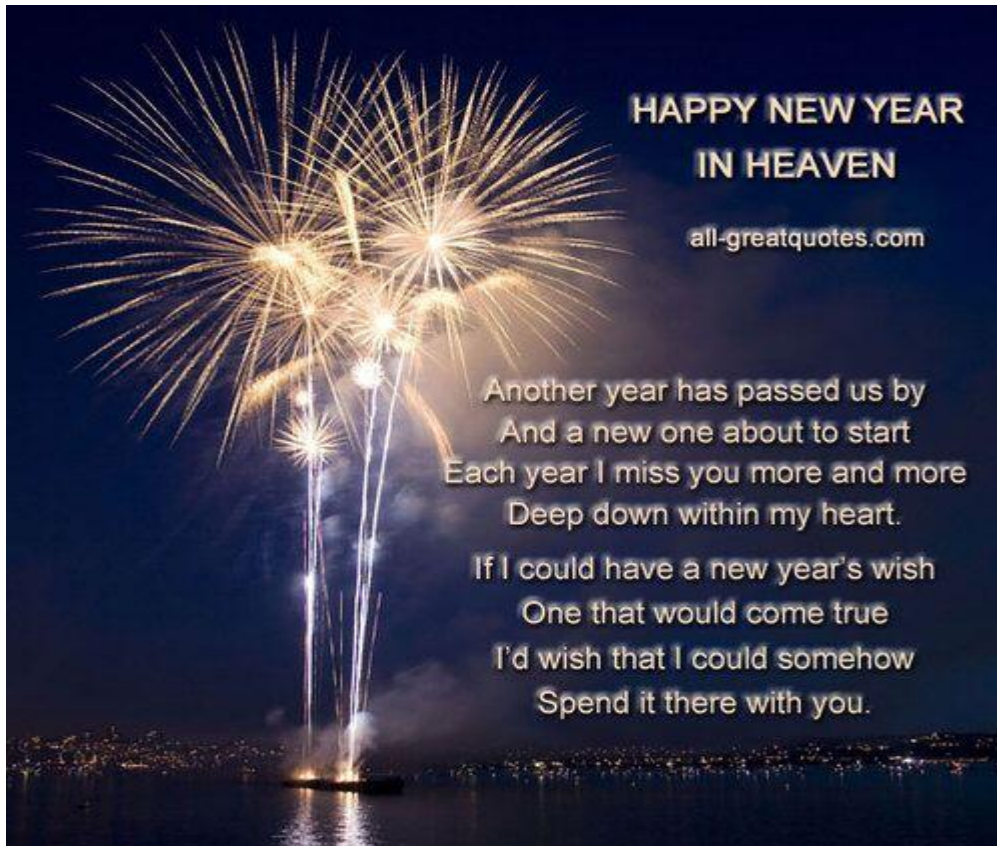
Every time the holiday season comes to a close, I feel as if I can hear a collective sigh of relief. This year was no different except that the sigh seemed louder and longer than in past years. Some years are like that for us. This one was certainly like that for me. No matter how difficult I thought the holidays would be to get through I was wrong. In some ways they were more difficult and in other ways, surprisingly, they were less difficult. The reality is that you and I, no matter how we anticipated the holidays, did get through them. We did survive the holidays and though it may be difficult for you to believe this now, there is no reason that this new year shouldn’t be better.

Which brings me to a favorite topic for this time of year, New Year's resolutions. Resolutions that I think are most helpful are those that concern our well-being. Above all else, resolve to take better care of yourself. Try to eat right and exercise. Find ways to nurture yourself—both your body and your mind. Remember all things in moderation. Seek advice from others when you need it and above all, ask for help when you need it. You won't always get the help when you ask for it, but remember, if you don't ask for it, you surely won't get it.

Another thing you can do to have a happier new year is to become more involved in our chapter of The Compassionate Friends. If you've not come to any meetings, or if it's been a while, give it a try. Commit to attending at least three meetings. If you were to attend only one, you would not necessarily get a very good idea of what our meetings are like. Join us and make your needs known to us.

Have a happier New Year!

Pat Akery  
TCF, Medford, OR  
December 30, 2001





## New Year a Time to Search for 'Ray of Hope'

*Be my ray of hope, be my ray of laughter.  
Be my song to sing that guides me on my way.  
Be the arms that hold me.  
Be the love that enfolds me, be my light,  
Be my ray of hope today.  
...Paul Alexander, songwriter*

Snowflakes drift silently to earth.

A new year has dawned. The revelry of the old year has quieted and the holiday hustle and bustle has ended

As bereaved parents, for many of us, this will be our first full year without our children. For others, the upcoming year will be another thread in the garment of life. A thread connecting the memories of our old life with the hope for "recovery" in our new life.

How often our thoughts wander back to another day and time when we were happy and full of the vitality that makes up life—a time when our child made our life complete and worth living.

Though three years have passed since becoming a bereaved parent, I still think about my children every day of my life. As I sat watching the ball atop Time Square descend, my thoughts jumped back to a time when my children lay safely in their beds as we brought a new year into existence.

Does *this* new year bring with it a time when we will hurt less—when there will be a new ray of hope? Or does it bring even more heartache because of the sadness and loneliness we find difficult to leave behind?

The answers lie deep within each of us. How we approach this new year will make the difference.

*Can we be kind to ourselves?* Just because others place demands on us to do whatever they feel will help us does not mean they are right. They have not walked in our shoes. We can say 'NO!'

*Can we enjoy life again?* Though we cannot be physically with our children, they would want us to enjoy living . . . and yes, they would want us to love again!

*Can we help parents who are more newly bereaved to clear the same hurdles that seemed so insurmountable to us such a short while ago?* By reaching out to others and making their burdens a little lighter, we are helping our own open wounds to heal.

*Inside of me are all the answers.  
Everything I need to know  
Lives inside of me.  
Come behold my miracle,  
Come and hear my story.  
Come and paint a memory with me.  
. . . P. Alexander*

Wayne Loder  
TCF Lakes Area, MI

*"Ray of Hope" by Paul Alexander on the CD "The Best of Paul" at [www.griefsong.com](http://www.griefsong.com) (Paul wrote LIGHT A CANDLE which has been used at many TCF candle lighting programs). Permission to use excerpts from "Ray of Hope" granted by Paul Alexander.*

## The New Year: A Time of Hope

Another New Year has slipped into our lives, radically changing some things and leaving other things to evolve naturally. For bereaved parents a new year marks another year on the calendar without their precious children. It is a new year, but not much has changed since the old year. Why is that?

We act as the catalysts of change for ourselves. We choose to help ourselves; we choose to stay in a specific place in our grief. We choose to reach out for hope or we choose to withdraw into the familiar and postpone facing life and hope another day. There are no set rules or specific timetables in bereavement. We are each unique in our grief.

Eventually we all find hope. We find it in different ways and in different times. There will be no one moment of epiphany for bereaved parents. Instead, there are a series of minutes, hours, weeks, months and often years until we realize that we can truly say we feel the power of hope coming alive from deep within us. This moment will come for each of us. It will come in its own time and its own way.

Even those of us who have found hope and who shine its light on the paths of newly bereaved parents, still regress and withdraw into the dark sadness of our loss. And that is as it should be. For we have lost the most precious gift of our lives...our children's presence with us and their future in this life. Our children live in our hearts and our memories and our dreams. They do not share this plane with us. It is normal and it is good to think of our children often and to shed some tears for all that has been lost. These aren't setbacks as much as sweet memories that bring cathartic tears.

The element we find in these memories is a closeness to our child and our child's life. This, too, is healthy. An often-expressed fear is that our children will be forgotten. Worry not, gentle parent, your child will be remembered for all of your days and for many days thereafter. You will never forget your child. Others who knew your child will never forget. The proof of this is in our memories....sweet memories that take us back to another time when our child was with us.

So this New Year's, whether you are a few months, a few years or many years in your grief, think about hope. You have not forsaken your child when you reach for hope. Your hope brings your child back in a positive way that will warm your heart. Reach for that hope. As you move forward in your grief in the New Year, reach for hope. Your child will still be with you. And one day you will find that your child's presence is sweeter when hope is within you.

Annette Mennen Baldwin  
In memory of my son, Todd Mennen  
TCF, Katy, TX



## Possibilities

The New Year is upon us and with its arrival are the usual concerns surrounding New Year's Resolutions. It has become popular over the years to take inventory, and consequently make a list of those things that we are going to finally try to accomplish during the new year. The list invariably includes all those intentions we have never been successful in keeping in the

past before but somehow feel we might have more resolve this time around. Resolutions are tough and often too harsh. When we look at the list of "never done" and try to muster up a me list of "to do", the attempts seem discouraging and downright overwhelming. Should we really try again? The loss of our child has surrounded us with a grief that is encompassing, and draining. Do we really care about well-intentioned resolutions?

This year I decided to try a new approach. Instead of resolutions, I am going to take a serious look at possibilities. The more I thought about it the more attractive a list of possibilities became. Possibilities are neither harsh nor burdensome, but rather they have an air of lightheartedness about them. On some level they present an invitation to open a door to wishful, even wistful thinking while at the same time weaving a thread of reality. Possibilities captivate the spirit. They could be a real winner.

With possibilities there are no deadlines-no voice of doom to shout our lack of effort and accomplishment. Possibilities can be very simple with few demands but with amazing results and satisfaction. Defy normal convention and allow your imagination to wander. You might even want to be a little daring. Take a walk in the rain, soak up sunshine, take up painting, cook up a storm, renew a forgotten friendship, lie in bed till noon, stay awake until midnight and laugh with the late-night talk show hosts, to name but a few. The list is as long or as short as you wish it to be. Most important of all, possibilities are not threatening. They invite us to consider and then explore. This is only a beginning. Be childlike. Jump right in. In this New Year I wish you Happy Possibilities.

**Rosemari Clogher**  
**TCF Shoreline Chapter, Northford, CT.**



## 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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