



# ***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.*

**JULY 2020**

## **HOUSTON NORTHWEST CHAPTER**

<http://www.houstonnorthwesttcf.org>

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

**We will not meet this month amid the Covid-19 virus**

at

**Cypress Creek Christian Church  
6823 Cypresswood Drive, Room #3  
Spring, Texas 77379**

The Church is located between the courthouse and Barbara Bush Library. At the York Minster traffic light turn into the church parking area. We meet in Room #3 which is down six steps off the main lobby of the Church on the Library side. Follow the posted signs to the meeting room.

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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.

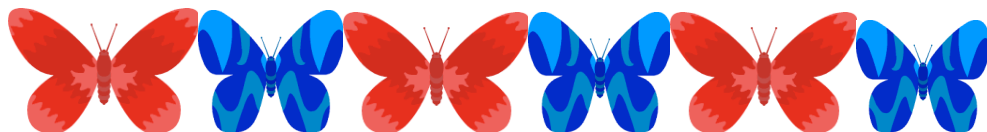
### To the Newly Bereaved

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.



## *Our Children, Siblings and Grandchildren Remembered*

### **JULY BIRTHDAYS**

1983 - Nicole Berrow, Daughter of Rosie Berrow  
1971 - Amy Wells, Daughter of Kerry & J.R. Wells  
2010 - Delaney Womack, Daughter of Carrie & Eric Womack  
1984 - Kristine Ashley Bergaila, Daughter of Kathleen Livingston  
1968 - Van Holland, Son of James & Olivia Holland  
1985 - Sean Hengel, Son of Laura Hengel  
1972 - Gregory Whitney Vinson, Son of Lance & Marilyn Vinson  
1960 - Evanna Johnson, Daughter of Nelwyn Heath and  
Sister In Law of Christal Janis  
1980 - Andrew Rininger, Son of Philip & Ellen Rininger  
1982 - Geoffrey Lynn Meier, Son of Gary Meier  
1989 - Kylar Shotwell, Daughter of Tracy Bradley  
1982 - Chance Wilcox, Son of Shelli Ralls  
1967 - John Steven Sims, Son of Marilyn Sims  
1999 - Ahjzanae Adore Triplett, Daughter of Alesia Abbott  
1993 - Patrick Burns, Son of Ray & Amanda Burns  
1991 - David Kerpchar, Son of Sally Kerpchar  
1971 - Joel Sloan, Son of Jim & Glenna Sloan  
1982 - Adam Brown, Son of Greg & Debbie Brown  
1979 - James (Jimi) Nicholas, Son of Fred & Linda Nicholas  
2015 - Kacie Joiner, Daughter of Julie Joiner  
1999 - Jared Mayfield, Son of Robbie Lampkins  
1986 - Kristina O'Masters Palmer, Daughter of Laurie Martin  
1997 - Ethan Tyler Brown, Son of Erica Poorbaugh  
2018 - Kingston Bowen, Son of Lakisha Washington  
1984 - Justin Moyer, Son of Valli Moyer  
1986 - Chad Moyer, Son of Valli Moyer  
1989 - Chance Barton, Son of Sherry Barton



You are rooted deep  
within my soul.  
A part of me forever  
In the deepest parts  
of my heart  
there you are.

## **JULY ANGEL DATES**

2008 - Aaron Michael Wolf, Son of Laura Wolf  
2006 - Chasen Sean Shirley, Son of Debbie Shirley  
2008 - DeAndria Sharee Anderson, Daughter of Rawn & Loretta Stephens  
2010 - Evanna Johnson, Daughter of Nelwyn Heath and  
Sister In Law of Christal Janis  
2008 - Lloyd Ross (Rossi) Moore, Jr., Son of Carolyn Moore  
2010 - Sanai Caden Johnson, Daughter of Octavia Johnson  
2012 - Brett Collins, Son of Bill & Geri Collins  
2010 - Ahjzanae Adore Triplett, Daughter of Alesia Abbott  
2011 - Christopher Birken, Son of Elizabeth Birken  
2013 - Zy-Air Stoval, Son of Jerome & Dora Stovall  
2010 - Austin Haecker, Son of Debbie Haecker and  
Grandson of Carolyn Cooper  
2013 - Jacob Landon, Son of Brenda Landon  
2016 - Matthew Coers, son of Michelle Guerrero  
2015 - Brian Smith, Son of Cindy Smith  
2005 - Patrick O'Masters, Son of Laurie Martin  
2017 - Kristina O'Masters Palmer, Daughter of Laurie Martin  
2018 - Kingston Bowen, Son of Lakisha Washington  
2018 - Austin Balogun, Son of Yokima Whittaker

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### **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

### TCF'S FIRST VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

**FRIDAY, JULY 31, 2020 TO SUNDAY, AUGUST 2, 2020**



TCF's Virtual Conference will provide an important opportunity for our community to connect in a way that is feasible right now. It also offers the opportunity for many people to attend who may not have been able to do so in the past for a variety of reasons.

The three-day conference will include:

- Keynote Speakers
- 70 plus workshop choices
- Sibling Sunday
- Candle Lighting Ceremony
- Sharing Circles
- Silent Auction
- Entertainment
- Additional regular conference activities that are suitable for a virtual environment

Additional information:

- The conference will take place on a Zoom platform with an online registration system.
- Registration fees for the three-day event will be \$65 per person (early bird registration) and \$85 per person after July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020.
- Information about the TCF Walk to Remember along with more conference details will be shared in the coming weeks.
- Training and orientation will be offered prior to the conference for attendees who may need some extra technology support in order to participate.

Although we would all love to be together in person, we can still connect, support, and gather as a community through a virtual event. We will continue to navigate this new environment we're in and we hope you will join us! Registration is now open.

<https://web.cvent.com/event/92043c90-aab7-49dc-bcf3-22d2f01de9f9/regProcessStep1>

## CHAPTER NEWS

**We are still waiting for the Church to reopen so we can once again get together for our meeting. I am open to your thoughts and suggestions on how we might hold our meetings until we can get back to the Church. Let me hear your thoughts.**

### **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 one comes to judge another. You will find that children are being mourned who have died from all ages and all causes. The pain is the same-that of the loss of hopes and dreams that will never be realized.

Come and join with others who understand much of what you're feeling more than most people, simply because we've been there. Know that there will be sadness and tears as we talk about our loss, but there will also be joy and laughter as we remember special times with our children. You don't have to say anything if you don't want to, but you will certainly be given that opportunity.

We ask but one thing from you, that you attend at least three meetings before you decide if The Compassionate Friends is right for you.

## NEWSLETTER ARTICLES

Our chapter welcomes all submissions to our newsletter. Send your articles, poetry, love messages and scanned photos to David Hendricks at: [dbhhendricks@hotmail.com](mailto:dbhhendricks@hotmail.com). The deadline for submitting your articles is the 5th of each month.

### **PRIVATE FACEBOOK GROUPS**

The Compassionate Friends offers a variety of private Facebook Groups. These pages are moderated by bereaved parents, siblings, or grandparents, and may not be accessed unless a request to join is approved by a moderator. A private message will be sent prior to approval, please be sure to check your mailbox marked "Other" if you do not receive one in your main mailbox. These pages were established to encourage connection and sharing among parents, grandparents, and siblings grieving the death of a child, grandchild or sibling.

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



**Reflections from a Chapter Leader**  
**David Hendricks**  
**Chapter Leader**  
**TCF Houston Northwest**

It's been over 23 years since my son David died in an automobile accident at age 35. It's been over 19 years since I became chapter leader and facilitator at our TCF Chapter. Over these many years at our meetings I have witnessed bereaved parents who could barely come through the door, barely breathe, whose emotions were at the surface and who needed to be with other parents who had lost children.

These same parents who could not imagine life without pain or having fun or even laughing, somehow can make it to a different place where there is joy and where the good memories dominate the bad ones. This transition takes between 3 and 6 years, but the new normal usually comes about in years 4 and 5. That's when they quit coming to TCF meetings because the pain of the meetings is greater than the good they get out of the meetings.

I call it graduation. Just when these parents are great contributors and valuable in our meetings, they quit coming. From a Chapter Leader and Facilitator point of view, I really miss these "graduates", but I am glad that their new normal allows them to not need TCF. But TCF still needs them.

Before our meetings start, there are smiles and sometimes laughter among some of the "veterans". This can be a shock to the newly bereaved. I point out to them that we are also bereaved parents and that the smiles and laughter that seems out of place, show that there is hope for a better future.

I emphasize to our group that it is important to manage your expectations.

I tell the newly bereaved that the grief journey is not measured in days, weeks or months. It is measured in years. The airlines tell you if the oxygen masks drop, put yours on first so you will be able to help others. In the same way, take care of yourself first. Do whatever it takes to deal with your loss. Only then will you be able to deal with the rest of your life.

The early time frame of grief comes with generally well intentioned comments from friends, relatives, co-workers and strangers: "are you feeling better", "have you recovered", "are you over it", "he's in a better place", "it's just God's will", "at least you have other children", "I know how you feel, I lost my dog last month", "I want the old person back".

Sometimes we ignore the questions and comments. Sometimes we try to explain our feelings. Sometimes we just explode, inwardly or outwardly. We face these questions, we face our grief, we face all of our relationships, and we face ourselves. Grief work is hard. We say our grief is so intense because the love of our child is so intense.

There are no short cuts on working through our grief. One of the benefits (if I can use that word) of coming to TCF meetings is "empathy". Most of our grief is focused inward. At a TCF meeting, we listen to other parents tell their story, and our grief is turned outward as we feel their pain. This empathy is physically and emotionally beneficial. It changes us from being totally inward focused to

being open to fellow travelers and to their stories and issues. Everyone listens and is attentive at a TCF meeting even if we've heard the story many times.

There are an abundance of tools to help us in our grief journey: TCF meetings, therapy and counseling, journaling, scrapbooking, TCF chat rooms, TCF facebook, articles, books, medication, meditation. As we work through our grief, we are often presented with "redemptive possibilities". These are things we can do now, that we probably would never thought of if our child were still alive. These include setting up a foundation, starting a scholarship, working with a group or activity your child was involved in, volunteering at a place to honor your child, special projects, special events, providing material goods where they are needed, and many other opportunities once our eyes are open. Don't expect to find redemptive possibilities when your grief is fresh. It takes time for our eyes to be open to them.

So it is possible, given enough time and enough work to find joy in your life, to laugh again, to be open to new things, and to not having your first thought of the day and the last thought at night to be of the loss of your child. I have seen it over and over again.

To the newly bereaved (and I mean for at least the first two years), the previous paragraph reads like fiction. But it is true. Nothing can compensate for your loss, but the "new you" will be able to navigate through life.

We never get over the loss of our child, and there is no such thing as closure. We just get through the loss and emerge as the "new you". Keep watching for the redemptive possibilities.

To all the "veterans" of this process, remember those who were there for you when your grief was new. Please consider coming back for a visit or two. Your experience and wisdom is very beneficial to our entire group.

So the message of these reflections is hope. Hope for a new you, as you feel your way along this grief journey. As you travel down that long, unfamiliar grief road from which there is no return, be gentle with yourself and work hard, and remember there is hope.

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**"In this sad world of ours, sorrow comes to all.  
It comes with bittersweet 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 somewhat less miserable now.  
I have experienced enough to know what I say."**

**Abraham Lincoln  
(Lincoln lost two of his four sons in his life time.)**

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## Accepting the Unacceptable

"I will never be able to accept the death of my child." Does that sound familiar? Have you said that? Not surprising. That is one, if not the most, difficult thing we have to do to get to the other side of the long dark tunnel of grief.

What does "accept" mean? One parent told me he would never accept his daughter's death, because he said "accept" means to "agree, approve, to consent to," Obviously, in that context no one in their right mind would "accept" their child's death. But there are other meanings to "accept": "believe to be true," "acknowledge." We do not like the sound of those words either, but at some point, accept them, in order to get on with our lives.

By stating we will not accept it, what is accomplished? ... Will it make it not true? If only it were that simple. Then I would be 100% in favor of denial. But it doesn't work that way. There are some things that cannot be changed, no matter how hard we may want them to be.

One example: My husband had a heart attack a little more than a year after Eric's death. He vehemently denied he had had a heart attack. ... He continued on with his HEAVY smoking. Then came his stroke. He is now badly paralyzed on his left side. He cannot deny his stroke. And he cannot go back, and accept his heart attack, change his way of living and perhaps avert the stroke. So what did his denial accomplish? It made things worse.

So it is with us. Denial won't work. At some point in time, we know it has happened. I realized for myself, it was when I could say "Eric died." I could say the word "dead." It took quite a long time. I could say "I lost a son" but not "he died." One day it just came out. It actually shocked and upset me. But afterwards, looking back, I realized that was a big step for me. Not a happy one, but it was one of my turning points.

All of the "stages" of grief that we go through are hard. There is nothing easy about it. As Darcie Sims said..."grief hurts." That almost seems like too mild a statement. The feeling is impossible to put in words. It's devastating!!

"Grief work" takes time and effort. I wish there was an easier way for all of you. I can only give you the hope and encouragement that you, too, can make it. Be kind to and patient with yourself. God Bless!

Mary Ehmann  
TCF Valley Forge, PA  
In Memory of my son Eric

One of my favorite poems by Emily Dickinson begins: "Hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul." In the early years of my grief after my daughter Coty died, it was hard to imagine I would ever feel that flutter of hope again. Through The Compassionate Friends, I found others who had not only survived, but had built a new life in honor of their loved ones. I felt the rustling of those little feathers and knew that hope would live again in my soul.

Kathleen Willoughby, Coty's mom  
Loss to Homicide moderator



## July's Child

Fireworks race toward heaven  
Brilliant colors in the sky.  
Their splendor ends in seconds  
On this evening in July.  
"Her birthday is this Saturday,"  
I whisper with a sigh.  
She was born this month,  
She loved this month  
And she chose this month to die.

Like the bright and beautiful fireworks  
Glowing briefly in the dark  
They are gone too soon, and so was she  
Having been, and left her mark.  
A glorious incandescent life,  
A catalyst, a spark...  
Her being gently lit my path  
And softened all things stark.

The July birth, the July death of  
my happy summer child  
Marked a life too brief that ended  
Without rancor, without guile.  
Like the fireworks that leave images  
On unprotected eyes...  
Her lustrous life engraved my heart...  
With love that never dies.

Sally Migliaccio  
TCF Babylon, Long Island, NY



## Compassion:

Compassion is such an easy word, yet it is not at all easy to achieve. Compassion means suspending one's own critical and advisory inclinations to help someone. Compassion is leaving oneself outside. Compassion is not approval. What the other person may need is often not at all what the compassionate helper believes to be helpful. The helper may want to give advice, or talk about himself/herself. What the griever needs, however, may well be a listener, a focused attention on the griever and on the loss the griever sustained. Often, compassion means not doing something – listening rather than speaking, crying rather than comforting with words. Compassion is not an easy task, but it is among the greatest gifts we can give each other.

-Sascha

## Borrowed Hope

Lend me your hope for awhile,  
I seem to have mislaid mine.  
Lost and hopeless feelings accompany me daily.  
Pain and confusion are my companions.  
I know not where to turn.  
Looking ahead to the future times  
Does not bring forth images of renewed hope.  
I see mirthless times, pain-filled days, and more tragedy.

Lend me your hope for awhile,  
I seem to have mislaid mine.  
Hold my hand and hug me, Listen to all my ramblings.  
I need to unleash the pain and let it tumble out.  
Recovery seems so far and distant,  
The road to healing, a long and lonely one.  
Stand by me. Offer me your presence,  
Your ears and your love.  
Acknowledge my pain, it is so real and ever present.  
I am overwhelmed with sad and conflicting thoughts.

Lend me your hope for awhile.  
A time will come when I will heal,  
And I will lend my renewed hope to others.

— Eloise Cole, TCF Ireland Chapter





## My Precious Grandchild

I waited for that moment and it arrived one special day.  
My first glimpse of you nearly took my breath away.

I was apprehensive about being called a grandma it's true,  
until the first time i was called grandma by you.

Being a mother was a wondrous joy for me,  
I gave it all I had with great responsibility.

Then I watched my child become a father of his own,  
now I could be a grandma and explore the great unknown.

You brought so much joy when you entered this world;  
you were grandma's pretty angel and daddy's little girl.

I loved to take you shopping, I loved to brush your hair,  
in fact I loved taking you with me almost anywhere.

All those years of joy were filled with promise of much more,  
how we could have known that sadness soon would be in store.

The ringing of the telephone, a knocking at the door,  
in an instant all that mattered most didn't matter anymore.

The hurt was great for me and for my child so wracked with pain,  
without my pretty angel life would never be the same.

We gave each other comfort and we held each other tight,  
somehow we have weathered the darkest of the night.

Today we still cry and we always ache for you,  
but we also take some time remembering that you lived too.

Your smile forever sparkles and your laugh will always be,  
because my precious grandchild you are still a part of me.

*By: Connie Sheets*

*Taken from: We Need Not Walk Alone*

*Winter 2014*



## Summertime

It sounds so easy. A soft, warm word—time to run barefoot, time to leave windows open all night. Summertime. Somehow it seems, doesn't it, that it's especially meant for children. Children on beaches, children on swings, children in large pools, children in tiny tubs.

We who do not have all of our children with us may feel the summertime in two ways. One is to remember shared events and adventures—there were so many. Long rides in a hot car, a nap in the back seat. The famous question, "Are we there yet?" Everything from a heat rash to ice cream cones and sand castles.

For us, another way to feel summertime is the special emptiness brought about by children who are no longer on this earth. They used to trot along on hikes in the hills; they used to gather wood for an evening fire. Now summer brings us again the melancholy awareness of their absence. Have you ever walked on some unfamiliar path, surprised about not having been there with the children? Even when there's nothing to remember, we are reminded of the children's absence.

We have been diminished by death. Some of us may still have living children. Other parents have no children left. They have lost an only child, perhaps. Or all of their children died. And here we are, grateful for the warmth of summer mornings, aware of the ripe beauty of nature, trying to deal with our children's absence with all the grace of which we are capable. Often we do not want to burden others with our grief. Or we may be convinced that others don't wish to share our distress. We have learned, after all, that the world around us is not always able to understand how we feel.

Besides, we were taught to be brave. Many of us will do everything we can to appear "normal" after our loss. But we were also taught to be honest. And when you feel the hurt, when you seem almost to be lost in the shadows of this golden summertime, don't hide your sorrow. The grief of your spirit can perhaps be kept a secret on the outside. Yet, your deepest feelings, unexpressed, can burn into your existence with harmful force.

You can be both brave and honest. You know that it's brave to share grief, be it old grief or new grief. And revealing that sorrow is also honest. Of course, nothing can wipe away much of your pain, but sharing grief is helpful. You will know that after you have expressed the painful sorrow you once kept hidden, and you find yourself, finally, smiling at the memories and the blessings of past summertime's.

Sascha Wagner



## IS IT EASING?

I heard your name today and my heart did not skip a beat, nor was my mind flooded with the emotion of losing you. I heard your name today and it did not bring back the terrible hurt feelings of when you first left me.

I heard your name today with a calmness that surprised me. Many another child carries your name, and it had been torture hearing it and seeing the smiling faces on those little girls.

But today I knew—I found out—what others in my footsteps found out and tried to tell me. The hurt will ease; but the memories, the love, the good times will never go away.

Phoebe C. Redman  
TCF Bradenton, FL



## 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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