# 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.*

# NOVEMBER 2026

## HOUSTON NORTHWEST CHAPTER

www.houstonnorthwesttcf.org

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

**Our next meeting is Tuesday, November 10, 2026**

**at**

**Trinity Lutheran Church**
**Family Life Center, Room #116**
**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 116.


**Chapter Leader:**
David Hendricks
936-441-3840
dbhhendricks@hotmail.com

**South Texas Regional Coordinator:**
Ghislaine Thomsen
**tcfsouthtexasrc@gmail.com**

**Newsletter Editor:**
Linda Brewer 936-441-3840
llbrewer67@hotmail.com

**National Headquarters, TCF**
P.O. Box 46
Wheaton, IL 60187
1-876-969-0010
www.compassionatefriends.org

# 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……**

## NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

1951-Pamela Ann Roberson, Daughter of Doris & Dale Hockstra
2005-Carson Hayes Gurgonus, Son of Amber Gurgonus
1976-Bryan Belveal , Son of Linda Belveal
1974-Michael Shrum , Son of Mike & Melva Shrum
1980-Michael Brent Police, Son of Jack & Sally Police
1984-Phillip Matthew Terrell, Son of Phillip & Mary Jo Terrell
1968-Jenny Nolan Burgess, Daughter of Jenelle Chamberlain
1998-Samantha Alonso, Daughter of Joanna Alonso
1985-Alan Jerome Austin, Son of Rhonda Austin
2004-Brett Collins, Son of Bill & Geri Collins
1978-Shelly Vick Hopkins, Daughter of Brandon & Paula Lansford
1985-Erin Johnson, Daughter of Rebecca Johnson
2012-George Milo Morfin, Jr., Son of Diana Abidin
1988- Katrina Martinez, Daughter of Amy Kohl
1991- Devyn Sloterdijk, Son of Janet Sloterdijk
2004- Lhwhyh Yhshrhal, Son of Taneshia Carey
1985- Adam Kujawa, Son of Larry and Sara Kujawa
2014 -Luke Curry, Son of Lynsy Curry
1989- Kellie Martin, Daughter of Denise Martin
1979- Bryan Selby, Son of Dennis Selby
1978- Nicole Speir, Daughter of Sue Speir
1974- Keri, Daughter of Darlene McGhee
1977- Wes, Son of Darlene McGhee
1993- Michael Jansen, Son of Mike and Linda Jansen
1987- Jacob Hamburg, Son of Faith Hamburg
1978- Matthew Lopez, Son of Rick Lopez
1972- Bruce Young, Son of Barbara Young
1991- Julian Karim, Son of Reshad & Rosanna Karim
2011-Makayla Guinn, Daughter of Darien & Valencia Guinn
2013-David Lear, Son of Dustin & Erica Lear

***Today I celebrate the life you lived and the blessing that you were to me during your time on Earth. I remember you. I feel you. I know you exist in my heart and elsewhere. I love you. Today, in your honor, I celebrate Life.***



## Lighting a candle, remembering a life

## NOVEMBER ANGEL DATES

2010- Trace Thornton, Son of Nina Thornton
2007- Garrett Conrad Ford, Son of Leigh Heard
2009- Makaylin Angel, Daughter of Jennifer Edwards
2005- Ava Helena Wallheimer, Daughter of Angela Wallheimer
2007- Kate Bronstein, Daughter of Pat Gallien
2008- Melissa Ellen Blackbird, Daughter of Will & Pam Blackbird
2008- Charles James Booth, Son of Mary Booth
2005- Ryan Matthews, Son of Frances Matthews
11/19 Jonathon Kuta, Son of Larry & Terri Kuta
2009- Lance Anderson, Son of John & Dianna Brumley
2009- Phillip Matthew Terrell, Son of Phillip & Mary Jo Terrell
2007- Megan Kathleen Ratliff, Daughter of Ann & Garvon Ratliff
2011- Nancy Lizabeth Gonzalez, Daughter of Dulce Gonzalez
2010- Kristen Roberts, Daughter of Tom & Geneva Montgomery
2012-George Milo Morfin, Jr., Son of Diana Abidin
2014 -Kristi Whitehorn Hill, Daughter of Susan Whitehorn
2014 - April Ann Ulrich, Daughter of Doug & Josette Tharp
2015- Baron Neelley, Son of Bo & Allison Neeley
2015- Sean Weinstein, Son of Steve & Sherry Weinstein
2015- Creighton Heslop, Son of Barry & Kris Heslop
2015- Marc Pourner, Son of Jolena Pourner
2014- Jamie Leonard, Son of Carrie Newman
2018- Angelique Duncan, Daughter of Rosalyn Fagen
2019- Bonnie Baszkiewicz, Daughter of Eve Baszkiewicz
1974- Keri, Daughter of Darlene McGhee
2016- Galencia Symone, Daughter of Titilayo Traylor

### *My Angel Day*

***Yes Mom, this is my Angel Day***
***From my earthly life, I know I left quite soon***
***But only to enter my greatest reward in Glory***
***Far beyond the moon***

***Today you'll perform your loving rituals***
***And do your best to keep my memory aware***
***Yes Mom, this ritual is for both of us***
***For I am both here and there***

# CHAPTER NEWS

**Our next meeting is Tuesday, November 10th at 7pm.**

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

We offer our warmest welcome to our newest members, **Andrea Loch lost her son Joshua Carrera in June 2026; Allie Bennett lost her son Noah Bennett September 2026.** 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!

## Save the Date

**Compassionate Friends**
**Worldwide Candle Lighting**
**Sunday, December 13, 2026**



**at**
**Trinity Lutheran Church**
**5201 Spring Cypress Rd.**
**Spring, TX 77379**

**There will be drinks, light snacks and sandwiches provided starting at 6:15 pm. We'll have a remembrance slide show. Please email 3 or 4 photos of your child along with their name, birth date and angel date to Darryl Heino at darrylheino@gmail.com. Everyone is welcome to attend the candle lighting.**

## Finding Meaning

One of the characters in Larry McMurtry's book, "The Streets of Laredo" says that, "He could remember the person he had been, but he could not become that person again." I think that's how all bereaved parents feel. Although friends, relatives and others want the old person back, the new person is who we've become.

David Kessler has written six books about grief. His latest is "Finding Meaning: The Six Stage of Grief." Most of us are familiar with Elizabeth Kubler-Ross's five stages of grief. In her book "on Death and Dying", she developed her theories while working with the terminally ill and their families. Her initial focus was not on the loss of a child, but those five stages are used with a variety of grief situations.

Kessler says, finding meaning does not equal understanding. Most of us don't understand why our child had to die. Each of us can find meaning in what we do after the death of our child. Meaning can occur in small moments. Maybe you became a more generous person, or a kinder person, or a more determined person. Or maybe you find a way to commemorate or honor your child.

This last definition of meaning is what we've called "Redemptive Possibilities" in our chapter meetings for years. Redemptive Possibilities means you do something positive to honor your child that you would not have done if your child were alive. Examples are scholarships, helping with whatever your child's interest were, being active in grief groups, donating time and /or money to causes close to you and your child, etc. Meaning is what we make happen after the loss. Finding meaning takes time, even years, to be able to recognize that meaning or to be open to redemptive possibilities.

Finding meaning is part of becoming the new person. The final stage of Kubler-Ross's stages is acceptance. That's also part of becoming the new person. And just like McMurtry's character, you can remember the old person, you just can't become that person again.

David Hendricks
Chapter Leader
Houston Northwest Chapter



## The Pit of Grief

The day my child died, I fell into the pit of grief. My friends watched me struggle through daily life, waiting for the person I once was to arise from the pit, not realizing she is gone forever. The pit is full of darkness, heartache and despair; it paralyzes your thoughts, movements and ability to think. The pit leaves you forever changed, unable to surface the person you once were.

Some of my pre-grief friends gather around the top of the pit, waiting for the old me to appear before their eyes, not understanding what's taking me so long to emerge. After all...in their eyes, I've been in the pit for quite some time. Yet, in my eyes, it seems as if I fell in only yesterday.

Not all of my pre-grief friends gathered at the top of the pit. Some are helping me with the climb out of the darkness. They climb side by side with me from time to time, but mostly, they climb ahead of me, waiting patiently at each plateau. Even with these friends I sometimes wonder if they are also waiting for the pre-grief me to magically appear before their eyes. Then there are the casual acquaintances (or maybe even family members), you know, the ones who say, "Hi, how are you?" when they really don't care or really don't want to know. These people are the people who sighed in relief that it was my child who died and not theirs. You know, the "better you, not me" attitude.

My post-grief friends are the ones who climb with me, side by side, inch by inch, out of the pit of grief. They have no way of comparing the pit climber to the pre-grief person I once was. You see, they started at the bottom of the pit with me. They are able to reassure me when I need strength. They have no expectations, no memories, and no recollections of how I "should" be. They want me to heal, to smile more often and find joy in life. But they've also accepted the person I've become: the "Person" who is emerging from the pit.

Cindy Early, November 1999
From the "old" web page MISS (Mothers in Sympathy and Support)
Lovingly borrowed from the newsletter of The Compassionate Friends,
Seattle-King County, WA, July 2001



## Seasons

The change of seasons is difficult. It reminds me that I must change if I am to live again. We can become stuck in our grief, full of self-pity and overwhelmed with pain. I do not believe our children would want us to live the rest of our lives in pain and misery. It is so easy to fall into the "black pit" and never have the strength or courage to crawl out – because crawl out we must…on our bellies.

We are different now, with different priorities and goals. We must find a new purpose for going on, and we must accept the changes in our lives – including ourselves, for we are different now. We cannot go backward, though there are times we yearn to. We must go forward. If we don't, we stay stuck at the point our world changed. I used to say "ended."

Change is difficult. To accept the loss of our child is the most difficult of all. Our comfort comes from believing that the love we share will go on for all eternity and that we will be reunited again – and each day brings us closer. We must learn to live again, love again, feel joy and peace again – or our survival will be without value to ourselves or others.

Renee Little
TCF, Fort Collins, CO

## Thanksgiving Marks Beginning
## Of Holiday Madness and Sadness

In our society we have turned the holidays into a never ending round of parties, shopping, cooking, preparations for guests or travel and stress, lots and lots of stress. It begins in October with the not so subtle reminders from our friendly retail stores. Most of us dread this time of year because as members of Compassionate Friends, we have one more item on our list and it invariably is at the top…...my child is gone…...how can I handle the holidays?

This will be my third Thanksgiving without my son. We had 35 wonderful Thanksgiving celebrations together, and now it's just me. My only child is gone, my grandchildren now live solely in their mother's world. I am not a part of that world.

But I am learning to cope with this reality. I am learning that I can hold on to the traditions that don't cause me sadness and let go of those that do. As bereaved parents we fall into a unique category. As humans we accept that the loss of parents, spouses, aunts, uncles, siblings, friends and acquaintances is inevitable. But never, never, were we taught or conditioned to the idea that our children would or could precede us in death. The very notion of this shook us to our core.

Now we have lost our child to death. Nobody prepared us for this mind numbing loss. The rules have been broken. We have no coping skills. Our friends usually can't help. Our families try, but until one endures a loss of this magnitude, the ability to fully comprehend the never ending rounds of sadness is simply not there.

We do have a support system…..we can choose to participate or simply be there, in the moment, at our Compassionate Friends meetings. Here we find our most meaningful and helpful connection with other parents…..parents who are walking the road we now walk. These bereaved parents are here to help us on this unfamiliar road. They cannot answer every question because the answers don't exist to most questions. When will this pain end? When will life go back to "normal"? There are different types of pain and new kinds of normal. We gather each month to help each other, to lean on each other, to find hope in each other's ability to function. From this meeting of kindred souls we do derive some solace, some peace and some hope.

I have watched the newly bereaved, raw in their sadness when they first attend a meeting. As the months move forward, I begin to see a change in these parents. Each changes in a different way, for each experiences their loss and their grief process in a different way. Some changes aren't apparent for months, even a year or two. Learning that we are not alone in the grievous burden of our loss is comforting. Learning that others have developed ways to cope with the holidays, the birthdays, the death anniversaries and other special occasions gives us the hope that we, too, will one day feel comfortable in our new "normal."

I have chosen to accept this group of gentle, kind and compassionate friends as an integral part of my life. The first holidays were horrible. I learned that I had to do what I felt was right. I learned to let go of the expectations of others and live in the moment. Even if I plan to do something and change my mind, I feel no guilt. I learned that those who truly love me understand. I have found that I am truly becoming myself….my new self. It is a slow process. There are setbacks.

Holidays are extremely difficult for every parent who has lost a child……it matters not how long ago our child died. The pain is fresh, new and raw at this time of year. This is the season for leaning on our compassionate friends, for asking questions, expressing fears, anxieties, doubts, depression and anger and for finding the comfort, hope and understanding that each of us so desperately seeks.

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



**People do not "get over" grief. Instead, we learn to integrate it into who we are. It changes us and becomes a part of us. As after a serious physical injury, we can heal, but we are different. Yet our lives can be full and rich again.**

**This healing process takes time and effort. The more actively you pay attention to and express your grief as it naturally unfolds, the more you are giving yourself momentum toward healing. Contrary to popular belief, time alone does not heal grief. It takes hard work. It takes focus and determination.**

**Alan D. Wolfelt PH.D.**



## THANKSGIVING

You may ask, "What do I have to be thankful for now that my child is dead?" After the death of a child, where is the joy in a day off from work? What pleasure can we derive from sitting around a table when someone is missing, and an uttered prayer of thanksgiving echoes hollow in our hearts?

Maybe we have been concentrating on the loss which has brought the overwhelming sorrow of death, and have forgotten the complete joy of life. When I remember laughing brown eyes, a mischievous grin, a scraped knee that Mommy could fix, a new word learned, even the memory of the realization that I had a baby boy, I have a great deal to be thankful for. I had 1 1/2 years of a dream come true, and I'm truly thankful I had my child.

Sure, the agony of grief, the anguish of losing my precious child to death, the torture of wanting to see that child grow and mature and the pain of never knowing, rips me up.

There is no Thanksgiving in entertaining these thoughts, so this month I am going to concentrate on the Living of my child, the Life that brought me so much joy. In this I am thankful that Evan was born, thankful that he lived, thankful that even for

those short 30 months—I lived them too. Even so, as he lived once, I live now and want a productive life.

I am thankful I have come that far in my grief work to know I want to live and remember the good times without sorrow. And, I am thankful for my husband, who stood by me during the rough times. The husband who is the father of the child of our love. In him I have found my child, in our marriage I have found love, and that love taught us how to love that child. I am also thankful for you, my real friends—Compassionate Friends.

Edie Kaplan
TCF Ft. Lauderdale, FL
In Memory of my son, Evan



## Choice

How many stomachs churn when you see store shelves already stocked with the colors of the upcoming holidays? How high does your blood pressure rise when relatives throw hints around about “Your house or mine?” How many turn away with leaded feet and ask the question, “How am I gonna do this?”

Like every day you have lived since your child’s death you will do this holiday season, “one moment at a time.” You will search for what is important, what you want to save, what you want to throw out, what others can do for you, what you want to do for yourself. You may stay in town or leave; you may cook or go out. Whatever you do, it is your choice. But before you take the first step you have to give yourself permission to have that choice.

The first holiday season, after our son Chad died, I didn’t know I had a choice. I was numb, in a powerful lot of pain, and feeling abjectly distracted. Therefore, when asked about Thanksgiving, I just went right along with the old traditions and said yes to the familiar family dinner.

Thanksgiving Day arrived and our family drove to my Aunt’s for dinner. When we walked in there was an invisible hush that descended upon the room. Then the noise level immediately resumed with an intensity I don’t ever recall hearing before. People laughed really loud. Their movements were rushed and jerky. They wanted to know where I got my earrings. They asked Roger how his favorite football team was doing. Everyone spoke to us but it wasn’t about what we needed to talk about! And then, they went about their routines. Mom cooked in the kitchen, Aunt made the gravy, Uncle mashed the potatoes, Cousin carved the turkey, and Dad played the guitar for the little kids.

I hadn't been asked to bring anything. They said I wasn't needed in the kitchen. So Roger and I sat huddled on the couch alone. Finally dinner was ready and we were all called together to be "thankful." The prayer before the meal was familiar, something we had all learned in grade school, and then we sat down to eat. No one mentioned Chad's name, no one asked us how we were doing, and nothing was done to mark the saddest holiday of my life. We managed to eat something, keep our broken hearts and tears in check, until we could get our coats on and leave. We both cried all the way home, angry, sad, frustrated, and mad. Never again, we agreed, would we go to a gathering where Chad was not welcome.

The days passed, as they somehow do when we are grieving, and soon the orange and brown colors of the stores changed to red, green, silver, and gold. We were looking another holiday square in the face. But this time we had a choice. We had a plan! We were going to buy a special candle, Chad's candle, and we were going to let the family know that we wanted to talk about him, that we wanted to honor him. Melinda, my daughter, and I went shopping and we went in and out of stores trying to find the perfect candle to no avail. My heart was beginning to wonder if it could continue this search when I reached down and saw the "perfect candle." It was a light rose color with a simple raised cross. I smiled, picked it up and turned to show Melinda who by now was at the other end of the store. Much to my glee, she was holding the exact same candle!

That Christmas Day, we waited until most everyone arrived and then showed them the candle. We told them the story of finding it and then we lit it and put it in the middle of the floor where we were sitting. We then asked everyone to write a note about Chad and we passed around his Christmas stocking and asked that they put their notes in it. As the family was doing this my "always late" Aunt arrived. As she threw open the door the candle flickered and went out, the family as a unit looked up at her with such shock that when I picture it today, I still laugh. We filled her in about what we were doing and re-lit the candle, gave her a chance to write her note, and then moved it to a table and went about the rest of the day with the candle burning. I know there were some uncomfortable people that Christmas, but they all went along and I am forever thankful.

Those notes and that candle lighting were a comfort to my family and me. We still read the messages that were put in his stocking and light his candle.

You may choose to do what we did, or you may think of something else. The most important message is that you have a choice to make the holiday for your family and yourself something that will be helpful and healing. There will be time in the future to "go back" to tradition. *Right now* is what is important and you have a choice. Take care of you.

With love,
Sue Anderson, Chapter Leader
In memory of Chad
Eastside TCF, Kirkland, WA



# 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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Laura Hengel
281-908-5197
linnemanl@aol.com
Auto Accident

Debbie Castelo
713-822-7851
debcastelo8@yahoo.com
Adult Suicide

Wendy DeVillier
281-795-2913
wdevillier@att.net
Leukemia

Beth Crocker
281-923-5796
thecrockers3@comcast.net
Multiple Loss
Heart Disease

Lisa Ascencios
281-450-9799
Lisa.ascencios@att.net
Teenage Suicide

Loretta Stephens
281-782-8182
andersonloretta@sbcglobal.net
Auto Accident

Lisa Thompson
713-376-5593
lisalou862@yahoo.com
Auto Accident/Fire

Pat Gallien
281-732-6399
agmom03@aol.com
Organ Donor

Leigh Heard-Boyer
281-785-6170
boyerbetterhalf@yahoo.com
Substance Abuse

**FOR FATHERS:**

Nick Crocker
832-458-9224
thecrockers3@comcast.net
Multiple Loss
Heart Disease

David Hendricks
936-441-3840
dbhhendricks@hotmail.com
Auto Accident

Glenn Wilkerson
832-878-7113
glennwilkerson@sbcglobal.net
Infant Child