



The Compassionate Friends

Santa Clarita Valley Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

March-April 2025

Volume 26, No. 2



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS is a self-help, nonprofit organization offering friendship, understanding and hope to families grieving the death of a child of any age, from any cause. When a child dies, at age, the family suffers intense pain and may feel hopeless and isolated. The Compassionate Friends provides personal comfort, hope, support to every family experiencing the death of a son, daughter, brother, sister, or a grandchild, and helps others better assist the grieving family. The butterfly signifies a new life for our lost children and a different life for ourselves. It is a symbol of hope, rebirth, regeneration and beauty.

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MEETINGS

We have one meeting a month. They are usually held on the 1st Thursday of each month. The next two meetings are:

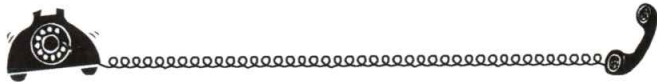
March 6, 2025

April 3, 2025

TIME: **7:00 PM**

MEETING **Bethlehem SCV**

PLACE: **27265 Luther Dr. Room 5 (Second Driveway & through the gate)
Canyon Country, CA 91351**



FOR INFORMATION OR FOR A LOVING LISENER, PLEASE CALL:

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Linda Stout (Facebook Manager)
Joanne Campos (Remembrance Secretary)
Steve Crittenden (Webmaster & Treasurer)
Jeanne Crittenden (Button & Angel Board Manager)
(661-478-2948)

The Locket



I opened it;
The locket was empty.
I don't know why; for I know I filled it.
I filled it with my pain, my sorrow, my anger.
But, it still remained hollow and empty...just like me.
When it's contents were sad and hurtful,
it was those feelings that reduced me to
a shell of bitterness.
That empty heart was a living hell.
So I stopped.
I filled it again.
I filled it with love, understanding, and acceptance,
...with that came peace.
It began to beat again,
it pulsed with the rhythm of life.
May you also discover that treasured locket
and share it with many.
For an open heart is **NEVER** empty.

~unknown

*"Though life is not as it was before,
and never will be again,
our memories are much richer than
if love had never been."*

~unknown



The Anticipation of Spring

Spring is a time for growth and renewal. As a child, teen, and then an adult, I always looked forward to spring with anticipation. The thoughts of green grass, budding tees, and blooming flowers of all varieties and colors were a welcome change from the long cold, dreary Michigan winter.

It was a magical time of year. When I was a child, each member of my family watched anxiously to lay claim to being the first to spot the familiar hop-hop of the returning robin, the first sign that spring was actually here. We could finally take off the gloves, shed our heavy winter coats and boots, and roll down the windows on the car to hear the laughter of children playing outside and smell the fresh mown grass as we'd drive down the road. That's the way it was for me on the first day of spring 12 years ago. I remarked how beautiful the tulips looked as they danced in the wind. The trees were budding and there was magic in the air. My kids and I shed our heavy winter coats, flinging them in the backseat, rolled down the windows of the car, and started singing in celebration of the beautiful day we were experiencing.

And then...IT happened.

Suddenly, undeniably, horrifically - my world, my spring, my life changed.

My 5 year old son, Stephen, died that first spring day. His 8 year old sister, Stephanie, my first born died a few hours later, enough past midnight to list the next day on the death certificate. Gone was the laughter, the magic, the beauty of my world.

The springs that followed were no longer filled with anticipation or magic. They were dark and ugly and filled with memories too painful to talk about. I wanted nothing to do with "spring." If H.G. Wells time machine had existed, I would have entered it at the end of winter and fast-forwarded through spring.

As time marched on and one spring followed another, I learned an important lesson in my journey through grief: As much as I wanted to, I couldn't fast-forward through the hard spots. I couldn't go around them. I had to go through them slowly, like a dog paddling through water, so I could get to the other side. Somehow doing this taught me to cope, to endure, to face tomorrow and all the first days of spring that followed. It's much like the transformation that takes place when a butterfly emerges from a dark, cold, seemingly lifeless chrysalis.

A few years ago, as winter was drawing to a close and the first day of spring was quickly approaching, I looked out the kitchen window toward the budding pear tree in the backyard and discovered it was full of chirping robins. I smiled and knew that spring somehow wasn't going to be so bad. It was once again time to enjoy the smells of the season, the beauty of the budding trees, and the magic that the season had to offer. And I knew Stef and Steve would have wanted that for me.

~Pat Loder

TCF Lakes Area Chapter, MI

In Memory of Stephanie & Stephen

Reprinted from *We Need Not Walk Alone*

National magazine of *The Compassionate Friends*



March

March is a season of "renewal". Let your darkened souls feel the warmth of new life and each tree, each bud breaks through the once frozen earth of winter. Let the "renewal" begin in your life. Your frozen heart can begin to live and feel again. Open it up to the warmth of your family and your friends and feel the love and yes, life that you thought died with your child.

~Nancey Cassell
TCF Mommouth, NJ

Seasons of The Heart



Your special days are unchanging
Seasons of the heart I celebrate.

Your birth, forever spring,
Tender memories relate,
New and green, a dream
From which too soon I awake.

The summer of your life was bright
Laughter needed no reason,
Seemingly endless days of sharing.
Sixteen summers. Short in season.

Your death brought winter without warning,
What sense in all this can be found?
Summer dreams replaced with mourning.
Where is hope now?

But the heart knows what
The mind cannot accept
That when all is lost,
It is love that is left.
Love knows no barriers
Time or distance recognize.
Love does not diminish,
But is constant in our lives.
And like a summer breeze
Uplifts and inspires us
With healing memories.

~Peggy Walls
TCF Alexander City, AL
In Memory of my son, Eddie

Chapter News

Meeting Topics & Info

Mar 6 - Meeting, "If you had the attention of the world for a minute, what would you say about your grief and death of your child/grandchild?"

April 3 - Meeting, "TCF Plants Seeds of Hope"

Why Me?

Most of us have pondered this question at some time in our lives, especially since the death of our children. It resurfaces periodically in discussions with the newly bereaved. I have never been completely satisfied with the responses given and have gone away considering "Why me?" to be an unanswerable question.

That was until recently when an article was brought to my attention. The writer states that no one is immune to disaster. "Whatever else separates us, suffering is the common bond of our humanity."

He told the tale of several people shattered by great losses, including the death of a child, each searching for an answer to "Why, why me?" They came together in their suffering. Though unable to prevent the pain, these fellow grievers found that by sharing their hurt, standing together and supporting one another they could endure devastating losses.

"Why me?" is a singular and lonely question, but it doesn't have to be. Together we can give hope to the hopeless and comfort to the suffering. All we need to do is reach out, then maybe the "Why me?" will answer itself.

~Polly Moore
TCF Nashville, TN

*Gone are the days we used to share,
but in our hearts you are always there.
The gates of memory will never close,
we miss you more than anyone knows.
With tender love and deep regret,
we who love you will never forget.*

~unknown

*"Letting go of the pain doesn't
mean letting go of the love"*

~unknown

48th TCF National Conference July 11 - July 13, 2025 Bellevue/Seattle, Washington

The TCF's National Conference is an enriching and supportive event for many newer and long-time bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings. Attendees come and find renewed hope & support, as well as strategies for coping with grief, all while making friendships with other bereaved people who truly understand the heartbreaking loss of a child, sibling, or grandchild.

Some of the conference highlights include, a Candle Lighting Program, Sharing Sessions, Keynote Addresses, and a Walk to Remember on Sunday morning.

This year's conference will be held in Bellevue/Seattle, Washington. As of yet, the hotel and reservations have not been announced. Please keep checking the National TCF's website at www.compassionatefriends.org for the online reservation link and more info.



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 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
Lovingly Lifted from
TCF National E-Newsletter Sept 2019

*"We cannot prevent the birds of sorrow
from flying around our heads,
but we must keep them from building
nests in our hair."*

~Chinese Proverb



Spring's Tears



When the sun's sharp brilliance echoes in the
luminescent blue
A grim, oppressive darkness stabs my aching heart anew.
Its golden upon my face, the warmth of winter's sun
Holds the promise of renewal when the icy months are done.

It is the vow of nature's resurgence in the spring
That bows my head, and breaks my heart; unlocks
my suffering.
For you will miss again the beauty of this time of year
The growing warmth, the sunny days when life will reappear.

For nature has no power over death that holds you still,
And though I know, I still resent spring's early daffodil.
Oh, that I could speak to Mother Nature face to face!
To beg she work her magic on your lonely resting place.

Why can't it be YOUR rebirth when the gray,
cold days are done?
Why mightn't YOU not live again to see springs fresh
new dawn
and feel the warmth of sunshine
relish in the greening earth...
to open arms, embracing life
why can't it be YOUR birth?

You were so young, your life so new when death
crept in the door.
And in my grief, beloved child, I'll ask forever more
The reason why the earth's renewed when spring comes
'round each year
Yet in your grave you're silent still,
and I
condemned here.

*~Sally Migliaccio
TCF Babylon, NY*



April Reflections Spring - Easter - Passover

Spring means new growth, flowers, green grass, butterflies, budding trees. And with this comes hope for the future.

Easter reminds us of a life hereafter and the children's laughter fills our hope. As they engage in Easter egg hunts and Easter bunnies.

Passover remembers the ones no longer with us - and as we mourn their loss we understand that the life of the dead is now the memory of the living.

Lent often brings up talk about "giving up things" - I would prefer to hear people say what they are doing for others for Lent. Forgiveness could be a start, followed by love. Add also patience, understanding and friendship. It's better to be less critical of others and more loving instead.

Priorities can change. One of our bereaved parents observed how her priorities have changes since the death of her child. She used to find it important to shop for material things. She now feels time spent with children is more important. She told us about a recent day; as she was about to leave the house her grandson wanted to show her something, but she said she didn't have time right then. After a moment, she reconsidered and said, sure she had time...

How many of us forget it only takes a few minutes or a smile, to make someone else's day. Bereaved parents know more than anyone we might not get a second chance. So tonight, when we turn out the light and reflect on the day, I hope we all can say "this was a good day not only for me but for the kindness I showed to others"

*~Othell Heaney
TCF Brandywine Hundred, Delaware*

Butterfly



A butterfly came to me today
and landed upon my knee.
His wings were heavy from the rain
I knew you had sent him to me.
Only an Angel such as yourself
would care about these things.
So I dried him with my breath
and sat him on some leaves.
As I sat there watching him
soaking in the sun.
I thought how great it must be to fly
it looks so much fun.
My Angel now you have wings
don't let my tears weigh them down.
I know someday I will see you again
until then keep sending the butterflies around.

*~Mary Woody
TCF, Atlanta's Online Newsletter*

*You don't heal from the loss
of a loved one because time passes;
You heal because of what
you do with the time.*

~Carol Crandall



Love Gifts

Were Received From:

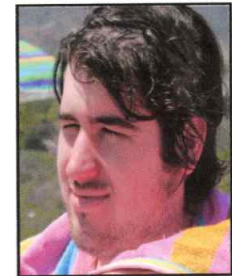
Barbara Rawson
In Loving Memory of her son:

**Christopher
Rodriguez**
9/22 - 6/13



Patricia Vassallo
In Loving Memory of her son:

**Sean
Tessier**
7/25 - 12/5



When I first began my journey of grief following the death of my only child, Todd, I didn't comprehend that I would have to take an active role in what would come to be defined as "grief work." All I knew was the pain, the shock, the sorrow, the desire to go to sleep and never awaken. My child was dead, and I had no desire to live.

As the months and then the years passed, I began to realize that I was, albeit unconsciously, doing grief work. Once I realized I could not walk this road alone, I became involved in our Compassionate Friends Chapter. That was the beginning of my "grief work." A few months later I enrolled in a six week program for bereaved mothers. More grief work. I have since attended seminars, retreats and workshops. From each effort I gained something new, something insightful, something that eased my burden just a bit, something that helped me to cope with this, the worst, of all losses

I consumed books. Some were about grief; others were about life. I watched movies, some about grief; others were about life. I talked with friends...sometimes about grief and sometimes about life.

Along the way I found that I reached out to others, I was once again, doing grief work. You see, I discovered that grief work is healing work. It doesn't dry my tears, nor does it mend my broken heart. Instead, it allows me to accept that I am in this place and living in this moment. That doesn't sound like much...unless one has lost a child to death. Lost a child to death. What a horrifying thought. Yet now I can say it to others, talk with others who are raw and new in their grief and know that I have come to accept that my son is gone from this plane. My grief work will continue until I die.

When we attend workshops, seminars, special presentations, Compassionate Friends meetings and privately contemplate the death of our loss and changes in our lives, we are doing grief work. Each of us travels this road differently, but we owe it to ourselves to do our grief work. Not easy work, not fun work, not immediately rewarding work, but this is work, just the same.

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

*"It isn't for the moment you are struck
you need courage,
but for the long uphill climb back to
sanity and faith and security"*

~Anne Morrow Linbergh

"Forever In Our Hearts"

Our Children/Grandchildren/Siblings

Loved and Missed on Their Birthdays



March

April

Name	Date	Member
Timothy Renolds	3/17	Tom & Alice Renolds
Michael Rodriguez	3/7	Debbie DiCorrado
Jeanene Sykes	3/2	Ted Sykes
Melissa Matters	3/26	Kirk & Dianne Mueller
Colleen Brown	3/17	Keith & Lin Brown
Bailey Haney	3/28	Myra Kulick
Kali Stanfiled Grandchild	3/30	Nika Johnson
Jax Markley	3/26	Matt & Daisy Markley
Max Mehlbaum	3/5	Stephanie Kavoulakos
Finley Drake	3/9	Collin & Lauren Drake
Ryan Ludwick	3/9	Cathy Rusch

Name	Date	Member
Bradley McBurney	4/22	Tammy Gauld
Walter Rodriguez	4/25	Carole Rodriguez
Reese Stout	4/30	Linda Stout
Kevin Rickhoff	4/30	Nancy Rickhoff
Jacob Kaplan	4/1	Michael & Robyn
Emily Mogg	4/16	Jeffrey & Tracey
Emily Mogg Grandchild	4/16	Gary & Sandy
Erica Thomas	4/13	Lisa Monsour



Lovingly Remembered on Their Angel Dates

March

April

Name	Date	Member
Brianna Smith	3/30	David & Laurie Millard
Nicholas Colley	3/28	Scott & Jade Colley
Aiden Lopez	3/26	Cesar & Jessica Lopez
Aiden Lopez Grandchild	3/26	Carmen Smith
Melissa VanDyke	3/27	Doris Van Dyke
Brian DeCaro	3/25	Mary Yancey
Kali Stanfiled Grandchild	3/30	Nika Johnson
Monique Gutierrez Grandchild	3/24	Irene Frenes
Keith Drynan	3/10	Lisa Grose
Max Mehlbaum	3/11	Stephanie Kavoulakos
Randy Pereira	3/28	Valerie Pereira

Name	Date	Member
Sammy Thomas Grandchild	4/10	Kay & Dave Thomas
Michael Arvizu	4/22	Robert & Juanita

Treasures

In this the first day
when you can bear to remember
how you smiled together,
that day in spring,
that morning in the rain?

Are you discovering
how many gifts of comfort
he left behind,
this child who died
to soon?

His life is gone,
but he endows your time
from this day forward,
with all the faithful treasures
of remembrance.



~Sascha Wagner
From: Wintersun