



The Compassionate Friends

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

FORT WORTH CHAPTER

DECEMBER 2016

Chapter Phone Number: (682) 201-0837

tcfportworth@gmail.com

20TH ANNUAL WORLDWIDE CANDLE LIGHTING SUNDAY, DECEMBER 11TH, 6:30 P.M.

The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting unites family and friends around the globe in lighting candles for one hour to honor the memories of the sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, and grandchildren who left too soon. As candles are lit at 7:00 p.m. local time, hundreds of thousands of persons create a virtual 24-hour wave of light in quiet remembrance of children who have died, but will never be forgotten.

Our chapter's observance of the Worldwide Candle Lighting will be held at our usual meeting place, Arborlawn United Methodist Church, 5001 Briarhaven Rd., Fort Worth, on Sunday, December 11th, at 6:30p.m. This event is appropriate for all ages, and we invite you to bring children or other friends and family to this special occasion.

"...that their light may always shine."

NATIONAL OFFICE

The Compassionate Friends
PO Box 3696, Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696
Call toll-free (877) 969-0010 Mon. - Fri., 9 AM - 5 PM, CST
nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org
www.compassionatefriends.org

The website contains links to TCF's national and regional conferences, brochures, e-newsletter, online support community, We Need Not Walk Alone magazine, "Healing the Grieving Heart" and "The Open to Hope Show" radio program archives, webinars, chapter websites, and other resources.

BIRTHDAY TABLE

Due to the November memorial, November and December birthdays will be celebrated at the December meeting on Tuesday, December 13th.

CHAPTER NEWSLETTER EDITOR NEEDED!

Our chapter is in need of someone to help with the newsletter - all that is required of you is to find three articles or poems a month from the National TCF database or other grief materials which allow reprinting. If you have read a book that helped you in your grief journey and you would like to review it for the newsletter, that would also be helpful. Even better would be something you have written yourself that you would like to share. If you would be interested in helping with the newsletter, please contact Becky Long through the chapter email address tcfportworth@gmail.com.



STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Jerry & Sharon Austry
Charles & Genie Dean
Mark Deegear
Jeff & Marty Martin
Lydia Moore
Jaye Sanford
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Chapter Website:

www.thecompassionatefriendsfw.com

WHY IS CHRISTMAS THE HARDEST HOLIDAY?

Why is Christmas the hardest holiday? Is it because of all those traditions that mean so much but now lie broken and empty in my heart? Is it especially hard now...because every time I try to roll out the cookie dough, tears drop into little salt pools on the counter? Is Christmas so hard now because of all the tinsel and tissue? Because of all the crowds dashing madly into and out of stores...buying something wonderful for someone wonderful? Is Christmas so hard now because I don't need to shop or bake or decorate anymore? Is Christmas so hard because I don't have someone wonderful anymore?

It's been a long time since I endured my first bereaved holiday season, but even now, my heart sometimes still echoes with emptiness as I roll out the cookie dough or hang his special ornament on our treasure tree. I think that hurt will always be with me, but now I know it only as a momentary ache - not like the first year when grief washed over me in waves, each new wave hurling me deeper and deeper into despair.

And it's not like the second year's hurt when I found myself both surprised and angry that IT hadn't gone away yet. I grew anxious about my sanity in the third year when my hands shook as I unwrapped the precious ornaments. When was I going to get better?! When was grief going to end?! Was I doomed to suffer miserably at every holiday for the rest of my life?!

The year the little satin balls fell off the tree, I gave up. Even the Christmas tree died! As my daughter and I dragged the brittle (and shedding) mess out into the snowdrift on Christmas morning, I knew we had reached the bottom. He had died, but we were alive. Had our grief so permeated our house, our lives, that even a Christmas tree could not survive? His death was more than enough...had we lost love, too?

That was the year we began to understand. And that was the year we decided to keep Christmas anyway. So what if our now completely bare tree was stuck in the snowdrift, already waiting for the garbage men? So what if the cookies were still a bit too salty with tears? In the middle of that Christmas day, now years past, we returned to that forlorn, frozen stick of a tree. And carefully, we hung the bare branches with popcorn strings and suet balls (not quite the same as satin!). I'm sure we were a

strange sight that afternoon, but with a mixture of tears and snowflakes, we began to let the hurt out and make room for the healing to begin.

With each kernel strung, we found ourselves remembering. Some memories came with pain. Others began to grow within us - warming heart-places we thought had frozen long ago. By the time we were finished, we were exhausted. Memories take a lot of work! At last we had a tree (although it was not the one we were expecting), but we had one, decorated with tears and memories, sadness and remembered laughter.

And now we've grown older (and maybe a little wiser) and we've learned that love isn't something you toss out, bury, pack away, or forget. Love isn't something that ends with death. Life can become good and whole and complete once again not when we try to fill up the empty spaces left by loved ones no longer within hug's reach, but when we realized that love creates new spaces in the heart and expands the spirit and deepens the joy of simply being alive.

We saved a tiny twig from that frozen tree...to remind us of what we almost lost. That was the year we chose to let Christmas come back. Now we don't have to wait for joy to return. For now we know it lives within us - where Christmas is EVERY DAY.

NEED TO TALK?

Listed below are parents, grandparents and siblings who have walked where you are today. If you are having a difficult day and just want to talk, please call.

Addiction

Helen (817) 431-6964

Auto

Jeff & Marty (817) 475-9141

Grandchild/ Multiple Loss

Lydia (817) 829-3801

Drowning

Debi (817) 270-3275

Drowning (Young Child)

Stacy (817) 656-7540 or (817) 845-3433

Long Term Illness

Marty (817) 636-5645

Homicide (Only Child)

Steve (682) 583-0125
sjroberts1216@hotmail.com

Suicide (Only Child)

Joy (817) 453-2227

Siblings

Jaye (817) 475-9363

Premature Infant(s)

Amy (817) 944-1710
amvtori12@hotmail.com

Middle of the night calls

Liz (817) 726-3999

CHRISTMAS PAST

I am spending Christmas in the past this year
 A time of laughter and good cheer.
 When the kids were all gathered round the tree with delight
 And my heart took a picture of this most perfect night.

A warm fire and some eggnog, hugs and big smiles
 My heart and mind race back through time and miles.
 The laughter and fun we all shared is still here
 The Christmas of the Present is just too bare.

So, I choose Christmas of past gone years
 The ones that are not filled with heartache and tears.
 And if you care to join me all you have to do
 Is gently close your eyes, remember a time,
 And in a second you will be there too.

Remember the love from the past is still here
 It does not leave us, and is always near.
 So no matter where you spend Christmas this year
 Be filled with the love, of the past gone years.

By Sheila Simmons

A LETTER TO MY FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Thank you for not expecting too much from me this holiday season. It will be our first Christmas without our child and I have all I can do coping with the "spirit" of the holiday on the radio, TV, in the newspapers and stores. We do not feel joyous and trying to pretend this Christmas is going to be like the last will be impossible because we are missing one.

Our family traditions will be too painful for us to continue this year. Please understand this and maybe some Christmas in the future we will have these traditions again.

Please allow me to talk about my child, if I feel a need. Don't be uncomfortable with my tears. My heart is breaking and the tears are a way of letting out my sadness.

I plan to do something special in memory of my child. Please recognize my need to do this in order to keep our memories alive. My fear is not that I'll forget, but that you will.

Please don't criticize me if I do something that you don't think is normal. I'm a different person now and it may take a long time before this different person reaches an acceptance of my child's death.

As I survive the stages of grief, I will need your patience and support, especially during these holiday times and the "special" days throughout the year.

Thank you for not expecting too much from me this holiday season.

*Love, A bereaved parent
 Madison, WI, TCF*

LOVE GIFTS

A Love Gift is a donation made in honor of a child who has died or as a memorial to a relative or friend.

Donations are tax deductible and are one means that allows us to reach out to other bereaved families through books and programs.

If you would like, you can specify that your love gift be used for specific use, e.g., continuing education, workshops, or books for our lending library.

You can make donations online through our website, or by mailing a check to:

Steve Roberts
 P.O. Box 734
 Euless, TX 76039

A LOSS BEFORE THE FIRST CHRISTMAS

I think the only thing sadder than looking back at Christmases that were and will never be again, is having no Christmases to look back to at all.

There are some people who believe it is easier to lose an infant than an older child, and I am sure that for some parts of grief, they are right, but this is not one of them.

Memories are painful but they are treasured, wonderful things that can help fill the emptiness.

Christmas is one of the big expectations. Matter of fact, it is one of the reasons we have children.

So if our child dies before sharing a Christmas with us, we know we are missing something wonderful, but we don't know exactly what.

We will try as hard as we can, over and over again, to imagine our children on Christmas. But we cannot fabricate a memory.

We cannot see our child's face light up, or hear their sweet voices, or watch their movements. So the more we try, the more frustrated we become.

We hurt horribly. We are empty, lonely and devastated.

But because we did not have them long enough, most people (even ourselves, sometimes) will feel we have no right to grieve this Christmas.

So I've got to tell you, we have as much right and as much reason as any parent, whose child has died, to grieve.

*By Laura Bouse
 TCF, Hardin County, OH*



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The mission of The Compassionate Friends:

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.

Fort Worth Chapter Meeting

Dec. 13th, 7-9 P.M.

This Month's Program

*Small Group Discussions:
Grieving during the Holiday Season*

Please feel free to bring refreshments to share.

~Paper Goods and Drinks are always provided ~

Room 271

**ARBORLAWN UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
5001 Briarhaven Rd., Fort Worth**

A Special Message

To those of you who are newly bereaved and receiving our newsletter for the first time, we warmly welcome you to The Compassionate Friends. We are a self-help organization of parents, grandparents and adult siblings who have experienced the death of a loved one. We offer understanding and support through our monthly meetings, a lending library, support materials and loving telephone listeners. Please do not be afraid to come to a gathering. Every other person in the room has lost a child, grandchild or sibling. They come because they feel the need to be with someone else who understands. We know it takes courage to attend that first gathering, but those who do come find an atmosphere of understanding from others who have experienced the grief that you have now. Nothing is asked of you. There are no dues or fees and you do not have to speak. There is a special feeling at meetings of The Compassionate Friends.

We meet the 2nd Tuesday of every month.