



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

SUGAR LAND/SW HOUSTON CHAPTER

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2012

A self-help organization offering friendship, understanding, and hope to bereaved families that have experienced the death of a child.

Monthly Meeting:

NOVEMBER 14, 2012

Always the second Wednesday

Time: 7:30 p.m.

Registration of new members and library opens at 7:00 p.m.

Topic: Handling the Holidays

**First Presbyterian Church
502 Eldridge Road
Sugar Land, Texas**

Directions: Eldridge Rd. (FM 1876) intersects Hwy. 90A two lights west of the Sugar Land exit of Hwy 59. The church is north of 90A, just past the RR tracks, the second building on the right. Enter the double doors at the back of the building.

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Join in Remembering Our Children: The Compassionate Friends 16th Worldwide Candle Lighting



Anticipation is building as the 16th Worldwide Candle Lighting December 9, 2012 approaches. The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting unites family and friends around the globe in lighting candles for one hour to honor and remember children who have died at any age from any cause. As candles are lit at 7 p.m. local time, creating a virtual wave of light, hundreds of thousands of persons commemorate and honor the memory of beloved children in a way that transcends all ethnic, cultural, religious, and political boundaries.

Now believed to be the largest mass candle lighting on the globe, the Worldwide Candle Lighting, a gift to the bereavement community from The Compassionate Friends, creates a virtual 24-hour wave of light as it moves from time zone to time zone. Hundreds of formal candle lighting events are held annually and thousands of informal candle lightings are conducted in homes as families gather in quiet remembrance of children who have died, but will never be forgotten.

The Worldwide Candle Lighting started in the United States in 1997 as a small Internet observance but has since swelled in numbers as word has spread throughout the world of the remembrance.

Every year you are invited to post a message in the Remembrance Book which will be available at TCF's national website during the event. Last year in that short one day span, nearly five thousand messages of love were received and posted, originating from every U.S. state plus Washington D.C., every territory, as well as dozens of other countries, with some posts in foreign languages.

Here in the United States, publicity about the event is widespread, being featured over the years in Dear Abby, Annie's Mailbox, Ann Landers column, Parade Magazine, Guideposts magazine, and literally hundreds of U.S. newspapers, dozens of television stations, and numerous websites and hundreds of personal blogs. Information on the Worldwide Candle Lighting and planned memorial candle lighting services (of which we are advised) is posted on TCF's national website every year as the event nears.

If no Worldwide Candle Lighting service was held near you last year, please feel free to plan one open to the public this year. You are welcome to use TCF's "Suggestions to Help Plan a Memorial Service in Conjunction with The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting®" (found on our website) to help in planning the service. All allied bereavement organizations, churches, funeral homes, hospices, hospitals, memorial gardens, and formal and informal bereavement groups are invited to join in the remembrance. When you firm up plans for your candle lighting, open to the public, please return to www.compassionatefriends.org and submit the event information form so TCF can list your service with the many hundreds held in the United States and around the world. The Worldwide Candle Lighting gives bereaved families everywhere the opportunity to remember their child . . . that their light may always shine!

Welcome

We extend a warm welcome to those who attended their first TCF meeting or received their first newsletter last month. We deeply regret the circumstances that brought you to our TCF Chapter. The Compassionate Friends is a mutual assistance, not for profit, self-help organization that offers support and understanding to families who have experienced the death of a child. You are cordially invited to attend our monthly meeting (always the second Wednesday of the month).

Meetings are open to everyone and free of charge. The purpose of our support group is not to focus on the cause of the death or the age of the child. It is instead a place to focus on being a bereaved parent, along with feelings and issues that evolve around the death experience of a child. You are free to talk, cry or sit in silence, we respect the individuality of mourning. Comments shared in the meetings remain confidential.

To Our New Members

Coming to your first meeting is the hardest thing to do. But, you have nothing to lose and much to gain. Try not to judge your first meeting as to whether or not TCF will work for you. It may be the second or third meeting before you find the right person—or just the right words spoken that will help you in your grief work.

To Our Old Members

We need your encouragement and support. You are the string that ties our group together and the glue that makes it stick. Each meeting we have new parents. Think back—what would it have been like for you if there had not been any “oldies” to welcome you, share your grief and encourage you? It was from them you heard, “Your pain will not always be this bad; it really does get softer.”

Lovingly Lifted from TCF –Tyler Texas Newsletter

Thanks For The Little While

Thank you for life. For its good times and bad
 Thank you for love, even when I can't feel it.
 Thank you for the love I used to share,
 For the arms that held me tight.

Thank you for my family
 In faraway places, in different times

Thank you for the songs we sang,
 For the dreams we saved
 For the smiles we shared

Thank you for the strength the eludes me just now
 Thank you for the weakness that sends me to my knees
 Thank you for the searching, the reaching, the hoping

Thank you for the bonds of memory that hold me in place
 in this universe, even when I don't believe in it
 anymore or forget what it is all about.

Thank you, most of all, for having been blessed with the
 love I have known, even now when I fear I will forget it.

Thank you for memory and for filling it full measure for
 me. It wasn't nearly long enough, but it will have to do.
 Thanks for the moments we danced.

Thanks for the little While.....

Darcy Sims

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*“There is a time when we must firmly
 choose the course we follow, or the
 relentless drift of events will
 make the decision.”*

Hubert V Prochnow

Meeting Dates and Discussion Topics*

November 14, 2012— Handling the Holidays

December 9, 2012—Worldwide TCF Candle Lighting

(We do not always stay on the topic offered for our meetings. We are here to discuss whatever you need to discuss to help on your grief journey.)

Love Shares Given In Memory of...

Personal information has been deleted from the internet version of this newsletter.

Consider giving a Love Share in your child’s memory. Help us continue our mission to help grieving parents. All Love Shares are tax deductible.

Remember... With Compassionate Friends
You Need Not Walk Alone

SPONSOR A NEWSLETTER IN MEMORY OF YOUR CHILD.

We are now offering members an opportunity to sponsor the publishing of a newsletter in memory of their child. By offering sponsorships, not only does it help defray the costs but it is also a wonderful way to honor your child. See prices below:

Full page spread—\$200
Half page spread—\$100
Quarter page spread-\$50
Small Picture with Name/Dates -\$25

If you are interested in one of the sponsorships above, please contact Marguerite Ward at mjward0123@gmail.com or call her at 979-335-6070.

Our Children Remembered On Their Angel Day

Angel Date	Child's Name	Parents/Family
Personal information has been deleted from the internet version of this newsletter.		

Compassionate Tears
 I cried in my car, and was ignored.
 I cried in church, and was pitied.
 I cried at work, and was shunned.
 I cried at home, and was hushed.
 I cried at The Compassionate Friends,
 And others shared their tissues & tears.
 Nona Walser, Greenville, SC Chapter—TCF

The Magic of Christmas

The magic of Christmas, it's contagious. You can't help but get caught up in the joy with the barrage of holiday festivities. We are surrounded with commercials for the perfect gift, the anticipated smells from the kitchen, the Santa's in the Mall with the line of children waiting to ask for their most desired gifts. Your heart can't help but beat a little faster. The houses decorated to express the joy of the season, inside and out, demand your attention. The twinkling lights draw your eye. You can't help but feel the magic of Christmas.

I had my own collection of decorations that occupied a special space in the attic, carefully wrapped and packed away from last year. The collection of ornaments that had been objects of careful selection each year was a prized possession. The other decorations such as sleighs, bells, angels, holly, statues had always bejeweled the house to shout out the joy, magic and anticipation of the season. My own childhood memories of Christmas' past were precious and served as a starting point to create memories for my own children. Soon after the turkey carcass was thrown out from Thanksgiving, up to the attic we would go and drag the boxes down the narrow attic stairs. "Be sure and get the box with the green lid" I would shout up the stairs, "but be careful. That one contains the glass ornament collection."

The boys would be so excited as their Christmas season began. Their house would be transformed into a winter wonderland all in a day. The season would officially begin as soon as the stockings were hung on the fireplace and the Christmas lists would be started. Catalogs were leafed through and advertisements taken seriously. There was no limit to the lists. The sky was the limit on dreams they were encouraged to dream.

Something happened after losing my son, Rick. The magic is gone, the thrill forgotten. The decorations are no longer in the attic but were given away the first Christmas after Rick died. How could I possibly gather the strength or will to put on such a show? There is no enjoyment, only memories of a joy that once was. The collection of glass ornaments are still wrapped in their tissue in the box with the green lid.

Michael has been robbed of his innocence surrounding Christmas but more than that he was

robbed of his brother and future memories. My heart hurts when my mind captures the full scope of my new life. That's when I shut the door on that room in my mind to be visited when I have more strength. But in the meantime another Christmas will come and go.

We have found a new way to observe Christmas. We use that day to honor life and the blessings that are bestowed upon us. We now appreciate family so much more and those in it. We celebrate our family, friends and the love of Christ. We have found that Christmas is not about the decorations, the food, or the gifts. To us Christmas is about the three of us rejoicing in our memories and the love we have in our lives now.

Even as I write this poignant story I do want to express my sincere appreciation for the precious memories that we had as a family when Rick was still here, when his gifts had their own place under the tree, his stocking had a place on the fireplace next to Michael's. The tack hole is still there as a reminder; "He was here".

I'm so thankful for the pictures in my mind and in the photo albums to remind me of the happiness that once was. I'm grateful for the time I had as a mother of young children during the magic of Christmas. Their exhilaration was priceless. I was witness to the sparkle in their eyes and their shivering of excitement on Christmas morning. I was able to go to them on Christmas morning and say, "Santa came." Christmas morning was the ultimate climax of the entire season and it was always as thrilling as promised. I will have these memories for the rest of my life and for that I'm thankful.

Dana Rogers
TCF Galveston County, TX
In Memory of my son, Rick
Mother to Michael

"The weird, weird thing about devastating loss is that life actually goes on. When you're faced with a tragedy, a loss so huge that you have no idea how you can live through it, somehow, the world keeps turning, the seconds keep ticking."

~ James Patterson, Angel

HOLIDAY HOPE

I have now survived over a decade of Thanksgivings and Christmases since my daughter Nina's death in 1995. It feels surreal that it has been that long since my dark-haired angel has not been present to share her infectious enthusiasm for the holidays. Admittedly, if not for my journaling, I have little recollection of the first two. Writing allows me to see how far I have come since the bleakness of my soul those first early holidays. In the midst of a "grief storm", when I feel that I have taken one step forward and two steps back, I only need to read what I have written to see that I have made much progress, something that in early grief I did not believe was possible. When in such a dark abyss, it is almost impossible to imagine that there is even a glimmer of hope and light.

The first Thanksgiving is a blur. Whether we went out for dinner or spent it with family or nuked a frozen dinner, I haven't a clue. As no one else seems to remember, I would surmise that it was the same for everyone else as well. The first Christmas without Nina was spent trying desperately to make sure that nothing was going to change. The trees would be decorated, cards would be sent, gifts bought—I believed that my daughter would not want us to be sad and that the holiday should and would play out as usual. It almost worked. But the effort of trying to achieve such an impossible task took its toll; coming home from my parents' home Christmas Day evening, the sight from the rearview mirror of the empty spot in the back seat next to my son where Nina should have been playfully sparring with her brother, was too much to bear. I spent weeks recovering from such an exhausting charade.

I learned a lesson that first Christmas because the second Christmas "after" I gave into the emptiness and pain that I felt. The artificial tree sat forlornly unadorned right where it was assembled in the middle of the living room; it seemed to symbolize the somber mood of that second holiday season. I vocalized to my family and friends that year about what I could and could not do, would and would not do, I used what I called the "five-minute rule", which meant however I felt five minutes before a holiday happening would be the deciding factor whether I attended or not. The respect for my feelings they showed me that year was the best gift they could ever have given me.

However, Christmas #3 seemed to mark a turning point. The visible evidence involved my Christmas Village. Though an inexpensive Department 59 wannabe, it was loved by my children, especially Nina. From the time she was very young, she imaginatively played with the ceramic people for hours at a time. Even as a teenager, she wanted to know when I would be putting up the Village, as it was her favorite part of our holiday décor.

The first two Christmases, I made a decision to never

put up our Christmas Village again. The memory of Nina's interactions with the Village was too painful to comprehend. However, that third Christmas, as I was unpacking the few holiday items that I would display, I came upon the boxes holding the Village. I slowly opened the containers of precious memories and one by one removed and unwrapped each piece. Visions of Christmases past raced through my mind. This year, the images of Nina's wide-eyed childlike wonder and excitement each time the Village came out of its year-long resting place brought a genuine smile to my face.

I brought the Village upstairs and arranged it on the ledge of the bay window, where it always had been. I sat in the dark next to the lit village houses and watched the mechanical skaters on the make-believe pond twirl and glide on the mirrored "ice". Even through my tears, I felt the warm glow of beautiful one-of-a-kind memories resurface. I realized at that moment that a corner had been turned. Whereas the first two Christmases I was unable to setup the Christmas Village because of the memories, I was now setting it up for the same reason—the memories! But with a twist this year—what I had once perceived as a painful memory, with time had become a precious memory as I remembered the delight and joy the Village brought to Nina each Christmas of her life.

Each holiday season following the third one has been gentler. We have gradually brought back some of our old traditions intermingled with the new. Though we are sadly aware that someone so loved is missing from our family gatherings, the beauty of the season can now overshadow some of the sorrow. We will never forget Nina and she will forever be included in our holiday celebrations. I put up a special little tree to exclusively hold the ornaments I bought each of the 15 years of her life; mixed in with the angel and butterfly ornaments I have since bought symbolizing her "eternal life". We light a candle and set her picture beside it, and we speak freely of our memories of her. The TCF Worldwide Candle Lighting program our chapter has each year is an especially important time for us to step away from the hubbub of the season, to reflect, remember, and bring Nina's spirit with us into the holidays.

Though the holidays can never be as they were, we who are further along in our grief journey can offer the gift of hope with the knowledge that with time, patience, support and compassionate friendship, you will find new ways (when you are ready) to bring a measure of joy and light back into the holiday season again. Wishing you peace, hope, solace and understanding...

With gentle thoughts,

Cathy L. Seehuetter
TCF St. Paul, MN

In Memory of my daughter, Nina

The passage of time alone does not cause our grief to end, but its softening touch helps us to survive ~ Wayne Loder

Piece by piece, I reenter the world.
A new phase, a new body, a new voice.
Birds console me by flying, trees by growing,
Dogs by the warm patch they leave on the sofa.
Unknown people merely by performing their motions.
It's like a slow recovery from a sickness, this
recovery of one's self.
~ Tony Talbot

When a bereaved parent was asked how she was doing, she replied, "I've still got my baggage, but I am down to a carry-on."
- Ron Greer

"When you have gone as far that you can't manage one more step, then you've gone just half the distance that you're capable of"
~ Greenland Proverb

"Even the saddest things can become, once we have made peace with them, a source of wisdom and strength for the journey that still lies ahead"
Frederick Buechner

*"Sadness flies on the wings of the morning"*And out of the darkness comes the light...
Jean Giraudoux

"Never hesitate to hold out your hand; never hesitate to accept the out-stretched hand of another."
-Pope John XXII

"It's being without him that I'll never get used to."
~ Christopher Buecheler

When you reach the top of the elevator in your grief, remember to go back down to help others" - Ron Greer

Reading Corner



**Life After the Death of My Son:
What I'm Learning** by Dennis L. Apple

On the morning of February 6, 1991, Dennis Apple discovered the lifeless body of his son on their family room couch. Eighteen-year-old Denny had died without warning from what was later explained as complications due to Mono. Sixteen years later, Dennis still struggles with living in a world without his son. *Life After the Death of My Son* shares a glimpse of the unspeakable pain, helplessness, frustration, and eventual healing that Dennis and his wife, Buelah, have experienced since losing their son. Using excerpts from his journal—which he began the day after Denny died—Dennis explores the dark, lonely road of grieving for a child. He discloses his anger and disappointment with God; discusses his frustrations with friends and family; and shares how he's dealt with the grief attacks, which continue to sneak up and surprise him. His painful, yet promising story offers comfort and connection to those walking similar paths. With understanding and compassion, Dennis offers grieving parents insight from 10 lessons he's learned—and continues to learn. His gentle words and honest understanding will guide those with grieving hearts on their difficult journey; giving them hope; helping them to discover ways in which God is able to continue the life of the child they loved.

Review from Amazon.com



The Compassionate Friends


Sugar Land—SW Houston Chapter
P. O. Box 231, East Bernard, TX. 77435


Honoring 20 Years of Support and Friendship
for Bereaved Families

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NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2012



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Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Light a candle for all
children who have died

**Worldwide
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*... that their light
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**Sunday, December 9, 2012
7 PM Around the Globe**

The Sugar Land Chapter of the
Compassionate Friends invites
families and friends to their annual
Worldwide Candle Lighting Service.

Date: Sunday, December 9, 2012

**Time: 6:00 p.m. registration
6:30 p.m. program begins**

**Place: First Presbyterian
Church Sanctuary
502 Eldridge Road
Sugar Land, Texas**

After the program we will gather in the
large meeting room next door
for refreshments and fellowship.
Each family is asked to bring a
snack to share with others.