



**THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS**
Supporting Family After a Child Dies



Newsletter

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POSTAGE

**PAUL BROOME in memory of CYNTHIA BROOME
ED and CAROLYN BUHANAN in memory of ASHELY BUCHANAN
JERRY and CINDY WIGGLESWORTH in memory of LEE WIGGLESWORTH**

SECURITY SERVICE

WILEY and BETH GREER in memory of BENJAMIN QUIN (BEN) GREER

LOVE GIFT

**LINDA DILLON PRIMOUS in memory of EARL DILLON
LISA BUCHANAN in memory of JESSICA BUCHANAN
CHUCK and MARLISE PRESTWOOD in memory of KRISSY PRESTWOOD
JIMMY and BARBRA WILKINS in memory of RUSSELL " RUSTY " WILKINS
GREG LITTLE in memory of DREW CHRISTOPHER LITTLE (Heaven date 11/24)**

The Compassionate Friends THANK YOU for your donations

They are tax deductible and deeply appreciated.

Printing of TCF Monthly Newsletter: Courtesy of BLUE CROSS/BLUE SHIELD OF MS

TCF JACKSON CHAPTER NEWS

Our chapter wishes each of you a peaceful Christmas season and may your sweet memories of your child be a comfort to you. Our annual candle Lighting Ceremony is set for December 2, and we will have a review in our January 2018 Newsletter. This is such a special event and we want to thank everyone in advance for their help. We could not do this without your participation. Thanks!

Because of the holidays, newsletter folding for December will be moved to the 3rd Saturday.

Newsletter folding: Saturday, Dec. 16th - 4:00 p.m.



Holiday Lights

During the holiday season, both Christian and Jew light candles in celebration of their respective faiths, and as they do so even the darkest of rooms become warm and bright from the glow of the candle. Then, we can ask ourselves how powerful and sinister can the darkness be if it can be overcome by the light of one little candle.

There is then a message in this for all of us. When the darkness seems to overwhelm us, and it can be a mental and spiritual darkness as well as the darkness of winter night, we need to be reminded that it is powerless to withstand the smallest bit of illumination.

So as the world grows colder and darker during these winter months, we as Compassionate Friends must do what people of many faiths have been taught to do at this season. Light a candle in someone's life to make the darkness and fears flee. A little bit of light is all that most of us need, but, oh, we need that little bit so badly.

So, let us all in The Compassionate Friends extend a candle of light and hope not only to each other, but to the unfortunate people who, for whatever reason, become one of us this winter and will be in need of that light. It's the least we can do and it accomplishes so much.

TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE IT.

*Bettye and Sam Rosenberg
TCF Louisville, KY*



TCF MEETINGS

2nd Tuesdays monthly at 7:00 p.m.
Fondren Presbyterian Church – Fellowship Hall
3220 Old Canton Road, Jackson, MS

Directions: Take West Lakeland Drive exit off I-55 North until it dead ends into Old Canton Road.
Turn right, go to 2nd traffic light.
Fondren parking lot is on the right.

Meeting: Tuesday, December 12, 2017-7:00 p.m.

Topic: "A Charlie Brown Christmas Tree"
Facilitator: David Morgan

Please bring a special ornament to hang on our tree in memory of your child. This can be an ornament your child made or one bought in memory of your child.

Although our meetings are held in donated church facilities, The Compassionate Friends is not a religious organization, and espouses no religion affiliation or doctrines. Persons of all faiths (or no faith), creeds, color, and race are welcome.

Prenatal Bereavement Support Group

*1st Wednesday/ Noon
UMC Cong. Ctr. Jackson Medical Mall
For more information, call
Kelly Hinson @ 601-815-7096

**If the meeting date falls on a holiday—the following Wednesday*

For Children Grieving the Death of a Loved One

The McClean Fletcher Center—12 Northtown Drive, Jackson, MS offers peer support groups for children ages 4-18. This includes the child's family and meets every other week. For more information call:

Jennifer at 601-206-5525

MS SIDS ALLIANCE INFANT LOSS SUPPORT GROUP

Monthly 1st Tuesday – 7:00 p.m.

River Oaks Hospital Lobby Classroom
MS SIDS ALLIANCE offers education to the public and professionals on risk reduction of SIDS and bereavement support.

Cathy Files - 601.955-1057
Leslie Threadgill – 601-573-1458



TCF November Meeting Notes

There were twenty-one 21 persons present, including two new grieving parents. Faye McCord welcomed everyone and made announcements, reminding us all about our upcoming Candle Lighting Service on Dec. 2nd at 7 pm.

Our facilitator was Gerry Gray-Lewis. Gerry who works as a nurse at Hospice Ministries in Ridgeland Mississippi. Gerry is a grieving parent of two children and a grandson. Her first child John David, still born 15 years ago, a daughter age 21, Maura Anne, 5 years ago, and her grandson age 20 Michael Pham, 2 years ago.

Gerry states grieving parents know things others don't, the day your child died, the month, the time. The day her grandson was murdered is Tuesday a random day for evil. She makes Tuesdays a random day for love! Gerry helps someone by paying for their food or gas that day. There are so many ways to show love—it's endless. Gerry praised the police officials that were on her grandson's case. They stayed all night with family to help them and talk about Michael and what happened. Gerry talked about parents after the death of your child the thing you must do is take care of yourself. You must take care of you, then you can help others: your family.

Everyone in the compassionate friends group knows the grief you know. We are tethered together as mountain climbers. When one in the group slips, we keep them from falling until they are able to make it up again. We must lean into the pain. There is no way to get away from it. There is power in our presence for others. Sometimes you come to the meeting, and it may not be that special to you that evening, but your presence means a lot to another grieving parent. Just with your presence, someone sees you are still alive. You didn't drown, even though many times you thought you would.

Gerry read a story from Winnie-the-Pooh. There is a surprising amount of wisdom in Winnie-the-Pooh! Pooh went down the rabbit hole to visit rabbit, and he ate too much honey and became too fat to get back out. This is the same with our grief—we feel as if can never get out. We are wedged in great tightness. How long will it be until we regain joy and move again? Christopher Robin helped Pooh. The same we of Compassionate Friends help each other.

Just as Christopher Robin said to Pooh, "You are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think." Each parent grieves the great loss of their child, but we find strength that we never knew we had to survive.

Gerry brought a book titled *OPTION B: facing Adversity, building Resilience, and finding Joy*. The authors are Sheryl Sandburg and Adam Grant. For more information, there is a web site: www.optionb.org Thank you, Gerry Gray-Lewis, for your time to come and share with our group and thank you for being an amazing hospice nurse.

Cont. to next column

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Thanks to all who came to TCF meeting—you mean so much to the drowning parent, me for one.

Thanks for the great snacks to eat they were delicious.

*Virginia Horton, treasurer
TCF/Jackson MS*



Thoughts from My Grief Journal

This will be our 20th Christmas without our precious son, Lane and that thought is "crushing" me! It is so HARD! Life without our children at Christmas is an unending journey of Grief, tears, and PAIN. There are still so many unanswered questions, still so many times when I want to run away - but where to? The grief goes with us no matter where we are or what we are doing. I try not to dwell on the obvious grief, that relentless emptiness that is always with me, but sometimes there is no way I can ignore it. I have to confront my grief, my pain, and just let it soak into my being and realize it is part of who I am now. I tell others that are grieving to "be kind to yourself," to "live life in tribute to the one who is no longer here", but then sometimes I fall back into that dark place myself. I must take my own advice and find the reason it is so difficult for me right now - at this time.

I am tired - so I must rest. It is hard for me to relax, to rest, and grief makes it worse. Grief affects every facet of our lives, physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. I must reflect on the path my grief journey has taken, and perhaps right now, I need to just find a "rest stop". I tell myself, "You have made it this far. You can survive." I will try once again to put one foot in front of another and trudge on, trying to take one moment at a time and trying to do what seems right to me. I will try once again to do what helps me and to remember that "anything I can do to help myself get through the next moment is okay as long as I don't hurt myself or someone else." I will try once again to focus on others and not on myself. I will try once again.....like the toy engine....."I think I can, I think I can",

I think I can, but not alone. That's why I love my TCF group. When others no longer want to hear about my personal struggles, TCF is there. Yes, I will try once again to reflect on my blessings and the good times we had with Lane knowing "I need not walk alone."

May each of you have a restful, peaceful Christmas and a safe and prosperous New Year.

*Faye McCord, in remembrance of our son, Lane.
(1/26/65-9/13/98*

The Bill of Rights of Parents Who Have Lost a Child

1. I have the right to grieve for however long I need to, even if others think I should "get over it."
2. I have the right to mention my child, even if it makes others uncomfortable.
3. I have the right to find comfort in my Faith, even if others disagree with what I believe.
4. I have the right to treasure my children's pictures and belongings, even if some think I should hide them away or discard them.
5. I have the right to avoid social gatherings I know will trigger more pain for me, even though some people may miss me.
6. I have the right to find solace in dreams in which my child appears, even if the beliefs of others take offense.
7. I have the right to share my Faith which has sustained me in my deep sorrow, even if others have different beliefs.
8. I have the right to not be gossiped about behind my back about the way in which I mourn, even if others think they are helping me by talking about me.
9. I have the right to not share things about my child that I hold close to my heart, even if others think I should.
10. I have the right to cry, even if it embarrasses someone who is with me.
11. I have the right to smile, even if some may think I shouldn't.
12. I have the right to visit my child's grave and remain there as long as I need and want to, even if others would prefer I be elsewhere.
13. I have the right to not celebrate Holidays, even if others don't understand why.
14. I have the right to not have to explain to others what it feels like to have buried my child, even if another wants to know.
15. I have the right to express my sorrow in whatever artistic manner I choose, even if others don't like my expression.
16. I have the right to believe I will see my child again, even if others do not share that same hope.
17. I have the right to believe that in God's Spirit I am still one with my child, even if others can't understand this or have been taught differently.
18. I have the right to work through feelings of fear and anger at my own pace, even if some don't agree with those feelings.
19. I have the right to see the world differently in my grief, even if others don't see it the same way.
20. I have the right to perceive life and death differently, even if some think I have "gone off the deep end."
21. I have the right to speak of my child as if he still exists, because he does, even if some judge me for doing so.
22. I have the right to choose if I need medication or not.
23. I have the right to grieve, even if some would prefer I "cheer up."
24. I have the right to violate my rights at any time, even if some make accusations when I do so.

By Jude Gibbs



A Christmas "Moment"

December 20: The tree is up, even if there are no ornaments on it. Its small size fit snugly on top of a small table; tiny colored lights shining from its bare branches. My heart is not "up" for decorating – and, in fact, I will probably leave the tree with nothing but lights again this year. There's something soothing about sitting in a darkened room, the tree lights shining softly; music and memories blending in the quiet.

It's hard to lose a child . . . harder still to continue with the "normal" stuff of life; and Christmastime is certainly one of the hard times. I've always loved Christmas; the lights, the music, the sharing with loved ones. It's just that when one or more of those loved ones are out of reach, the holiday loses some of its charm.

So it is that I sit in my small living room, lights off, soft Christmas music playing, pondering the unanswerable. I take off my glasses, my nearsightedness diffusing the tree lights across the room into soft pools of color. Don't ask me why, but I close my left eye and looked at the tree. The lights keep some of their diffused definition. Then I close my right eye and look only with my left – the eye I call my "shingles eye," ever since my head and the shingles virus intersected three years ago, leaving my left eye plagued with irritation, requiring daily doses of some unpronounceable drops and a generally deteriorated eyesight.

As I look with that left eye that had given me so much grief, I am struck by what I see. Somehow, probably because of the poor vision, the tree lights diffuse differently than with the other eye, each one turning from a small pool of undefined light into an angel. An angel. It is as if my small tree is covered with tiny angels – red, blue, yellow, green – shining forth their special message of comfort and joy. It was comfort and joy, was it not, that the angels sang about on that Bethlehem hillside so many centuries ago?

Comfort and joy . . . a strange combination perhaps, but one I find just right for this Christmas season. Comfort for the losses that have occurred; joy for the containers filled with that comfort: the short notes from friends and loved ones, the memories that spread across my heart at the oddest moment, reminding me of so many good times with my daughter, and the knowledge that I do not walk alone: not today, not tomorrow, not ever. Comfort and joy. The message of the angels, brought to me once again all because of my "shingles eye." Who would have thought?

Sally Cowell
TCF Salem Oregon Chapter



One Little Candle

I lit a candle tonight, in honor of you.
 Remembering your life, and all the times we'd been
 through.
 Such a small little light the candle made until
 I realized how much in darkness it lit the way.
 All of the tears I've cried in all my grief and pain.
 What a garden they grew, watered with human rain.
 I sometimes can't see beyond the moment, in hopeless
 despair.
 But then your memory sustains me, in heartaches
 repair.
 I can wait for the tomorrow, when my sorrows ease.
 Until then, I'll light this candle and let my memories run
 free.

*Sheila Simmons
 TCF Atlanta, GA*

About Christmas

For those who think that Christmas and Chanukah are just nice days to give and get presents, bereaved parents have another message. Mixed with the joy is the knowledge of sadness. With the hope of birth comes the threat of death. We should not try to cover up our sadness in front of people, for we have a lesson to teach them.

But the holidays have a lesson for us, too. Yes, there is death. Yes, there is a great bitterness in life. There is darkness. But there is hope. There is birth. There is light.

In a society which works so hard to deny death, perhaps only bereaved parents and a few others can truly understand the depths of these holidays.

*Dennis Klass
 TCF St. Louis, MO*



Winter Memories

The days are getting colder,
 and the first snow's not too far off.

It used to be so pretty
 gently falling from aloft.

But the snow won't be as pretty,
 as it gathers on the ground,
 'cause there'll be a snowman missing,
 my son is not around.

The playing children's laughter,
 used to be a special song,
 but this year will be different,
 without my son to sing along.

The song has lost its music,
 and it'll be just another day,
 as I gaze down from my window
 and watch the children play.

But the snow will again be pretty,
 in a far off distant time,
 and we'll build snowmen together
 and we'll never look behind.

For now, I'll remain with memories,
 and the melting snow will fade,

but he builds snowmen to his heart's content,
 because he now lives where snow is made.

*Jeremiah Sundown
 TCF Nashville, TN*



Remember

*Remember the children, we ask tonight,
 As we continue this wave of light.*

*Remember the babies, never given a chance,
 To grow, to play, to love, or dance.*

*Remember the toddlers, just starting to live,
 Teddy Bears and blankies and big hugs to give.*

*Remember the children, who grew strong and true,
 Maybe struck by an illness that devastated you.*

*Remember the teen-agers and the promise in each,
 Taken suddenly or slowly, beyond our reach.*

*Don't forget the adult child, fully grown,
 Whether 18 or 80, we still called them our own.*

*Our grandchildren, sisters and brothers have died,
 For nieces and nephews and cousins, we've cried.*

Some of us say, "I've lost my dreams,"

While others say, "my memories."

*So tonight we remember with this candlelight,
 So like our love that shines so bright.*

*Marilyn Rollins
 TCF Lake-Porter County, IN*

OUR CHILDREN—LOVED, MISSED & REMEMBERED

“They may be deceased by a few days or years, but we still miss them so much and still shed our tears.”

Birth Date	Child’s name	Parent’s name(s)	Cause
12/01	Jason Walters	Brenda Crumbley	Auto accident
12/02	Jason Davis	Jackie Rutland	Cancer
12/03	Eric Hegwood	Janice Berlin	
12/05	Jason Keen	Cirie Keen	Auto accident
12/06	Susan Michelle Ware Canoy	Ted/Mary Joe Ware	Clot/Lung/pregnancy
12/08	Mike Fox, Jr.	Mr. Mike Fox, Sr.	Drugs
12/09	John David Gray-Lewis	Vic/Gerry Gray-Lewis	Still Birth
12/09	Germain Dawson	Barbara Dawson	Natural causes
12/10	Scott Lee Kitchens	Bobbie Garrett	Suicide/Jumped MS
12/17	Parker Rodenbaugh	Rick/Cordie Rodenbaugh	Accidental overdose
12/18	Amber Noelle Smith	Sandy Boteler	Homocide
12/18	Amber Smith	Lindsey Crutcher	
12/21	Jeff Pritchett	Paul/Rita Pritchett	Auto accident
12/22	Tanner Stewart	Paul/Samantha King	
12/22	James Arnold (Arnie) Ball	Mr./Mrs. Raymond Ball	Heart Defect
12/23	Keith Richardson	Donna Dubosh	Suicide
12/27	Price Harper	Alicia Harper Ball	Seizures/handicapped

Tonight I’ll Be Strong

*It has been two and a half years
And my heart is still badly torn
With my feelings so terribly hurt
I’m fairly ragged and worn*

*I can’t seem to get over the tragic loss
That happened the morning of June Fourteen
Since then it’s been just one long day
The longest I’ve ever seen*

*I know I’m not supposed to hurt this way
But the two holes in my heart are still so raw
People do not seem to realize how I feel
Or maybe it’s just my own personal flaw*

*I wake up each morning with the girls on my mind
I’ll go to work with their memory all day long
And then in the evening when I head home
I’ll drive and think “Tonight I’ll be strong”*

*I’ll eat my supper and stare at the TV
Until bedtime when I lay down my head
My mind wanders back to a hidden place
When there, the tears I’ll shed*

*Donald Moyers
TCF Galveston County, TX*

OUR CHILDREN—LOVED, MISSED & REMEMBERED

Heaven Date	Child's name	Parent's name(s)	Cause
12/01	Robert Lee Hopper, Jr.	Robert/Bea Hopper	Cancer
12/01	Brantley Clark	Jeanette Browder	SIDS
12/04	Kevin Lefteroff	Marcia Lefteroff	Car wreck
12/05	Robert Thornton	Dave/Charlotte Greer	
12/06	Richard Thompson	Wayne/Ramee Thompson	Car accident
12/06	Terrance Contrell Stewart	Barbara Stewart	Sick
12/07	Keandra Jaree McMorris	Kornella S. McMorris	Suicide
12/09	John David Gray-Lewis	Vic/Gerry Gray-Lewis	Still Birth
12/10	Jackie Worman	Dave/Kathy Worman	Auto Accident
12/14	Larry Lefteroff	Corinne Hudson	Heart attack
12/20	Kim Corban	Mickey/Pauline Corban	Heart attack
12/25	Julie Jabour Abraham	Mr./Mrs. Freddy Abraham	Gangrene
12/26	Matthew James Eldridge	Debbie Eldridge	Traumatic asphyxiation
12/27	James Arnold (Arnie) Ball	Mr./Mrs. Raymond Ball	Heart defect
12/27	Wynn McAllister	Susan McAllister	Auto accident
12/27	Scott Lee Kitchens	Bobbie Garrett	Suicide/Jumped MS
12/27	James Arnold Ball	Mr./Mrs. Raymond Ball	Heart Defect
12/28	Tyler Thompson	Wayne/Ramee Thompson	Leukemia
12/28	Justin Lloyd Hartley	Ron/Terry Hartley	Cardiac arrest
12/31	Kurt McCurdy	Ms Christina McCurdy	Car accident

REPLY FORM—IMPORTANT

It is important for our children to be remembered. Please understand that in order for your child to be on the "special days" list, you must fill out this form, which gives us permission to list this information.

I/We are bereaved Parents grandparents siblings step-parents friends relatives professional
 Please add remove keep me on the mailing list.
 Remember my Child Sibling Grandchild on Special Days. Please have someone call me.

Name _____ Phone _____
 Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____
 E-mail address _____
 Name of Child _____
 Age when deceased _____ Cause* _____
 Child's Birthday _____ Child's Heaven Date _____

*You need not list cause of death. We ask this only so that parents whose children have died in similar ways may reach one another.

Optional: Your donations are tax deductible and allow us to reach to other bereaved parents.

Enclosed is \$ _____ given in memory of _____
 I would like my contribution used to fund: Check one: Postage Children's Memorial Love Gift
 Mail to: The Compassionate Friends; P.O. Box 1396; Jackson, Mississippi; 39215-1396

*People will forget what you said,
 people will forget what you did,
 but people will never forget how you made them feel.
 ~ Maya Angelou ~*