



**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 BUCHANAN in memory of ASHLEY BUCHANAN

JERRY and CINDY WIGGLESWORTH in memory of LEE WIGGLESWORTH

LOVE GIFT

DR. GREG LITTLE in memory of DREW LITTLE

CHUCK and MARLISE PRESTWOOD in memory of KRISSY PRESTWOOD

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They are tax deductible and deeply appreciated.

TCF JACKSON CHAPTER NEWS	TCF MEETINGS
<p style="text-align: center;">An Update from Marcia</p> <p>I wanted to update everyone as much as possible on the events we have every year for our Chapter.</p> <p>First of all, I am missing so much meeting with everyone. I really am struggling with grieving my grandchild because as most of us have first-hand experience with, you have lots of support at first but then that kinda dwindles down. And of course, that has happened with me, especially with this pandemic and having to basically not be around a lot of people. My supportive family, well, what can I say. They of course have their own lives and family and really don't have time to call and say, "How are you". Enough of that.</p> <p>As it looks now, we will not be having balloon lift off, at least in September as we have always done. The rules for Covid change daily and our Governor has put a limit as to how many can congregate. It doesn't have to be in September so if things get better we can revisit and do it another time.</p> <p>Candlelight ceremony: I did talk to Fondren and the Church is not allowing any group meetings until at least the end of the year. The Church is wanting to work with us as much as possible and suggested perhaps having it outside around our beautiful new fountain, but the weather is so iffy, it could be summertime weather or ice, sleet and other so that won't work. So, since it does take some planning to put that together, I will say I don't anticipate that happening this year. The whole point is being together and celebrating our children and that's hard to do when you have to be spread out and wearing masks.</p> <p>We are still missing Bob Gates and Joy who were always such a huge part of our group. Please remember Joy, not only is she grieving Bob but can not finalize remembering him with their vast group of friends. We love you Joy, so much.</p> <p>Newsletters are only online now and can be seen or printed from the website: www.tcfjacksonms.com.</p> <p>Also, please contribute to the newsletter by sending whatever you would like to be put in the newsletter to paulabroome427@gmail.com. We would love to hear from you and whatever is going on with you.</p> <p>National, who is basically not a physical building now has suggested that perhaps we do zoom sessions or use some other way of communicating, I believe Google also has basically the same thing. Personally, I don't think that will be what our group needs but weigh in and let us know what you think.</p> 	<p style="text-align: center;">2nd Tuesdays monthly at 7:00 p.m. Fondren Presbyterian Church – Fellowship Hall 3220 Old Canton Road, Jackson, MS</p> <p>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.</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">+++++</p> <p><i>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.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">-</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u><i>Prenatal Bereavement Support Group</i></u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">*1st Wednesday/ Noon UMC Cong. Ctr. Jackson Medical Mall For more information, call Kelly Hinson @ 601-815-7096</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>*If the meeting date falls on a holiday—the following Wednesday</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u><i>For Children Grieving the Death of a Loved One</i></u></p> <p>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</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;"><u><i>MS SIDS ALLIANCE INFANT LOSS SUPPORT GROUP</i></u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Monthly 1st Tuesday – 7:00 p.m.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">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</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">After October and if there be a perfect month, for me, it is October... with days and nights like laughing fauns, with mornings bright and sober. when wind will dance in sudden glee to do the autumn-sweeping or cloud and fog and wistful rain can move a heart to weeping. and in October You were born, four days before November... and four years later you were gone, my little son, my only son, I love you. and remember. . .</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Sascha Wagner</i> © The Compassionate Friends</p>

Grief and the Pandemic

The coronavirus is not only causing a viral pandemic—it is giving rise to a pandemic of grief. As I write this, in mid-March, we as a global community are suffering so many losses that I hardly know where to begin.

Death and grief go hand-in-hand, of course. Thousands of people have already died of COVID-19 worldwide. Many more are dying right now. These are terrible losses for the loved ones of these precious individuals, and they will need our support and empathy in the months to come.

Yet what strikes me at this moment is that this aggressive new virus is threatening every single person on Earth with myriad losses of every kind. Name something you care about or that gives your life meaning. In all likelihood, this attachment is now negatively affected or threatened in some way by the coronavirus.

Social distancing is forcing us to be apart from friends and family for weeks and possibly months. Personal events have been postponed or called off, so we are unable to gather for life's most meaningful celebrations and rituals, from baptisms and birthdays to weddings, anniversary parties, and funerals. Public activities and experiences that brought us together have also been cancelled. Workplaces are shuttering or moving to work-from-home. Restaurants, museums, and theaters are closing. Sporting events have been shut down. Town squares stand empty.

While thanks to technology we can still stay in constant contact with one another remotely—something that wasn't possible during past prolonged international crises, such as the 1918 flu pandemic—we are learning the limitations of digital love and care.

What is grief?

As human beings, whenever our attachments are threatened, harmed, or severed, we naturally grieve. Grief is everything we think and feel inside of us when this happens. We experience shock and disbelief. We worry, which is a form of fear. We become sad and possibly lonely. We get angry. We feel guilty or regretful. The sum total of all these and any other thoughts and feelings we are experiencing as a result of the coronavirus pandemic is our grief.

Our pandemic grief will change from day to day and week to week. This virus is fast. As it sweeps across continents and we collectively take action to "flatten the curve," new rules and limitations are popping up every day. Restrictions are mounting and growing increasingly severe. As circumstances grow more dire, our grief will change. And as with the virus itself, it will likely get worse before it gets better.

How to help yourself and others: emotionally, socially, and spiritually

There are a couple of important things to understand about your pandemic grief. First, it is normal and natural. It is simply a part of your love and attachment. And second, grief responds to awareness, attention, and expression. You will feel better if you mourn. Mourning is being aware of your grief, giving it the attention it needs and deserves, and expressing it outside of yourself. We have all heard a lot about how to take care of ourselves physically with this virus, but I have seen little about emotional, social, and spiritual health.

During this time of great grief, mourning is the key to these pillars of self-care.

When we are feeling the emotional pain of our coronavirus grief, we can tune into it and allow it to teach us what we are really worried, sad, angry, etc. about. And then we can express it. We can talk to others about it, in our household, on the phone, or online. We can write about it in a journal. We can listen to music or watch movies that help us access, understand, and share our feelings. Mourning our grief in these ways helps soften it and gives us the emergency emotional release and sustenance we need to survive.

Socially, we can't congregate in person right now. Did you know that the word "congregate" comes from the Latin roots *com*, meaning together, and *gregare*, meaning to gather in a flock? But we can continue to make efforts to reach out to the people we care about. Video calls are probably the best substitute for face-to-face conversations. Voice calls come second. After that, emails, texting, and social media work too. And don't forget the power of the handwritten letter! The point is to stay connected as much as possible AND to be open and honest in those communications about whatever it is you are feeling or struggling with at the moment. Your candor will encourage others to be honest as well, creating the opportunity for mutual support and kindness.

And when it comes to spiritual health, now is an especially resonant time to work on caring for your soul. One redeeming factor of enforced isolation is that it creates the opportunity for spiritual contemplation and practice. In times of loss, we almost always wonder why things happen as they do. We naturally question the meaning of life in general and the meaning of our own life in particular. We turn our attention to our deepest beliefs and values. We talk to God or wonder about God or get angry at God.

If you've been struggling with beliefs, values, meaning, and life goals during the pandemic, you're experiencing the spiritual aspect of grief. And the best way to care for your spirit right now is to be intentional about giving it time and attention. I recommend spending at least 15 minutes each day on spiritual practices. Whatever helps you get in touch with your divine spark—do that. For some people that might be meditation or prayer. For others it can be reading a spiritual text, speaking affirmations, attending a religious or spiritual service online, doing yoga, writing in a journal, or spending time observing nature or walking outdoors.

Simply being aware of your emotional, social, and spiritual health every day and being deliberate about self-care in those areas will help you and others today as well as in the weeks to come. There is no doubt that this is a challenging moment to be alive, but it is also a moment in which our collective resources have never been greater and more capable. So let's be open, honest, and kind—to ourselves and to each other.

Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.

Thanks to Marcia Lefteroff for bringing this important article to our attention.





... in the Autumn

Some people love to see the changes
in the colors of the leaves,
When the sky is clear and dark blue
as the sea.
They love to smell the oak leaves burning
But it is then my heart is yearning
To be with ones I know
I cannot see.
There's something in the autumn
That makes my heart so heavy,
I miss them all but know they're where
they should all be.
If I can make it through the winter,
And see the spring unfold before me,
Then I'll know once more they're
there, and wait for me.
When the morning sun comes later,
and the afternoons die early,
And my spirits drop like leaves
around my feet.
I'm so aware that I am mortal
and I can almost see the portal
that I will pass through and be
evermore complete.

*Jim O'Neil
TCF, Montgomery, AL*



*All who have been touched by beauty are
touched by sorrow at its passing ~*

Louise Cordana

Nostalgia

As school bells ring, young voices sing.
And small ones shout with glee.
The autumn air beckons school to start,
And left alone am I.

What makes me feel so down and blue
And boggled down with thoughts of you?
I see the school bus passing by,
And find myself with a tear in my eye.

Is it the clothes that we can't buy,
While others grab for jeans to try?
Or is it autumn in the air
That pulls at heartstrings – already bare?

Maybe it's falling leaves and dying grass,
Whatever the reason that stirs my heart,
Every year when school must start,
Reminds me how much I miss you.

*Barbara Williams
TCF, Fort Wayne, IN*



The Solitude of Grief

There are wounds one can't assuage
For the cut is deep and bleeding
Some wounds show no outward trace
For it's the heart that's sore and needing
How does one cope with a broken heart
A heart that's cold and lonely
From where the strength to carry on
From a grief that's shared . . . but yours only
Still in dreams we see them yet
So young, so fair so alive
I don't know how we cope with death
But somehow – somehow we do survive
Always a part of this heart of mine
Now tossed like a windblown leaf
And I imprisoned in a world not mine
In the solitude of grief

*Harvey Hockstein
TCF Morris Area, NJ
In Memory of my daughter, Marilyn*

After

After all the pain
We still can feel the sun.
Not without pain though,
Not without recrimination.

After all the sorrow
The sun still shines.
Not without sorrow though,
Not without repercussions.

For nothing is the same
And everything is different
After

My eyes open each morning
But not to you.
Sun shines,
Rain falls,
The earth revolves,
The moon shines full each month.
But you're still gone.
After.

The years go by,
On and on,
Milestones pass, but I can't share with you,
After.

When death happens
There is an illusion of time stopping
Just an illusion
For the living go on
After all.

*Melissa Anne Schroeter
TCF Rockland County, NY
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A Season of Many Feelings

Fall is a season of many feelings
Autumn is here once again
As it comes every year.
And with the leaves
My falling tears.
This time of year
is the hardest of all
My heart is still breaking,
Once again it is fall.
Memories once so vivid
Are seeming to fade.
My time spent with you
Seems some other age.
This season reminds me
Of grief and of pain.
But yet teaches hope
And joy once again.
For trees are still living
Beneath their gray bark,
And you my sweet child
Are alive in my heart.

*Cinda Schake
TCF, Butler, P*

Ideas for Writing Your Story or Journal

Recently, several new TCF members have asked me for suggestions about what they can do at the early stages of grief and what helped me in my experience in those earlier days of grief when my son, Bobby, died. In thinking about that, I remember my *journal* and what a meaningful and effective way of venting that was for me. As you may know, very often our close friends think we should be "moving on with life" or "letting go," etc. Unfortunately, for me, they just didn't get it. So, I looked back through some past newsletter issues and found an article on ideas for writing your story or journal – I hope you find it helpful: Bereaved parents who have written about their loss unanimously agree that writing unleashes enormous stress and pain. In my own experience, I recall one night when I locked myself in the bathroom and wrote a long letter to my son, Bobby. It was my chance to express my feelings without having them diminished by well meaning and caring people around me trying to be helpful. I will never forget the pressure that letter released for me. Although the letter was not saved, the positive result was everlasting. Have you ever thought of writing your story or keeping a journal? You may find it helpful to clarify your thoughts about your child by recording your feelings in the form of a letter. Write a letter to your child, expressing your thoughts and feelings about the following:

- A special memory that I have about you.
- What I miss the most about you and our relationship.
- What I wish I'd said or hadn't said.
- What I'd like to ask you.
- What I wish we'd done or hadn't done.
- What I've had the hardest time dealing with.
- Ways in which you will continue to live on in me.
- Special ways I have for keeping my memories of you alive.

Choose one or several ideas that have significance for you or start at the top of the list and work your way down. These topics may serve to help you come up with your own ideas, specific to your situation and relationship. Give yourself this exercise as a gift. If you would like to share your writing at a TCF meeting, please do. You never know how many other parents will be touched and benefit from your experience.

*Pat Akery, Chapter Leader,
In memory of Bobby
TCF, Medford, Oregon*



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
10/03	Hunter McDaniel	Leianna Ishler	Accidental overdose
10/08	Albert Alan Ball, Jr.	Pamela K. Williams-Shelton	Suicide
10/10	Shannon C. McNeil	Bob/Jeanette McNeil	Murder
10/15	Steven B. Cutrer	Ricky/Brenda Cutrer	Heart Attack
10/18	Eric Dean Dungan	Gerald/Carolyn Dungan	Auto Accident
10/19	Billy Jack May, Jr.	Helen/Jack May	Heart Attack
10/20	Gregory Stewart	Wendall/Lynn Stewart	Cancer
10/21	Charles Griffin	Charles/Lora Griffin	Auto Accident
10/22	Aerica Robnett	Brandi Robnett	Unknown
10/24	Britton Grant	Alma Lewis	Accidental overdose
10/24	Jonathan Lazich	Gary/Cindy Lazich	Drowning
10/24	Rivers McGraw	Lauren McGraw	Suicide
10/25	John Mack Osborne III	Mack Osborne	Suicide
10/26	Ronald Little	Pat /Tommie Little	Auto Accident
10/29	William Tate	Eleanor Tate Crowell	
10/30	Jennifer Clark	Bette Clark	Auto Accident

A man had been wandering in the forest for many days, and was nearing the end of his water and food supply. With each passing hour his sense of fear and despair was increasing. His body was weary with fatigue, yet he was unable to sleep.

Slowly it became clear to him that he had been walking in circles and retracing his steps. He knew that his end was near.

Suddenly, in the distance, he noticed the figure of a bedraggled fellow wanderer approaching him. His joy was boundless as he thought to himself, "At last, a way out of this dark and foreboding forest."

The man gathered all of his remaining strength and ran towards the stranger and exclaimed, "My brother, I can't begin to tell you how happy I am to see you. Which way leads out?"

The stranger responded, "My dear friend, I am so sorry to disappoint you, but I too have been wandering in this forest for days on end. I can't save you - I too am looking for a way out.

In a fit of despair the first wanderer shouted, "Then all is lost. It is over. There is no use in continuing," and fell to his knees in a fit of tears.

The stranger responded in a deeply caring and comforting voice, "My friend, why are you giving up hope? Let us journey together. I will show you the paths I have taken that have led me nowhere and you will show me the paths you have taken that have not brought you to your destination. Let us walk together and find a path home."

-Chassidic Tale



OUR CHILDREN—LOVED, MISSED & REMEMBERED

Heaven Date	Child's name	Parent's name(s)	Cause
10/03	Kimberly Copelan	Stacy Copelan	Auto Accident
10/04	Ethan Lee Davis	Jim/Sheila Davis	Suicide
10/06	Aaron Gerald Varner	Bill Varner	Cancer
10/07	Jason Lee Moore	Emmit, Jr./Glenda Moore	Drunk driver
10/07	Ryan Fisher Knight	Wiley/Wanda Fisher	Auto Accident
10/16	Mark R. Stancel	Don/Gaye Stancel	Brain Tumor
10/19	Ronald Little	Pat /Tommie Little	Auto Accident
10/20	Charles Griffin	Charles/Lora Griffin	Auto Accident
10/21	Jonathan Walker	Betty Walker	Four
10/22	Joseph "Daniel" Medina	Patrick/Kris Medina	Suicide
10/23	Aaron Brown	Juanita Brown	Passenger
10/25	Rashard Hamilton	Andre Barker	Cardiac arrest
10/28	DeMarqus Dobson	Michael/Stephenia Dobson	Murdered/Gun
10/29	Alan Ebersole	Bruce/Story Ebersole	
10/30	Brandon Bennett	James/Anita Bennett	Suicide
10/30	Jason Davis	Jackie Rutland	Cancer

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