



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

NORTHEAST LOUISIANA CHAPTER

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NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2007

GIVING THANKS

I cannot hold your hands today,
I cannot see your smile.
I cannot hear your voices now,
my children, who are gone.
But I recall your faces still,
the songs, the talks, the sighs.
And story times and winter walks,
and sharing secret things.
I know you helped my mind to live
beyond your time with me.
You gave me clearer eyes to see,
you gave me finer ears to hear,
What living means, what dying means,
my children, who are gone.
So here it is Thanksgiving Day,
and you are not with me.
And while I weep a mother's tears,
I thank you for the gifts you were,
and all the gifts you gave to me,
my children, who are gone.

Sascha Wagner

THANKSGIVING

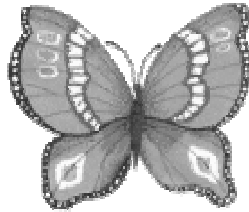
Our time together was too brief,
Your life on earth numbered in but days.
Yet, how could I have loved you more if I had
Held you through the seasons of your life?
When does love begin?
For me the day you first moved within me
Wrapped me in such warmth that it can still keep
Out the cold as here I stand missing you and all
That we could have shared.
Death has robbed me of your softness and of all
The dreams I had for you,
But not of my love.
Not even death can take that from me – from us.
And for that, I am thankful.

Karen Nelson
TCF Box Elder County; Brigham City, UT

CHRISTMAS THOUGHTS

Beyond the twinkling lights, the red and green candles, the poignant aroma of evergreen...Beyond the Christmas trees, the angels, and stars and beloved carols...Beyond the presents, the shopping, the baking and cooking...Beyond all of these sights and sounds of Christmas...Beyond all of these...there is hope.

Hope...It is hope that sustains us though the days of grief and anger and frustration and loneliness.



The hope that someday the pain of the death of our children will be eased. The hope is that someday our smiles will be real. The hope is that once again we will laugh and love and cry completely without fear and hollowness.

It is the hope that someday we can remember our children with a tenderness merely tinged with sorrow and not overwhelmed with it.

So it is that for each of you I would wish hope, peace, compassion, love, sympathy, understanding, sharing, and listening.

In the sharing of our grief with one another and in the emotional support we give to one another, we receive and learn of all of these gifts.

TCF Wabash Valley Chapter

Monthly Meetings

Thursday, November 1

6:30 PM
St. Paul's United Methodist Church
1901 Lexington Ave.
Enter through the back parking lot off Milton St.

Due to the Candle Lighting Ceremony to be held Sunday, December 9 we will not have our regular monthly meeting in December.

For Siblings

An outlet for siblings is the TCF Sibling Forum. It is available online and is a place where siblings from all over can share and help each other cope with the unique grief of losing a brother or sister. Siblings are able to ask questions, make a comment or leave a thought for others to respond.

Visit the Sibling Resources Page at www.compassionatefriends.org
Email tcsiblingrep@compassionatefriends.org for the password

COURAGE

My brother died three years ago, when he was seventeen years old. It was an accident, when he fell, while hiking in the mountains. I was fifteen and my brother was my hero. I would do anything to make him proud. When I lost him, I could have just given up. I have the courage to love people even though I know that I could lose them. I had many opportunities to just forget everyone else and lose myself. My brother was my best friend and when he died I could have too.

I decided that he would not have wanted me to throw my life away. I try my hardest to work hard in school and live up to what his expectations would have been. I am not living just for him. I am living for myself. A lot of people like to escape their problems by drinking or doing drugs. Alcohol and drugs only make problems worse because escaping a problem is not solving the problem. Self-respect means knowing who you are and treating yourself with dignity. I want people to look at me and to respect me. Staying in school and, working to my potential is essential for respect. People cannot respect those who do not respect themselves. As Shakespeare said: "This above all else, to thine own self be true."

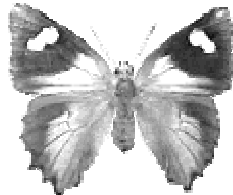
I do not like choices based on what the popular decision is. I base my thoughts and ideas on what I believe are right and important. I know that my brother would have been proud of me, because I made it through the most difficult time in my life, without him. I kept living when I lost the most important person in the world to me. Courage is to keep fighting even though it looks like you are going to lose. When he died, I felt the world crash down on me. Everything I ever hoped for just seemed empty. Even now sometimes it will just hit me that my brother is gone.

I have to keep on living and facing the world because that is what life is all about. Sometimes things happen that seem impossible to face. If I do not face my problems, who will?

Life is not supposed to be easy but it is not devastating either. There are so many wonderful things that happen and I have to have the courage to realize it. Life is not just a long line of problems. It is also a long line of answers. I need courage and self-respect to find these answers. I have to trust myself and my future that everything will work out. It always does. The answers to life's problems can only be found through hard work and belief in yourself. My belief in myself comes from a big brother who always had faith in me.

In loving memory of my brother Sean
8/24/76 - 8/28/93

Patricia Kelley
TCF Richmond, VA



THE BITTER TEARS OF LOVE LOST

Because of my status in society I can look below to poverty and realize no matter how frustrated I get, I will always be very lucky to have a family who loves and cares for me.

But still the tears roll down my face and my cheeks are forever stained because I know as long as I live my heart will always be pained.

I was left in shock, pain, and fear, left with your unspoken words which I will never hear

But in my days of sorrow when I feel that I will fall
I can only repeat the phrase to myself,
"It is better to have loved and lost than to never have loved at all."

Peter Smith, age 15
sibling to Gregory Smith

IT'S BETTER NOW

How I wish I had known someone, anyone, I could have turned to back in 1978 as I approached the first Thanksgiving after my son's death who could have told me IT WILL BE BETTER! Unfortunately, there was no Compassionate Friends in Atlanta at that time, so I anticipated my first Thanksgiving with fear and trepidation, thinking it would be that painful for as long as I lived. Those of us who have had several years to make our adjustment can do nothing of greater import than to pass on to you the message that you will learn how to handle the holidays. I don't know of any shortcuts. If I had I would have used them back there. It takes experiencing a few Thanksgivings and Christmases before you come to know what you need to do to handle those days. If you're new at surviving, do whatever it is that you need to do to get through these first special times, but do them knowing that it won't always be this painful. Please believe me when I tell you, it really is better now.

Mary Cleckley,
TCF Atlanta, GA

MY BEST SUGGESTION

How I struggled that first Thanksgiving after Wade died to see how in the world I could possibly be thankful. The idea came to me to separate the two – what I could never be thankful for, from those things for which I was still thankful in spite of the tragedy that had come. I wrote my two lists on paper, and it helped.

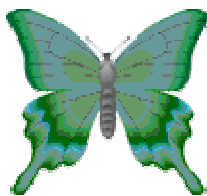
Janet Reindle
TCF Houston NW Chapter, TX

JUST FLOW WITH THE SEASON AND TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

We're well into November and it's almost time to take the "January Pill". After Tricia died I decided I'd invent a pill you could take the week before Thanksgiving and when you came to, it would be January! I'm still working on the invention. In the meantime, I know many of you are already dreading the approaching holidays. The true spirit and meaning of Thanksgiving and Christmas are not necessarily exemplified by some of our "traditions". You are re-evaluating many aspects of your life so let this also apply to the coming holidays. You will not feel as you do now. You will find joy in holiday activities, but maybe not in all the things you once thought so very important.

Flow with the season and with your sadness, knowing strength will come as you work with what you can do without overtaxing yourself. Resolve to be as generous with your energy as you can and as selfish as you have to be to protect the emerging person you will become as a result of your loss. This person can be truly beautiful and loving because of what you have learned through grief. You will miss your child; no magic potion can wipe the pain away. Enjoy what you can — you deserve some pleasure. And may some measure of peace overtake you before this year ends.

Elizabeth E.
TCF Augusta, GA



HOLIDAY THOUGHTS

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 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 K.
TCF St. Louis, MO

CONGRATULATIONS

**Beverly & Charles Wall on your
50th Golden Wedding Anniversary**

Chapter co-leaders

Marilyn & French Smith

Steering Committee

Henry Cole, Facilitator

Beverly & Charles Wall, Treasurer

Dianne & Frank Bruscato, Library

Ann Cole & Marilyn Smith, Hospitality

Frances & Jim Gregory, Outreach

Julie & Danny Petty, Newsletter

Betty Jean & Johnny James, Memorial Park

Sandy Chester, TCF Regional Coordinator

TEN TIPS FOR SURVIVING THE DIFFICULT HOLIDAYS AFTER YOUR CHILD DIES

Patricia Loder, executive director of The Compassionate Friends submitted these ideas in 2005 as a way to help families who have lost a child and are struggling with how they can simply survive to see the new year. Mrs. Loder, whose two young children died in a car crash in 1991, says there are many tips that can help a grieving family prepare for the holidays.

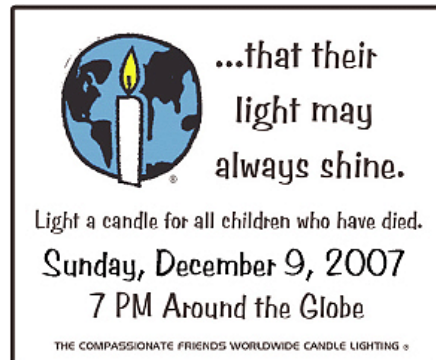
- 1) Plan ahead. Realize you will not be able to do everything with everyone. Decide what is truly important to you and your family.
- 2) Don't be afraid to ask friends for help. Tasks which may normally take little effort can feel overwhelming, whether it's fixing a meal, cleaning the house, or putting up decorations.
- 3) No one expects you to string rows and rows of lights just to prove you have the holiday spirit. If you don't feel up to past efforts, you may simply want to place an electric powered candle in your window in memory of your child.
- 4) Just because you've hosted holiday gatherings in the past doesn't mean you're obligated to this year. Others will understand.
- 5) After a child dies, old traditions are often left behind and new ones that incorporate the child who died can take their place. Honor the memory of your child in unique ways that have meaning to you.
- 6) Surviving children should be included in your plans. They too mourn their sibling, but need a normalcy the holidays can provide.
- 7) If you don't get everything done that you plan, be easy on yourself. Grief is tough work and you should never feel guilty for not getting everything done.
- 8) If you must shop for others, find a time when the stores are not extremely busy, like early morning, order through the internet or ask others to shop for you.
- 9) Participating in a memorial service, such as The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting, the second Sunday in December, can be very meaningful. This can be done in a formal service with others or through a short private candle lighting in the privacy of your home.
- 10) Remember that the fearful anticipation of an approaching holiday is usually worse than the day itself. "Many people believe that they can escape the holidays by leaving home on a vacation," adds Mrs. Loder. "This rarely helps because grief can never be left behind and it is important to have the support of relatives and friends. Talking with others who have also lost a child can help those facing grief to understand they are not alone. Others have survived the holidays and they will too."

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS Northeast Louisiana Chapter

CANDLE LIGHTING CEREMONY

*Join with us as we honor the
memories of our children.*

In loving memory of our children who are no longer with us, The Compassionate Friends of Northeast Louisiana extends an invitation for you, your family, and friends to join us for our annual Candle Lighting Ceremony.



**When: Sunday, December 9, 2007
at 6:30 pm**

**Location: Grace Episcopal Church
1400 North 4th St. at the corner of
Glenmore Ave.**

We do this . . . that their light may always shine!



The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting® is held every year on the second Sunday in December at 7pm for one hour local time in each time zone around the globe – a 24-hour wave of light in memory of all children who have died.

Our Children Always Loved and Remembered



A special table is set up at our meetings to honor children whose special days are in that month. We invite you to bring a picture or memento of your child to share during that significant month.

OUR CHILDREN'S NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

<u>Child</u>		<u>Parent(s)</u>
Joe Block Barham	11/06/78	Janie & Andy Barham
Derek Winnon	11/11/85	Barbara Williamson
Dawn Rose	11/13/79	Debbie & Danny Upshaw
Teresa Gentry	11/18/55	Lynn & Jim Walters
Steven Wisdom	11/20/48	Dee Wisdom
Dustin Allbritton	11/22/78	Linda & Ronnie Allbritton
Corey Hayman	11/23/77	Linda & William Hayman
Brandon Dempsey	11/25/76	Belinda Enterkin
Robin Gates	11/27/83	Nora & Darwin Gates

OUR CHILDREN'S NOVEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

<u>Child</u>		<u>Parent(s)</u>
Daniel Blakeney	11/03/06	Myrl & Roger Blakeney
Dylan Smith	11/05/05	Joan Taylor
Stephen Smith	11/07/99	Marilyn & French Smith
Jason Farrell	11/08/02	Sandra Garrett
Joe Block Barham	11/19/03	Janie & Andy Barham

OUR CHILDREN'S DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

<u>Child</u>		<u>Parent(s)</u>
Mica Lightsey	12/02/84	Karen & Larry McAdams
Stuart Morse	12/07/79	Tammy & James Morse
Wendy Williams	12/12/57	Nell Williams
Kelly Chapman	12/12/03	Judy & Bennie Chapman
Brandon McGehee	12/16/77	Teddi & James McGehee
Car Alexander	12/18/63	Valerie & Billy Matejowsky
Brian Perry	12/25/72	Clara & Don Perry
Beth Ann Smith	12/26/86	Judy & Randy Smith
Krista Corrent	12/28/64	Anna Ruth Hill
Jonathon Tatum	12/30/78	Kimberly Tatum
Randy Coody	12/31/58	Lennie & Thomas Coody
Jake Raborn	12/31/01	Staci & Don Raborn
Michael Griggs	12/31/06	Michelle Murphy

OUR CHILDREN'S DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

<u>Child</u>		<u>Parent(s)</u>
Mica Lightsey	12/09/06	Karen & Larry McAdams
Christopher Johnson	12/18/94	Melissa & Barry Johnson
Norman Craig	12/28/02	Pat Craig
Seth Lowery	12/31/05	Joyce Lowery

TO OUR LONG TIME 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 when new parents arrive with a fresh hurt and frightened eyes, I remember how we felt at our first meeting. 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." They were the ones who wanted to really listen when you talked about your child. Can you be an "oldie" for someone else? By helping someone else, you help yourself and share your child with someone who never got to know them. Come out and share with newly bereaved parents to help them heal. Our own healing happens when we are reaching out to others.

**WE NEED NOT WALK ALONE;
WE ARE THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS**

OUR CREDO

We need not walk alone.
We are The Compassionate Friends.
We reach out to each other with love, with understanding and with hope.
Our children have died at all ages and from many different causes,
but our love for our children unites us.
Your pain becomes my pain just as your hope becomes my hope.
We come together from all walks of life, from many different circumstances.
We are a unique family because we represent many races and creeds.
We are young, and we are old.
Some of us are far along in our grief, but others still feel a grief so fresh
and so intensely painful that we feel helpless and see no hope.
Some of us have found our faith to be a source of strength;
some of us are struggling to find answers.
Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in deep depression;
others radiate an inner peace.
But whatever pain we bring to this gathering of The Compassionate Friends,
it is pain we will share just as we share with each other our love for our children.
We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves,
but we are committed to building a future together
as we reach out to each other in love
and share the pain as well as the joy,
share the anger as well as the peace,
share the faith as well as the doubts
and help each other to grieve as well as to grow.

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