



The Compassionate Friends

Topeka Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Published Quarterly by The Topeka TCF Chapter

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NEWSLETTER - Volume 6, Issue 4
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National TCF Website:
www.compassionatefriends.org

Topeka TCF Chapter Website:
www.tcftopeka.org

Oct ~ Nov ~ Dec ~ 2021
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REMINDER: Please note that the December Memorial Candle Lighting is on the SECOND Monday in December, not the usual FOURTH Monday for our regular meetings. This is because of the MPH Christmas Holiday schedule.

OCTOBER MEETING

Monday, October 25, 2021
Most Pure Heart of Mary Church
3601 S.W. 17th Street, Topeka, KS
7 - 8:30 p.m.

Handling the Holidays - Beginning with Halloween and running through Thanksgiving, Christmas, Hanukkah and New Year's, as grievers we are faced with the onslaught of holiday activities and "cheer" which we may find difficult and hard to deal with. At this meeting we will discuss some strategies for making this time of year less stressful. We will also talk about ways to include your loved ones in whatever holiday traditions you are comfortable with. Plan to share any ideas that have been helpful for you in handling the holidays. We can all learn from each other's experiences.

NOVEMBER MEETING

Monday, November 22, 2021
Most Pure Heart of Mary Church
3601 S.W. 17th Street, Topeka, KS
7 - 8:30 p.m.

Signs, Symbols & Dreams - At this meeting we will talk about unusual happenings we may have experienced since the death of our child, grandchild or sibling. Bereaved people often talk about something that has happened to them that made them feel as though they were somehow contacted or felt more connected to their loved one. These experiences might include sensing of a presence, hearing a voice, seeing a symbol of something (like a butterfly, a flower, other) that you connect with your child, etc. Sometimes dreams about our child can be comforting, sometimes unsettling. This meeting offers us the opportunity to share such events and experiences in an open and nonjudgmental setting.

DECEMBER CANDLE LIGHTING

Monday, December 13, 2021
Most Pure Heart of Mary Church
3601 S.W. 17th Street, Topeka, KS
7 - 8:30 p.m.

Note Date Change!

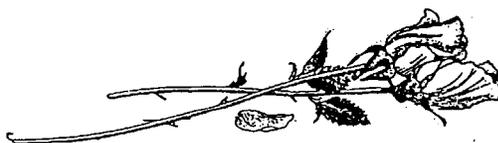
Memorial Candle Lighting - Please plan to join us for this special event to honor the lives of our children, grandchildren and siblings who "left too soon". You are asked to bring a framed desktop photo of your loved one (if you do not have photos, plan to bring something that represents them to you). During the Candle Lighting we will share special music, poetry and each person will have an opportunity to light a votive candle in memory of that special life and place that candle by their photo/memento. You are encouraged to bring your or your child's favorite holiday treat to share with the group. Votive candles are provided. **PLEASE NOTE DATE CHANGE: This event takes the place of our regular December support group meeting. If you have been fully vaccinated masks are optional; if you have not been fully vaccinated masking will be required at this event.**

Meetings are always held on the fourth Monday of each month unless otherwise noted. Listen to radio & TV for cancellations due to severe weather conditions. Always check the Topeka TCF Chapter website (www.tcftopeka.org) under "Meetings" for latest information.

The Compassionate Friends is a self-help organization offering friendship and understanding to bereaved parents. The purposes are to promote and aid parents in the positive resolution of the grief experience following the death of a child of any age, from any cause; and to foster the physical and emotional health of all bereaved parents, grandparents and surviving siblings.

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TCF Mission Statement: *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.*



We Need Not Walk Alone

We Would Like to Thank the Following for Sponsoring this Edition of the Newsletter

Gary & Susan Chan in loving memory of their daughter Rachael Reneé Chan who was born on December 28th

Tom & Mary Sue Kraft in loving memory of their son Tyler Kraft who died on December 9th

Duane & Mary Eberhardt in loving memory of their son Jerry Eberhardt who died on October 25th

Mark & Debi Harvey in loving memory of their son Nathan Harvey who was born on December 9th

Ann Hermreck in loving memory of her son Mitchell A. Hermreck who was born on October 14th

Gary & Linda Ramey in loving memory of their daughter Kiley Ramey who was born on November 24th

Joseph & Anne Steinbock in loving memory of their son Jeffrey Alan who was born on December 13th

David & Laura Wiebler in loving memory of their son Eric Edward Gordon Wiebler who was born on November 15th

Please Note:

**If you wish to sponsor the next newsletter
(January ~ February ~ March 2022)**

**we must receive your information and \$30.00
check by December 1, 2021. Make checks payable to:
Topeka TCF Chapter**



Are You Moving?

If you move, please let us know your new address so you can continue to receive this newsletter. It costs the Chapter 71 cents every time a newsletter is returned by the Post Office with an outdated address. Please send address changes to: Susan Chan, 3448 SW Mission Ave., Topeka, KS 66614-3629. You may email address changes to chanx2@cox.net. We appreciate your cooperation as this will save the Chapter money which can be better spent on bereavement outreach. If, for any reason, you wish to have your name removed from our mailing list, please drop me a note or email and I will take your name off the list. If you have chosen the e-newsletter option, please keep me aware of any email address changes.

A Special and Important Message to Our New Compassionate Friends

If you are newly bereaved and have recently attended your first Compassionate Friends meeting, you may have left the meeting feeling overwhelmed and emotionally drained. With the heavy load of grief you are carrying, you cannot bear to hear about all the pain shared at meetings. Consequently, you may have decided not to return. We would like to let you know that these feelings are common to all our members, many of whom resolved not to expose themselves to such anguish again, but were drawn back by the knowledge that they were among those who "know how you feel".

Please give us at least **three** tries before you decide whether or not the meetings are for you. You will find a network of caring and support which will help you as you travel your grief journey, and most assuredly, you will find hope along the way. We truly care about you and want to make certain that no bereaved parent ever needs to walk this path alone.

---Topeka TCF Chapter Steering Committee

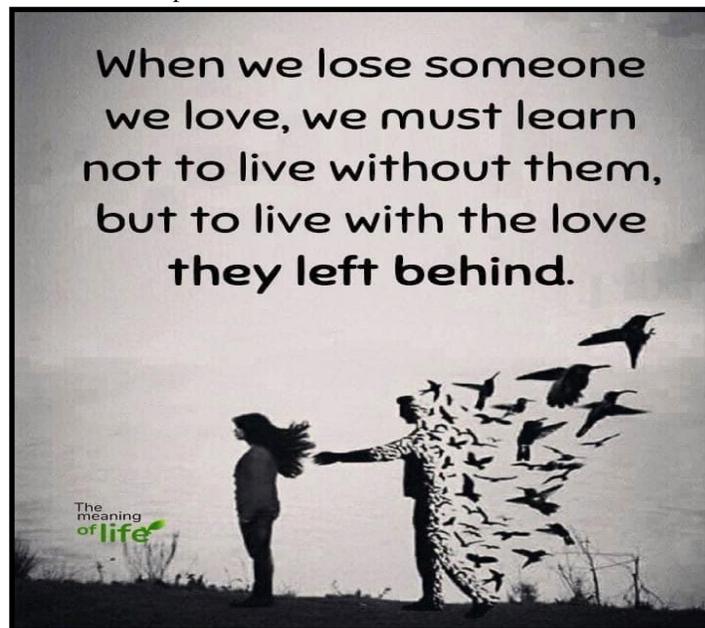
Additional Support Group Resources

HEALs - Healing after loss of suicide offers support to all survivors affected by the loss of a loved one to suicide. Meetings are at 6:30-8:00 p.m. on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month. Pozez Center (north side of Stormont Vail). Contact Information: Sandy Reams 785-249-3792 or email TopekaHeals@gmail.com

Pregnancy and Infant Loss Group - Meets 1st and 3rd Thursdays of the month from 6-8 p.m. at the Pozez Education Center. The group, which has regular meetings to share information and experiences, also has a blog for members that offers communication, resources and support. If you are interested in learning more about the blog, please email lrosen@stormontvail.org. For information call (785) 354-5225.

From Victims to Survivors - Support group for families who have had a loved one murdered. The group meets the fourth or last Wednesday of each month at Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, 4775 S.W. 21st. For more information, call Bill Lucero at 232-5958 or see <http://fromvictimstosurvivors.com>.

When we lose someone we love, we must learn not to live without them, but to live with the love they left behind.



And We Remember . . .

Because of the potential for the hurtful crime of identity theft, TCF Chapter Newsletters will now only publish the date of a child's birth or death without listing the year of the event. This is a directive from TCF National to protect all TCF members. Due to space constraints, only those families who remain current on our newsletter mailing database will be included in the We Remember section.

OCTOBER ~

Olivia Lynn Anderson, daughter of Suzannah Anderson; sister of Eli Anderson who was born on October 11th

Jordan Robert Barranco, son of Juan and Elizabeth Barranco, who was born on October 30th

Brian Lynn Blecha, son of Lynn and Alice Blecha, who died on October 15th

Derek G. Bodeman, son of Becky S. Bodeman, who was born on October 29th

Monty Brentlinger, son of Don and Carolyn Brentlinger, who died on October 21st

Skylar Callahan, son of Gena Callahan, brother of Branden, Alex, Chris and Jacob, who died on October 30th

Seth Austin Carney, son of Clay and Michelle Carney, who died on October 13th

Kale Cauthon, son of Denise Cauthon; brother of Josh and Cam, who died on October 15th

Eric Joseph Conley, son of Tom and Barbara Conley, who was born on October 22nd

Gerald (Jerry) Eberhardt, son of Duane and Mary Eberhardt, who died on October 25th

Richard Brian Gilbert, son of Rick and Carla Gilbert, who was born on October 20th

Justin Grabhorn, son of Philip and Barbara Grabhorn, who was born on October 10th

Tasman McKay Grout, daughter of Pam Grout, who was born on October 8th and died on October 15th

Mitchell Hermreck, son of Dennis and Ann Hermreck; brother of Shelby and Raegan, who was born on October 14th

Abigail Hosie, daughter of Matt and Jennifer Hosie, who was born on October 30th

Vernon A. Jamison, Sr., son of Eugene A. and Mayverdis Jamison who died on October 1st

Gabriel Kidd, son of Julie Kidd, who died on October 1st

Abigail Medley, daughter of Terry Medley and Jennifer Hoise, who was born on October 30th

Jessica Rae Meyer, daughter of James Robert Meyer and Jennifer Jean Meyer, and sister of Rebecca Meyer, who was born on October 27th

Janet Pace, daughter of Barbara Hale, sister of Carla Gilbert and Sara Wallo, and mother of Shauna Andersen, who was born on October 9th

Robin Lynn Paulson, daughter of Frank and Brenda Bissey and sister of Brad Bissey, who was born on October 8th

Sarah N. Rice, daughter of Gary and Peggy Rice, who died on October 6th

Brian Keith Robinson, son of Vernon and Pauline Robinson, born on October 3rd; died on October 13th

Luke Rojas, son of Wilma W. Rojas, born on October 22nd, and died on October 29th

Abbey Rubottom, daughter of Darcey Evans, who was born on October 23rd

Patrick Sprowl, son of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Sprowl, born on October 18th

Jeffery Alan Steinbock, son of Joe and Anne Steinbock, who died on October 11th

Caldyn David Wasinger, son of Austin and Krista Wasinger, who was born on October 28th

NOVEMBER ~

Spencer O'Bleness, son of Rebecca O'Bleness, who was born on November 15th and died on November 8th

Skylar Callahan, son of Gena Callahan, brother of Branden, Alex, Chris and Jacob, who was born on November 4th

Kristi Diaz, daughter of Julie Diaz, born on November 7th

Jeffrey Hoium, son of Mel and Helen Hoium, who died on November 12th

Steve Isley, son of Web and Jeanette Isley, who died on November 6th

Karen Kay Karnes, daughter of Wilson and Maxine Karnes, who died on November 19th

Morgan Kottman, daughter of Christine Kottman, who died on November 21st

Tabitha Krystofosky, sister of Darrell "Bo" Cremer, Jr., who died on November 27th

Ben Lake, grandson of Patty Lake, who died on November 29th

Christen (Chris) Edward Locke, son of Alfonzo E. Locke Jr. and Sheila D. Locke, who was born on November 29th

Phylles McCarthy, daughter of Janet Hamilton who was born in November.

Jessica Rae Meyer, daughter of James Robert Meyer and Jennifer Jean Meyer, and sister of Rebecca Meyer, who died on November 16th

Kyle Neigh, son of Rosemary Robledo, who died on November 19th

Kiley Ramey, daughter of Gary and Linda Ramey, who died on November 24th

Kevin Lee Cronister, son of Richard and Judy Cronister, who died on December 10th

Adam J. Reams, son of Gene and Sandy Reams; brother of Nick Reams, born on November 24th

Curtis Junior Dickinson, son of Curtis and Debbi Dickinson, still born on December 24th

Louis Walter and Teresa Caolina Stroble-Bernal, son and daughter of Raja Stroble and Beatriz Bernal, who were stillborn on November 1st

Callea Breiner, daughter of Bob and Kayla Dieball, who died on December 19th

Jason R. VanDam, son of Will and Kay Hasty, who died on November 5th

Angel Dawn Dickinson, daughter of Curtis and Debbi Dickinson, stillborn on December 25th

Donald (Donnie) Warren, son of Nancy McCune, who was born on November 26th

Phylles McCarthy, daughter of Janet Hamilton, who died in December

Eric Edward Gordon Wiebler, son of David and Laura Wiebler, born November 15th

John Carl Harrington, son of Mary Harrington, who was born on December 15th

Kenneth Williams, son of Clayton and Sharon Williams, who was born on November 14th and died on November 21st

Nathan Harvey, son of Mark and Debi Harvey; brother of Rachel, Amanda and Caleb Harvey; grandson of Velata Tibbs, who was born on December 9th

Richard Wilson, son of Kathrine Susan Whittington, who died on November 10th

Shawn Michael Hatfield, son of Hank and Cathy Harman, who died on December 5th

DECEMBER ~

Austin Tyler Miller, grandson of Earl and Linda Frey, stillborn on December 3rd

Carlie Almond, daughter of Brad and Amy Almond, who died on December 3rd

David D Morris, son of Merwin (Bud) and Velma C. Morris, born on December 18th

Kyle Bartley, son of Susan Bartley, who died on December 20th

Krystil M. Pearson, daughter of Patti Cox and sister of Kendall Pressler, who was born on December 24th

Lori Ann Becerra, daughter of Mike and Ginny Becerra, who was born on December 15th and died on December 15th

Jamie Lynn Russell, daughter of John and Elaine Chandler, who died on December 29th

Ryan Broxterman, son of Kevin and Susan Broxterman, who died on December 6th

Jeffrey Alan Steinbock, son of Joe and Anne Steinbock, who was born on December 13th

Rachael Reneé Chan, daughter of Gary and Susan Chan, who was born on December 28th

Nicholas Swanson, son of Candi Kuipers, brother of Tayla and Jaythan, who died on December 23rd

Tyler Kraft, son on Tom and Mary Sue Kraft, who died on December 9th

Caydyn David Wasinger, son of Austin and Krista Wasinger, who died on December 1st

(Use the form below to submit your listing if you have not already done so. Once you have submitted your listing, you do not have to do so every year as long as you remain active on our mailing list. Your child's name and dates will remain on the We Remember database unless you request their removal or choose to discontinue receiving this newsletter.)

And We Remember - If you wish your child, grandchild or sibling included in this section, please fill out the form below and return to: Susan Chan, 3448 S.W. Mission Avee., Topeka, KS 66614-3629. You may also email to chanx2@cox.net< We do not automatically list your information just because you are receiving this newsletter. We only list information for those requesting it. **Please type or print clearly.**

Child's Name _____

Son __ Daughter __ Grandson __ Granddaughter __ Brother __ Sister __

Date of Birth _____

Date of Death _____

Father _____

Mother _____

Address _____ Phone _____

Note: Please list address and phone #. You will only be contacted if there is a question about your listing.
Is this a change of address for you? (please circle) YES NO

Holiday Grief and the Lessons from Tangled Christmas Lights

By Jan Borgman, MSW, LISW-S, FT

I knew the holidays were coming but I didn't want to deal with them and I really didn't want to put up any of the holiday decorations. Well-meaning family and friends kept telling me that I needed to "get into the spirit" of the holidays. I agreed that I would at least get the boxes out of storage and go through them.

I soon realized that each box held memories of past holidays and celebrations. At times, I was overwhelmed with the feelings that I experienced as I opened the boxes that held my precious decorations. By the time I found the holiday lights that were at the bottom of a box, I wasn't in the mood to deal with the impossible task that was before me as the lights were a tangled mess.

As I tried to untangle the ball of lights, I began to see this mangled mess as part of my grief journey. I felt tangled in my grief and my emotions were like a ball wadded up within me. It would have been much easier to just toss the lights aside and purchase new ones but I didn't want to face the crowds at the store.



For some reason, I got lost in the distraction as I tried to figure out the best way to untangle the strands of lights that were before me. I plugged them to make sure they worked before I would spend any time dealing with them. Through the tears that had gathered in my eyes, the lights seemed to sparkle. I found comfort in their brightness and I became determined to conquer the mess.

As I sat there trying to find which way to move the wires to get them free, I began to see how this tangled ball of lights represented my experience of grief. I realized that the only way I was going to get through this experience was to be patient. I've learned a lot about being patient as I deal with my grief. It would have been easy, so many times in the past year, to give up and to walk away from the memories and the pain. But when I faced my frustration and fears, I found strength I never knew I had.

This was a similar challenge as I tried to untangle the strands of lights. As the ball became smaller, I knew I was making progress. Each time I thought I was past the worst tangle, I would find another one, but this time it was smaller and easier to figure out. As I work through my grief, the

same can be said. Each new challenge seems smaller and easier to manage because of the progress I have already made.

And as I gazed upon the lights, I realized that each of the colors represent a part of my grief. The red lights remind me of the love I shared. I recalled the happy times and the wonderful memories I hold in my heart. The red lights also remind me of the things I need to stop doing such as denying my feelings and blaming myself.

The blue lights represent my sadness. There are times when I feel "blue" or sad. Once I own my feelings of being down they are easier to accept because I'm embracing my pain instead of denying it. Admitting that I was sad made it easier to reach out and ask for help or to find things to distract me.

The yellow lights represent the brightness in my life as I smile at all the memories I hold. I found myself laughing at some of the past holiday experiences and the things we did or shared. I realize how full my life is because of the life we shared. The brightness truly outshines the sadness.

The orange lights remind me that the warmth of our love will always shine upon me because of the life we shared. I hold so many memories and I have been blessed to know the gift of love.

And the green lights represent my hope for the future. Hope gives me permission to move forward with my life as I learn to live with my loss. Learning to live with loss doesn't mean forgetting the person who died but being able to create new memories to compliment the memories already held.

As I finally got the last of the lights untangled, I felt a sense of accomplishment that I stayed with the task and didn't give up. When I plugged them in, I noticed that some of the bulbs were burnt out but the strand of lights were still lit. It reminded me that even though those we love may no longer be with us, they are still part of our lives. Just as the other lights stayed lit, when someone we love dies, it doesn't mean that we have to stop living.

Alone, the colors would not be as bright but together they provide a soft, comforting glow. The lights represent aspects of my life and my grief. The red, blue, yellow, orange and green lights represent my love, my sadness, my memories, my joy and my hope. I have the opportunity to keep the love glowing through my memories and the life I live.

I never imagined that those tangled Christmas lights would help me find meaning in my grief and strength to face the holidays. (Source: *Grief Digest Magazine*, Centering Corporation, 7230 Maple, Omaha, NE 68134, www.centering.org) Only December
Posted on December 5th, 2018



ONLY DECEMBER

*Feelings heavy,
 tears and tears.
 Will the darkness last?
 Or is it - only December?
 Hadn't past months
 brought peace and hope?
 Where is the strength of October-
 and November?
 Lights, carols, ornaments on trees,
 cards from friends,
 happy times in seasons past.
 We remember.
 We remember.
 Will January bring light at last?
 Will we be stronger then,
 for making it through
 this December?
 When people ask
 how I'm doing,
 I say, "Well, you know,
 it's December..."*

~ from *Stars in the Deepest Night* – after the death of a child
 By Genesse Bourdeau Gentry

And when I
 turned to face
 grief, I saw that it
 was just love in a
 heavy coat.

~ Shannon Barry

A NEW THANKSGIVING

On Thanksgiving morning 1991, I was standing at the sink, peeling potatoes. The turkey was in the oven, the pies were cooling on the sideboard. Just another normal holiday morning. At 10:30 the phone rang. I was closest, so I answered it.

That call from the San Diego medical examiner changed my life forever.

Within seconds our whole household was in chaos and shock our beautiful daughter Nancy had been killed in a car accident earlier that morning.



How could this be? I had just talked with her less than 24 hours before. She had wished us a "happy Turkey Day" and closed her call with "I love you, Mom." That was to be the last time I would hear her voice.

How did I get from that day of wrenching pain to this day nine years later? The simple answer is: a minute, an hour, a day at a time.... one foot in front of the other, reaching out for people who had been where I was.

The first Thanksgiving after Nancy's death was the most difficult. I couldn't bring myself to cook or even look at a turkey. The decorated paper plates and napkins in the store were sickening to me. My solution to the turkey was to serve prime rib instead. That strategy got me through the next two Thanksgivings.

One of my watershed moments came on the fourth Thanksgiving after Nancy's accident. My surviving children wanted the traditional turkey-and-trimmings dinner. They missed the old ways. The truth is, they had moved forward and they wanted me to take that step also.

Reluctantly, I obliged, but with a heavy heart. With red roses nearby and her candle lit, we gathered together and counted our blessings.

Today with love and support of family and friends, I will once again prepare the Thanksgiving dinner. It will always be "different." I can't change what was. I can, however, choose to embrace the life I have now. There is so much more to be grateful for. Not a day goes by that I don't count my blessings. Among the greatest of these is the love of family and friends, and peace in my heart.

I truly believe that those blessings can be yours, too. Time, tears, love of family, good friends, and reinvestment can lead you there.

~ Mary Conway, TCF, Nashville, TN
 In Memory of my daughter, Nancy



*In the fall
When amber leaves are shed,
Softly—silently
Like tears that wait to flow,
I watch and grieve.
My heart beats sadly in the fall;
'Tis then I miss you most of all.*

*Lily de Lauder
TCF, Van Nuys, CA*



How To Access To Compassionate Friends On-Line Support Chat Groups

To access the on-line support system go to compassionatefriends.org or use key word "Compassionate Friends". Click on Find Support then click On-Line Communities then click on Get OnLine Support. You will need to register for the chat rooms.

How To Access To Compassionate Friends Facebook Groups

For the national TCF Facebook page go to Facebook and enter Compassionate Friends USA.

For individual groups within Facebook, please go to compassionatefriends.org or use key word "Compassionate Friends". Click on Find Support then click On-Line Communities then click on View Groups or click on Resources then click on 24/7 Private Facebook Groups. The Compassionate Friends offers a variety of private Facebook Groups. These pages are moderated by bereaved parents, siblings, or grandparents, and may not be accessed unless a request to join is approved by a moderator. Please click on the link next to the group you wish to join and answer the screening questions so we can confirm your request. If you are waiting approval, please message one of the administrators. Join requests to our Facebook groups must be requested personally, therefore when you wish to share the group with someone please pass along the link to the group.

Accessing Brochures/E-Newsletter

To access various brochures on dealing with various aspects of grief go to compassionatefriends.org or use key word "Compassionate Friends." Click on Resources then click Brochures Available. You can also register for the national e-newsletter at this site.

Halloween

It is here, this day of merriment and
children's pleasure.
Gremlins and goblins
and ghosties at the door
of your house.

And the other children
come to the door of your mind.
Faces out of the past,
small ghosts with sweet, painted faces.

They do not shout.
Those children
who no longer march laughing
on cold Halloween nights,
they stand at the door of your mind

and you will let them in,
so that you can give them
the small gifts of Halloween,
a smile and a tear.

*~ Sascha Wagner
The Compassionate Friends*



Enjoying the Holidays in a Different Way ... Without My Brother

~ Heidi Horsley, www.opentohope.com Posted 12/5/2018

I was shocked and stunned when I received the news that my brother Scott had died in a car accident. I thought my brother was going to be in my life forever. We grew up together, experienced a shared history, and knew things about each other that no one else will ever know. I always assumed we'd raise kids together, grow old together, and share many more holidays together.

So how did I not only survive the holidays, but eventually learn how to enjoy them again without my brother. It was a rocky, painful journey, with pain that hit like waves, sometimes when I least expected it. The holidays brought back so many memories; every song, smell, and tradition was bittersweet.

Initially, joy made me feel guilty. I worried that if I let go of the pain, I would be letting go of my brother's memory. It felt disloyal to experience positive feelings when I missed my brother so much. Well-meaning friends told me that my brother would want me to have a happy holiday, and while I knew this on an intellectual level, my heart wasn't ready to accept it yet.

There were some relatives who tried to recreate a typical Christmas, with family traditions, as if my brother had never died. Not acknowledging my brother was the worst thing anyone could do. The pretense was that everything needed to return back to normal. However, things in my life were forever changed and I needed to figure out how to create a "new holiday normal." For me, this meant finding a way to honor the memory of my brother while at the same time reinvesting in my new life.

Here are some of the things that have helped me during the holidays. I hope they will help you as well. However, everybody who is grieving must decide what works best for them:

Holiday Survival Tips:

- Plan in advance how you are going to spend the holidays, and be able to say no if you need to.
- Take a break from holiday traditions that are too painful –create new traditions.
- Connect with others.
- Share stories of past holidays and spend time reflecting back. Keep your loved one's memory alive for those who were too young to remember the person.
- Include memories of your loved one in your celebration (e.g., light a candle, display pictures, make a toast in honor of the person).

My brother played many roles during the holidays. I can fill some of these roles but there are many more that will never be filled, and I fill those with all the memories that he left behind. Although we are poorer for having lost our loved ones, we are richer for having known them. I hope you will be able to celebrate the happiness, laughter, and memories that your brother brought into your life by enjoying this holiday in a new and different way!



CALL FOR PHOTOS

If you would like your loved one's photo included in our TCF Chapter's memorial slide presentation, please do one of the following:

1. If you have computer access and can send a jpg file of your child's photo electronically, please send to: dtucker35@cox.net <Be sure to include your loved one's full name, birth and death dates.
2. If you are not able to send a photo file electronically, you may send a photo print (do not send the only copy you have!) so that we may scan it into digital format. Send the photo plus the full name, birth and death dates for your loved one to: Susan Chan, 3448 SW Mission Ave., Topeka, KS 66614-3629. Please include a stamped, self-addressed envelope for return of your photo. We will continue to collect photos throughout the year to add to the slide presentation. **If you have already sent in a photo, you need not resend one.**
3. The Memorial Slide Presentation will be a part of our Candle Lighting Memorial on December 13th.



My Worldwide Candle Lighting Experience

By John Thayer, Chadron, NE

Lighting a candle is usually simple, but when I lit one in memory of my niece during the Worldwide Candle Lighting® this year, I found it to be very difficult.

As I was getting ready for church, I received a text message from my sister who lost a daughter three years ago. Her message read, "Today is Worldwide Candle Lighting Day. We are asking that you please light a candle at 7:00 p.m. in loving memory of our angel, Alicyn Grace and let it burn for one hour. It would mean so much. Thanks!"

I had to participate. It was about what it meant to my sister and brother-in-law. After church, I went to Walmart for what may have been my first-ever candle purchase. I just stood there looking at the candles. Minutes passed, carts pushed by as I picked a candle up and set it back down. When you are doing something meaningful, you don't just grab the first thing you see. It has to feel right.

I finally picked up a white candle and a holder, but before I walked away, something caught my eye. It was a candle holder in the shape of a heart. It could only go with a red-colored candle, and with a smile, knew I had the right one.

That night I took the candle with me to a company Christmas party. I was planning to get away from the party at the right time and light the candle where it could burn for one hour. At 6:14 p.m., I received another text message from my sister. "Never knew lighting a candle could be this hard. The flicker of the fire is dancing steadily . . . wonder if she is dancing with it. Love you guys!"

As a tear filled my eye, I responded, "You know she is." I started to wonder if this was going to be hard. There were so many things running through my head as the Christmas party began. I stood there with a smile and carried on a conversation although part of me was never present.

As we went through gag gifts, I continued to watch the clock. When my phone read 6:56 p.m., I excused myself and went into the office where the candle was waiting. I stood there staring at the clock with the lighter in my right hand. As the minutes ticked by, memories filled my thoughts.

With two minutes until lighting, I was taken back to that Friday morning in the middle of a Doane College parking lot where I fell to my knees as I heard my mother's voice say, "Allie is gone," over the phone. I remembered feeling incredibly weak . . . helpless. I was three hours away and couldn't race to my sister and give her a hug. We grew close after I moved to college. Not sure why it took so long, but we talked a lot on the phone. Back on that Friday morning, I remember wiping tears from my face as people curiously looked on.

I finally got up and walked across the campus where I had just given a tour. Before I'd left, Michelle, an admissions counselor, had asked how my sister and her baby were doing. She knew the due date was close. Running late, I'd smiled and said they were doing great and that I had a picture to show her when I got back. It was the picture my sister had sent late Thursday night after she had finished the crib. Now,

as I made my way back to the building, I knew things weren't so great. They were awful. The worst had happened.

I dropped off some keys at the desk and went to Michelle's office. Her glowing smile dropped as she saw me turn the corner. She asked what was wrong, and after I'd closed her door, I lost it again. She jumped up and gave me a hug as I told her my sister had lost the baby.

Preparing the candle took me back to the moment I walked into my sister's house where my mother and brother-in-law's mother, Pat, stood. Not a word was said. I walked across the floor and grabbed my mother with both arms as tears ran down my face. Then I gave Pat a big hug and stood there trembling.

It took me back to the moment I walked into the hospital and didn't want to go into my sister's room but knew I had to. You see, my sister carried full term and was induced to deliver stillborn. As Mom grabbed the handle, she looked at me and asked if I was ready. As strong as I could be in a weak moment, I told her I was as ready as I would ever be. When the door opened I locked eyes with my sister and made a beeline to her side. She cried when she saw me as I reached down to give her the biggest hug I ever had.

It took me back to the moment standing outside of the delivery room when the process was complete and there was only silence. For a moment I said a prayer with the words, "Please cry," but there was nothing.

It made me think about the late nights up with my sister, as she cried and asked why. I had no answers. There was nothing I could say . . . nothing I could do.

It took me back to the April 23 graveside service, looking at a tiny box and thinking it was something for shoes and not for my niece. It took me to the moment the balloons were released into the sky, as I watched my two nephews' balloons, filled with toys for their sister to play with in heaven, bounce through a tree and out the other side without popping.

It all came back to me. And it happened quickly. As the clock hit 7:00 p.m., I reached forward and lit the wick as a tear streamed down my face. I stood over the burning flame and stared at it. I wondered who she would be today. As I watched the flame dance, I thought back to my sister's message and smiled as I took pictures of the burning candle. One of the pictures made it to Facebook where I wrote my sister and brother-in-law a message to let them know it was okay to let their candle go out. The light was continuing for another hour . . . in another time zone.

In Loving memory of Alicyn Grace Hosick (04/18/08).

Editor's Note:

The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting is a powerful and meaningful expression of the love we have for those who have died. I encourage you to join the event this year on Sunday, December 12, 2021. You can light your candle in your home or with friends and family in loving memory of those "who left too soon". Light your candle at 7:00 p.m. in your time zone and let it burn for one hour. You will be joining thousands of families across the globe in this special memorial event. You can find more information at www.compassionatefriends.org<

Christmas Eve



*Silent
Night, holy
Night ~*

"It's about time,"
he says quietly.

Deliberately, wordlessly,
they gather the materials
carefully put away last year,
the matches, candle, candle jar
to fend off the harsh winter wind.

Tis the season to be jolly ~

Slowly they drive toward the town's edge,
past homes with bright, blinking bulbs.
Cars of faraway relatives fill the drives.

Happy, laughing families, children home from school
pass on the way to midnight Mass.

It's the most wonderful time of the year ~

At last, town lights left far behind, they sit mute,
each wrapped in private cocoons of memories of
Christmas past, excited whispers from their room,
silly giggles, fervent good-night kisses, anticipation of morning.

On a cold winter's night that was so deep ~

Through the gate, down the drive, engine killed,
frozen grass crunching underfoot, hand-in-hand
they walk up the hill to the familiar moonlit stone. With
practiced hands they brush it clean, then prepare their votive Noel.

The world in solemn stillness lay ~

Lumps in throat, arm-in-arm, candles lit, they stand and weep,
But not so bitter as in years past. The pain's as deep but not so long,
as once again they dream of things that should have been but never were.

The stars in the sky look down where he lay ~

"Let's go," he says. She nods assent. They leave, though turn back once to see
the lonely flame of their lost child gleaming peacefully through the dark.

He whispers softly, his visit done -

"Merry Christmas and
good-night, my child.

~ Sleep in heavenly peace, Sleep in heavenly peace ~

By Richard A. Dew, MD, TCF Knoxville, TN

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



The Compassionate Friends
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Light a candle for all
children who have died

**Worldwide
Candle
Lighting®**

*... that their light
may always shine.*

**Second Sunday in December
7 PM Around the Globe**



The Compassionate Friends

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TCF Credo

We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends.
We reach out to each other with love, with understanding, and with hope.

The children we mourn have died at all ages and from many different causes, but our love for them 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, creeds, and relationships.
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 they feel helpless and see no hope.

Some of us have found our faith to be a source of strength, while some of us are struggling to find answers.
Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in deep depression, while 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 the children who have died.

We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building a future together.
We reach out to each other in love to 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.

We need not walk alone. We are The Compassionate Friends.