



The Compassionate Friends

Topeka Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Published Bimonthly by The Topeka TCF Chapter

ADVISORY BOARD - Topeka Chapter
Rev. Art Donnelly, Second Presbyterian Church
Chaplain Ty Petty, MDiv., L.S.D.C.S.W.
Colleen Ellis, L.S.C.W., Family Therapist
Donna Mathena-Menke, Funeral Director/Bereaved Parent
Donna Kidd, Bereaved Parent
Byron Waldy, Chaplain/Counselor

NEWSLETTER - Volume 5, Issue No. 2
The Compassionate Friends, Inc.
National Headquarters, P. O. Box 3696
Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696
Toll Free 877-969-0010; Fax (630) 990-0246

National TCF Website:
www.compassionatefriends.org

Topeka TCF Chapter Website:
www.tcftopeka.org

March ~ April 2020
Editor: Susan Chan
3448 S.W. Mission Ave.
Topeka, KS 66614-3629
(785) 272-4895

MARCH MEETING

Monday, March 23, 2020 (**4th Monday**)

Most Pure Heart of Mary Church

3601 S.W. 17th St., Topeka, KS

7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

Signs, Symbols & Dreams - At this meeting we will discuss unusual happenings we may have experienced since the death of our child, grandchild or sibling. Bereaved parents 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, flower, etc.) that you associate with your child, etc. Sometimes dreams about your child can be comforting, sometimes unsettling. This meeting offers us the opportunity to share such events and experiences in an open and nonjudgemental setting.

APRIL MEETING

Monday, April 27, 2020

Most Pure Heart of Mary Church

3601 S.W. 17th St., Topeka, KS

7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

Healing Tears - We will talk about the role of crying in our grief journey. Why and where do we cry? What triggers our tears? Does crying make us feel better or worse? We will explore some of the myths about crying, and members are free to share how crying or not crying has influenced how they have grieved the death of their child, grandchild or sibling. Tears are sacred and tissues will be available.

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.

This newsletter is sponsored by:

*Gary & Susan Chan in loving memory of their daughter
Rachael Reneé Chan who died on March 17th*

*Mark & Lori Neddermeyer in loving memory of her
daughter Maddie Rae Nail who died on March 19th*

*Mark & Debi Harvey in loving memory of their
son Nathan Harvey who died on April 10th*

*Damon & Collene Tucker in loving memory of their daughter
Brittany Nicole Tucker who was born on April 30th and died on
March 11th*

*Phil & Louise Jenkins in loving memory of their daughter
Teresa Jenkins Carson who was born on April 7th*

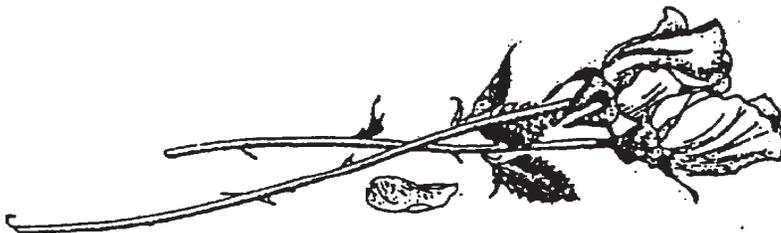
*Tom & Mary Sue Kraft in loving memory of their
son Tyler Thomas Kraft who was born on April 30th*

*Margaret & Tad Kramar & Benjamin Good in loving
memory of her son and his brother Spenser Thomas Good
who died on April 30th*



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.

Copyright ©2020 The Compassionate Friends
All rights reserved



We Need Not Walk Alone

From the Newsletter Editor

Dear Compassionate Friends Family,

We seem to be making a slow climb out of winter's gloom and bitter cold as temperatures start to moderate and we see small clumps of green poking their heads out of sleepy gardens. Sometimes I think that we too are like those newly emerging plants. We have kept our vigil in the sometimes dark and hidden places of our grief journeys and now, with the passage of time and by doing our grief work, we have started to emerge back into life. No, we never expect to be the same person we were before our beloved child, grandchild or sibling died, but we can sense that there has been a change in us. We hopefully have reached a point where, when we think of our loved one, we can focus more on the memories of their life rather than only on the day of their death. Each of us may reach this point in our journey at different times, but I do believe there are indeed "seasons of grief" that we pass through on our journey. I hope for each of you that the arrival of Spring may bring you a sense of renewed hope and commitment to seeking your individual path towards healing. We move forward, hopefully leaving some of the intense pain of our early grief behind, but carrying forward with us the love we will always have for our children, grandchildren and siblings. Love doesn't go away, but lives on forever in your heart and in your memories. I wish for each of you a season of hope and renewal.

A Couple of Reminders: The month of March has FIVE Mondays in it, so keep in mind that our March meeting is the regular FOURTH Monday this month. We invite you to join us as we discuss "Signs, Symbols & Dreams".

Also, please remember that we will be culling the Topeka TCF Chapter mailing list beginning with the May/June issue of this newsletter. SO, if you have not already returned the yellow form that was in the Jan/Feb newsletter indicating your wish to remain on our mailing list for future newsletters, PLEASE do so NOW. We want everyone who wants to get the newsletter to be able to do so and you have the option of receiving the newsletter in printed form or sent electronically to your e-mail address. If you no longer have your yellow form, you can find a printable PDF copy of it on our Chapter website (www.tcftopeka.org) under "Newsletters".

The Topeka Chapter Steering Committee would like to thank those who have sent in Newsletter Sponsorships and Love Gifts. We are a non-profit support entity and charge no dues or fees to participate in our support group meetings or special memorial events or to receive this newsletter. We totally depend on donations to help pay the expenses for our TCF Chapter so any help you can give will be most appreciated.

Until next time, be gentle with yourself and let the healing happen.
Remember, We Need Not Walk Alone.

~ Susan Chan, Rachael's Mom

It wasn't My Choice To Survive Without You!

So, I Chose To Live and To Honor You!

Cavissa Fowler Healing Hand

Last Moments

***Last moments
Snatches of conversation
That echo across all decades...
Priceless words
Indelibly etched on the heart.
Sometimes
Thoughts were never spoken
But unexpected sentiment—
A quick embrace, a silly smirk,
Or joyous laughter—
Reaches through the pain
And warms the heart.
We came too soon to understand
The folly of harsh words
Or neglected touch,
For who can know which
Taken-for-granted event
Will become
A last moment.***

~ Diane Fields, TCF Westmoreland, PA

Love Gifts

**Your Love Gifts Help Spread
the Message of Hope & Healing ~ Won't You Help Today?**

What is a Love Gift? A Love Gift is a gift of money (or books, etc.) to The Compassionate Friends. It is usually in memory of a child, grandchild or sibling who has died, but it may be from individuals who wish to honor a relative or friend who has died, a gift of thanks that their children are alive, or simply a gift from someone who wants to help. The Compassionate Friends charges *no individual dues* or fees and depends on such Love Gifts to meet the Chapter's expenses, including the printing and mailing of this newsletter. **When you make a donation, make sure to check to see if your employer may have a "matching gifts" program** as this could double the amount of your donation. If you are not sure whether your company has such a program, check with your Personnel Department. This month we thank the following:

- ♥ Bert and Elaine Bandstra in loving memory of their daughter Diane Joy Bandstra
- ♥ Tom and Mary Sue Kraft in loving memory of their son Tyler Thomas Kraft
- ♥ Don and Julie Strathamn in loving memoy of their son Keith Strathman

Your gifts enable us to print this newsletter and reach out to newly bereaved families. Donations are our only source of income and are **tax deductible**. If you would like to sponsor a newsletter, the cost is \$30.00. If we have more than one sponsor, we recognize all of them. If you wish to send a Love Gift, any amount is appreciated. It is whatever you feel you can give. Donations of books that you have found helpful to the Topeka Chapter Library are also greatly appreciated, and it is a nice way to remember your child or other loved one. If you would like to send a Love Gift or a Newsletter Sponsorship, you may do so by sending it to: The Compassionate Friends, c/o Susan Chan, 3448 SW Mission Ave., Topeka, KS 66614-3629. For Newsletter Sponsorships, please indicate which issue you wish to sponsor (Jan/Feb, March/April, May/June, July/August, September/October, or November/December). Makes checks payable to "TCF".

Our Thanks to: Midland Care Connection for giving us a mailbox and Most Pure Heart of Mary Church for allowing us to meet at their facility. A special Thank You to ProPrint for helping to underwrite the printing cost of this newsletter.

*"It is so much darker when a light goes out than it would have been if it had never shown."
~ John Steinbeck*

TCF National Office e-mail:
nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org

Compassionate Friends web address:
www.compassionatefriends.org

Topeka TCF Chapter web and e-mail addresses:
www.tcftopeka.org tcftopeka@gmail.com

Kansas Regional Coordinator:
Marty & Renda Weaver - (785) 823-7191
mweaver@cox.net

.....
: **Dillions Community Rewards Program Helps Fund** :
: **Chapter Expenses - A REMINDER** - Have you signed :
: up for the Dillions Community Rewards Program yet? If :
: not, we encourage you to do so as it really helps to bring :
: income into our Chapter to help meet expenses. The more :
: participants we have, the more income we can generate. :
: I encourage you to go to www.dillions.com/community :
: rewards and click on "Register" at the top of the page. When :
: you enroll you will be asked to designate which charity your :
: wish to support. **The Topeka Compassionate Friends** :
: **Chapter NPO number is TC248**. Once you have done so :
: and have a Dillons Shopper's Card, every time you make a :
: purchase at Dillons a portion of your total will be donated :
: to the Topeka TCF Chapter. Participating in this program :
: **costs you nothing** and **does not affect your fuel points** :
: for gasoline purchases. If you need assistance in setting up :
: your account, call toll-free at 1-800-576-4377 and select :
: Option 3.
:

Upcoming Events/Dates to Remember

TCF Regional Conference in Honolulu, HI - March 27-28 2020. "Hope, Healing and Aloha". For information go to www.compassionatefriends.org/events

43rd National TCF Conference in Atlanta, GA - July 24-26, 2020. Theme: "Sharing Sweet Memories of Love".

Sites of Future National TCF Conferences:

2021 ~ Detroit, MI 2022 ~ Houston, TX

Pro Print
DIGITAL PRINT AND COPY SERVICES

4931 WEST 6TH ST., STE 104 1033 SW GAGE BLVD, STE 200
LAWRENCE, KS 66049 TOPEKA, KS 66604
785.842.3610 785.272.0070

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 each event. This is a directive from the National TCF Office to protect all TCF members. **Due to space constraints, only those families who remain current on our newsletter mailing list will be included in the We Remember section**

Diane Joy Bandstra, daughter of Bert and Elaine Bandstra, who was born on May 24th

Derek G. Bodeman, son of Becky S. Bodeman, who died on May 6th

Terry Edward Burns, son of Kenneth and Eleanor Burns, and brother of Kathy Kaesewurm, who died on April 15th

Teresa Jenkins Carson, daughter of Phillip and Louise Jenkins, who was born on April 7th

Carly Kathleen Cornelison, daughter of Corie Green, who was born on April 17th

Tyler Thomas Craft, son of Tom and Mary Sue Craft, who was born on April 30th

Michael Ray Donoho, son of Tammy Collins and Dennis Donoho; and stepson of Edward Collins and Debbie Donoho, who died on April 11th

Dan Evans, brother of Drew Evans, born in April and died on May 21st

Claire Elise Fisher, daughter of Debra Fisher, who was born on May 15th

Jeff Fitzgibbons, son of Bill and Jean Fitzgibbons, who died on April 8th

Randy Flanagan, son of Dennis Flanagan, who was born on May 14th

Ryan Flanagan, son of Dennis Flanagan, who was born on April 24th

Anthony James Forshee, son of Darren and Gloria Forshee, who died on May 15th

Carter James Friess, son of Jennifer Friess, who died on May 19th

Richard Brian Gilbert, son of Rick and Carla Gilbert, who died on April 10th

Spenser Thomas Good, son of Margaret Kramar, who died on April 30th

Nathan Harvey, son of Mark and Debi Harvey; brother of Rachel, Amanda and Caleb Harvey; grandson of Velata Tibbs, who died on April 10th

Mitchell Hermreck, son of Dennis and Ann Hermreck; brother of Shelby and Raegan, who died on May 12th

Marshall Hille, son of Paula Ackerman, who died on May 16th

Nason John Hobelman, son of Dee Hobelman, who died on May 7th

Zachary James Hudec, son of Greg and Liz Hudec, who was born on May 8th

Gabriel Kidd, son of Julie Kidd, who was born on May 3rd

Michael "Mike" Dean Kidney, son of Forrest and Susan Kidney, who died on May 2nd

Morgan Kottman, daughter of Christine Kottman, who was born on April 22nd

Tabith Krystofosky, sister of Darrell "Bo" Cremer, Jr., who was born on April 11th

Andrew Garrett Lindeen, grandson of Mary J. Lindeen, who was born on May 8th

Dennis Montgomery, grandson of Janet Hamilton, who was born in April.

Morgan Myers, daughter of Alta and Rocky Myers, who died on April 3rd

Kyle Neidigh, son of Rosemary Robledo, who was born on April 21st

Eric Alan Palmberg, son of Jim and Doris Palmberg, who was born on April 14th

Evan Michael Schuetz, son of Tom and Debbie Schuetz, who died on April 12th

Rachel Diana Sowers, daughter of Bill and Diana Sowers, who died on May 17th

Sydney Diane Tate, daughter of Jeff and Misty Tate, who was born on April 30th

Brittany Nicole Tucker, daughter of Damon and Collene Tucker, who was born on April 30th

Taylor William Clay Watson, son of Terry and Kathy Watson, who was born on April 12th

Christopher Wempe, son of Dan and JoAnn Wempe, who died on May 12th

(Use the form on opposite page 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. (This month's listing includes birth and death anniversary dates for April and May)



Daydreams



*Once a day and sometimes more
You knock upon my daydreams door
And I say warmly come on in
I'm glad you're here with me again.*

*Then we sit down and have a chat
Recalling this, discussing that
Until some task that I must do
Forces me away from you.*

*Reluctantly I say good-bye
Smiling with a little sigh
For though my daydreams bring you near
I wish that you were really here.*

*But what reality cannot change
My dreams and wishes can arrange
And through my wishing you'll be brought
To me each day: A happy thought.*

*~ Stephen A. Wrig
TCF, Champaign-Urbana*

BORROWED HOPE

Lend me your hope for awhile,
I seem to have mislaid mine.
Lost and hopeless feelings accompany me daily.
Pain and confusion are my companions.
I know not where to turn.
Looking ahead to the future times
Does not bring forth images of renewed hope.
I see mirthless times, pain-filled days and more tragedy.
Lend me your hope for awhile.
I seem to have mislaid mine.
Hold my hand and hug me,
Listen to all my ramblings.
I need to unleash the pain and let it tumble out.
Recovery seems so far distant.
The road to healing, a long and lonely one.
Stand by me. Offer me your presence,
Your ears and your love.
Acknowledge my pain, it is so real and ever present.
I am overwhelmed with sad and conflicting thoughts.
Lend me your hope for awhile.
A time will come when I will heal,
And I will lend my renewed hope to others.

~ Eloise Cole, Phoenix, AZ TCF

(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 the We Remember section of this newsletter, please fill out the form below and return to: Susan Chan, 3448 S.W. Mission Ave., Topeka, KS 66614-3629. You may also email the information to chanx2@cox.net< We do not automatically list your information just because you are receiving this newsletter. We only list information for those parents requesting it. If you have previously submitted your child's information and it has appeared in the newsletter during the past year, you **do not** need to resubmit it. If you have just begun receiving this newsletter, or have never submitted this information, you will need to do so in order for it to be included. **Please type or print clearly.**

Child's Name _____ Son__ Daughter__ Grandchild__ Brother__ Sister__

Date of Birth _____ Date of Death _____

Father _____ Mother _____

Note: Please list your address and phone number. 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

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>.

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.

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.

TCF National Magazine

We Need Not Walk Alone Available Free Online

The Compassionate Friends national magazine, *We Need Not Walk Alone*®, is available for free online. The magazine remains available in print free with any patron donation or when ordered by paid subscription through TCF's online store.

We Need Not Walk Alone provides comfort and support to bereaved parents, siblings, and grandparents through stories, poems, advice columns, and much more. It has been referred to as "a support group in print" and is published three times a year.

Sign-up for a free online subscription through our website, compassionatefriends.org. It can be read online or downloaded to your computer for personal use.

Sign up for Compassionate Friends E-Newsletter

The Compassionate Friends National Office publishes a monthly e-newsletter designed to keep you up-to-date on what's going on with the organization and its chapters.

The e-newsletter includes information on such things as TCF National Conferences, the Walk to Remember, the Worldwide Candle Lighting, regional conferences, and other events of importance.

All you have to do to receive The Compassionate Friends e-newsletter is sign up for it online by visiting The Compassionate Friends national website at www.compassionatefriends.org and filling out the request to sign-up at the bottom of the page.



TCF National Page (open group)

<https://www.facebook.com/TCFUSA/>

Los Amigos Compasivos/USA

<https://www.facebook.com/LACUSA/>

TCF Private Facebook Groups

<https://www.compassionatefriends.org/find-support/online-communities/private-facebook-groups/>

Loss of a Child

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/407123299460580/>

Sounds of the Siblings (bereaved siblings only)

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/21358475781/>

Loss of a Grandchild

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/421759177998317/>

Recognizing Unsuccessful Grief

All of us who have searched for healing following the death of a child, grandchild or sibling know the roller coaster of emotions that are part of our grief process. We know there is no “quick fix” that magically lets us get on with our lives, and grief can be physically exhausting. We cannot go back to what was! And time, in and of itself, does not heal.

Although there is no set schedule for grieving and there will always be a hole in our hearts, many of us in TCF have found that within a year to 18 months, we are beginning to make some progress—granted the progress may seem minute to the bereaved. Grief therapists have learned that if death is from prolonged or serious illness there is grieving during the illness. The second year of grief may be as intense or even more emotionally devastating than the first year.

However, no two people have the same grief timetable. If we feel that we are not making progress, is there some way to determine whether or not we may need professional help or evaluation or at least reassurance? The following considerations may help you decide:

- Extended withdrawal from the world around you and prolonged inability to accomplish normal tasks or participate in everyday activities.
- Self-imposed isolation where you do not want to be around anyone—friends, family or others.
- Becoming too scared to be alone. You must have someone around all the time.
- Anger or guilt that (a) is out of proportion, (b) does not fit the circumstances, (c) extends for a long time without retreating, or (d) may be directed toward or imposed on others close to you.
- Depression that is exaggerated, unremitting, prolonged and occurs in original intensity years after the loss.
- Anxiety that interferes with going away from home.
- Dependence on alcohol or medications to cope or forget.
- An emotional “logjam” resulting from an accumulation of losses over the years.
- Contemplating or attempting suicide to “get away from it all” or to join your child.
- Self-caused illness or physical health problems that do not go away, or the inability to separate the real from the imagined. This kind of illness is different from the “ailments”

that most of us experience during the anniversary of our loved one’s death.

- Placing your child on a pedestal and forgetting his/her imperfections; or being unable to redirect your activities or to shift your focus, so that you can honor your child in a positive way.
- An absence of grief or a numbness, anxiety, sadness, or any kind of overall attitude that negatively affects others around you, including over-protectiveness of your loved ones.
- Converting all emotions into one or two favorite or “safe” emotions—like anger, boredom, or despair—which become all you are feeling, taking the place of grief.
- When talking does not seem to help or there is no one able to listen.

*~ By Libbyrose D. Clark, , TCF, Deep East Texas
from information provided by Vera Baron, LPC,
and Ray Johnson, CSW*

Empty Places

I drove the old way yesterday.
It'd been awhile, you see.
And there, without a warning,
the pain washed over me.
I drove the old way yesterday
and sadness came on strong,
taken back by so much feeling,
since you've been gone so long.
Places seem to lie in wait
to summon up the tears,
to say remember yesterday,
those days when you were here.
Places where you laughed and played
are places where I cry.
These places hold the memories
that will live as long as I.

*~ Genesse Gentry
TCF, Marin City, CA*

THE HOWLING GOD

Each Spring I begin a personal journey strangely linked to my religious beliefs.

Yesterday was Palm Sunday. The day is a mix of the triumphant and the defeated.

During the first part of this service we sing and speak of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. In some places such as my own church the congregation literally marches outside as a symbolic reenactment of Jesus' procession through the streets of Jerusalem. The feeling is upbeat, almost militant. It reminds me of that life before Rachel's diagnosis... the "silver bullet" attitude many of us have... 'That happens to other people, not us.'

The second half of the service begins with a reading of one of the Gospel stories covering the final hours of Jesus' life. In many congregations this reading is presented as a play of sorts with selected members of the congregation speaking the different roles that took part in the betrayal, handing over, trials, final agonizing walk and death of this man. The Gospel reading ends with Jesus' death. The "parade" at the beginning of the service ends with a terrible "crash" into the cross.

This coming Friday, commonly called Good Friday, repeats the Palm Sunday drama leading to those final moments on the cross and the laying in the tomb. It is a bleak day. Unlike Palm Sunday there is no triumphal entry. The battle is seemingly lost on Good Friday. The church is shorn of all adornment, the music somber... haunting and the readings are of a pleading, sorrowful, even angry tone.

For me the most striking moment of the Good Friday service are the words that Jesus utters in terrible agony while hanging from the cross:

"My God! My God! Why have you forsaken me?"

I had an hard time figuring out those words when I was young but I understand them now. They are similar to a howling within me that I ripped out of my soul on a bright, sunny mid-May morning almost seven years ago.

When my daughter, Rachel, died of leukemia I spent the first few days after her death in a bubble of sorts. I went through the process of working out her funeral, her cremation, her burial... the things I was supposed to do as her Dad. I knew my role and I performed it. I was "taking care of her."

I greeted friends at the front of the church as they came in to honor her at her funeral. I marched down the aisle holding her cremated remains in the plain wooden box and set them on the altar steps and took my place in the front pew with my family. I sang the songs, said the prayers and marched out of the church holding her ashes in my arms.

During the funeral service our son, then 18, leaned over and whispered, "You need to let go of what's inside you, Dad."

I glared back at him. I knew what was inside me and didn't need some teenager screwing with my brain.

At the grave I took the boxed remains up to a small bier next to the grave and sat next to Diana. There were some more readings, prayers and a song.

After the song each of us was expected to come up, bless the remains with holy water and then step aside. I stood up after Diana had blessed the container and moved forward... and my life began to unravel.

I was her Dad. No, I was her Daddy. I had sat with her many nights reading her a story before bed. I sang her favorite lullaby to her. I had walked her across the street holding her hand. Diana and I had rotated staying with her at the hospital. I had loved her more than my own life.

I... had... done... what... I... was... supposed... to... do...

...until now.

I could not protect her from leukemia, the pain and suffering that went with three chemo and a bone marrow transplant... the slow suffocation of her lungs by pneumonia. I had not protected her. And now... Now.. I was going to hand her over to these people who were going to put her in the ground and shovel dirt on top of her?

My mind began to race 100 miles per hour. I was going to grab the box and run for it. It seems ludicrous to the sensible mind but there is no "sensible" in these moments. I laid my hands on the wooden box... my Rachel... my child... and there was a momentary jerking as I started to lift it away from these people who knew nothing of her... who would put my little girl in the ground.

A hand touched my shoulder... a gentle hand... I turned... my beloved wife, Rachel's mother, Diana, looked into my eyes. A million Madonnas... mothers who have buried children... looked at me through those two eyes... Sad, wounded love.. And I knew... my daughter was dead.

It came out of me from a place I can't imagine deep inside... a HOWLING. I can still hear it in my mind each spring as I move toward May... Not a scream or a yell but a howl. What my son had told me... the thing that needed letting out... came out. A close friend who was there later told me that she'd grabbed ahold of herself at that moment for she had started to lose her balance at that howl as though knocked over by it. She called it, "The most powerful sound a person can ever make.... wounded love."

"My God! My God! Why have you forsaken me?"

There is a moment when this man, hanging from a cross, believed by Christians to be God's son, suddenly understands that feeling of complete abandonment. It is not a deity play acting or mimicking mortal feelings but a deep wounding... God perceiving humankind's suffering... our helpless, hopeless state at times. And God, whose other name is Love, howls.

I understand this God. He holds me close to him like a child, touches me, looks into my eyes and says, "I know."

And each spring we remember together... and howl.



Madison "Maddie" Rae Naill 1996-2012



9th Grade



Maddie,

We miss your smile, spunk, competitiveness, sense of humor & your laugh. We are grateful your friends still write to us, post on your memorial page, and take items to the cemetery.

Love, Mom & Mark, Dad, Allie, Jesse, Cale, Braden, Grams & Gramps, Lisa and Lexi



10th Grade



Kindergarten



5th Grade

Have Others Forgotten?

Written by Clara Hinton | Mar 30, 2003
www.ClaraHinton.com

The first several weeks following the death of a child are usually filled with lots of emotional grief support. Friends drop by your home with food. Cards arrive daily. Phone calls of encouragement come quite often. Then, almost as suddenly as the support began, it ends. Friends become scarce, and when they are around, they don't know what to say so they often remain silent. As a parent, it feels like everyone has forgotten your child, and that leaves a parent with a lonely, empty feeling.

The death of a child makes others feel very uncomfortable. Friends and family members alike often are afraid to mention the name of the deceased child for fear of bringing up sad memories to the parents. What others fail to realize is that it is very healing for parents to hear the name of their child spoken, as well as to hear stories that bring warm memories to mind. Parents long to hear about their child from others. Fond remembrances are comforting and aid in healing.

As a parent, it often helps to talk about your child to others, breaking the ice of being uncomfortable. Remind others that you love to hear your child's name spoken in a warm way. It will often be up to you to lead the way with talking about your child. Once you make the effort, others will know that they, too, have permission to talk about times spent with your child. They will find that it's healing to them to talk about your child, too. The bond of friendship you share will become even stronger as you walk through this journey of grief hand-in-hand.

Be prepared for the few who might suggest that you should be ready to "move on" with your life, though. Many simply will not understand that your loss presents a continuing empty void that needs attention. The absence of support leads a parent to believe that their precious child has been forgotten. Actually, others have not forgotten, but they might feel that enough time has elapsed to provide healing. What most people don't understand is that grief, while it does get better, is a slow, difficult journey that takes lots of time and hard work.

How can a parent cope when others are not providing adequate support? It's a great idea to find a local support group, if at all possible. Face-to-face support can be the one thing that keeps a parent going during those lonely, dark moments. It helps to find a group where you can talk freely about your feelings, vent openly without fear of someone making you feel inadequate, and where you can mention your child's name without being made to feel uncomfortable.

When it seems like others have forgotten, bring your child's memory alive by talking about past experiences. Invite some of your child's friends to your home and

plan something like an informal get together and perhaps have your child's friends help you begin a memory book or some sort of scrap book. An activity like this can be quite healing to all involved.

Others have a tendency to forget special days, anniversaries, and occasions such as your child's birthday. Rather than waiting for others to send a card, plan a meal and something such as a balloon release, candle lighting, or planting of a flower or tree in memory of your child. Ask your friends and family members to join you for these special occasions for additional support.

Have others forgotten? Not always. Most times they are afraid to bring up memories for fear of adding more pain. When you openly remember your child, so will others. And, you will soon have a built-in support system that can carry you through the difficult days into healing.

The Stone

It was just over a year after my son John died that I realized we needed a special place in this world to honor his memory ~ a place to ponder things past and things future. A place where others may come and remember and wonder why a 19-year-old would die.



Since my son was cremated and his ashes spread on my parents and my future resting place, there was no room for a stone. What did we need a stone for anyway? The answers soon came. One of my son's friends stopped by and wanted to know where he was. Another wanted to know where his stone was so they too could remember good times. It was then that I realized there was no, special place for us. We needed, I needed, and so did his friends need, a stone. His name needed to be written in stone to symbolize he was here, he was somebody and so he wouldn't be forgotten.

Selecting a stone at this time was not with the same numbness as making the final arrangements. It was a lot easier than going through his things and dividing the "spoils" By this time I could accept the help from family, not insisting on doing everything myself. My father and I went to the same place that provided the stone for his parents' gravesite. Even his and mom's stone came from there. The beginnings of a family tradition were already in place. With my dad's help and experience, we were able to make a wise choice and surprisingly bring our relationship closer.

The stone was set in place at the beginning of a dull, dreary, Chicago-land winter. Two days later it was covered with snow before I even knew it had arrived. Then I went to see and approve the handiwork of the carver.

There it was for everyone to see, my son was dead. The pain of it all stabbed me again and again as I cleared the snow off the stone and fingered each letter. It was painfully real, there it was "carved in stone." Even the cold reality of the inquest could have warmed my aching spirit.

Now for our holidays we face "the stone," bringing our decorations and flowers, refreshing our pain and reliving memories.

~ Darlene Patterson, Northern Lake Country TCF

What Might Have Been ... What Is

I want what might have been...

And I want what is.

I want the child I do not have,

And I want the child that has come after.

I cannot choose

One or the other,

My heart wants both.

What might have been,



*A sturdy lad,
Baseball bats,
Football helmets,
Squiggly worms on hooks
Dirt and mud and
Burps and booms.*

What is now,

A charming girl,

Raggedy Anne,

Stuffed bears,

Curls and ribbons on hair

Tea and cookies and

Squeals and giggles.



How can I choose

From two blessings,

One gone too soon,

One here by a miracle?

I cannot ...

But if I could...

I would want both ...

What might have been ...

And what is.

~ Lisa Sculley

In memory of Joey Sculley 7/16/92 to 10/7/92 SIDS

And with love to Leslie Sculley, Born 3/19/19

Choosing Life

"It will never be the same. Never." As a bereaved parent, you have often heard or said these words to express grief's profound feelings of sorrow and disorientation. Your life has suddenly taken an unexpected course that appears both uncharted and endless. Bewildered, you vainly search for pathways back to your former life, until you confront the reality that there is no way back. Your child is dead forever. It is then that you may say, "...never the same."

This is the aspect of grief that Simon Stephens calls "The Valley of the Shadow." It is that very long time between the death of your child and your reinvestment in life. Between. It is not supposed to be a permanent resting place. Although some people do take up residence in the valley, it is a transition from the death of your child to life with renewed purpose.

The key to this transition is yourself. You must choose between life and the valley. You and only you can decide. And you must make that decision again and again, each day.

Giving in to the hopelessness of the valley is tempting. Choosing to move on toward life requires a great deal of work. You must struggle with the pain of grief in order to resolve it. It is a daily struggle full of tears, anger, guilt and self-doubt, but it is the only alternative to surrendering yourself to the valley.

Little by little you choose to move on. Little by little you progress toward the other side of the valley. It takes a very long time, far longer than your friends or relatives suspected. Far longer than you had believed – even prayed – that it would be. When one day you find yourself able to do more than choose merely to live but also how to live, you will know you are leaving the valley of the shadow. There will still be more work to do, more struggle and choosing. The valley, however, stretches behind rather than in front of you.

When you have resolved your grief by reinvesting in life, you will be able to realize that nothing is ever "the same." Life is change. We would not have it be otherwise, for that is the valley of the shadow. Change has the promise of beginning and the excitement of discovery.

Life is never the same. Life is change. Choose life!

~ Marcia Alig, TCF Mercer Area, NJ

Somewhere It's Spring

It's spring in some places now. And in some places, it will be winter for another couple of weeks (months?). Somewhere the tulips are beginning to push through the soft earth and somewhere the birds are returning to sing. Somewhere the air is warmer, the breezes more gentle, the land begins to awaken from a frozen sleep. The trees are beginning to bud and even the air smells fresh and clean. Somewhere windows are open and the sound of the vacuum can be heard, marking the beginning of spring cleaning... a ritual was given to us long before our forefathers set sail for a new world. Somewhere the last holiday decoration is being packed away (those holiday diehards!) and somewhere a lawn mower is being readied for a new season.

As spring approaches, we begin to shed our overcoats and stand in front of the mirror... examining the body for the extra lumps we've accumulated during the hibernation season. We lace up our jogging shoes and make our way to the sidewalks, high school tracks and to the gym, eager to strip away the added inches that came because it was dark and gloomy and food seemed to soothe and comfort during the dark days of winter. Somewhere someone is planning a wedding, a graduation, a family reunion.

Vacation brochures begin to appear and plans are discussed in anticipation of summer.

Spring is the reawakening season... the great wake up call for the earth. Somewhere, someone is answering that get up call... greeting the new season with vim, vigor, and vitality. There are smiles and renewed energy and hope seems to simply float on the softened air. Somewhere... all of that is occurring, but not within me. It's still snowing inside my being. It's still winter inside here and there aren't any tulips about to burst open in my spirit. I've still got my snow boots on and the sun hasn't quite made it to my world. It's still winter inside me... I wonder if spring will ever come.

Oh, there have been moments of spring in the past. Wonderful, warm fleeting moments; moments when I "forgot" about the pain, the emptiness, the despair, the grief. Moments when the world was right side up and the music made me dance. But they were only moments and I'm waiting for spring to arrive in me.

Hope... the major ingredient in spring, seems to elude my grasp. Just when I think there might be some hope, a memory comes creeping across my soul and it's winter again in my heart. It's this lack of hope that seems especially cruel during springtime. I thought this winter inside me would end and I was looking forward to a more peaceful time in my life. I thought we would settle down, plant a garden and live our life filled with memories and the opportunity to make

new ones. HA! I thought grief would end at some point. The books all say it will... everyone else looks like their grief has subsided... how come spring missed us?!

A season without hope is the ultimate in despair and I've spent too many such seasons. Where does hope go and how do I get it back?

Hope is that elusive something that keeps us moving, even in the dark. We are only powerless when we have no hope, no vision, no faith in our own abilities. We may be helpless at times. We may question the arrival of spring but we are only truly powerless when we have no hope, no dreams...

Don't lose the hope! Search for it! Fight for it! Demand its return. Hope changes as we do and it can be so disguised that we may not recognize it, but it can be found — in the moments of our memories. We probably won't ever have totally happy lives again... We probably didn't have that kind of life anyway; we just thought we did.

Don't let death rob you of the moments of joy still to be remembered, and found. Don't let grief rob you of those spring places where love and joy live forever in the heart. Somewhere it is spring... Deal with the anger, the guilt, the depression as it comes and then let it go as you can... so there is room for joy to come again. Let hope come in... it's spring.

(About the Author: Darcie D. Sims, Ph.D., CHT, CT, GMS was a bereaved parent, a grief management specialist, a nationally certified thanatologist, a certified pastoral bereavement specialist, and a licensed psychotherapist and hypnotherapist. She was an author of many books on grief and bereavement including Why Are the Casseroles Always Tuna?, Footsteps Through the Valley and If I Could Just See Hope. She was an internationally recognized and popular speaker having keynoted at numerous bereavement conferences nationally and around the world. She served on The Compassionate Friends (TCF) national board of directors and the Association of Death Education and Counseling. Darcie received the TCF Professional Award in 1999. She was president and co-founder of Grief, Inc. and Director of American Grief Academy. She also was Director of Training and Certification for Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS). Sadly, Darcie died suddenly and unexpectedly in February of 2014.)

Learning to live with loss is not the same as minimizing the life of your loved one. Finding joy in your present and future is NOT a sign that you no longer value or miss those who were so great a part of your past." —excerpt from, "Regaining Strengths", by Michael Nunley. Entire article can be found on "Opentohope.com"



The Compassionate Friends

Topeka Chapter, c/o Midland Hospice Care., Inc.
200 S.W. Frazier Circle, Topeka, KS 66606-2800

A self-help organization offering friendship and understanding to bereaved parents and siblings.

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U. S. POSTAGE
PAID
AT TOPEKA, KS
PERMIT # 547

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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.