



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

A self-help organization offering friendship and understanding to bereaved families

FEBRUARY 2014

Inside Valley Forge

Meetings are on the first Thursday of every month at 7:45PM (ending at 9:30PM). We meet at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church Fellowship Hall, Valley Forge and Henderson RDs, King of Prussia, PA. Phone **on meeting evenings only** is 610-265-0733. All other times please call Rhonda at 484-919-0820.

Meeting Schedule and other TCF Events of interest

Feb 6 Parental General Sharing

Mar 6 Parental General Sharing & Death by suicide

SIBLINGS - see page 2

We encourage newsletter writings from our members. You may also submit articles written by others, please include the author of all articles submitted. **The cut-off date for newsletter entries is the 15th of the preceding month.**

ARTICLES SHOULD BE SENT TO THE NEWSLETTER EDITORS.

There are no dues or fees to belong to The Compassionate Friends, or to receive our newsletter. Your tax deductible donations (which we call love gifts) given in memory of your loved one enables us to defray the cost of chapter expenses, particularly the newsletter, meetings, and our outreach to the newly bereaved.

Please include any special tribute you wish printed in the newsletter along with your gift.

If you donate to **United Way** at your place of work, and wish your contribution to go to the Valley Forge Chapter of The Compassionate Friends, you may do so by entering: **The Compassionate Friends - Valley Forge Chapter United Way ID# 04-104.** on your pledge form.

**PLEASE MAKE ALL CHECKS PAYABLE TO:
TCF VALLEY FORGE CHAPTER
SEND TO: CHAPTER LEADER
RHONDA GOMEZ**

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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.

SIBLINGS

The Compassionate Friends, Valley Forge Chapter offered a monthly Sibling Sharing Session beginning January 3, 2013. This group would be led by Stephanie Bailey. We stated we need your participation to make this opportunity beneficial.

Stephanie has come faithfully to each meeting. Due to the lack of sibling support, this group will no longer be available. We thank Stephanie for her devoted interest in reaching out to other bereaved siblings.

CANCELLATION NOTIFICATION

It is impossible to notify all members who are planning to attend a meeting. If there is a need to cancel a TCF meeting due to inclement weather, power shortage or any situations that may occur preventing safe travel **Please view the Valley Forge web site: www.tcfvalleyforge.org**, for the latest update.

Frank Gomez did a bulk email to all those who receive the newsletter by enews to inform them about the cancellation of the December 5th meeting night, and the World Wide Candle Lighting on December 8th. We have approximately 600 in our database mailing list. Not knowing who plans to attend, this would be an impossible task to contact everyone by telephone.

LOVE GIFTS

Robert & Kathleen Grossi, in loving memory of our son,
James Michael Grossi, on his anniversary Jan. 28th.

Gerald & Nancy Hall, in loving memory of our son,
Douglas Byron Hall on his anniversary Jan. 25th.

Jerry & Gloria Koval, in loving memory of our son,
Steven Koval, on his birthday March 11th.

Lynette Lampmann, in loving memory of my son,
Shawn Lampmann on his birthday Feb. 10th and his anniversary Feb. 13th.

Dale & Helen Ninneman, in loving memory of our son,
Dale Ninneman II, on his birthday Feb. 24th.

Carol Sannella, in loving memory of my son, *David* (19).
and my husband, *Bob (Robert J. Sannella)*

Marie Schmeltzer, in loving memory of my son,
Sam "Sonny" Schmeltzer (27).

Ronda Stansbery, in honor of my daughter,
Susan Anne Stansbery Stamman, on her birthday Dec. 22nd.

Fred & Irene Sutton, in loving memory of our son,
Jim Sutton (21).

OUR CHILDREN & SIBLINGS LOVED, SADLY MISSED AND REMEMBERED

Each month some of us must face those special, but difficult days of birthdays and anniversaries. This month we ask your thoughts and prayers for the parents/siblings/relatives of the following children:

**We will no longer list the birth and death years of deceased persons in our newsletter.
We have concerns this information could be misused, and result in an adversity for the families.**

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

Madeleine Adler, son *J. Peter Adler* 2/5
William Bodulich, son *William W. Bodulich* 2/14
Ann Bruner, sister *Katy Wade* 2/8
Donna & Gregory Class, daughter *Megan Maria Class* 2/7
Wendy Coleman, daughter *Gabrielle* 2/19
Liz & Scott Conaghan, brother *Jan* 2/6
Jane Cox, son *Bill* 2/21
Bud Cunnane, son *Patrick* 2/14
Jim & Ruth Fairley, son *David Fairley* 2/5
Rochena & Pat Fatale, son *Mark Longan* 2/21
Charlie & Jill Fick, son *Michael Sternberg* 2/10
Laura Giordano, son *Peter* 2/12
Sandra Greenly, son *Michael Greenly* 2/18
Cathy Grosshanten, son *Gary* 2/16
Lee & Patricia Grossman, daughter *Rachel Leah* 2/2
George & Kay Hartman, son *Thomas R Hartman* 2/4
Jean & James Hayden, son *LCDR. Timothy M. Hayden* 2/17
Othell & William Heaney, son *Kevin* 2/14
Nora & Peter Heiss, daughter *Noreen Schmucker* 2/15
Kimberlee Hills, brother *Chuck Hills* 2/10
Charles Hills, son *Chuck Hills* 2/10
Thomas & Virginia Hoesch, son *William E. "Buddy" Hoesch* 2/16
Marlene Hoffman, brother *Barry Hoffman* 2/4
Marlene Hoffman, son *Jesse Hoffman* 2/3
Sally Ivory, son *Jimmy Ivory* 2/4
Joan Jagers, son *John Costello* 2/17
Deborah Keevill, son *Brandon* 2/23
Shirley & Philip C. Kennedy, son *Philip V. Kennedy* 2/22
Margaret & Edward Kiefski, Sr., son *Edward Kiefski, Jr.* 2/11
Lynette Lampmann, son *Shawn* 2/10
Carole LaSorsa, son *Stephen* 2/17
Liz & Joe Loeper, son *Jamey* 2/27
Julie & Richard May, son *William L. May* 2/25
Jennifer McGowan Clark, brother *Joseph McGowan* 2/25
Sue McMaster, cousin *Laura* 2/28
Kathleen Mitchel, brother *Jeffrey Hathaway* 2/19

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS continued

Audrey Morasco, son *Christopher Morasco* 2/22
Mary Mulholland, son *Joseph McGowan* 2/25
John & Mary Ann Murphy, daughter *Maureen Murphy* 2/13
Dale & Helen Ninneman, son *Dale Ninneman II* 2/24
Connie & Richard Nolan, son *Christopher Nolan* 2/9
Emil Nunez, son *Oliver Nunez* 2/12
Robert & Jean Phillips, son *Robert Phillips* 2/23
Carol Phipps, daughter *Casey* 2/18
Joan & Earl Reigel, daughter *Melissa Reigel* 2/19
Thomas & Jeri "Bubbles" Reinert, mother (*Bubbles*) *Theresa Volpe* 2/27
Tony & Toni Riccardi, son *David Riccardi* 2/17
Jacqueline Rider, son *Matthew Rider* 2/14
Barbara Rossman, daughter *Kickole Lyn* 2/13
Linda Sandlin, brother *LCDR. Timothy M. Hayden* 2/17
Bernice Scheinfeld, son *Richard Scheinfeld* 2/18
Frank and Kay Shinnners , son *Erik Shinnners* 2/22
Janemarie Smith, daughter *Beth Jovanovic* 2/6
Gary Snyder, daughter *Alyse* 2/16
Margaret & Wade Stallard, son *Wade Hampton Stallard, III* 2/21
Elaine & Joe Stillwell, son *Denis E. O'Connor, III* 2/4
Robert & Nancy Thompson, friend *J. Peter Adler* 2/5
Esperanza & Libardo Toro, daughter *Maria Eugenia Toro* 2/9
Barbara Torrens, brother *Robert Birmele* 2/18
Steven Tucker, son *Steven II* 2/27
Mek Wagner, daughter *Paige* 2/1
Henry & Elizabeth Weaver, grandson *Donald Smith, Jr.* 2/24
Gisela Witte, son *Bruce G Edlund* 2/24

FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARIES

Gary & Phyllis Adler, son *Matthew* - 2/18
Marilynn Anton, cousin/godmother *Douglas Hofmocker* - 2/7
Nina Bernstein, son *Andrew Voluck* - 2/9
Donna & Gregory Class, daughter *Megan Maria Class* - 2/9
Lisa Connolly, daughter *Elyce Pindjak* - 2/10
Janet Cozzone, daughter *Jesika* - 2/19
Allison Crowder, daughter *Amber* - 2/21
Emilie Degville, daughter *Madeline* - 2/8
Harold & Marcia Epstein, grandson *Andrew Voluck* - 2/9
Danielle Evelyn, son *Samir* - 2/12
Rita & Thomas Gibbons, daughter *Patricia Gibbons* - 2/1
Jack & Freda Gross, daughter *Linda Joy Gross* - 2/25

FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARIES CONTINUED

Frank Harms, son *Tyler* - 2/16
Kimberlee Hills, brother *Chuck Hills* - 2/24
Charles Hills, son *Chuck Hills* - 2/24
Marlene Hoffman, brother *Barry Hoffman* - 2/12
Marie & Ken Hofmockel, son *Douglas Hofmockel* - 2/7
Robert Huss, son *Daniel* - 2/27
Judy Kahl, son *Mark* - 2/16
Barbara & Michael Kaner, son *Max Steven Kaner* - 2/7
Sandi Kensicki, sister *Rose* - 2/5
Tobie Kessler, daughter *Beth Kessler Waasdorp* - 2/9
Rhoda & Melvin Kreiner, daughter *Anna Kreiner* - 2/10
Lynette Lampmann, son *Shawn* - 2/13
Sue Lawlor, son *Jim* - 2/17
Janet Leflar, son *Scott* - 2/22
Mary MacFarland, son *Marc* - 2/12
Carl & Josie Malitsky, daughter *Cynthia Malitsky* - 2/8
James & Mary Beth Mattiford, son *Scott Mattiford* - 2/26
Debra McKinley - Hastings, brother *Ken* - 2/17
William & Carol Meehan, son *Patrick W. Meehan* - 2/11
Alexandra Milas, sister *Demitra Vallianos* - 2/17
Jeffrey & Christine Miller, daughter *Teresa Leanne Miller* - 2/20
Andrew Miller, daughter *Perri* - 2/5
Leonard & Thelma Miller, son *Lowell Bruce Miller* - 2/23
Betty (Elizabeth) Miller, husband *Dick Miller* - 2/8
Kathleen Mitchel, brother *Jeffrey Hathaway* - 2/27
Fran & Kathy Moran, daughter *Denise Nicole Moran* - 2/3
Anthony & Mary Morrell, son *Andrew Michael Morrell* - 2/2
Aminah Na'im, son *Dawann* - 2/1
Kathy Nicholson, son *Frank* - 2/3
Dale & Helen Ninneman, son *Dale Ninneman II* - 2/29
Carol Phipps, daughter *Casey* - 2/16
Thomas & Jeri "Bubbles" Reinert, son *Thomas Reinert, Jr.* - 2/19
Susan Reynolds, son *Craig Anderson* - 2/3
Jacqueline Rider, son *Matthew Rider* - 2/14
Lois Robinson, son *Randy* - 2/1
Pamela Schneibolk, brother *Douglas Hofmockel* - 2/7
Priscilla Shober, son *Jeffrey R. Shober* - 2/2
Melissa Smith, daughter *Ava* - 2/5
Penny & Steve Stanaitis, daughter *Mikayla Faith* - 2/20
Ellen & Frank Svitek, daughter *Kate Elizabeth Svitek* - 2/9
Mary Ellen Swider, daughter *Kelly Swider* - 2/8
Elaine & Tim Thomas, son *Seth Peterson* - 2/9

FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARIES CONTINUED

Marilyn Toole, son *Ted Toole* - 2/26
Ann VanLandingham, daughter-in-law *Rita VanLandingham* - 2/12
Laura & Leo Weishew, brother *Steven McGowan* - 2/2
Terry & Bob Wolfe, son and stepson *Steven Moyer* - 2/15
Rose Yanni, nephew *David Yanni* - 2/10
Frank & Dolores Yanni, son *David Yanni* - 2/10
Anthony & Cindy Zalesky, grandson *Max Zalesky* - 2/12

THANKS

Thanks to the friend who did know the "right words" to say:
"There is a group in town that might help you."

Thanks to the parent who somehow found the courage to call that
phone number and find out about "that group".

Thanks to the mother who went to that first meeting knowing it
would really hurt to talk - and talked.

Thanks to the dad who said, after the first meeting, he could
never come back - but did.

Thanks to the parent who, at the fifth meeting, put her arms
around a "new one" and said: "They really can help."

Thanks to the mom who, for the first time, was again able to bake
cookies - for her "Compassionate Friends."

Thanks to the homemaker who could never talk in front of people -
who became a facilitator.

Thanks to the six-foot father who cried in front of the other men -
and didn't say he was sorry.

Because of you we will be able to help someone we don't even know -
next month.

Thanks

John DeBorer Greater Omaha Chapter, NE

SHARED THOUGHTS ON HEALING LOVE

When we think of our deceased children and siblings, it is most often attached to our fond memories and love. Sometimes it can even be inter-mingled with anger, particularly if they contributed to their death. The anger is not caused by hate, but by the fact we are now deprived of showing and sharing our love to them. These same tender feelings that brought us joy while our loved ones were alive, cause us to grieve. Our heart knows there will be no more new memories, that is why we hold and cherish those we have so dearly. It is the love remembered that gives us hope in the midst of our sorrow.

It is more the life and love of our children and siblings, rather than the death, that gives us the need to go to Compassionate Friends. It provides a safe haven to speak of those we love, and to share the memories. If the child was too young for physical memories, there are still memories of anticipation of what our child might have been. What to do with our unfinished love, and pain of not seeing the child or sibling experience life outside the womb, or a short childhood, all needs to be shared with love and understanding.

One of the reasons our children and siblings are so sadly missed is because of the love and kindness they showed. Remembering this helps to keep them close and alive in our hearts. One way of honoring our loved ones is by showing love to those around us, particularly our family. Sometimes, this can be very difficult when we are grieving, for the natural thing to do is to lash out at anyone, or anything, that crosses our path. Most of the time a response will be returned in a similar temperament, for the tone we have set with our dialogue.

The whole family is hurting. Parents dreams have been shattered, we have fallen apart to the degree we feel our life can never be put back together again. We know we are not functioning as the stable parent we were, the guilt of letting our surviving children down adds to our pain. We want so badly to remove the pain from the whole family, but we don't even know how to help ourselves. This helpless feeling lowers our self-esteem. The siblings have lost their parents, as they knew them. Many have to cope with a new family structure of being an only child, or now the oldest, or youngest. It takes a lot of love and understanding to get through the horrendous ordeal. Love is a gift that must be exchanged to be effective, we all need it to heal. This is a time for caring, touching and hugging one another. We hope you can give and receive your share.

God Bless, *Marie Hofmocker* , TCF Valley Forge

The heart knows many songs
And sings them well
The heart holds images
And sees them, even
When life is much too dark
To light the eyes.
The heart knows many songs
We cannot hear.
The heart is wise.

Sascha

HOPE

Hope is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul
And sings the tune without the words
And never stops at all.

Emily Dickinson

BOYS

Boys
 bats, both winged and wood
 bugs, beehives
 dinosaurs
 balls of every size, color
 some hard, some soft
 bikes, big wheels then ten speeds
 baseball cards and bubble gum
 barber hair cuts
 Bert and Ernie lunch boxes
 Batman and Robin, G-I Joe
 but butterflies

cannon balls into the pool
 jack knives, and belly flops
 sun burns, sneakers
 and lost towels
 buck teeth, then braces
 bait, worms or bacon
 burps and farts
 black-eyes, blisters,
 bruises and scabs
 but butterflies
 and then always
 good-byes.

Taddy Dawson TCF Valley Forge, PA

ESSENCE OF TCF

I can tell by that look, friend, that we need to talk.
 So come take my hand and let's go for a walk.
 See, I'm not like the others – I won't shy away,
 because I want to hear what you've got to say.
 Your child has died and you need to be heard,
 but they don't want to hear a single word.
 They say your child's with God, so be strong.
 They say all the "right" things that somehow seem wrong.
 I'll walk in your shoes for more than a mile
 I'll wait while you cry and be glad if you smile.
 I won't criticize you or judge you or scorn,
 I'll just stay and listen 'til night turns to morn.
 Yes, the journey is hard and unbearably long
 and I know that you think that you're not quite that strong.
 So just take my hand 'cause I've got time to spare,
 and I know how it hurts, friend, for I have been there.
 See, I owe a debt you can help me repay,
 for not long ago, I was helped the same way
 And I stumbled and fell through a world so unreal,
 so believe when I say that I know how you feel.
 I don't look for praise or financial gain and I'm sure not
 the kind who gets joy out of pain.
 I'm just a strong shoulder who'll be here 'til the end-
 I'll be your Compassionate Friend.

Steven L. Channing, TCF Winipeg, Canada

BE KIND TO YOURSELF

There will always be times when
 it's hard to remember your
 strengths.
 These are the times when you need
 to give yourself special attention.
 Be kind to yourself...
 Kindness nurtures and gives hope to
 growing dreams.
 Respect yourself...
 Listen to your needs, and treat
 yourself as you would a friend.
 Encourage yourself...
 Remember what you truly want, and
 fight for it as you would your life.
 Appreciate yourself...
 Don't take for granted the qualities
 that make you unique.
 Focus yourself...
 It is with discipline and motivation
 that you will move towards your
 goals.
 Be giving towards yourself...
 In that way your strength will thrive,
 and you'll be realizing your goals a
 day at a time.

Gail Mutterperl

EVERYTHING IS A FIRST

Everything is a first. Many moments must be faced. There are the first holidays, the first anniversary, the first birthday. Thoughts about my brother Dave will always be with us. It's never more than a sentence away from me -- NEVER! The ordinary cannot be ordinary. A certain phrase, a look, or an article of clothing can trigger thoughts and emotions. The joy of my senior year in college was interrupted by sad reality. FORGET? How is this possible? The days and months following my brother's death were filled with grief. Flowers and food were everywhere -- love and concern were translated into strength that kept me moving one step at a time. People don't know what to say -- nothing is NORMAL.

Tragedy has brought a seriousness to my life. Thoughts about the meaning of life and the unimportance of a lot of things I have previously found important are circulating in my mind. I think about my own funeral now. When will it be? Tomorrow, next week, next year, before or after my parents? There are good days and bad days. I am learning to deal with all of this. People ask me, "How are you?" Here is my answer; "I am mad, Dave died at the age of 17. I am angry that my parents have to go through this. I am confused about my role in the family. I am jealous of other families. I am sad. I am fearful about the future. I am hopeful things will get better. I am courageous. I think about my brother every day. I will be strong"

Lisa Ann Jones, Avoca, PA

*Tears don't erase all the hurt,
 Tears don't bring the dead to life,
 But tears do help to ease the pain.*

Phillip W. Williams

A LETTER TO MY BROTHER

Suddenly you're gone. I'm still here. Why? How can this be? Someone tell me the reason, the answer.

How can I fill the void, the space once so full of life? What will I do? How will I be strong for others when the sting of pain is so real, so near?

Though everyone seems calm, my soul screams at the injustice, the unfairness of losing you. I miss you, I think of you everyday and feel you in my heart always.

Whatever the reason for your leaving, I know your living had a reason. Despite the brevity of your life, you lived a lifetime's worth. You blessed us with your presence, your specialness.

I have only to think of you to feel the joy you've left as a legacy. You shaped the purpose of my life. I can see the world through your eyes.

Robin Holeman Tuscaloosa, AL TCF

You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You are able to say to yourself, "I have lived through this horror. I can take the next thing that comes along." The danger lies in refusing to face the fear, in not daring to come to grips with it. If you fail anywhere along the line it will take away your confidence. You must make yourself succeed every time. You must try to do the thing you think you cannot do.

Eleanor Roosevelt

Tread gently near
the tender souls
who've lost a child,
whose hearts are
bruised and bleeding;
for healing comes slowly,
with pain in every
forward step,
tears in every
backward look.

So much love still flows
for that special one --
arms reach out to hold
and back to cling,
but reach forward
only numbly,
fearful of forgetting
or being disloyal
by going on.

There is guilt
in laughing
feeling pleasure,
even being alive.
There are questions
longings, heartaches.

But slowly, surely,
strength and healing come,
in God's own time --
not as answer,
nor as forgetting,
but as acceptance
that this pain, this loss,
is ours to live with
and somehow,
by God's grace,
to us to bless!

Joan Spletstoesser - TCF Pike's Peak

CHANGE AND CHALLENGE

As I look back over the past six years since our son died, I realize how much I have changed. When we talk about grieving, we often forget to mention that we grieve, too, for the person we were before our child died. We might have been energetic and fun-loving but now are serious and absorbed.

Our friends and family miss the 'old us' too, and their comments show it. "Don't you think it's time to return to normal?" "You don't laugh as much as you used to." They are grieving for the person who will never be the same again.

Like the caterpillar who shrouds itself in a cocoon, we shroud ourselves in grief when our child dies. We wonder, our family wonders, our friends wonder - - when will he or she come out of it? Will they make it through the long sleep? What hues will show when they emerge? If you've ever watched a butterfly struggle from the safety of a cocoon, you'll know that the change is not quick or easy - - but worth the effort!

We begin to mark our struggle from the cocoon of grief when we begin to like the "new us." When our priorities become different and people become more important than things; when we grasp a hand that reaches, and reach in turn to pull another from his own cocoon; when we embrace the change and turn the change into a challenge, then we can proudly say, "I have survived against overwhelming odds. Even though my child's death is not worth the change in and of itself, the changes and the challenges give us hope that we can be happy, we can feel fulfilled again, we can love again.

Sherry Mutchler - Appleton, WI

LOVE'S REMEMBRANCE

Tonight, I light a candle
for you, my beloved child.
And as your name is spoken aloud,
a testament that you lived,
I will gratefully remember,
the clearness of your eyes
Your sweet newborn smell
Your kindness as you grew.
Your measured steps toward adulthood, cut short
many hearts filled with memories, your legacy.
Tonight, I light a candle
for you , my beloved child.
And as the room is lighted
by many candles fired with love,
I will remember not your death, but your life.
And in your candle's warmth
I will pray that memories and love and eternity
will blend together,
bonding us forever, my beloved child.

Elaine Madden

In memory of my son
Andrew Madden (1978 - 1995)

And all the children loved and remembered
by TCF-Valley Forge Chapter

SLOW DANCE

Have you ever watched kids
On a merry-go-round
Or listened to the rain
Slapping on the ground?
Ever followed a butterfly's erratic flight
Or gazed at the sun into the fading night?
You better slow down
Don't dance so fast
Time is short
The music won't last.
Do you run through each day on the fly
When you ask, "How are you?"
Do you hear the reply?
When the day is done,
Do you lie in your bed
With the next hundred chores
Running through your head?
You better slow down
Don't dance so fast
Time is short
The music won't last.
Ever told your child,
We'll do it tomorrow
And in your haste, not see his sorrow?
Ever lost touch,
Let a good friendship die
'Cause you never had time
To call and say "Hi"?
You better slow down
Don't dance so fast
Time is short
The music won't last.
When you run so fast to get somewhere
You miss half the fun of getting there.
When you worry and hurry through your day,
It is like an unopened gift
Thrown away
Life is not a race.
Do take it slower
Hear the music
Before the song is over.

Author Unknown



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS, INC.

Valley Forge, PA Chapter
Rhonda & Frank Gomez
Chapter Leaders
12 Brook Circle
Glenmoore, PA 19343

...A bereavement organization

For parents, siblings & families

We offer friendship, love and understanding

We talk, we listen, we share, we care

The Compassionate Friends 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. ©2007