



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

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

SEPTEMBER 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

Sept 4 General Sharing & Death by Suicide

Sept 13 Butterfly Release & Program
2PM Upper Merion Township building
King of Prussia (see page 3)

Oct 2 General Sharing

Oct 9-11, 2015 E. PA Regional Conference
(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.

INSIDE VALLEY FORGE CHAPTER

NEW MEMBERS

Ellen & Jim Burbano, son ***Eric*** (28)

REFRESHMENTS

Mary Lou Harrison, in memory of her son, ♥***Scott***♥ on his birthday, Aug.4th.

Ronda & Frank Gomez, in memory of Rhonda's brother's birthday & anniversary in Aug.

Refreshments may be donated in memory of loved ones, please call **Rhonda (484) 919-0820**, or you may sign the refreshment chart located on the refreshment table.

LOVE GIFTS

Gwen & Dennis Kearns, in loving memory our our son, ***Dennis J. Kearns, Jr.*** on his birthday 9/18 and his anniversary - 9/28.

Nancy & John Logue in loving memory of our daughter, ***Heather***, on her birthdate 8/16 and her anniversary - 8/23.

Mary Ellen & James Madden in loving memory of our daughter, ***Anne Marie Madden*** on her anniversary July 28th.

Mary Jane & Tom Poore, in loving memory of our son ***Bradley Poore***.

Mary & Donald Rose in loving memory or our daughter, ***Marjorie Rose-Cotteta*** on her birthday September 30th.

Irene & Fred Sutton in loving memory of our son, ***Jim Sutton*** on his anniversary August 7th

Roxborough/Manayunk Lions Club in loving memory of ***Dennis J. Kearns***, who died at the age of 36, son of ***Dennis & Gwen Kearns*** (Dennis is one of our members).

Roxborough/Manayunk Lioness Club in loving memory of ***Dennis J. Kearns***, 9/18 - 9/28, son of ***Gwen & Dennis Kearns***

NEWSLETTER BY EMAIL

We are asking if possible , would you please receive your newsletter by email.

We do not want to remove anyone from our newsletter mailing list who is benefiting from receiving it. We hope it is a help to you while going through your grief, giving you better understanding of your feelings, and letting you know "**We need not walk alone**".

A newsletter helps to keep our TCF family informed of local and national events. We consider this an important function of our program.

We are asking if you have email, would you consider receiving your newsletter in email format. You will receive your copy earlier if you opt to receive it by email. If you chose to use the email method of receiving your newsletter, you will have the option to switch back to the old method. If you wish to receive the newsletter by email please contact: **Frank Gomez fgomez@hybridpoplars.com**



BUTTERFLY RELEASE AND PROGRAM
Saturday, September 13, 2014 at 2PM



Upper Merion Township Park (back of Police Station)
175 West Valley Forge Road, King of Prussia, PA 19406

Diagonally across from our monthly meeting place at Good Shepherd Church.
This event will be held in back of the township building, left of the gazebo.

Cost \$10.50 per butterfly - August 16th last day to place order.
There is no admission or parking fee.

Water will be provided by the chapter. Please bring folding chairs or a blanket to sit on.

A family may order one butterfly to share, or order one butterfly for each family member. You may order as many butterflies as you wish. All butterflies must be preordered. If you are unable to attend on this date, we can release the butterfly that you have purchased in your loved one's name. The names of all loved ones will be read during the program.

For questions, please call TCF Valley Forge 484-919-0820
Any further details will be posted at the VF website. www.tcfvalleyforge.org

REGISTRATION FORM

Name: _____ **Phone Number:** _____

Address: _____

Name of loved one

Your Relationship to them

Name of loved one

Your Relationship to them

Name of loved one

Your Relationship to them

Total number of butterflies ordered: _____ \$10.50 each

Total money (no credit cards) enclosed: _____

Please forward registration and check to: Rhonda Gomez,
12 Brook Circle, Glenmoore, PA 19343

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.

SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Jim & Michelle Angelini, son *Danny* 9/12
David Bonga, daughter *Amanda* 9/15
Marc & Jean Burock, daughter *Sophie* 9/1
Robyn Buseman, daughter *Maya Buseman-Williams* 9/30
Scott & Gail Campbell, daughter *Chelsea* 9/1
Judy & William Cosgrove, son *Michael Cosgrove* 9/4
Reno & Bonnie Crescimone, son *Jonathan* 9/5
Alex Crisanti, Jr., son *John Crisanti* 9/6
Dorothy & G. Robert Daily, Sr., son *G. Robert Daily, Jr.* 9/19
Michelle G. Doll, son *Justin* 9/1
Bob & Connie Ercole, son *David* 9/26
Julie & Joe Fabrizio, brother *John Russel Bryant* 9/24
Sharon & Francis Gailey, son *Francis E. Gailey, III* 9/28
Molly Gehring, son *Daniel* 9/12
Rhonda and Frank Gomez, son *Frank Jr.* 9/30
Jeanne R Helmers, sister *Mary Ann Helmers Kemme* 9/16
Gail & Calvert G. Hess, Jr., son *Calvert G. Hess, III* 9/4
Walt & Adele Higgins, son/stepson *Brian* 9/22
Michelle Hillstrom, daughter *Jen* 9/26
Jacob & Rachel Himmelstein, son *Benjamin Himmelstein* 9/25
Lesley Jones, son *Christopher* 9/14
Gwen & Dennis Kearns, son *Dennis J. Kearns, Jr.* 9/18
Tobie Kessler, daughter *Beth Kessler Waasdorp* 9/16
Jacquie Kilroy, son *Shilen Kenneth* 9/4
Suellen & Stephen King, daughter *Danelle Rossi* 9/18
Becky & Alan Logsdon, son *Nathaniel Logsdon* 9/25
Elaine & James Madden, son *Andrew Madden* 9/26
Frank & Bernadette McAllister, son *Christopher J. McAllister* 9/4
Linda & Jim McGrath, son *Paul Drew McGrath* 9/26
Alfred J. & Joan Michini, son *Adam Jonah Michini* 9/28
Jeffrey & Christine Miller, daughter *Teresa Leanne Miller* 9/12
Betty (Elizabeth) Miller, son *Raymond "Jim"* 9/1
Barbara & Jeff Norris, son *Greg* 9/21
Mary O'Halloran, brother *Thomas M. O'Halloran* 9/1
Winnie & James O'Halloran, son *Thomas M. O'Halloran* 9/1

SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS continued

Elizabeth Orbann, daughter *Linda Elizabeth Johnson* 9/15
Linda & Andrew Peoples, Jr., son *Brian A. Peoples* 9/7
Mary & Salvatore Perna, grandson *Nathan A. Bieber* 9/11
Robert & Nancy Ricciardi, daughter *Jessica Lee Ricciardi* 9/23
Ruth Richardson, grandson *Nicholas Richardson* 9/1
Gina & Brian Richardson, son *Nicholas Richardson* 9/1
Jacqueline Rider, daughter *Michelle Connelly* 9/24
Margaret Rodalewicz, son *Shane Wooley* 9/23
Donald & Mary Rose, daughter *Marjorie Rose-Cotteta* 9/30
Margaret & Tom Saunders, daughter *Katie* 9/27
Cathy Seehuetter, daughter *Nina Seehuetter* 9/24
Cathy Siciliano, son *Anthony* 9/15
Helen Smith, son *Patrick Kenneth "Kenny" Smith* 9/5
Walter & Irene Stolarczyk, daughter *Barbara Stolarczyk* 9/11
Emil & Joy Tkachick, son *David L. Tkachick* 9/11
Sharon Venezia, son *Justin Negron* 9/9
Shelly Wagner, son *Andrew Wagner* 9/29
Terry & Susan Weikel, daughter *Jennifer* 9/26

SEPTEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

Laura Bedrossian, son *Teddy* - 9/24
Jeff & Donna Brown, son *Kenneth Bernstiel* - 9/12
Ann Bruner, sister *Katy Wade* - 9/27
Marc & Jean Burock, daughter *Sophie* - 9/17
Suzanne Carcarey, son *Eddie* - 9/21
Phyllis & James Casey, son *Jim "Jimmer" Casey* - 9/17
Tom & Irene Cornely, son *Tom* - 9/1
Catherine Dardozzi, son *James Dardozzi* - 9/7
Michelle G. Doll, son *Justin* - 9/4
Sarah Fishel, daughter *Allyson* - 9/15
Suze Goldberg, uncle *Neal* - 9/3
Tina & Neil Goodale, son *Brien Goodale* - 9/15
Judi Griffith, son *Steve* - 9/4
Virginia Hagen, son *Matthew D. Hagen* - 9/28
Jeanne R. Helmers, daughter *Betsy Helmers* - 9/7
Nancy Lee & Jerry Hess, son *Jerry R.L. Hess* - 9/28
Marlene Hoffman, son *Jesse Hoffman* - 9/6
John Horulko, son *Daniel* - 9/30
Monica Horulko, son *Daniel* - 9/30
Barbara Jacobs, daughter *Pamela Faye* - 9/17

SHARED THOUGHTS ON SETTING YOUR OWN PACE FOR GRIEVING

When we are in our early stages of grief, it can be a relief to see the summer's flurry of activities end. Picnics, family vacations, gatherings with happy children that once were such special times, can bring additional agony after the loss of a child or sibling. Watching other families, who have not lost one of its members, can cause us to fantasize, what could have been for us.

When we feel so all encompassed with grief, it is hard to imagine that we can one day enjoy life again. Our life seems so irrevocably changed. When we first begin our journey of grief, and pain permeates every part of our being, the road appears so dark and endless. We so desperately need someone to appreciate what we are experiencing and to understand we have been immobilized by our loss. It is normal for those around us, who have not experienced such a loss to want us to "snap back" to our old self. What they cannot appreciate is that all of our reactions are normal. Our fast paced society does not allow us proper time for grieving. It is healthy to cry, and talk about the deceased. It isn't time alone that heals; it is primarily the grief work. And we can only have a healthy healing grief process when we move at our own pace. Some need to spend more time than others on particular aspects of grief. The age of the deceased, the relationship you had with them, the cause of death and a long list of circumstances can create varying intensity of pain in different areas of grief. Each person in grief has to make their own path. We all hurt to the depth of our capacity, but each path to recovery is unique. It is very helpful to have someone who is non-judgmental with whom we can express our concerns. Putting our thoughts into words can bring healing.

It takes all the strength we can muster up to get our lives back together again. In our early stages of grief we cannot fathom ever leading a full life, laughing, being productive, or being a functional human being again. It is normal to feel our life is over. As we progress in our grief, and much healing has taken place, it is also normal for the intensity of our emotions to lessen, even though our grief may be a lifelong process. We learn to live without our loved one being physically among us. That does not mean our loved one is not with us in our memory. The memories will always be a part of our being. We will always be the same to each other. Our love does not diminish as our grieving progresses, we remember the good times and put away the thoughts of "I wish I had", or "I should have". The pain softens and our memories are our most prized possession.

It takes a lot of mountain climbing to reach the valley in grief. It cannot be rushed; no one can do it for us.

I hope all the brilliant colors of fall can form a rainbow for you, and give you hope.

God Bless, *Marie Hofmockel* - TCF Valley Forge, PA

LUANNE

My Beloved Angel In Heaven
On the 4th Anniversary of her passing

It Seems like only yesterday I heard the news
I remember so clearly my family in the pews
The tears streaming down our face
 and her little dress made of lace
The face of an Angel so meek & mild
So Beautiful she was just like a child
In memory of her I will sit in silence today;
Four years ago, it seems like only yesterday.

LuLu

God saw you getting tired and a cure was not to be
So he put his arms around you and whispered come to me
With tearful eyes we watched you and saw you pass away
Although we loved you dearly, we could not make you stay
A golden heart stopped beating - Hard working hands at rest
God broke our hearts to prove to us he only takes the best!

LuLu... Thinking of you is easy, I do it every day
Missing you is the Hardest - That Never goes away

I miss you dearly, All my love, always & forever, Mommy
Lucia Watters (Mother of Luanne)

HELPING OTHERS HELP YOU - 10 RULES FOR SELF HEALING

1. Tell friends to call you often. Explain that after the first couple of months you'll need their calls.
2. Tell your friends to make a specific date with you; none of this "we must get together for lunch". Remind them that you're bound to have "down" times and their patience would be appreciated.
3. Tell them to please feel free to talk about the person that has died -- and don't avoid that person's name.
4. It's important for friends to understand that you may appear to be "doing so well" but on the inside you still hurt. Grief is painful, it's tricky and it's exhausting.
5. Ask your friends to care but not to pity you.
6. Make plain that friends and relatives can still treat you as a person who is still in command and can think for yourself.
7. Tell your friends that it's all right to express their caring. It's OK for them to cry; crying together is better than avoiding the pain.
8. Let your friends know too, that it's all right to say nothing. A squeeze or a hug are often more important than words.
9. Let people know that they can invite you to socialize, but that you might decline.
10. Ask your friends to go for walks with you. You and your friends can "walk off" feelings. Walks promote conversation and help fight depression.

Ruth Jean Loewinsohn

I'M FREE

Don't grieve for me, for now I'm free,
I'm following the path God laid for me.
I took God's hand when I heard the call;
I turned my back and left it all.

I could not stay another day,
to laugh, to love, to work or play.
Tasks left undone must stay that way.
I found that place at the close of day.

If my parting has left a void,
Then fill it with remembered joy.
A friendship shared, a laugh, a kiss,
Ah yes, these things too I will miss.

Be not burdened with times of sorrow;
I wish you the sunshine of tomorrow.
My life's been full, I've savored much,
good friends, good times a loved one's touch.

Perhaps my time seemed all too brief,
don't lengthen it now with undue grief.
Lift up your heart an share with me -
God wanted me now, God set me free.

Author Unknown
Submitted by *Gwen Kearns*

CONCERNING SIBLINGS

It's been said that when a child's brother or sister dies, actually three people are lost: the sibling and both parents. The sibling also loses a friend, playmate, confidant, role model, and lifelong companion. For the parents, the loss of a child is often so traumatic that they have little left to give to the surviving children. Yet the surviving sibling has fears, needs, and anxieties that must be explored and addressed if the child is to avoid negative long term consequences. Listed here are normal feelings siblings might have concerning the loss along with some suggestions on what to do to encourage their expression.

Normal Thoughts

- * "Did I cause the death?"
- * "Will the rest of my family die?"
- * "Who will take care of me now?"
- * "I'm all alone now."
- * "Half of me died."
- * "I'm different from all the other kids."
- * "I'm not a child anymore."
- * "I feel left out."
- * "Things will never be the same again."
- * "No one cares about my grief, only about my parents grief."
- * "I can't cry because it will make my parents more upset."
- * "I feel guilty to be happy or to laugh."
- * "Why wasn't it me?"
- * "Will I die young too?"
- * "I made it happen by wishing him dead!"
- * "If I act like my sibling, maybe my parents will feel better."
- * "Maybe my parents would love me more if I died!"

Normal Feelings

- * Impatient and angry at the world.
- * Resentful over the attention the parents are getting.
- * Resentful over the attention they are not getting.
- * Fearful of having to replace the sibling.
- * Guilt for feeling relieved over the death after a long illness.
- * Guilt over all the "bad" thoughts, words, and fights with the deceased.

How To Help

- * The bereaved parents should constantly remind themselves to be sensitive to the feelings of the surviving children.
- * The parents should strive to maintain as much of a normal routine as possible for the survivors.
- * The parents should encourage grieving, openness and the expression of feelings in the children by grieving openly and expressively in front of them.
- * Reassure them that they are not going to die, too.
- * Reassure them that they are loved, wanted and okay.
- * Reassure them that they did not cause the death in any way.
- * Give lots of physical reassurance in the way of touching and hugs.
- * Contact the teacher/teachers or school counselors.
- * Ask them what and how they would like the school to be told.
- * Prepare them for questions and remarks they can expect at school.
- * Encourage them to resume their normal activities at their own pace.
- * Remember the sibling's birthday and anniversary of the death.
- * Remember the sibling at special family gatherings and functions.
- * Don't be afraid to talk about the child that died.
- * Talk about all the qualities of the child that died - positive and negative.
- * Talk about the differences between the siblings - good and bad.
- * Don't promise them a replacement sibling with talks of having another child.
- * Remember surviving siblings cannot become, or replace, the deceased - brother or sister.

TLC Group grants anyone the right to use this information without compensation so long as the copy is not used for profit or as training materials in a profit making activity such as workshops, lectures, and seminars, and so long as this paragraph is retained in its entirety.

Adapted From: *Helping Children Cope With Loss*
Buz Overbeck - Joanie Overbeck

My pain helps me live with my loss

The morning our 20-year old daughter Lee took sick with her last illness, I was trying to write a letter of sympathy to a friend, wondering if it would make any difference.

Five days later, I knew. It made a difference.

I discovered it was better to reach out than turn away, to say the wrong thing than say nothing.

But in living through losing Lee, I also discovered I had something to say to others who suffered the loss of someone they loved.

Pain is better than forgetting.

It has been almost 18 years since she died, but Lee is still with us. The pain has not so much lessened as it has become familiar, like the pain that continues in the leg that has been amputated. Her death is part of us.

I steel myself pretty well for the expected moments of pain. Her birthday in March, her death day in August, Thanksgiving, Christmas, even, these days, listening to an Albinoni oboe concerto knowing it is not she practicing in the next room.

But there is no protection from the blindside hit. Lee waves from a passing car. She appears ahead of me on a street in Siena, wearing a backpack; I rush to catch up with her but she turns a corner and is gone.

She stands in the shadows, just outside the living room. I hear her counsel when I have a problem and pay attention. At the concert I sit beside her in the center of the orchestra.

It is not all tears. We laugh at the same old jokes - and some new ones. Every submarine sandwich, I eat, I share with Lee. It was her favorite.

When I thought I was dying of a heart attack, Lee stood - in the blue jumper she had made - waiting at the end of a brightly lit tunnel, smiling.

But, I often say in a letter of sympathy, people will want you to get over it, snap out of it, buck up, forget. Of course we have to get on with life, to find salvation in routine that suddenly seems trivial, to fulfill our responsibilities to the living. But not to forget.

It is far better to remember, to mourn! To weep, to rage, than to allow the one who is gone to disappear.

In a way, I welcome the pain. I hurt; I remember.

So, I say in my sympathy letter, they should learn to accept the pain, even in a way welcome it, by comparing it to the terror of forgetting.

And as an elder of the tribe who has experienced loss, I write for them to remember in their own way, to mourn in their own way, to do what would be appropriate for the person who has gone and, more important, to do what needs to be done for the living.

The night Lee died we went to a musical in which her sister was appearing in the chorus. Lee would have wanted that, no matter if others disapproved.

We chose cremation because it was what we thought she would have wanted and it was, we discovered, what each of us wanted for ourselves. We paid no attention to the relative who said, "I don't know how you could burn her up."

We did what we had to do.

We could not handle a formal funeral, bringing the family from afar, after her quick dying, so we had a private service at the graveside.

I wept - frequently - and Minnie Mae did not. No guilt, no public measuring of pain. I dream of Lee and Minnie Mae does not. That does not mean that one of us mourns more deeply than the other. No guilt. No keeping score.

We love in our own way; we grieve in our own way.

And in this terrible loss we have found strength. When we are tested by other events, we have a measure of our ability to survive.

And we are also reminded that life is fragile.

In my letters reaching out I tell others what Lee's passing taught us: to listen to each other and to ourselves, to live the gift of life with caring and celebration. Today. Right now.

By Donald M. Murray
SPECIAL TO THE BOSTON GLOBE

THANK YOU REV. SIMON STEPHENS AND TCF FOR:

(Rev. Simon Stephens is the founder of The Compassionate Friends)

- TENDER**
- (1) **HOPE** - when I believed in **none anywhere.**
 - (2) **REASSURANCE** - I'm **not** "crazy"! Confusion, displacement, preoccupation, forgetfulness, timelessness, panic, my journeys into **HELL** - all part of "normal" parental grieving. OK to feel **and** express feeling, or remain silent.
 - (3) **ENERGY** - An infusion via newsletters, a note or phone call when I'm exhausted, depleted, flat, not able and not caring to function.
 - (4) **UNDERSTANDING** - my bitterness and rage, there by miraculously reducing both.
 - (5) **CONTINUING GENTLE REMINDER** - to accept that most despairing of facts - **MY CHILD DIED!**
 - (6) **WATCHFULNESS** - Strive not to get stuck in denial, anger, etc. My child would not want this for me.
 - (7) **RESPIRE** - a release of tension from desperately "holding myself together".
 - (8) **COMPASSION** - " I know your pain". TCF members truly do.
- COMFORTING**
- (9) **FORGIVENESS OF SELF** - for real and imagined commissions and omissions as I'm forced to review my life, accept my humanity.
 - (10) **LOVE** - doesn't die. My significant others do not replace my child but do expand my caring.
 - (11) **SELF ESTEEM** - Slow rebuilding of a DESTROYED SELF. I will be worthwhile again and able to help others someday.
 - (12) **AWARENESS - I AM BLESSED** - My child lived and we loved.
 - (13) **FAITH** - My child, and your child, is in another dimension in **PEACE** and **LOVE**.
- FRIENDSHIP**
- (14) **SHARING** - I'm not alone. In my stark despair, others reach out or will reach out. Grief is very personal, but others are in a parallel lane.
 - (15) **ENCOURAGEMENT** - I'll fall back but I'll move forward again.
 - (16) **PATIENCE** - First with myself, then with others; only **TIME, TIME, TIME** can dull this agony.
 - (17) **REFUTES** - my desire for and attempts at isolation.
 - (18) **ACCEPTANCE** - I'm a **DIFFERENT SELF FOREVER** -the death of my child was the death of so much of me.
 - (19) **HUMOR** - can again be part of me despite the underlying devastation, the never ending awareness of this most searing, irreplaceable loss. My child smiles with me.
 - (20) **THANK YOU - TCF LEADERS** for giving so much of yourselves, for all your work behind the scenes.

written (1985) by *Ellen Bruno* / Valley Forge, PA TCF
dedicated to her son *J.B.* who died at the age
of 29 of a massive heart attack 9/15/84



**THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS, INC.**

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

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**...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