



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

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

FEBRUARY 2018

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 Founders 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 1 General Sharing

Mar 1 General Sharing

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

Due to the snow storm, the January monthly meeting was cancelled.

LOVE GIFTS

Nina Bernstein in loving memory of my son, *Andrew Voluck* on his anniversary 2/9.

Marcia Epstein in loving memory of my grandson, *Andrew Voluck* on his anniversary 2/9.

Gerald & Nancy Hall in memory of our beloved son, *Douglas Byron Hall*
on his anniversary 1/25.

Ken & Vivian Maahs in loving memory of our beautiful daughter, *Kirstein Allison Maahas*
on her anniversary 1/18.

Sam & Palma Panichello in loving memory of our son, *Joseph*, who passed on 6/7.

“Never forgotten - forever in our Hearts - he will always be with us.

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

This publication of the **TCF Valley Forge Chapter Newsletter** is funded by the
Steven Schneibolk Memorial Fund.

REMINDER

Did you wake up in the morning
with tears in your heart?
And did you say to yourself
“I should not feel like crying
not like this, every morning.”

But you do know the truth, don't you?
When life deals us such a tragic blow,
such enormous damage,
We need many mornings to recover.
We need more than a few moments to heal.

Take for yourself the grace
of one quiet healing-step at a time.
Trying to rush the work of grief,
will slow down your renewal.

You only need to remember
that you will recover some day.
You only need to remember
that we all have our own pace,
and we all move in our own measure.

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

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

Laura Amen, son *R.J. Amen* 2/5
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
Rhonda and Frank Gomez, brother *Paul* 2/7
Sandra Greenly, son *Michael Greenly* 2/18
Tim & Rosemarie Griffiths, son *Timothy Griffiths* 2/18
Cathy Grosshanten, son *Gary* 2/16
Lee & Patricia Grossman, daughter *Rachel Leah* 2/2
Jean & James Hayden, son LCDR. *Timothy M. Hayden* 2/17
Othell & William Heaney, son *Kevin* 2/14
Kimberlee Hills, brother *Chuck Hills* 2/10
Charles Hills, son *Chuck Hills* 2/10
Thomas & Virginia Hoesch, son *William E. "Buddy" Hoesch* 2/16
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
Marlene & Jerry Lener, son *Daniel* 2/11
Liz & Joe Loeper, son *Jamey* 2/27
Andie Lunkenheimer, brother *Brennan* 2/26
Julie & Richard May, son *William L. May* 2/25
Jennifer McGowan Clark, brother *Joseph McGowan* 2/25
Sue McMaster, cousin *Laura* 2/28

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
Barbara Rossman, daughter *Kickole Lyn* 2/13
Linda Sandlin, brother LCDR. *Timothy M. Hayden* 2/17
Rosemarie Scott-Griffiths, stepson *Timothy F. Griffiths* 2/18
Frank and Kay Shinnners , son *Erik Shinnners* 2/22
Felicia Skalecki, *Zuko Iroh McNulty* 2/4
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
John & Linda Wilson, son *Sean* 2/18
Gisela Witte, son *Bruce G Edlund* 2/24

FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARIES

Gary & Phyllis Adler, son *Matthew* - 2/18
Marilynn Anton, cousin/godmother *Douglas Hofmockel* - 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
Linda Cymbala, son *Nicholas Cymbala* - 2/5
Carol Dawidziuk, daughter *Rachel* - 2/27
Emilie Degville, daughter *Madeline* - 2/8
Jennifer Dixon, son *Graham* - 2/14
Harold & Marcia Epstein, grandson *Andrew Voluck* - 2/9

FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARIES CONTINUED

Danielle Evelyn, son *Samir* - 2/12
Rita Gibbons, daughter *Patricia Gibbons* - 2/1
Jack & Freda Gross, daughter *Linda Joy Gross* - 2/25
Frank Harms, son *Tyler* - 2/16
Kimberlee Hills, brother *Chuck Hills* - 2/24
Charles Hills, son *Chuck Hills* - 2/24
Marie & Ken Hofmockel, son *Douglas Hofmockel* - 2/7
Robert Huss, son *Daniel* - 2/27
Ginger Jarrett, daughter *Adrienne* - 2/4
Jack & Stacy Kabic, daughter *Brithy* - 2/3
Judy Kahl, son *Mark* - 2/16
Vern & Joyce Kaiser, son *Michael* - 2/2
Barbara & Michael Kaner, son *Max Steven Kaner* - 2/7
Sandi Kensicki, sister *Rose* - 2/5
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 Mac Farland, 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, mom's sister *Demitra Vallianos* - 2/17
Jeffrey & Christine Miller, daughter *Teresa Leanne Miller* - 2/20
Andrew Miller, daughter *Perri* - 2/5
Thelma Miller, son *Lowell Bruce Miller* - 2/23
Betty (Elizabeth) Miller, husband *Dick Miller* - 2/8
Kathleen Mitchel, brother *Jeffrey Hathaway* 2/19
Fran & Kathy Moran, daughter *Denise Nicole Moran* - 2/3
Anthony & Mary Morrell, son *Andrew Michael Morrell* - 2/2
Aminah Na'im, son *Dawann* - 2/14
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
Lois Robinson, son *Randy* - 2/1
Pamela Schneibolk, brother *Douglas Hofmockel* - 2/7

FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARIES CONTINUED

Priscilla Shober, son *Jeffrey R. Shober* - 2/2
Felicia Skalecki, *Zuko Iroh McNulty* - 2/4
Melissa Smith, daughter *Ava* - 2/5
Penny & Steve Stanaitis, daughter *Mikayla Faith* - 2/20
Luanne Stetler, grandson *Jordyn* - 2/25
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
Marilyn Toole, son *Ted Toole* - 2/26
Ann VanLandingham, daughter-in-law *Rita VanLandingham* - 2/12
Laura & Leo Weishew, brother *Steven McGowan* - 2/2
Kathryn & Pat White, son *Steven White* - 2/9
Rose Yanni, nephew *David Yanni* - 2/10
Frank Yanni, son *David Yanni* - 2/10
Anthony & Cindy Zalesky, grandson *Max Zalesky* - 2/12

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

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 Hofmockel*, 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

SUGGESTIONS FOR HELPING YOURSELF THROUGH GRIEF

This title is not meant to indicate that others in our lives do not help us through grief. We do need the help of relatives and friends, and may need the help of Professional Counseling. At the same time, it is important for us to make the effort to help ourselves. Remember, that a lot of energy will be used for healing. Treat yourself with the same care and affection that you would offer to a good friend in the same situation. Most of us are aware of “LOVE THY NEIGHBOR” - we forget the part - “AS YOU LOVE YOURSELF”. Not all suggestions will be helpful to everyone. Grief has it’s unique side. Choose the ideas that appeal to you.

1. **Go Gently**. Don’t rush too much. Your body needs energy for repair.
2. Don’t take on new responsibilities right away. Don’t over-extend yourself. **Keep decision making to a minimum**.
3. Accept help and support when offered.
4. Ask for help. Our family and friends can’t read our minds. It is very important to find someone who cares, understands, and with whom you may talk freely. It’s okay to need comforting.
5. Seek the support of others...Invite a relative/friend for dinner or overnight. Also, consider meeting new people.
6. Be patient with yourself. Healing takes time.
7. Lean **into** the pain. It cannot be outrun. Let the grief/healing process run its full course.
8. Through this emotional period, it is okay to feel depressed. Crying does make you feel better.
9. If Sundays, Holidays, etc., are especially difficult times, schedule activities that you find particularly comforting into these time periods.
10. Seek the help of a **qualified** Counselor or Clergy if grief is unresolved.
11. Try to get adequate rest. Go to bed earlier. Avoid caffeine in coffee, tea and colas.
12. Good nutrition is important to help the healing process. (Decrease junk food and try to eat a balanced meal)
13. Keep a journal. It is a good way to understand what you are feeling/thinking. Hopefully, when you re-read it later, you will see that you are getting better.
14. **Read** -- there are many helpful books on grief. If grief is understood, it is a little easier to handle. A little less frightening.
15. Moderate exercise helps (walking, tennis, swimming, etc.) It offers an opportunity to work off frustration and may aid sleep.
16. Begin towards building a pleasant time with family and friends. Don’t feel guilty if you have a good time. Your loved one would want you to be happy.

Author Unknown

BEATITUDES FOR THOSE WHO COMFORT

- Blessed are those who do not use tears to measure the true feelings of the bereaved.
- Blessed are those who do not always have a quick “comforting” answer.
- Blessed are those who do not make judgments on the bereaved’s closeness to God by their reaction to the loss of their loved one.
- Blessed are those who hear with their hearts and not with their minds.
- Blessed are those who allow the bereaved enough time to heal.
- Blessed are those who admit their uncomfortableness and put it aside to help the bereaved.
- Blessed are those who do not give unwanted advice.
- Blessed are those who continue to call, visit, and reach out when the crowd has dwindled and the wounded are left standing alone.
- Blessed are those who know the worth of each person as a unique individual and do not pretend that they can be replaced or forgotten.
- Blessed are those who realize the fragility of bereavement and handle it with an understanding shoulder and a loving heart.

Jacki Deems

SEARCHING

<p>Once again, my list has vanished; it was here, but now it's missing. Keys and glasses disappearing, books and letters overdue.</p>	<p>I'm forever searching, searching, they must be here, and I need them! Could it be that what is missing, what I want this very minute</p>	<p>could it be that what I'm really searching for, my child, is you?</p>
		<p><i>Joyce Andrews</i> TCF, Sugar Land, TX</p>

HUGGING: PERFECT CURE FOR WHATEVER AILS YOU

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No movable parts No batteries to wear out No periodic checkups Low energy consumption High energy yield Inflation proof No monthly requirements Theft proof Non-taxable Non-polluting And, of course, fully returnable | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hugging is healthy. It relieves tension, Combats depression, Reduces stress, Improves blood circulation. It's invigorating. It's rejuvenating. It elevates self-esteem. It generates good will. It has no unpleasant side effects. It is nothing less than a miracle drug! |
|--|--|

Author Unknown

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

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Sherry Mutchler - Appleton, WI

ROOMS AND THINGS

How many people have suggested to you in subtle and not so subtle ways that you'd be better off if you'd only go ahead and get rid of your child's things and redo the room? You see, they think that the holding on to these things is morbid. These people, who have never suffered the loss of one of their children, really do not understand that you have to do your grief work, and whether you do this sad task now or later really doesn't affect the length or depth of your pain.

Some parents need to make the changes and decisions about personal belongings as soon as possible after the death. Having the chore ahead of them is more painful than the doing. These parents are advised, however, to go slowly when disposing of belongings. It may seem to you, also, that not seeing or having anything around to remind you of your dead child will somehow make your pain less. Later, though, when your grief has softened, you may find you need that special something, but by then it's too late.

On the other hand, you may try to keep everything, and it may take many months and several acts of sorting through the belongings at intervals before you're able to decide on just the special things you want to keep as mementos. As time goes by, you will be able to let go of the less important things without it ripping you to pieces. Not everything will forever have the same value for you. You may change in how you feel and find that it comforts instead of hurts to see your subsequent child wearing some of the baby's clothes, or that catching a glimpse of an old familiar shirt on one of your teenagers brings a warm feeling.

Whether you've made changes or haven't been able to make changes, it's okay. There is no rule about when you do it, so don't let well-meaning friends or relatives make you feel guilty because your needs don't meet their timetables. What we would like to suggest to you is, though there is no rules about when you do it, that you have as a goal eventually making the changes, otherwise the room and things become a shrine, and if you have surviving children or a spouse that may find it very difficult to live in this atmosphere forevermore. If they could be honest with you, many would tell you they don't want their dead sibling closed up in his or her room, as though their dying was something for which they're being punished. Instead, bring the record player and records into the den, or use the backpack and tent or whatever, because it comforts them to feel that their sibling has once again become a part of the family and not relegated to "the room".

I don't think I know of anyone who hasn't kept some belongings of their dead child, so that must be normal. What we learn after the death is that life is tenuous at best, and rather than hanging on to unchanged rooms, try to value the important people who are left in this life, be they family or friends, and savor them along with the memories of your dead child. For when all is said and done, those memories are truly the important part of what you have left of your child. That's a truth that doesn't need changing.

Mary Cleckley TCF, Atlanta, GA



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS, INC.

Valley Forge, PA Chapter
Rhonda & Frank Gomez
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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