



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

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

JULY 2016

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

July 7 General Sharing

July 8-10 TCF National Conference Scottsdale, AZ
See page 3

Aug 4 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

We send our love and get-well wishes to **Frank Gomez**, who is now home recovering from surgery. He, and his wife **Rhonda**, are co-leaders of the TCF Valley Forge Chapter. Frank, we hold you in our thoughts and prayers, and wish you a speedy recovery.

REFRESHMENTS

Lee & Robert Duffield in memory of our son **Michael Robin**

Mary Lou Harrison in memory of my son, **♥Scott♥** on his 19th anniversary

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

Rose Marie Cote and Jamie Weaver, in loving memory of our son / brother, **Mark J. Cote** on his birthday 6/3.

Gail & Calvert G. Hess, Jr., in loving memory of our son, **Calvert G Hess, III** on his anniversary 6/18.

Marjorie Randolph, in memory and with love for my son, **Doug Fixter** on his anniversary 6/19, and a thank you to the TCF Valley Forge Chapter for the newsletter and the support given to me my Marie Hofmockel & Mary Ehmann years ago.

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**

The Compassionate Friends National Conference 2016



The Compassionate Friends National Conferences offer much healing to bereaved parents.

Many well known speakers will be addressing the opening and closing sessions., luncheons, banquets, and many workshops on different aspects of grief.

National Conferences offer a Hospitality Room, Reflection Room, Butterfly Boutique, Book Store, and Memory Boards to place a picture of your loved ones, and a candle lighting service.

There will be time for one-on-one sharing with our TCF families.

In Memorium of Joe Lawley

The following is from the TCF-UK website:

It is with very great sadness the we learned of the death of Joe Lawley earlier today - Monday 13 June. Joe was one of Founder parents of The Compassionate Friends.

Joe was admitted to hospital on 3 June and his wife Iris was with him when he died.

He will be greatly missed and we send our love to Iris and their daughters at this sad time. Without them, and the other Founder members, TCF would not have existed. On hearing this sad news, our Chair of Trustees, Dr Margaret Brearley commented: "Joe and Iris, together with the Hendersons and Simon Stephens, created TCF in 1969 - now a worldwide group of caring organizations uniquely comforting bereaved parents. Their shared companionship and informal mutual support in their overwhelming grief allowed them to turn outwards to seek other similarly grieving parents, with the result that literally hundreds of thousands of grieving parents have been given comfort and friendship - and in many countries - all this inspired by their example and their words".

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.**

JULY BIRTHDAYS

Charlene & Earle Bare, son *Abe Bare* 7/1
Herb and Fran Barnett, son *Andrew* 7/2
Loretta Bovell, daughter *JoAnna* 7/12
Joann & Gary Chavez, son *Christopher Dale Chavez* 7/19
Tracy & Mike Collins, daughter *Krystal Chuck* 7/19
Hazel Corbin, daughter *Dayle C. Rutledge* 7/7
Jennifer Dixon, son *Graham* 7/22
Tom & Judy Hahn, daughter *Erica Hilley* 7/2
Nancy Hartzell, son *Adam* 7/29
Giuliana Hilend, son *Patrick Andrew Hilend* 7/9
Janet & Dave Keller, brother *Thomas A. Keller* 7/3
Al & Sue Koenig, daughter *Emily Grace Koenig* 7/8
Lisa Gie Liem, daughter *Stephanie* 7/14
Joan Lippre, son *John* 7/16
Stacy Ludy, daughter *Alyssa Kenny* 7/27
Robert McCullough, daughter *Caroline Patricia McCullough* 7/19
Cameron and Sandra Meikle, daughter *Laura* 7/4
Pete Mihalek, son *Andy* 7/15
Alexandra Milas, mom's brother *Nicholas Stathes* 7/1
John & Mary Ann Murphy, son *Brian Michael Murphy* 7/20
Carol & Dennis O'Connor, brother *Jack Coladonato* 7/14
Gary & Patricia Otto, son *Benjamin Otto* 7/26
Betty Jane Peters - Neilson, son *Walter C. Peters* 7/4
son, *Russell F. Peters, Jr.* 7/25
Vernice Quattlebaum, daughter *Gwendolyn Y. Ashe* 7/11
Donald & Freda Rhinier, son *Glenn D. Rhinier* 7/18
Kelly Rossi, brother *Kevin* 7/24
Abigail Schwartz, mother *Barbra* 7/15
Mike & Beverly Smith, son *Ryan* 7/18
Helen Smith, son *Bob Smith* 7/2
Patricia & Bertram Snead, son *James Christopher Snead* 7/15
Jen & Alex Soutos, daughter *Alexi* 7/27
Harry & Merrily Spiess, son *F. Ryan Spiess* 7/16
Lisa M Spinks, brother *Robert* 7/9
Linda Sposato, daughter *Bernadette Funaro* 7/23

JULY BIRTHDAYS continued

Dave & Lynn Strange, son *Bradley* 7/9
Ellen & Frank Svitek, daughter *Kate Elizabeth Svitek* 7/1
Anne & Charles Swann, daughter *Katherine Anne Swann* 7/12
Chris & Larry Teal, son *Wade Teal* 7/30
Renee Teufel, son *Gregory* 7/28
Robert & Nancy Thompson, son *Andrew Thompson* 7/21
Brenda Timbers, daughter *Niya Raquel Timbers* 7/3
Steven Tucker, son *Patrick Ryan* 7/12
Barbara Tuller, son *Charles* 7/3
Pat Villante, daughter *Laura* 7/28
Bill & Patti Whitehead, daughter *Maria* 7/4

JULY ANNIVERSARIES

Charlene & Earle Bare, son *Abe Bare* - 7/27
Lori Bartholomew, brother *Matthew* - 7/14
Eleanor Brennan, grandson *Jonathan Masiak* - 7/9
Jackie & Steve Brown, son *Doug Brown* - 7/23
Ellen & James Burbano, son *Eric* - 7/14
Maureen Butler, son *Terence* - 7/23
David Castle, best friend *Eric* - 7/11
Joanne & Tom Christman, son *Kyle R. O'Neill* - 7/20
Catherine Dardozi, grandson *Evan Schmidt* - 7/15
Vanessa Diaz, friend's child *Samir* - 7/12
Bob & Connie Ercole, son *David* - 7/2
Sharon & Francis Gailey, daughter *Danielle Marie Gailey* - 7/14
Ron & Sue Gamza, daughter & grandson *Rachel & Troy* - 7/24
Gwen & Walt Gearhart, grandson *Jamie Rogers* - 7/12
Carolyn & Allen Gephart, son *Joseph Malec* - 7/14
Craig & Kathleen Gerland, daughter *Alexis* - 7/18
Rhonda and Frank Gomez, son *Frank Jr.* - 7/17
Danielle & Joshua Graham, brother *Jake* - 7/29
Jean & James Hayden, son *LCDR. Timothy M. Hayden* - 7/26
Beatrice K Hildebrandt, son *John R. Hildebrandt* - 7/12
Mark & Vicki Hoffman, son *Eric Daniel Hoffman* - 7/21
Dennis & Lois Ianovale, son *Dennis* - 7/6
Sally Ivory, son *Jimmy Ivory* - 7/16
Lisa Gie Liem, daughter *Stephanie* - 7/19
Maryann Lockyer, son *Keith* - 7/15
Fred & Kay Lokoff, daughter *Terry Lokoff* - 7/27
Maryellen & James Madden, daughter *Anne Marie Madden* - 7/28

JULY ANNIVERSARIES CONTINUED

- Lynne & John Malloy, son *David Gross* - 7/1**
Linda Massey, son *Gene* - 7/16
Lee & Laurie Maxwell, son *Dan* - 7/21
Frank & Bernadette McAllister, son *Christopher J. McAllister* - 7/11
Cheryl Mezzaroba, son *Lon Mezzaroba* - 7/24
Fran Miller, son *Christian* - 7/27
Betty (Elizabeth) Miller, son *Raymond "Jim"* - 7/26
Christy O'brian, daughter *Evie* - 7/19
Steve Patrizio, son *Stephen* - 7/5
Betty Jane Peters - Neilson, son *Walter C. Peters* - 7/21
Marie Poulsen, grandson *Jerry August Warfel* - 7/3
Chris Poulsen, nephew *Jerry* - 7/3
Donna Rogers, son *Jamie Rogers* - 7/12
 husband *Jonathan Rogers* - 7/13
Thelma Rosen, nephew *Charles Carswell* - 7/10
Linda Sandlin, brother *LCDR. Timothy M. Hayden* - 7/26
Mildred Sayles, son *Fredrick Chavis* - 7/6
Donna & Eric Schaertl, son *Jared M. Schaertl* - 7/13
Suzanne Schoenhut, son *Joe* - 7/5
Anna Schwarz, son *Jerrold Schwarz* - 7/11
Ann Sherwood, son *David Foster Sherwood* - 7/28
Matthew Silverman, sister *Avery Silverman* - 7/14
Howard & Margorie Silverman, daughter *Avery Silverman* - 7/14
Janis Siravo, son *Christian* - 7/22
Eileen Smith, son *Craig* - 7/31
Carole Solomon, niece *Avery Silverman* - 7/14
Philip & Ilene Spector, niece *Avery Silverman* - 7/14
Margaret & Wade Stallard, son *Wade Hampton Stallard, III* - 7/27
Margaret & Matthew Strickler, son *Timothy Strickler* - 7/23
Suzanne Teleha, son *Peter Teleha* - 7/29
Hellmut Theil, son *Hellmut Theil, Jr.* - 7/14
Robert & Nancy Thompson, son *Andrew Thompson* - 7/28
Brenda Timbers, daughter *Niya Raquel Timbers* - 7/2
Shelly Wagner, son *Andrew Wagner* - 7/26
Irene & Bob Weaver, daughter *Monica* - 7/17
Ellen & Dale Weaver, son *Jeffrey M. Weaver* - 7/29
Peggy West, daughter *Kelly Ann West* - 7/28
Patricia White, daughter *Diane Patricia White* - 7/4
Donna White, sister *Diane White* - 7/4
Nancy Willis, son *Alex* - 7/9
Andy & Peg Yanoviak, daughter *Elizabeth "Betsy" Hershman* - 7/5

SHARED THOUGHTS ON VACATIONS

Many well meaning people like to tell us what we should, or should not do. We emphasize the importance of not letting others "should on us", but, perhaps we are the greatest offender, by "shoulding" on ourselves. We put such unnecessary demands on ourselves. The only thing we should do, is take care of ourselves, and our family. We need to do what is right for us, and that may mean changing traditions and lifestyles to fit the new person we have become through our devastating loss.

Frequently, non-bereaved friends like to tell us vacations can be a cure-all. They stress we should, "get away from it all". They fail to realize our pain goes with us, and it is too early to expect much peace. It is not wise to take a vacation because someone else feels that is what we should do. We can't expect the same enthusiasm as in past years. We have to realize if we stay home, we will not have a great summer, either. Our grief is far more than an interruption in life.

Perhaps, it can help to plan a trip on a smaller scale, and not let our expectations be so great. It is normal for memories to bring sadness, but these same memories will one day bring a smile, when our hearts become lighter (which may be beyond your expectations at this point, but it will happen, but not nearly so soon as you want it to).

Taking vacations has to be a very individual family decision. Some bereaved families have found vacations to be very helpful in their grief, as well as time to sort out our feelings and relationships with the remaining family members. Even though it may stir up memories of past summers and create a void, it can bring some healing, and help us get more from our vacation the following year. Each phase of grief we deal with, helps to strengthen us, and puts a bit of normality back in our lives.

Vacations were always a big part of our life. We felt they were a necessity, not a luxury. It was a time for our family to devote a couple of weeks to one another. Having seven children created a limited budget, so they were primarily camping trips. Our last trip, before Doug's death, was a 2-car caravan, with a camper, across country to California, which now brings fond memories of the closeness we shared. For the most part, we kept our family traditions intact. Vacation was the one exception. It was always such a fun time, and we were not ready for fun.

Sometimes we regret not continuing family vacations. Although, we resumed vacations some 8 years later, we feel we may have missed out on many years of sharing fun times with our family. Death has made us more aware of the importance of spending time together, and also the fact we can not go back to recapture what we have lost. We did the best we could at the time, so that has to be good enough, and maybe we handled it in a way that was best for us.

We hope you will plan your summer for what is best for you, and pray you will find some peace, and hope regardless of where you are.

God Bless, *Marie Hofmockel*, TCF Valley Forge

GRIEF IS LIKE A RIVER

My grief is like a river -
I have to let it flow,
But I myself determine
Just where the banks will go.
Some days the current takes me
In waves of guilt and pain,
But there are always quiet pools
Where I can rest again.

I crash on rocks of anger -
My faith seems faint indeed -
But there are other swimmers
Who know that what I need
Are loving hands to hold me
When the waters are too swift,
And someone kind to listen
When I just seem to drift.

Grief's river is like a process
Of relinquishing the past.
By swimming in Hope's channel,
I'll reach the shore at last.

Cynthia G. Kelley
TCF, Cincinnati, OH

FLOWING TEARS

The tears may come,
I know not when.
My face shows pain
And a puckered chin.

Large tears glisten,
Falling down my face;
On a large grey man
They seem out of place.

My thoughts may not be
Of the girl I knew.
Happiness, or sad tales,
Turn the mood blue.

My memories turn back
To my beautiful girl --
Dimples on a pretty face
And a dainty curl.

Odd, but true,
A happy scene can make me cry.
Hold back the tears,
I don't even try.

At times I have tears
Expressing joy,
As a child might
With a repaired favorite toy.

My child left through
The portals of eternal life.
Now I grieve and feel wounded,
As with a knife.

The tears I feel
Make matters seem so clear;
Through I miss the one

The tears flow,
And the hurt will seem to heal;
Later I know
That life is not such a rotten deal.

The Lord above must have
Created all the tears,
So everyone
Could better handle their fears.

I know nothing can ever
Return my loving child,
Who had a lively step
And manner so mild.

Tears will not wash away
Reality this day,
But as long as I have them,
I'll have courage to stay.

The tears will flow
And ease my grief;
That, I say,
"Is a great deal of relief."

So if you see me crying
And tears on my nose,
Leave the room quietly
And gently the door close.

For God gave me tears
So I might cope,
Whenever I seem
To have lost all hope.

William A. VanVactor
TCF, St. Joseph, MO

MY BROTHER REALLY IS GONE

The sky turns dark and gloomy;
My brother has gone away.
I know I'll never see him again
Not another day.

"Why?" I ask a thousand times,
Must this all happen to me?"
My family is left in sorrow,
Weeping like a willow tree.

I can vaguely remember
How he was before.
Yet I still sit and wait
for him to walk through my door.

Can this be some mistake?
He's not really gone.
Who am I trying to fool?
But still I must go on.

Another day begins;
I realize that I'm wrong,
My brother is really dead;
My brother is really gone.

*By Teglene Burwell
TCF Van Nuys, CA*

I'M SORRY FOR THE THINGS I DIDN'T DO

It's too late to say "I'm sorry"
for the things I didn't do.
It's too late to say, "Forgive me,
and I'll make it up to you"
For you're gone now, forever.
Oh, if you only knew,
"Kid Brother," just how much
I miss you.

No more teasing, no more pleasing,
No more borrowing the car,
No more promising to be careful,
No more sneaking in the pickle jar.
God in Heaven, please take care
Of that brother of mine.
He was so sweet, so tender, and kind.

O, Dear God, when you see him
Please tell him for me
That I miss him something awful,
Though I have my memories.
And, Dear God, there is something
That I'm asking of you -
Ask Jimmie to please forgive me
For the things I didn't do.

*Laura Mae Martin
TCF, Grand Junction, CO*

**Please don't ask me to keep in step -
-It's hard enough just to stay in line!
TCF, Pikes Peak, CO**

Grief is a process, recovery is a decision.
Readjustment does not come overnight. But,
each of us CAN resolve to survive --
One Moment At A Time.

author unknown

When one door closes...another opens,
but we often look so long and so regretfully
upon the closed door that we do not see the one
which has opened for us.

A. G. Bell

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

RESPECT THE LONELY SAILOR ON THAT VAST, DARK OCEAN

Recently, two acquaintances were discussing a man whose wife died a few months ago. It was time he gave away her things., they said. It was time he got over it.

I listened, silent, but started writing this column in my mind.

Dear friends, we have such a small understanding of grief and so little patience with the bereaved. It's time to find more of both.

Grief has no schedule. It would be so much easier on all of us if the pain of bereavement ended after three months, but it just doesn't work that way.

Sometime after three months the reality of the loss is just beginning to sink in.

Grief is neither a sickness that can be cured nor a stage one can outgrow. Like any other milestone, it's a permanent addition to our self-definition. After the loss of someone we love, please don't expect us to snap out of it and be who we were before. Our old self and our old life died with our loved ones. However prepared we might have been, when they died we stepped through a door that has forever closed behind us. We can't go back.

Sometimes we feel like we're just going through the motions for the first year after a loss. Each holiday, anniversary and birthday looms like a tidal wave and hits us about that hard. The week or months in between are simply recovery from or preparation for the next unbearable event.

We have to get through all these significant dates a least once before we can understand how we'll get through the rest of our lives. It takes a full year to go through all of them, and then we still face the worst one all, the first anniversary of the death.

Everyone grieves differently Sleep, often elusive, is at least oblivion. Waking is dreaded. We may be clingy, we may have nightmares, we may be remote, we may cry often, we may never cry again.

We're often told time will heal us, but time is the enemy. We want to turn back the clock, but it goes forward. It slows down in the worst parts and speeds up through the easy parts. Some days are excruciating. Some seasons are endless.

Eventually, things do change. But each person's grief takes its own good time. While a 1-month-old grief is unbearable and a 1-year-old grief is still raw, a 10-year-old grief is different.

Even after much time has passed, gently and caringly asking about a loss can be a kindness, especially when well-meaning friend have decided it's a taboo subject. One of the hardest parts of losing someone you love is the fear that he will be forgotten. So many times, the people who recognize our need to talk are those who've been where we are.

There's a strange kinship among the bereaved. We have lifetime memberships in a club no one wants to belong to. More than once, I've initiated conversations with near-strangers about subject so private and painful others might have been shocked. But we understood each other. We recognized each other because we spoke the language of tragedy.

Everyone reacts differently to a loss. Some of us do thing we'd never do otherwise. Please, be gentle in your opinions and understanding in your expectations. If you haven't gone through what someone else is experiencing, then trust me, no matter how compassionate you are, you don't know what it's like.

People speak of grief as if it were a tide that's come in and will soon recede. But grief is not the tide. Grief is what's left when the unimaginable occurs. It's the residue of horror, the aftermath of heartache, the uninvited guest who will not leave. It lingers, it hovers, it smothers. It's unrelenting.

Bereavement puts us on a small boat in a great ocean. Time, faith, love, friends and our own inner strength are the tides that can carry us to shore. But grief is the ocean, vast and overwhelming.

Once you've seen the ocean, you never see the world the same.

Jennifer Hansen, Arkansas Democrat Gazette
Submitted by **Rusty Puglisi**, mother of **Michael** 3/5/1966 - 9/10/1994

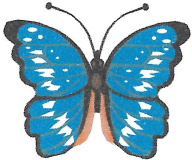


**THE
COMPASSIONATE
FRIENDS, INC.**

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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