



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

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

SEPTEMBER 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. For information please call Rhonda at 484-919-0820.

Meeting Schedule and other TCF Events of interest

- Sept 6 General Sharing
- Sept 15 Butterfly Release (see page 3)
- Oct 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.

NEW PEOPLE

Ella Mack, sister *Elizabeth* (53)

We welcome our newly bereaved friends, sorry for the cause that brings you. We have all been in the depths of despair, and offer unconditional love and understanding to all of you. It sometimes takes several meetings to feel the full benefit of group sharing.

REFRESHMENTS

Nina Bernstein, in memory of all the children.

Rhonda Gomez in memory of my brother, *Donnie's* birthday.

Mary Lou Harrison in memory of my son, *Scott's* birthday.

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

Lily & Herman Eason in honor of *Peter's* 2nd anniversary this past July.

Mary Lou Harrison in loving memory of my forever-beloved son, *Scott*. (see poem below)

Jerry & Gloria Koval in loving memory of our son, *Steven Koval* on his anniversary 9/3.

We truly appreciate receiving the monthly newsletter.

Patricia & Harry McCullough in loving memory of our son, *Brian McCullough*.

Rusty Puglisi in loving memory of my son, *Michael* on his anniversary 9/10. (see poem below)

Lorraine Spear in loving memory of my beautiful daughter, *Kimberly J. Spear*.

on her 40th birthday. Forever in my heart. Always & forever. Love and miss you. **Mom**

Fred & Irene Sutton in loving memory of our son, *Jim* on his birthday 8/7.

I TALK ABOUT HIM BECAUSE

I talk about him because I'm proud.

I talk about him because he deserves to be remembered.

I talk about him because even though he's not physically with me, he's never far from my mind.

I talk about him because he's part of me, a part that I could never ignore or disown.

I talk about him because I love him still and always will. Forever. Nothing will ever change that.

Author **Lexi Behrndt** Submitted by **Rusty Puglisi**

SOMETHING YOU GET THROUGH

When you lose the one you love

You think your world has ended

You think your world will be a waste of life

Without them in it

You feel there's no way to go on

And life is just a sad, sad song

But love is bigger than us all

The end is not the end at all

It's not something you get over

But it's something you get through

It's not ours to be taken

It's just a thing we get to do

Life goes on and on

And when it's gone

It lives in someone new

It's not something you get over

But it's something you get through

Lyrics by **Willie Nelson**

submitted by **Mary Lou Harrison**



BUTTERFLY RELEASE AND PROGRAM
Saturday, September 15, 2018 at 3PM

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, **at the Gazebo rain or shine.**

Cost \$5.00 per butterfly - registration now being accepted.
Rhonda has ordered additional butterflies that are available,
please call her to place your 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 are available. 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. **Everyone welcome, (even if you do not order a butterfly) bring a friend.**

For questions, please call TCF Valley Forge 484-919-0820

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: _____ \$5.00 each

Total money (no credit cards) enclosed: _____

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

TO ALL MEMBERS OF TCF VALLEY FORGE CHAPTER

The Valley Forge Chapter is a safe haven for bereaved families to come share their grief with one another. Our meetings include women & men in all stages of grief. The more seasoned members offer hope to the newly bereaved. Many have stayed to fill positions that holds a chapter together.

Ken & I wish to say thank you for helping us to grieve and grow. The time has come for us to pass the Newsletter Editor position on to someone else.

We wish to inform you of our resignation effective December of this year, or as soon as possible. The chapter leaders, Rhonda and Frank Gomez, are aware of our decision prior to this notice.

The Newsletter Editors can be an individual, or a couple. Fresh ideas and different styles are welcome, as long as the basic rules set by TCF National are not violated. It is the willingness to reach out to the newly bereaved that is important.

The best part of healing is reinvesting by giving back. It is a tremendous reward to give hope to the newly bereaved and see their fragmented lives find meaning in living again. Please volunteer to either of the persons listed below, it can be very healing.

Marie & Ken Hofmockel
Phone: 610-337-1907
Email: Kendall.Hofmockel@gmail.com

Rhonda & Frank Gomez
Phone: 484-919-0820
Sugar@TCFValleyForge.org

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 frank@tcfvalleyforge.org**

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:

SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Jim & Michelle Angelini, son *Danny* 9/12
David Bonga, daughter *Amanda* 9/15
Robyn Buseman, daughter *Maya Buseman-Williams* 9/30
Scott & Gail Campbell, daughter *Chelsea* 9/1
Chris Carlton, brother *Eric* 9/5
Barbara Cohen, son *Mark Y.* 9/18
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
Catherine Dardozzi, grandson *Evan Schmidt* 9/29
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 & 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 Kearns, son *Dennis J. Kearns, Jr.* 9/18
Jacque Kilroy, son *Shilen Kenneth* 9/4
Suellen & Stephen King, daughter *Danelle Rossi* 9/18
Kevin & Janet Landis, son *Daniel* 9/10
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
Elizabeth Orbann, daughter *Linda Elizabeth Johnson* 9/15
Linda & Andrew Peoples, Jr., son *Brian A. Peoples* 9/7

SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS continued

Robert & Nancy Ricciardi, daughter *Jessica Lee Ricciardi* 9/23
Ruth Richardson, grandson *Nicholas Richardson* 9/1
Gina & Brian Richardson, son *Nicholas Richardson* 9/1
Donald & Mary Rose, daughter *Marjorie Rose-Cotteta* 9/30
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
Sharon Venezia, son *Justin Negron* 9/9
Shelly Wagner, son *Andrew Wagner* 9/29
Kelly & Gary Walens, son *Kevin McGinley* 9/22
Terry & Susan Weikel, daughter *Jennifer* 9/26
Kathryn & Pat White, son *Steven White* 9/16

SEPTEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

Laura Bedrossian, son *Teddy* - 9/24
Jeff & Donna Brown, son *Kenneth Bernstiel* - 9/12
Suzanne Carcarey, son *Eddie* - 9/21
Phyllis & James Casey, son *Jim "Jimmer" Casey* - 9/17
Theresa L Cole, son *Christopher Michel* - 9/10
Laureen Cole, brother *Chris* - 9/10
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
Judi Griffith, son *Steve* - 9/4
Brittany Hackman, brother *Brian* - 9/1
Brooke Hackman, son *Brian* - 9/1
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
Rick & Susan Hildeberg, daughter *Amy* - 9/16
John Horulko, son *Daniel* - 9/30
Monica Horulko, son *Daniel* - 9/30
Gwen Kearns, son *Dennis J. Kearns, Jr.* - 9/28
Deborah Keevill, son *Brandon* - 9/1
Donna Kendall, daughter *Jennifer* - 9/24
Shirley & Philip C. Kennedy, son *Philip V. Kennedy* - 9/23
Gloria and Jerry Koval, son *Steven* - 9/3
Joanne & Thomas Lennen, son *Scott C. Lennen* - 9/2
Maureen Lok, daughter *Jessica* - 9/25

SEPTEMBER ANNIVERSARIES CONTINUED

- Eileen & Chris McKeown, son *Eric* - 9/18
 Alfred J. & Joan Michini, son *Adam Jonah Michini* - 9/7
 Betsy Oakes, son *Bruce Schaeffer* - 9/2
 Marie O'Connon, son *Curran J.* - 9/8
 Elsie Oreski, son *Gregory T. Oreski* - 9/3
 Teresa and Ron Perkins, daughter *Allison* - 9/22
 Kathy & Jim Petrokubi, son *Andrew* - 9/26
 Mary Jane Pollart, son *Mark Andrew Steffler* - 9/7
 Rusty & Anthony Puglisi, son *Michael Puglisi* - 9/10
 Steve & Joann Reynolds, son *Chris* - 9/15
 Donald & Freda Rhinier, son *Glenn D. Rhinier* - 9/16
 Bonnie Rosen, son *Troy* - 9/29
 husband *Eugene* - 9/3
 Marie Schmeltzer, son *Sam "Sonny" Schmeltzer* - 9/11
 Abigail Schwartz, brother *Jake* - 9/13
 Charles & Tish Shaw, son *Charles "Corky" Shaw* - 9/29
 Fietta Sherlock, son *Jeremy* - 9/17
 Helen Smith, son *Patrick Kenneth "Kenny" Smith* - 9/17
 Jean Sykora, son *Mark* - 9/27
 Renee Teufel, son *Gregory* - 9/24
 Barbara Tuller, son *Charles* - 9/24
 Weldon & Marie Tyson, son *Ronald C. Stewart* - 9/21
 Sharon Venezia, son *Justin Negron* - 9/17
 Laretta Wagner, daughter *Traci Wagner* - 9/10
 Kelly & Gary Walens, son *Kevin McGinley* - 9/28
 Lucia Watters, daughter *Luanne Zambino* - 9/15
 Mary Willinger, sister *Annette* - 9/27
 Muriel Wilson, son *John F. Shaffer* - 9/25
 Gisela Witte, son *Bruce G. Edlund* - 9/22

AS TIME PASSES

As time passes
 And others forget
 Day by day
 I enter my lonely
 Room of memories
 And broken dreams
 And I cry.

And each day
 As I push forward
 I move a step ahead
 And then back
 But still gaining
 If even but a little.

Mary Rapke
 TCF, Grand Junction, CO

SHARED THOUGHTS ON HOPE THROUGH SHARING

Many bereaved parents and siblings attend Compassionate Friends National & Regional Conferences. As we share with each other, it is obvious that hope brings us together. The very fact we are there means we want to help ourselves. Many speakers & workshop presenters come at their own expense, to help others better understand their grief. There are very newly bereaved and many with distance from their grief, but all are there with hope to help themselves, or to attend leadership workshops, so they can come back with new insights on how to help others. Many attendees are fragile with fresh grief and only have a glimmer of hope, but they come to build on what they have.

There are times in our grief when we feel we cannot survive, and the intense pain can cause such momentary despondence that we don't want to survive. The gentle encouragement of those who are further down the path can give us hope that we can make it. They help to build self-confidence by telling us that tears, anger, guilt, fear, low self-esteem and all those painful aspects of grief are normal and we need to deal with them. We have learned that the best way to get past such feelings is to express them. It is very helpful to share with someone who has experienced and know the depth of despair it takes to get through grief.

We know our tears can be very warm and bring solace, or they can come from a raging anger for the loss of our child or sibling, or the injustice that life brings. We also know they can be private or shared. But, the one thing most of us have learned, they are very healing, and cleansing. Shedding tears does not mean we have lost hope. Mourning helps us to accept (but not approve) of the situation we are in. We are recognizing the fact our loved one is gone, and how we will miss them. As Sascha Wagner writes, "Grief cannot be conquered like an enemy. Grief can only be changed from pain... to hope... from hope... to deeper life". This cycle is necessary to go on with life and eventually face the challenge of our tomorrows.

It is difficult, but we must allow ourselves to feel the pain of grief. It is normal to cry, to be enraged, to be confused, and sad. But, we have found strength in sharing. It can help to prevent self-pity. And no matter how dark our path, we learn we can still believe in rainbows. For it is hope that can eventually overcome our nightmare and bring dreams back into our lives, so we can again cherish the love and loved ones around us. We know all this comes so very slowly. We must take time and be patient and first learn to stand, before we can walk.

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

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

Some Common Thoughts Following the Death of Your Child

- It is not uncommon to feel bitterness or a sense of injustice when one loses a child. So if you find yourself thinking, Why me?, Why my child?, Why our family?, You are in good company.
- Some parents describe “an irrational sense of self-blame” following the death of a child. I never was able to figure out what a rational sense of self-blame might be. But I do know that many of us blame ourselves. We replay the what-ifs of our child’s life and death a thousand times a day. Almost always self-blame is misplaced.
- Grief over the loss of a child lasts longer than any other kind. It heals more slowly and causes the most monumental disruption for those who survive. This is because a child is a part of what psychologists call our internal psychological structure - meaning that in a way, part of the parent dies too.
- Most experts believe that loss and helplessness are the greatest tests any human can face. A child’s death is off the charts in both categories.
- You may be strong, smart, and highly resilient. But nothing can prepare you for the loss of a child.
- One reason the loss feels so enormous is that a child’s death violates an implicit generational contract that our own children will survive us.
- A child’s death also challenges the fundamental instinct of parents to protect their child. That is what we are supposed to do, isn’t it? To make the world safe? The feeling that we have failed to do so can haunt us, compounding our sadness.
- In an era of medical miracles, we are less culturally conditioned to expect a child’s death than in previous generations. On the contrary, the prevailing assumption is that science and technology can and will work wonders.
- Some experts estimate that in the face of a child’s death two years is a reasonable grieving period. Others double that figure. The truth is, it takes as long as it takes - sometimes a whole lifetime. But if you are lucky, the grief will transmute. Even its physical properties will transform. Its weighty presence abates. The grief becomes gentler - less terrifying - and sometimes, paradoxically, rather sweet.

Taken from *After the Darkest Hour the Sun will Shine Again*
By **Elizabeth Mehren**

STRENGTH

In the early days of my grief,
A tear would well up in my eyes,
A lump would form in my throat,
But you would not know - I would hide it.
For the strong do not cry ...
And I am strong.

In the middle days of my grief,
I would look ahead and see that wall
That I had attempted to go around,
As an ever-present reminder of a wall yet
not scaled.
Yet I did not attempt to scale it,
for the strong will survive ...
And I am strong.

In the later days of my grief,
I learned to climb over that wall
step by step,
Remembering, crying, grieving,
And the tears flowed steadily as I
painstakingly went
For the way was long, but I did make it ...
For I am strong.

Near the resolution of my grief,
A tear will well up in my eyes,
A lump will form in my throat
But I will let that tear fall
And you will see it.
Through it you will see that I still hurt
And I care ..
For I am strong.

Terry Jago,
TCF, Regina, Canada

**In your gathering of memories, invite
your courage to remember everything.**

Sasha Wagner

**A FATHER'S VIEW OF
THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS:
COURAGE, SURPRIS, AND UNDERSTANDING**

Attendance Requirement: Courage

I don't think I am unique, I did not want to attend a meeting of Compassionate Friends. I was coerced by my wife. It was subtle but effective. My son, on the other hand, made a devil's deal; he agreed to go to the next meeting in exchange for a favor - his debt some weeks away. The thought of discussing death nauseated me. We, my son and I, had made a bad deal.

The Meeting: A Surprise

I was surprised to find I was not the only man to have lost a child. There was a reality to that recognition. My loss, not unlike yours, is a personal matter. No one can tell me how I feel or how I ought to feel. Yet, the group never made me feel guilty about my selfishness; they understood.

The Result: An Understanding

Compassionate Friends is not an efficient organization. There are no systems, no quick easy cures. Grief is a catharsis. Most of what you hear there you will dismiss, it will not apply to you. But, there are nuggets - small ideas you will want to try or things you will want to think about. Some you will try. Many you will discard. Only a few will help the pain. These you will treasure.

Your friends and associates may try to understand your grief and try to help. They can do neither. They don't understand. And they try to help. My son felt he had gained little from the meeting. Yet, he left feeling he had helped someone else deal with his grief. What a marvelous satisfaction for a 15 - year old.

What's in it for you? Compassionate Friends is here to help - to listen, to suggest, to understand.

If you handle your grief well, you do not need Compassionate Friends, But we need you. Your approach or method of dealing with grief could help one or more of us. Please share it.

Bob Watts 7/96 TCF, Stamford, CT



**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