



The Compassionate Friends

of Northwest Houston

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Welcome to The Compassionate Friends. We are sorry for the reason you are here, but are glad that you found us. You Need Not Walk Alone, we are The Compassionate Friends.

NOVEMBER 2025

HOUSTON NORTHWEST CHAPTER

www.houstonnorthwesttcf.org

We meet the second Tuesday of each month at 7:00pm.

Our next meeting is Tuesday, November 11, 2025

at

**Trinity Lutheran Church
Family Life Center, Room #116
5201 Spring Cypress Rd.
Spring, Texas 77379**

The Church is located on the corner of Spring Cypress Road and Klein Church Rd. Please enter off Spring Cypress Road. The meetings are held in the Family Life Center Room 204.

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THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS 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.

To the Newly Bereaved

As the years pass, we see new members come into the chapter, and we try to help them with their grief as we progress in our own. Over and over again, I have seen newly bereaved parents come to their first meeting totally devastated and convinced that their lives are over. Through the months (and years) I have seen them struggle and suffer and try to find meaning in their lives again. And they do! Through all the anger, pain and tears, somehow the human spirit is able to survive and flower again in a new life – perhaps a changed life and possibly a sadder one, but a stronger one nevertheless.

We feel so weak and crushed when our beloved children die, but I know because I have seen it countless times in the years I've been involved with The Compassionate Friends that we can make it together. When you walked through the door for the first meeting, you were frightened and nervous; but with that step you made a statement about your life. With that first step through the door, you said you wanted to try, you wanted to find a reason for living again, that you weren't willing to be swallowed by your grief. You wanted to go forward, and those first steps into The Compassionate Friends began your journey.

The journey will be a long one, for you loved your child with all your heart and soul. When that child died, a part of you was ripped away. It takes a long time to repair that large hole. The journey will not always be steady or constant; there will be many setbacks. Those of us who have taken the journey before you can assure you that, while there may be no rainbow at the other end, there is indeed "light at the end of the tunnel."

We want to help you as we were helped, but in the beginning and in the long run, you must help yourself. You have to want to get better, to talk about your loss, to struggle through the grief. We will listen, suggest, share and laugh and cry with you; and we hope, at this time next year, you'll be several steps along in your personal journey through grief. Then you can begin to help others.





Lighting a candle, cherishing a birth.....

NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

1951-Pamela Ann Roberson, Daughter of Doris & Dale Hockstra
2005-Carson Hayes Gurgonus, Son of Amber Gurgonus
1976-Bryan Belveal , Son of Linda Belveal
1974-Michael Shrum , Son of Mike & Melva Shrum
1980-Michael Brent Police, Son of Jack & Sally Police
1984-Phillip Matthew Terrell, Son of Phillip & Mary Jo Terrell
1968-Jenny Nolan Burgess, Daughter of Jenelle Chamberlain
1998-Samantha Alonso, Daughter of Joanna Alonso
1985-Alan Jerome Austin, Son of Rhonda Austin
2004-Brett Collins, Son of Bill & Geri Collins
1978-Shelly Vick Hopkins, Daughter of Brandon & Paula Lansford
1985-Erin Johnson, Daughter of Rebecca Johnson
2012-George Milo Morfin, Jr., Son of Diana Abidin
1988- Katrina Martinez, Daughter of Amy Kohl
1991- Devyn Sloterdijk, Son of Janet Sloterdijk
2004- Lhwhyh Yhshrhal, Son of Taneshia Carey
1985- Adam Kujawa, Son of Larry and Sara Kujawa
2014 -Luke Curry, Son of Lynsy Curry
1989- Kellie Martin, Daughter of Denise Martin
1979- Bryan Selby, Son of Dennis Selby
1978- Nicole Speir, Daughter of Sue Speir
1974- Keri, Daughter of Darlene McGhee
1977- Wes, Son of Darlene McGhee
1993- Michael Jansen, Son of Mike and Linda Jansen
1987- Jacob Hamburg, Son of Faith Hamburg
1978- Matthew Lopez, Son of Rick Lopez
1972- Bruce Young, Son of Barbara Young
1991- Julian Karim, Son of Reshad & Rosanna Karim
2011-Makayla Guinn, Daughter of Darien & Valencia Guinn

***Today I celebrate the life you lived and the blessing that you were to me
during your time on Earth. I remember you. I feel you.***

I know you exist in my heart and elsewhere.

I love you.

Today, in your honor,

I celebrate Life.



Lighting a candle, remembering a life

NOVEMBER ANGEL DATES

2010- Trace Thornton, Son of Nina Thornton
2007- Garrett Conrad Ford, Son of Leigh Heard
2009- Makaylin Angel, Daughter of Jennifer Edwards
2005- Ava Helena Wallheimer, Daughter of Angela Wallheimer
2007- Kate Bronstein, Daughter of Pat Gallien
2008- Melissa Ellen Blackbird, Daughter of Will & Pam Blackbird
2008- Charles James Booth, Son of Mary Booth
2005- Ryan Matthews, Son of Frances Matthews
11/19 Jonathon Kuta, Son of Larry & Terri Kuta
2009- Lance Anderson, Son of John & Dianna Brumley
2009- Phillip Matthew Terrell, Son of Phillip & Mary Jo Terrell
2007- Megan Kathleen Ratliff, Daughter of Ann & Garvon Ratliff
2011- Nancy Elizabeth Gonzalez, Daughter of Dulce Gonzalez
2010- Kristen Roberts, Daughter of Tom & Geneva Montgomery
2012- George Milo Morfin, Jr., Son of Diana Abidin
2014 - Kristi Whitehorn Hill, Daughter of Susan Whitehorn
2014 - April Ann Ulrich, Daughter of Doug & Josette Tharp
2015- Baron Neelley, Son of Bo & Allison Neeley
2015- Sean Weinstein, Son of Steve & Sherry Weinstein
2015- Creighton Heslop, Son of Barry & Kris Heslop
2015- Marc Pournier, Son of Jolena Pournier
2014- Jamie Leonard, Son of Carrie Newman
2018- Angelique Duncan, Daughter of Rosalyn Fagen
2019- Bonnie Baszkiewicz, Daughter of Eve Baszkiewicz
1974- Keri, Daughter of Darlene McGhee
2016- Galencia Symone, Daughter of Titilayo Traylor

My Angel Day

***Yes Mom, this is my Angel Day
From my earthly life, I know I left quite soon
But only to enter my greatest reward in Glory
Far beyond the moon***

***Today you'll perform your loving rituals
And do your best to keep my memory aware
Yes Mom, this ritual is for both of us
For I am both here and there***

CHAPTER NEWS

Our next meeting is Tuesday, November 11th at 7pm.

A Warm Welcome to Our New Members We're Glad You Found Us.

We offer our warmest welcome to our newest members. If you have walked through the door to a TCF meeting, we understand how traumatic and difficult that is to do...we have all taken that step and reach out to you in friendship and support.

As our TCF Credo says, *"We come from different walks of life..."*, but the common bond we now share is the death of a beloved child, grandchild, or sibling. Others cannot understand the terrifying and debilitating emotional issues that occur in our daily lives once this event happens; a TCF member can and does!

Save the Date
Compassionate Friends
Worldwide Candle Lighting date this year:
Sunday, December 14, 2025



Sunday, December 14, 2025 at
Trinity Lutheran Church
5201 Spring Cypress Rd.
Spring, TX 77379

There will be drinks, light snacks and sandwiches provided starting at 6:15 pm. We'll have a remembrance slide show. Please email 3 or 4 photos of your child along with their name, birth date and angel date to Darryl Heino at darrylheino@gmail.com.

Dwelling on Our Loss

To an outsider, the idea of meeting with a group of people for the purpose of discussing death, our personal experiences with the death of our children, the "grief process," etc., may seem grim if not altogether morbid. All of us who are involved in The Compassionate Friends have run into someone who has asked, "Why do you do this?" or "Why don't you just try to let it go?"

The idea of "dwelling on the loss" is always stated with negative connotations, yet dwelling on the death of a child is not something we can avoid. Indeed, "dwelling" is part of the healing process. It's how we come to grips with the questions "Why, what if...?" that uncontrollably pop up in our minds, and it is how we learn to accept the unacceptable.

Certainly, there is a wealth of information in books dealing with death and dying. Our faith, our pastors, priests, and rabbis have much to contribute to our healing. Psychologists, psychiatrists and therapy may be necessary.

The Compassionate Friends encourages grieving parents to utilize any or all of the above tools, but we also realize the value of learning to verbalize, openly, publicly, the grief and the loss we feel . . . not in the privacy of our doctor or minister's office, where we are very sheltered, but openly among people who know full well how hard it is to say, "My child is dead." We do not put any pressure on people attending our meeting to say anything, but the beautiful part of this group is that it enables you to see people who are "down the long road" a way further and to realize that you will be there in time.

Are we dwelling on our loss? Absolutely. But we are learning to dwell on it constructively, to dwell on it without guilt and without the isolation we have all felt. We learn how to reach out (in time) to others with a compassion that brings healing to others as well as to ourselves.

Philip Barker
TCF, California

Seasons

The change of seasons is difficult. It reminds me that I must change if I am to live again. We can become stuck in our grief, full of self-pity and overwhelmed with pain. I do not believe our children would want us to live the rest of our lives in pain and misery. It is so easy to fall into the "black pit" and never have the strength or courage to crawl out – because crawl out we must...on our bellies.

We are different now, with different priorities and goals. We must find a new purpose for going on, and we must accept the changes in our lives – including ourselves, for we are different now. We cannot go backward, though there are times we yearn to. We must go forward. If we don't, we stay stuck at the point our world changed. I used to say "ended."

Change is difficult. To accept the loss of our child is the most difficult of all. Our comfort comes from believing that the love we share will go on for all eternity and that we will be reunited again – and each day brings us closer. We must learn to live again, love again, feel joy and peace again – or our survival will be without value to ourselves or others.

Renee Little
TCF, Fort Collins, CO

Thanksgiving Marks Beginning Of Holiday Madness and Sadness

In our society we have turned the holidays into a never ending round of parties, shopping, cooking, preparations for guests or travel and stress, lots and lots of stress. It begins in October with the not so subtle reminders from our friendly retail stores. Most of us dread this time of year because as members of Compassionate Friends, we have one more item on our list and it invariably is at the top.....my child is gone.....how can I handle the holidays?

This will be my third Thanksgiving without my son. We had 35 wonderful Thanksgiving celebrations together, and now it's just me. My only child is gone, my grandchildren now live solely in their mother's world. I am not a part of that world.

But I am learning to cope with this reality. I am learning that I can hold on to the traditions that don't cause me sadness and let go of those that do. As bereaved parents we fall into a unique category. As humans we accept that the loss of parents, spouses, aunts, uncles, siblings, friends and acquaintances is inevitable. But never, never, were we taught or conditioned to the idea that our children would or could precede us in death. The very notion of this shook us to our core.

Now we have lost our child to death. Nobody prepared us for this mind numbing loss. The rules have been broken. We have no coping skills. Our friends usually can't help. Our families try, but until one endures a loss of this magnitude, the ability to fully comprehend the never ending rounds of sadness is simply not there.

We do have a support system.....we can choose to participate or simply be there, in the moment, at our Compassionate Friends meetings. Here we find our most meaningful and helpful connection with other parents.....parents who are walking the road we now walk. These bereaved parents are here to help us on this unfamiliar road. They cannot answer every question because the answers don't exist to most questions. When will this pain end? When will life go back to "normal"? There are different types of pain and new kinds of normal. We gather each month to help each other, to lean on each other, to find hope in each other's ability to function. From this meeting of kindred souls we do derive some solace, some peace and some hope.

I have watched the newly bereaved, raw in their sadness when they first attend a meeting. As the months move forward, I begin to see a change in these parents. Each changes in a different way, for each experiences their loss and their grief process in a different way. Some changes aren't apparent for months, even a year or two. Learning that we are not alone in the grievous burden of our loss is comforting. Learning that others have developed ways to cope with the holidays, the birthdays, the death anniversaries and other special occasions gives us the hope that we, too, will one day feel comfortable in our new "normal."

I have chosen to accept this group of gentle, kind and compassionate friends as an integral part of my life. The first holidays were horrible. I learned that I had to do what I felt was right. I learned to let go of the expectations of others and live in the moment. Even if I plan to do something and change my mind, I feel no guilt. I learned that those who truly love me understand. I have found that I am truly becoming myself....my new self. It is a slow process. There are setbacks.

Holidays are extremely difficult for every parent who has lost a child.....it matters not how long ago our child died. The pain is fresh, new and raw at this time of year. This is the season for leaning on our compassionate friends, for asking questions, expressing fears, anxieties, doubts, depression and anger and for finding the comfort, hope and understanding that each of us so desperately seeks.

Annette Mennen Baldwin
In memory of my son, Todd Mennen
TCF, Katy, TX

Open Letter to Our Siblings

Dear Sibling,

How can I possibly tell you how much I miss you? But of course you probably know - since you knew me better than anyone. No matter how much time passes, I still wish you were here to share our lives and the future I expected us to have together.

Even though we fought and at times neglected each other, I just assumed that you would always be there. That we'd grow old together and remember stories of growing up and laugh at each other as we looked and acted more like our parents. That we'd share our joys and setbacks, and adore each other's children.

Your death has rocked me harder than I could imagined I'd survive. Ultimately, there are no answers to my questions. There is no replacing you and there is no solace for my grief.

There is only the simple choice I make every day to live on in the honor of your memory and the love we shared. To strive to carry on the best of who you were. To cherish the brief time we have with others. To celebrate the opportunity to be alive. To have compassion for the pain of others as well as my own. To have the courage to love fully as I have loved you and to remember that you would want me to go on and find joy again.

You gave me so many gifts while you were alive and I continue to discover the gifts in this loss. I am so thankful you were born my sibling. I would not have traded our time together for anything. You are always with me because you are a part of me.

Mary Lamourex
TCF Marin County, CA



Our Many Special Days

The beginning of the school year each fall seems to signal the coming holidays. The commercial market starts stocking school supplies just after the Fourth of July; shortly thereafter, by late summer the school supplies are crowded out by all the paraphernalia of Halloween! A glimpse of Thanksgiving whizzes by and it is an all out affront on the Christmas season. After the death of our child we stumble around each year looking for the appropriate way of handling these seasons that once had so much joy to them.

But the calendar holidays are far from the only "Special Days" that bereaved parents face. Our child's birthday and death date are especially hard days but also are the days relating to their illness or other events that relate to their death date and funeral or memorial. The most obvious days are not always the only hard days to live with. Rainy days, snowy days, starry nights can all trigger tugging emotions. Tuesday for laundry day may be the hardest day all year long.

No bereaved parent will have the same feeling of a special day or have the same special day because our children were different people to each person. Because of this, like in everything else in our grief work, we have to allow space for each other's "bad" days.

Each passing year after the death of our child finds us relating to special days differently each year. It is a continuing process never to return to that which used to be. As the years pass and we work hard at our "grief work" we will heal but that does not mean being like we were or doing the things we used to do. We are an evolving new person learning to live again.

Gerry Hall
TCF South Central, MO



Butterflies in November

Thanksgiving was Chad's favorite holiday. He loved the food and the football games without the hassle of all the Christmas going ons. I have so many memories of Thanksgivings past. I remember the last Thanksgiving we were together. Chad called me from Alabama and said he and Mandy were on their way to Atlanta and to please save him something to eat. I said "of course I will save you something to eat, but I thought you were eating with Mandy's family?" Chad said "Mom, I think they make their stuffing with "GRITS".....need I say more? Just save me some."

That really made me feel good. He loved my Southern Cornbread Dressing, Turkey, Ham, and all the fixins. We enjoyed so much just being together and preparing the dinner and enjoying the meal.

Chad died in September of 1996. Thanksgiving came way too fast. For those who have gone through their first Thanksgiving you know the feelings

I am describing. Everything seems to go in slow motion with the inability to move forward....the heaviness and the physical and mental fatigue...the pain in your heart, the lump in your throat and the tears in your eyes. No, I did not want Thanksgiving to come this year or ever again. My daughter was away at school and I knew she would be coming home. My mother was struggling with lung cancer and I knew there would not be many more Thanksgivings with her. What do I do? I think we all decided that if we could just go through the motions it would be better than doing nothing and I think we all did it for each other.

I cried the whole time I was preparing the meal. I do not remember anything other than the tears. Several friends wanted to join us for Thanksgiving that year and they volunteered to bring a turkey and dessert. I readily accepted their offer.

We gathered together at noon, my husband said the blessing (which I really had a hard time with) and then I wanted to read a poem in Chad's memory. I asked everyone if they would bear with me as I read this. Several times I could not speak. The words would not come, but I was determined that I was going to read this poem. When I neared the end of the poem I felt the lump in my throat and I knew I was going to start crying out loud. As soon as I finished I got up from the table and left the room.

There was dead silence. No one spoke a word. Then I heard one of our friends say "Look at that butterfly. I can't believe there is a butterfly this time of year. And he looks as though he wants to come in. He is hitting himself against the glass door."

My tears turned from sadness to tears of joy. I knew that was Chad. I knew he had come to get some of my Cornbread Dressing. The only regret that I have is that I did not let him come in. I knew if I went back to the dining room and told my friends that was Chad they really would think I was crazy. If I had to do it over again....it wouldn't matter but at that time I had not gotten involved with TCF or did not know another bereaved parent....so to me my "crazy thoughts" were just that and I thought they probably were not normal.

We do not have butterflies in Atlanta in late November. I choose to believe it was a sign from my son. This will be our fifth Thanksgiving without him. The pain has softened. My tears do not come as often. The memories are

sweeter. My heart is a little lighter. My love for my son is as strong as ever. I feel his presence in everything I do. I do not fear I will forget anymore. I know he is with me.

This Thanksgiving my plan is to make a LARGE pan of my southern cornbread dressing along with Chad's favorite Ham recipe and take these to the hospital to share with my daughter, who is an RN, and all the staff in the PICU at Children's Hospital—Egleston Campus and the parents who are spending Thanksgiving with their children in the Intensive Care Unit. For some, this will be their last Thanksgiving with their own children.

The staff at the Children's Hospital work very long and stressful hours. They are away from their own families on this holiday to take care of the children who are in the hospital. I feel this is a way I can help others and also include some precious memories of my Thanksgivings past with my own son and daughter. I am looking forward to this very much and I am thankful I can be with my daughter.

I wish for those of you who are facing your First Thanksgiving that you can read this and know that it will get better. You will find joy again. There is hope. The love will always remain and your child will always be with you. Of course, it is not like we hoped it would be but it can be good. Our children will always be a "present" part of our lives....they will not be forgotten.

I pray you find peace this holiday season. I pray your sorrows will soften and your memories bring smiles. I pray you will be able to enjoy your other family members. I pray you know you are not alone.

Jayne Newton
TCF Atlanta, GA

In Memory of my son, Chad Gordon 5/21/72 - 9/3/96 and All Our Children



Phone Friends

All of the people on the following list are bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings. They understand what you are going through and have all wished to be included in this list in the hope that anyone who needs to talk will reach out to them. They are willing to talk with you at any time you need their support. Some have listed the specific area in which they have personal experience but they do not intend to imply that that is the only topic they wish to talk about. We all have experienced this journey through grief and it encompasses much more than the specifics surrounding our individual loss. Having a compassionate person to listen when you are having a bad day or just need someone to reach out to when you feel overwhelmed can make the difference in getting through one more day. We have all been there and understand, please feel free to contact any one of us.

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