

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Post Office Box 25573 Greenville, South Carolina 29616

(864) 288-9820 www.tcfogreenvillesc.org



December 11, 2008 Meeting

Always the second Thursday of the month

Topic:

Know Me, Know My Child

This meeting offers each of us an opportunity to share something about our child. Plan to bring anything you would like to share – a photo, a poem, a sonogram, a toy, an article of clothing, a special song, etc. In TCF our children are always remembered; no life is too brief not to be treasured, honored, and remembered. This meeting will offer you a special opportunity to share that special life with others who understand your need to remember.

Facilitated by:

Dick Renner

Meeting Time & Location

7:30 P.M.

Pelham Rd. Baptist Church,
Family Life Center
1108 Pelham Rd., Greenville, SC

Compassionate Friends A Safe Place to Talk

There is a need to talk, without trying to give reasons. No reason is going to be acceptable when you hurt so much. A hug, the touch of a hand, expressions of concern, a willing listener was and still is the things that helped the most. The people who were the greatest help were not judgmental. It's most helpful when people understand that what is needed is to talk about it and that this is part of the grief process.

TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Coming to the first meeting is the hardest, but you have nothing to lose and everything to gain! Try not to judge your first meeting as to whether or not The Compassionate Friends will work for you. At the next meeting you may find just the right person or just the right

words said that will help you in your grief work.

TO OUR MEMBERS WHO ARE FURTHER DOWN THE "GRIEF ROAD"

We need your encouragement and your support. Each meeting we have new parents. **THINK BACK** – what would it have been like for you at your first meeting if there had not been any TCF "veterans" to welcome you, share your grief, encourage you and tell you, "your pain will not always be this bad, it really does get better!"



Christmas Night

My kitchen is hushed and quiet now,
Hushed and quiet from the day's
turmoil, only the memory candles glow,
Bathing the room in a soft and rosy
Pink tranquility.

I linger wistfully, savoring the joy
And the beauty of children come home,
Of loved ones snuggled deep and
Sleeping serenely beneath a warm
Blanket of love, a blanket such as only
A family can weave.

I linger wistfully and in the
Rosy-pink glow the candles weave
Their memories of the child not here
But who sleeps, wrapped
Tenderly and securely in Heaven's
Eternal blanket of love.

I linger and in the hushed stillness
My heart bows down and my soul is
Wrapped in rosy-pink tranquility
Like a quiet candle of my candle and
Memory lit kitchen on Christmas night.

By Mary Wildman



I always sleep late on Christmas

Somehow, I always sleep late on
Christmas. Strange -- that's not how it
used to be. Each year in anticipation of
surprises left for me by the tree, I jumped
from my bed at the crack of dawn. Now I
always sleep late on Christmas.

It just doesn't seem so important
anymore to be the one whose feet are
first to hit the floor, as it was
when I would stand over my
brother's bed and say, "Wake up!
You can't sleep late.
It's Christmas!"

There is no one now to keep me
from missing Christmas dawn
because of too much sleep. That
time on that day is now lonely.
So, I always sleep late on
Christmas Day.

*Meilanie Smith
TCF Tuscaloosa AL*

The 2008 Newsletter is lovingly dedicated to the memory of all our Children . . . gone too soon.

Our Children Remembered:

Loved, missed and forever in our minds and in our hearts, as we celebrate their life.

DECEMBER SUNRISES

Debra Anne Jolley
Kelly Kimbrell
Corey Alexander King
Elijah "Eli" James Labbe
Brian T. Martin
Mindy Massey
Christopher Lewis Parker
Jason Smith
Timothy "Scott" Taylor II
John Wesley Turner III
Aubrey (Porter) Watson
Amy Wilkinson
Amanda Camille Williams

DECEMBER SUNSETS

Tina Collins
Clifford Gammons IV
Karen Moore Hayden
Christopher A. Howard
James L. Howard II
Jennifer Nicole Hower
Bobby Jones
Greg Lackey
Allison Leslie
Randall Rainey
Chad Withered

A recent memo from our National Headquarters has urged the local TCF Chapters **NOT** to publish the birthdates of our children. This is because birthdates are often used to commit identity theft. TCF Greenville will comply with this recommendation as identity theft would lead to further grief for our bereaved families. We hope that all will understand this concern.



We acknowledge the following love gifts with **sincere gratitude and deep appreciation in Loving Memory of:**

Kim Dacus by Shirley Herd
Carol Ewing by Robert Edward Ewing
Mary D. Warlick by Jason S. Warlick

**** Love Gifts received after the 20th of the month, will be published in the following month's newsletter.**

CANDLELIGHT FOR YOUR HEART

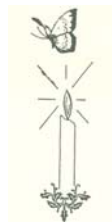
Light a candle through tears tonight,
As you remember me.
In your heart, in your mind,
Soft candlelight for all to see.

Remember the candle burning,
The entire year through.
Carried in your heart, in your mind,
Wherever life takes you.

My light will be your smile,
And sweet memories your hope.
Always in your heart, in your mind
My light, with you as you go.

Light a candle with a smile tonight,
Let your love for me shine through,
I'll be in your heart and in your mind.
And remember, I love you, too.

Written by Nona Walser of the Greenville TCF Chapter in loving memory of her son, Kirby Walser



Every tear is a verse,
And every heart is a poem.

By Marc Andre

Lights of Love

Can you see our candles burning in the night?
Lights of love we send you;
rays of the purest white.

Children we remember though missing from our sight.
In honor and remembrance we light candles in the night;
all across the big blue marble spinning out in space.
Can you see the candles burning from this human place?

Oh, angels gone before us who taught us perfect love;
this night the world lights candles that you may see them from above.

Tonight the globe is lit by love of those who know great sorrow.
But as we remember our yesterdays;
let's light one candle for tomorrow.

We will not forget,
and every year in deep December,
on Earth we will light candles as we remember.

*Jacqueline Brown
Peace Valley TCF
New Britain, PA*



I will Light Candles this Christmas

by Howard Thurman

I will light Candles this Christmas;
Candles of joy despite all sadness,
Candles of hope where despair keeps watch,
Candles of courage for fears ever present,

Candles of peace for tempest-tossed days,
Candles of grace to ease heavy burdens,

Candles of love to inspire all my living,
Candles that will burn all the year long.

PLEASE PLAN TO ATTEND

**THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS'
WORLDWIDE CANDLE LIGHTING SERVICE**

in remembrance for all our children who left too soon

SUNDAY, December 14, 2008

7:00 PM - 8:00 PM

At the Thomas McAfee Funeral Home, Downtown Chapel

639 N Main Street, Greenville SC 229601

Please join us in this community event. Everyone, including family members and friends, remembering the loss of a child or sibling is invited to attend.

Candles will be provided and light refreshments will be served.

For more information, please call 232-6733.

***If unable to attend, please light a candle wherever you are...
"that their light may always shine".***

Please visit www.compassionatefriends.com to leave a message for your child, and/or to read other messages to children.

This is the letter referenced in the "Holiday Sadness" article on the previous page

A LETTER TO MY FAMILY AND FRIENDS

The following idea for a letter to family and friends could be used either in its entirety or just in part to your own family and friends. It is written looking for understanding during the holidays but could be modified for use at any time of the year.

Dear Family and Friends:

Thank you for not expecting too much from us this holiday season. The absence of our child when the "whole family" gathers seems to accentuate our incomplete family. It is difficult to cope with the "spirit" of the holidays on the radio, TV, in the newspapers and stores. We will need the patience and understanding of our family and friends to help us through the holidays as best we can.

Our family traditions may be too painful for us to continue this year. We may want to change the way we spend Thanksgiving, Christmas, or Hanukkah. Please understand this and maybe some time in the future we will have these traditions again. Whatever our thoughts are for coping with the day, please take our feelings into consideration when you make your plans.

Please allow us to talk about our child, if we feel a need. Perhaps the single most helpful thing you can do for us is to include our child in the holidays. We want to hear his/her name, to have you recall fond memories of their lives, to know that you, too, are feeling their absence and remembering them with love.

As we work through our grief, we will need your patience and support, especially during these holiday times and the "special" days throughout the year.

Thank you for not expecting too much from us this holiday season.

Love...a bereaved parent/family

From Healing Hearts for Bereaved Parents



The Holiday Army

By Andrea Gambill

Here it comes again — the Holiday Army — in its annual march against us. Some of its generals are called "Thanksgiving," "Christmas," "Hanukah," "New Year's Eve" and "New Year's Day." They are no respecters of the heartbroken and emotionally wounded, and their troops are merciless. They take no prisoners! They demand that we participate in their joy and nostalgia or they will mow us down with their militant tanks of holiday spirit.

Sometimes they declare their war on us openly — without shame or remorse. Sometimes, they wait for us in ambush. Their intelligence operators have been working diligently all year, waiting for the Thanksgiving Day (or sometimes Halloween!) trumpet signal to begin their attack. They just don't seem satisfied to have their celebrations and parties and dinners and festivities unless they can recruit ALL of us into their ranks.

Actually, we wish them well. All we really want is for them to leave us alone and let us mourn in peace and quiet. We prefer our "Silent Nights" to their "Deck the Halls" and Jingle Bells." We don't intentionally spoil their fun, it's just that our pain makes them uncomfortable. They've been conditioned to believe that "The Holiday Season" should have no blemish of suffering or lack of frivolity. We must not only bandage our wounds while in their presence, but cover them with taffeta and sequins besides. They are convinced that all we need is to "put on a happy face" and all our sorrows will magically evaporate.

In their mad pursuit of happiness, they shoot us with the bullets of shopping, piped-in music, special holiday foods and fragrances, gift wrapping, decorations (especially the angels!), joyous children with happy smiles, cards, invitations, parties and gift exchanges. Any other time of the year, snow is considered a nuisance to shovel and plow through. At the holiday season, though, it is touted as romantic and is linked to sleighs and starry nights in front of fireplaces, snuggled close to those we love.

The most devastating bombs they drop into our lives are the images of reunion — times of greeting and hugging folks who are much loved and sometimes not often seen for awhile. They may only be separated by geography; our absent loved ones cannot cross the chasm of loss that looms before our tear-filled eyes. They remind us of things we should be thankful for (and we are more thankful for many of those things than they can ever imagine). They prod us with their spears of delightful togetherness, never realizing that what they celebrate is what we cannot now enjoy. We would not dream of attacking them in these battles for holiday survival. With our noses pressed against the glass that divides us, we actually long to be able to be part of their happiness. We remember the times we joined in their fun and we, too, were part of their army of nostalgia and joy.

Our broken hearts and bleeding wounds do not excuse us from being gracious, however. While grief does not give us permission to be rude and selfish, and we take no overt action against their aggression, we are not without defenses in these battles. We can shield ourselves with the armor of dignity with kind but direct and simple explanations: "We understand your need for celebration, but this year we prefer quiet and private reflection and meditation." "Right now it's hard for us to function in large groups and to appreciate laughter and high spirits." "Our energy is so limited; we'd appreciate some quiet one-on-one time with you in a more spiritual atmosphere." We can gently remind them of how important it is for us to remember those we love who are gone. These are statements that clarify our position without judging or criticizing them for theirs. In kind and non-threatening ways, we need to tell them what's good for us, because they won't think of it on their own, and they can use the education.

We also can exercise the muscles of our sense of humor. It will take some effort on our part, but so does anything that is worthwhile and good for us. We can teach ourselves not to fall into the trap of thinking that our grief makes us the center of the universe. We can limit our demands that others treat us in "special" and "deferential" ways because of our pain. We can cut them a little slack and remember that once upon a time, we were just like they are now. It's good and healthy for us to review our perspectives now and then and decide if we're being fair and reasonable.

We can express our love in simple and unhurried ways without all the frenetic, expensive and often hysterical hype that the holidays can generate. And we must exercise the expression of our love. Grief does not rob us of our ability to love; it reminds us ever more dramatically of our need to both give and receive love while we are here.

Whenever we can take some control in our situations, we empower ourselves, and then we feel less like victims in what seems like a war of "peace on earth, goodwill toward men." Anytime we can educate and inform with mercy and compassion, we have given a truly spiritual holiday gift of love that will keep on giving forever.

May your season be filled with genuine blessings of peace.

TCF National Office

The Compassionate Friends
P.O. Box 3696
Oakbrook, IL 60522-3696
Toll Free: 877-969-0010
Fax: 630-990-0246
E-mail:
nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org

Website:
www.compassionatefriends.com

TCF National Memory Book

If you would like to have your child's name put in the TCF National Memory Book, please send the following information concerning your child to our National Office. **Child's Full Name, Date of Birth, Date of Death, Relationship to child, Your Name, Address, and Zip Code. Also include Your Phone Number and E-mail Address.**

Love Gifts – A Way to Remember

There are no dues to belong to Compassionate Friends, because we have already paid the ultimate price; the loss of our loved one(s). *A Love Gift is a gift of money given in honor of a child who has died from their family members or as a memorial from friends. Your gifts are **tax deductible** and are used to reach out to other bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings. Your gifts support this newsletter, our TCF Library, and other Chapter expenses.*



Birthday Table

Every month at our Chapter Meeting we provide a Birthday Table. In the month of your child's birthday, please bring pictures and small mementos of your child to place on the table. You may also bring a favorite cake, cookies, or other snack in memory of your child. We do this to celebrate and honor our children and to share their special day with others who understand.

Useful Web Sites

www.compassionatefriends.org - TCF National web site. Be sure to visit the **Other Grief Resources** section and the **Sibling Resources**, and the **Community Online Support** Section, as well as the chat room sections of the National web site.

www.tcfogreenvillesc.org - Greenville, SC Chapter web site.

www.SpiritLyric.com - great grief website with several links to many grief resources including other grief web sites, books, music, etc.

www.suicidreferencelibrary.com - contains very good grief information about suicide and general grief.

www.alivealone.org - Alive Alone for bereaved parents whose only child or all children have died.

www.bereavedparentsusa.org - information for bereaved families and newsletters.

www.agast.org – Alliance of Grandparents A Support in Tragedy

www.climb.org - Center for Loss in Multiple Birth

www.teengrief@newhope-grief.org - teenage grief web site

www.misschildren.org – mothers in sympathy and support. Provides support to parents enduring the tragedy of stillbirth, neonatal death and infant death from any cause.

www.pomc.com – a web site for parents of murdered children providing on-going emotional support and education, prevention advocacy, and awareness.



TCF Library

We invite you to check out books from our library. We are pleased that you might find a book that may help you or your family. If you have any books you would like to donate to our library that will be great. On the inside front cover of the book please put "Donated in Memory of (Your Child's Name)", and your child's birth and death dates. Also include your name and the date donated.

Newsletter Submissions

If you would like to submit an original poem or a poem of special meaning for you; you can send it to our editor, Dick Renner at the following address:

The Compassionate Friends
P.O. Box 25573
Greenville, SC 29616



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Greenville, SC Chapter
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We Need Not Walk Alone

December 2008



To those of you who are newly bereaved and receiving our newsletter for the first time, we warmly invite you to The Compassionate Friends. We are a self-help organization of parents, grandparents and adult siblings who have experienced the death of a loved one. We offer understanding and support through our monthly meetings, a lending library, and support materials.

Please do not be apprehensive about coming to a meeting. Every other person in the room has lost a child, grandchild or sibling. They come because they feel the need to be with someone else who understands. We know it takes courage to attend that first meeting, but those who do come find an atmosphere of understanding from others who have experienced the grief that you have now. Nothing is asked of you. There are no dues or fees and you do not have to speak. There is a special chemistry at meetings of The Compassionate Friends.

Worldwide Candle Lighting Held annually the second Sunday in December, this year December 14th, TCF's Worldwide Candle Lighting unites family and mends around the globe. As candles are lit at 7 P.M. local time, hundreds of thousands of persons commemorate and honor children in a way that transcends all ethnic, cultural, religious, and political boundaries. Believed to be the largest mass candle lighting on the globe, the Worldwide Candle Lighting creates a virtual 24-hour wave of light as it moves from time zone to time zone. Hundreds of formal candle lighting events are held and thousands of informal candle lightings are conducted in homes as families gather in quiet remembrance of children who have died, but will never be forgotten. Our chapter's observance of the Worldwide Candle Lighting will take place on Dec. 14th, at 7:00P.M. at Thomas McAfee Funeral Home, 639 Main Street, Greenville, SC