



The Compassionate Friends

Pittsburgh Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

©2015 The Compassionate Friends, Pittsburgh Chapter

October/November/December Fall 2019

The mission of The Compassionate Friends is to assist families toward the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child of any age and to provide knowledge to help others to be supportive.

The Compassionate Friends (TCF) is an international non-profit, self-help support organization which offers friendship and understanding and hope to families who are grieving the death of a child of any age from any cause. There is no religious affiliation. There are no membership fees or dues, and all bereaved family members are welcome.

The Compassionate Friends was originally founded in England in 1969. The first U.S. Chapter was organized in 1972. The Pittsburgh Chapter began in 1978.

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PITTSBURGH PA CHAPTER

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United Way #2647



Fall Monthly Meetings

Meetings are held at **Bower Hill Community Church**

from **2:30 - 5:30 p.m.**

70 Moffett St, Mt. Lebanon, PA 15243 (off of Bower Hill Road)

Please sign in at the welcome table on the lower level of the church.

PLEASE NOTE!! ALL NEW MEMBERS WHO ARE ATTENDING A MEETING FOR THE FIRST TIME, PLEASE ARRIVE BEFORE 1:30 PM TO SIGN IN.

You will then join the regular meeting at 2:30.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2019

Tear Soup: A Recipe for Healing After Loss

This DVD tells the story of a wise woman, Grandy, who has just suffered a big loss in her life. In her grief, Grandy goes to her kitchen to make Tear Soup. The recipe includes memories of all kinds, good and bad times as well as silly and sad times, because Grandy does not want to forget even one precious memory of her loss. A discussion of the video will follow. Refreshments after the program will include various soups and hearty breads.

The Special Sharing will be on preparing for the holidays. Regular sharing groups will be offered as well.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 2019

Sharing Holiday Memories

Please join us as we share our favorite holiday memories of our children, siblings or grandchildren. Feel free to bring a special picture, ornament, song, or anything else that reminds you of holidays spent with your loved one.

For the Special Sharing, we will be making ornaments full of memories! Clear round ornaments will be provided, which can be filled with memories of / messages to your loved ones. Regular sharing groups will be offered as well.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2019

31st Annual Candlelight Remembrance Service

Please see page 7 for more information about this special event. A catered luncheon will be provided in the church's Fellowship Hall after the service. There will be no sharing sessions.

— INSIDE THIS ISSUE —

Home Meetings, New Members,
Loving Listeners

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Directions To Bower Hill Community Church:

70 Moffett Street, Mt. Lebanon, PA 15243

Downtown: through Fort Pitt Tunnels. Exit 5A Banksville Rd. (Rte 19S), bearing right onto Banksville Rd. for 2.3 miles. The last few blocks of Banksville Rd. become McFarland Rd. before you bear right on to Beverly Rd. Go 0.6 miles to Cochran Rd., turn left and go 0.2 miles to Bower Hill Rd. Turn right and go 0.5 miles and turn right on to Moffett St. Bower Hill Community Church is on the right.

From Rt. 19: when you enter Mt. Lebanon, follow signs for Washington Rd. At light turn on Bower Hill Rd. Continue 1.7 miles on Bower Hill Rd and turn right on to Moffet Street. Parking available in the North Parking Lot of the church.

From Airport: East on I-376 to I-79S/Pittsburgh (Exit 64A). Take Exit 55 (Heidelberg/Collier). Take the Washington Pike ramp toward Bridgeville, then slight right onto Washington Pike/PA-50. Turn left onto Vanadium Road. Go about 1.5 miles, turn left onto Bower Hill Road. Go straight about 2.5 miles, then turn left onto Moffet St. Church is on the right.

New Members Greeted Recently

We welcome the following new friends who have attended their first Compassionate Friends meeting recently. We are truly sorry that you have experienced the death of your child, sibling or grandchild. We sincerely hope we will be able to offer you some understanding and support. Coming to your first meeting may be the hardest step you have made since the death of your child. But you have nothing to lose and everything to gain. Try not to judge your first meeting as to whether or not it will work for you. The second, third, or fourth meeting may be the time you will find the right person – or just the right words that will help you in your journey.

Remember . . . You need not walk alone!!!

JUNE

KP, mother of JK

AR & SR, parents of AR, Jr.

JULY

LC, mother of GCC

BC, mother of MC

DD, mother of BD

TR, father of JR



Home Meetings

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN HOSTING A HOME MEETING?

Home meetings give TCF-Pittsburgh Chapter members, particularly new ones, the opportunity to meet with a small group in a more intimate setting. Often, a monthly sharing just isn't enough, as members long to talk about and share memories of their child, grandchild, or sibling with others on a more frequent basis. We will guide you through the specifics, although it is rather simple. It is opening your home and hearts to others who are struggling to move forward in the grieving process. In the past, home meetings have been held in the eastern, western, northern, and southern regions of Pittsburgh. Meetings can be held on the day of your choosing, and they have typically been held in the evenings.

TCF-Pittsburgh Chapter's trained facilitators will be available to provide support and guidance for the home meetings.

If you are interested in hosting a home meeting or would like more information, please contact Megan Talbot (814-860-4732 or coleader@tcpittsburgh.org). We will provide meeting information (dates,

hosts' names, address, and contact information) at our monthly meetings, where our members will be able to sign up to attend one or more meetings.

NORTH HILLS AREA:

See website for info

October 17, November 21 and December 19 at 7 p.m.

SOUTH HILLS AREA:

Friday **October 25, at 7 p.m.**
see website for info

We ask that you contact the hosts at least 48 hours prior to the meeting to let them know that you plan to attend. If no RSVPs have been received 24 hours prior to the meeting, the host may cancel the meeting. If your plans change and you cannot attend, please notify the host family immediately. If you are uncertain whether the meeting is going to take place, please contact the host.



LOVING LISTENERS & REMEMBERING FRIENDS

If waiting until the next meeting is too long and you want to talk, the following people may be contacted. They are willing to listen. They understand what you are going through and they do care. Feel free to call them when you need them.

- SIBLINGS (over 16)**Carlotta Harbaugh - 412-859-0303
- GRANDPARENTS** Mary McGrath - 412-527-7248
- ALL CHILDREN**.....Gene & Rose Sprando - 724-947-3130
- YOUNG CHILDREN** Martina Hartland - 412-245-7048
- STILLBORN, MISCARRIAGE, INFANT DEATH**.....Jen Geis - 412-841-1701
- SIDS**.....Dee Dee Pelled - 412-521-7668
- LEGAL ISSUES**.....Jeff Bragdon - 412-600-4675
- FATHERS**.....John Urso - 412-847-8337
- SUICIDE**Sandy Economou - 724-457-9117
- DRUG OVERDOSE** Mary Jane Marculaitis - 412-916-2094

**IF YOU CANNOT REACH ANY OF THESE NUMBERS,
PLEASE CALL 412-835-1105**

My Dear Compassionate Friends,

As the leader of the Pittsburgh Chapter of The Compassionate Friends, I am writing because our chapter is in desperate need of your help. As you may or may not know, the local chapters of TCF are run entirely by volunteers. These people are members of our organization who have graciously given of themselves to serve our members by volunteering their time and talents to make sure our organization operates smoothly. They are the people who are responsible for making sure all of the official chapter business is completed and they are your direct line to the national office. They facilitate our monthly meetings and they plan and organize our special events. They are responsible for all chapter communication, records, and finances. Our volunteers are the heart of our chapter.

The Pittsburgh Chapter's Steering Committee has remained stagnant for a number of years. It is a common practice for TCF officers to rotate every two years, however our current volunteers have all been members of the steering committee for 3 or more years, and our officers have remained the same for at least as long, many longer. Additionally, as some of our Steering Committee members have had to step down from their responsibilities for a variety of reasons (including multiple years of service and a need to "retire" from their roles), no one has stepped up to take their places. Without additional help from volunteers, our meetings, programs, and special events are in jeopardy.

If you are feeling as though you are far enough along in your grief journey that you are willing and able to give back to the organization and its members, PLEASE consider volunteering. Our chapter's future depends on it.

With love and compassion,

Megan Talbot
TCF-Pittsburgh Chapter Leader

Spaghetti Dinner – POSTPONED

*The spaghetti dinner scheduled for **October 27th** has been postponed to sometime next year. If you already bought tickets, you will receive a refund.*

October is Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Month.

Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Day is October 15 of each year.

***Notes from Our Members***

Friends,

I cannot tell you what a wonderful job this organization does in sending notes out for our son's birthday and the anniversary of his death. Just for two of our "hardest" days to be acknowledged by others makes us feel loved and strengthened. And, I appreciate the newsletter and seeing our son's name PRINTED in it. And all the beautiful poems, letters and memorials. We will always be grateful for each of you!

--Debra F

Many thanks to **Birrbatt Printing** for printing our newsletters, invitations and programs!

421 Cavitt Avenue • Trafford, PA 15085 • 412-373-9047

TCF PITTSBURGH*31st Annual Candlelight Remembrance Service*

***The Compassionate Friends - Pittsburgh, PA Chapter
Invites you to join us on
Sunday, December 8, 2019 from 2:30 – 5:00 PM
At Bower Hill Community Church***

The Pittsburgh Chapter of The Compassionate Friends is part of an international organization that remembers our deceased children, siblings, and grandchildren in a special way on the second Sunday of every December. Our remembrance will take place on Sunday, December 8, 2019 at 2:30 p.m. in the sanctuary of Bower Hill Community Church. During our Candlelight Memorial Service, our members will honor their loved ones through song, poetry, and readings. Members will also receive candles to light as they approach the microphone and share the name(s) of their loved one(s). The service will be followed by a catered meal in Fellowship Hall. Each year, the day comes to a close with the burning of a candle from 7 – 8 p.m. in our homes to add light to the 24-hour, worldwide recognition of life and love that never dies.

The Steering Committee invites you, along with your family and friends, to attend this special memorial in honor of your loved ones. We also invite you to bring an ornament in remembrance of your loved one to decorate the tree that will adorn the sanctuary during the candlelight service and/or a favorite dessert to share at the meal following the service. Members are also invited to bring a picture of their loved one(s) to display during our luncheon.

We recognize that the holidays can be a difficult time for families who have experienced a loss like ours. Times that were once filled with excitement and joy may now be filled with anxiety, sadness, and trepidation. At TCF, we understand these emotions better than most, and it is our hope that our candlelight service and luncheon will give you an opportunity to express your feelings of loss and longing, share a meal with family and friends, and help you experience some moments of peace with those who best understand what you are going through.

Look for your invitation in the mail and be sure to RSVP by the due date so that we can adequately prepare for the service and for the luncheon. Or, feel free to email editor@tcfpittsburgh.org with your RSVP (number attending and whether you will be staying for the luncheon).

**23RD ANNUAL WORLDWIDE CANDLE LIGHTING**

The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting unites family and friends around the globe in lighting candles for one hour to honor the memories of the sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, and grandchildren who left too soon. As candles are lit at 7:00 pm local time, hundreds of thousands of persons commemorate and honor the memory of all children gone too soon.

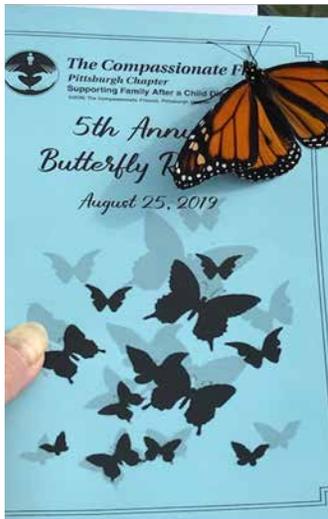
Now believed to be the largest mass candle lighting on the globe, the 23rd annual Worldwide Candle Lighting, a gift to the bereavement community from The Compassionate Friends, creates a virtual 24-hour wave of light as it moves from time zone to time zone. TCF's WCL started in the United States in 1997 as a small internet observance, but has since swelled in numbers as word has spread throughout the world of the remembrance. 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.

TCF PITTSBURGH

Chapter Notes

Volunteers needed! We are in need of volunteers to fill the following positions: Secretary, Treasurer and Newsletter Editor. If you have found hope and healing from TCF, please consider giving back to help other Compassionate Friends! Brief descriptions are below; please contact one of our co-leaders if you are interested or if you'd like more details of any of the positions: Megan Talbot (814-860-4732 or co-leader@tcfpittsburgh.org) or Pauline Sambol (412-585-0787 or chapter.leader@tcfpittsburgh.org). Thank you!

- **Secretary** – Main responsibilities include sending and responding to all correspondence to/from the Chapter; and taking and distributing minutes of the Steering Committee meetings.
- **Treasurer** – Main responsibilities include activities related to the Chapter's bank accounts (recording and depositing checks and donations, paying invoices, and reconciling monthly bank statements); preparing monthly treasurer's reports; and preparing the end-of-the-year report for the TCF National Office.
- **Newsletter editor** – Main responsibilities include activities related to the publication of the newsletter, including gathering and review of materials submitted by members; obtaining and editing information regarding love gifts, monthly program information, and new members since the last newsletter; submitting documents to printer for production; and proofing final version before printing for accuracy of information. Internet access and an e-mail account are necessary; experience with Microsoft Word and Excel strongly preferred.



My Mother, Jeanne and I attended the Butterfly Release in honor of my brother Jeff. That was such a special day and we really appreciate all you do. My Mother was so touched and felt my brother's spirit when her butterfly landed on her program and she wanted me to share [this picture] with you...

I am the son-in-law of Dink and he introduced my parents to your group after losing my brother 3 years ago.

God Bless and Thank You,

David

Butterfly Release

follow-up – Our 5th annual butterfly release was held on Sunday, August 25, 2019, a beautiful, sunny, and rather windy day! After a program of songs and readings, the names of our loved ones were read, and then everyone released their butterflies into the air. If you attended this event and have comments on it, or if you have suggestions for future events, please let us know. Also, if you have pictures you would like to share, please email them to editor@tcfpittsburgh.org. Thank you to Jeanne and her son, David, for this wonderful picture of their butterfly along with a lovely email!

Outdoor Sound System/Speakers Needed!

Our beautiful butterfly release program in August was just about perfect – except for the sound system! Many people were unable to hear some of the speakers and music, because our sound system/speaker is an indoor one. We will need a sound system that is appropriate for the outdoors for our next butterfly event. If you or someone you know can provide one for us to borrow, please contact Mary Marculaitis at 412-916-2094. Thank you!

Getting Through the Holidays

The pressures around the holidays can be even more challenging after the death of a child, sibling, or grandchild. Here are some tips to consider that may help as you navigate the challenges.

1. *Plan ahead.* Anxiety and anticipation leading up to the season can be more intense than the actual holidays. Planning ahead can help lower anxiety. Once you've decided what you can and can't do, share your decisions with friends and family.
2. *Don't let other people determine what you "should" (or "shouldn't") do.* You don't have to do what others think you should. Give yourselves the right to do what you want to do!
3. *Accept limitations.* You may not be able to do all the things you've always done. Which aspects of the holidays are especially challenging for you or your family? Consider scaling back or changing things you may have done in the past, and consider what has been or might be especially enjoyable or meaningful to your family.
4. *Celebrate different feelings and preferences.* Involve family members in discussions about what they would like to do. You and your family may decide to keep everything the same or change everything – or you may fall somewhere in between.
5. *Be informed before attending events.* Find out who will be there, how long it's expected to last, and whether you need to do anything to prepare for it. As a family, brainstorm ways to respond to questions or offers of help from others.
6. *Ask for help, even when it's hard to do.* If it feels right, allow people to help in concrete ways such as cleaning, cooking, baking, shopping, childcare, and running errands. Sometimes we worry about burdening others, but more often than not, they are eager to help.

7. *Find time for rest.* The holidays can be physically and emotionally draining, especially if you're grieving. Encourage rest and plan for healthy eating and hydration for the entire family.

8. *Find ways to remember and honor your loved one.* Here are some ideas to consider:

- *Light a memorial candle.* Invite family/friends to share memories.
- *Write a card or letter to the person who died.*
- *Write memories on strips of paper and use them to create a paper chain.*
- *Hang a special decoration in memory of him/her, such as a wreath or stocking.* If a stocking is used, family members can place cards or pieces of paper with memories inside.
- *Buy a gift he/she would have liked and donate it to a charity.*
- *Gift-wrap a box and make an opening in the top for family and friends to share written memories.* At a special time, the box can be unwrapped and the memories shared.
- *Set a special memorial place at the table during a holiday meal.*
- *Create a memorabilia table or corner where you can place photos, stuffed animals, toys, cards, foods, and any other kinds of mementos.*
- *Share one of your loved one's favorite foods or meals.* Food can be a great spark for sharing memories.

Grief is processing what's been taken from you, what's still within you, and all the blessings and memories left behind by the one you're grieving.
- Terri Guillemets

Not what we say about our blessings, but how we use them, is the true measure of our Thanksgiving.
- W.T. Purkiser

Candles in the Dark

Blackness envelopes us and leaves us alone.
Then cool to the touch a candle is placed in our hands.
These hands which have held each of you, our children,
And which now hold each other.
One by one a light is borne.
One by one it flickers, flames.
And the glow warms our hearts, touches our souls,
And we remember love, we remember you.

by Karen Nelson - TCF Brigham City, Utah

NOTE TO SELF,

*I am doing the best I can with what I have
in this moment and that is all I can expect
of anyone including me.*



Jonathan 1983 - 2017

Jonathan, this Christmas week will be two years since we received that life-changing phone call telling us that your life had been taken on your way to work by a careless driver of a truck that crossed over the center line on a two-lane road. You were always such a careful driver, but this time it didn't matter. Two "angels" assisted you at the scene and you didn't die alone. And for that we will always be grateful. We have since had "extra bright" stars named for each of the women. They were thrilled because they both have children who could "find" their mother's star and see its light - the same "light" that each of their mothers let "shine" that morning when they stayed by your side.

Growing up, we had always hoped more than anything, you would be a "good" man, and by all accounts we felt you had become just that, but at your funeral we found out just how "good" of a person you had been! Stories from so many people, young and old, of things you had done for them or helped them or given them. People spoke of the many notes and cards of encouragement that you had sent and how you made each of them feel loved, thought about and special. Many said you made them want to be a better person.

All of the qualities you showed to others in your short life could be recognized so clearly in this poem from a sympathy card we received in those early weeks following your passing. We have a framed copy of it in our family room.

A Journey Remembered

As some people journey through life,

They leave footprints wherever they go -

Footprints of kindness and love, courage and compassion,

Humor and inspiration, joy and faith.

Even when they're gone, we can still look back

And clearly see the trail they left behind -

A trail bright with hope that invites us to follow.

Jonathan, you are always with us and forever loved,

Mom & Dad

*If possible, please email poems/remembrances for
the newsletter to editor@tcfpittsburgh.org
Thank you!*

Happy Heavenly Birthday

TO OUR DAUGHTER

SARAH

1983 - 2018

*Birthday wishes sent to Heaven from your family below,
Sarah we miss and love you dearly and wanted you to know*

Your Birthday's not forgotten and your memory lives on.

We celebrate the life you had even though you've gone.

If we were given just one wish, one that would come true,

We'd wish you back beside us to spend this day with you.

We will always love and miss you and often shed a tear,

Especially on your special day year after year.

Somewhere over the rainbow is where you'll be Sweet Sarah.

Forever in our hearts.

We love you.

Mum, Dad, Douglas and your two precious sons

Joshua & Jacob

Ritual

A gaze thru blurry window

When did it start to rain?

Then realize it's just the eyes

They're crying once again

Emptiness is mighty

Deep within begins the ache

Intense, this pain that surely

Will cause a heart to break

Shoulders gently tremble

A moaning soft and low

Arms tightly wrapped about oneself

Body rocking to and fro

A ritual of comfort

A numbing of the mind

A cleansing of the tortured soul

A knowing eye made blind

Thus begins the healing process

Of this I know so well

Without you, I fall victim to

This mindless cast of spell

DONNA GERRIOR

TCF PASCO COUNTY, FL

IN MEMORY OF ROB

A love gift is a contribution to honor our children, grandchildren, and siblings, who have died or a memorial for a relative or friend. To contribute a love gift, simply mail in the form below with your gift. There are no dues or fees to belong to TCF and *funds received are used for printing and mailing expenses, for purchasing library materials, and miscellaneous chapter expenses.* These gifts are frequently given on the anniversary or birthday dates or in lieu of flowers when someone has died. Your donation is tax deductible.

PLEASE NOTE: *If you wish to send a love gift or submit a poem for your loved one's birthday or anniversary date, please send the information to the post office address listed on the donation form (rather than dropping it in the mailbox at the monthly meetings), so that we can be sure it is acknowledged in the appropriate monthly newsletter.*

We thank the following people for their kind generosity, love and sharing:

♡ Love Gifts ♡

- JA, in memory of her son, GA
- BD, in memory of his daughter, AD
- LD, in memory of her daughter, DD, and grandson, DD
- TF & DF, in memory of their son, JF
- RG, in memory of her son, DC
- LG, in memory of her son, RG
- DG, in memory of her grandson, GC III
- MH & JH, in memory of their son, SH
- RK & BK, in memory of their son, JK
- MM & KM, in memory of their son and brother, RM
- CM & BM and EM, in memory of their son and brother, JM
- JM, in memory of her son, RM
- JS, in memory of his mother, BV
- PS, in memory of her brother, TG
- DS, in memory of her son, MT
- MS, in memory of her daughter, MS
- AS & MS, in memory of their son, DS; granddaughter, SH; and sister, JS
- GS & RS, in memory of their son, RS
- AT, in memory of her sister, PG
- JT & PT, in memory of their daughters, BT and JH
- BT & LT, in memory of their son, JT
- RT, in memory of her son, JT
- MV & JV, in memory of their son, VV

LOVE GIFT DONATION FORM - PLEASE SEND THIS FORM WITH YOUR CHECK

LOVE GIFTS are a loving memorial to our children, grandchildren and siblings, usually given on birthdays, anniversaries, holidays etc. Your gift may be accompanied by a poem or article for your loved one's special day.

I, (PRINT YOUR NAME) _____ wish to make a donation

in memory of my: Son Daughter Sister Brother Grandson Granddaughter _____

(PRINT THEIR NAME) _____

Their Date of Birth: _____ Their Date of Death: _____

PLEASE NOTE: All love gifts, poems, etc. for the **January-February-March 2020 newsletter must be received by December 1, 2019.**

Please make checks payable to: **THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS** and mail to: **P.O. Box 15495, Pittsburgh, PA 15237**
 Please be sure to send all love gifts and poems to our mailing address above so that the love gift can be acknowledged in the correct month of your loved one's birthday or anniversary.

**The Compassionate Friends
Pittsburgh Chapter
P.O. Box 15495
Pittsburgh, PA 15237
Return Service Requested
Permit No. 17**

NEXT ISSUE WILL BE
JANUARY/FEBRUARY/MARCH 2020
ALL LOVE GIFTS, ARTICLES AND SPEAKERS
WILL BE DUE **BY DECEMBER 1, 2019**

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If disposing of it, please shred.*

NEWSLETTER STAFF:

Susanna Zawacki
Editor
Linda Bloom

If you'd like to receive this
newsletter via email, please
contact editor@tcfpittsburgh.org

The Compassionate Friends Credo

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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 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.

PLEASE NOTE: *Per National Office of The Compassionate Friends, the parents and siblings credo has been combined and the above version is the one we are to use for children, siblings and grandparents.*

We need not walk alone. We are the Compassionate Friends.

TCF Pittsburgh Phone:
412-835-1105

Good Grief Center:
412-224-4700

**Highmark Caring Place: A Center for
Grieving Children, Adolescents & Their Families**
1-888-224-4673