



The Compassionate Friends

Pittsburgh Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

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March/April/May 2018 Spring Issue

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.

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

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PITTSBURGH PA CHAPTER

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REGIONAL COORDINATOR

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United Way #2647



Spring 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, March 25, 2018

Our program will be a viewing of the DVD,
Proactive Grieving:

Turning Loss into Legacy with Mitch Carmody. Grief is a unique journey to each of us. Learning how to be proactive can help us become the CEO of our journey, allowing us to choose to not only survive, but thrive as we move through our pain. Mitch Carmody offers his wonderful insight and keen observations about choices we can make, and actions we can take to help us process our loss. The new S.T.A.I.R.S model for grieving is covered, which Mitch feels is a more practical view than the traditional 5 stages of grief that many have come to accept. This DVD will inspire you to "take control" of your grief, and do it "your way."

The Special Sharing

will be an ongoing discussion of the DVD.

Sharing Groups

1st time attending, Newly Bereaved Up to One Year, Grief 1-2 years, 3-5 years, over 5 years and Siblings Over 16 Years

Sunday, April 29, 2018

Our program will be a viewing of the DVD,
Whispers of Loss: Signs of Our Loved Ones,

with Mitch Carmody. *"The butterfly that shows up just at the right moment, the penny in your shoe, an orb in your photograph, or that dream that was so real and vivid featuring your loved one who has died. Are all these things coincidence? Or could it be that our loved ones are sending us a little whisper of love to let us know they are right here with us?"*

The Special Sharing will be an opportunity for our members to share stories about the signs they have received from their loved ones.

Sharing Groups

1st time attending, Newly Bereaved Up to One Year, Grief 1-2 years, 3-5 years, over 5 years and Siblings Over 16 Years

Sunday, May 27, 2018

Our program will be **Loss and Grief: Hope, Healing and Reconnections**, with TCF-Pittsburgh Chapter Program Director, Lillian Meyers, Ph.D.

The Special Sharing will be an opportunity to create a collage depicting memories of our loved ones.

Sharing Groups

1st time attending, Newly Bereaved Up to One Year, Grief 1-2 years, 3-5 years, over 5 years and Siblings Over 16 Years

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 Moffett 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 Moffett St. Church is on the right.

— INSIDE THIS ISSUE —

Home Meetings, New Members,
Loving Listeners
Birthdays and Anniversaries
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TCF Pittsburgh Chapter notes

- TCF Calendars – Our steering committee recently discussed the idea of having a 2019 TCF calendar sale as a fundraiser. There are many options for the format of the calendar; for example, our members could have an opportunity to have pictures and birthday and/or anniversary dates of their loved ones printed in the calendar, which could then be purchased through our chapter. We are asking for feedback on this idea from our members. **We would also be in need of members who are willing to help organize and work on this project!** If you are interested, please see a steering committee member at an upcoming monthly meeting or contact our co-leader, Megan Talbot, at 814-860-4732 or co-leader@tcfpittsburgh.org. Thank you!



*Sending love to
Heaven this Easter
and Always*



Gateway to *Hope and Healing*

**41st TCF National Conference
St. Louis, MO ■ July 27-29, 2018**

The Compassionate Friends is pleased to announce that St. Louis, Missouri, will be the site of the 41st TCF National Conference on July 27-29, 2018. "Gateway to Hope and Healing" is the theme of 2018's event. In conjunction with the conference, the 19th Annual Walk to Remember will be held on July 29, 2018 from 9-10 a.m.

The 2018 Conference will be held at the Marriott St. Louis Grand Hotel. Updated details will be posted on the national website (www.compassionatefriends.org/event/41st-national-conference/) as well as on the TCF/USA Facebook page (www.facebook.com/TCFUSA) and elsewhere as they become available. Plan to come and be a part of this heartwarming experience.

Memorial Day

For each grave
Where a soldier lies
At his rest

For each prayer
That is said today
Out of love

For each sigh
Of remembering
Someone who died

Let us also give thought to
The mothers and fathers
The brothers and sisters
The friends and the lovers
Whom death left behind.

Sascha

Angels Across the USA Tour

Music by Alan Pedersen

Free Concert for anyone who has lost a child,
sibling, family member or any loved one

Tuesday, March 20, 2018

At 7:00 pm

Westminster United Presbyterian Church

115 N Mercer Ave

New Brighton, PA 15066

Please join us at this very special concert, as we honor and remember the children and other loved ones that have left our lives too soon.

Alan Pedersen is an inspirational speaker on grief and loss, award winning songwriter and successful recording artist. In August of 2001, Alan's only daughter died in a car accident. Since that tragic event, Alan has turned his journey through the valley of grief and the pain of loss into a collection of powerful and moving songs recorded on to 4 highly acclaimed CD's. Alan speaks and plays his original music at more than 100 events every year throughout the United States. His gentle mix of humor and straight-from-the heart talk wrapped around powerful songs about love, loss and healing make for a unique experience.

For more information contact

Sharon (724)847-1494

or visit

www.facebook.com/angelsacrosstheusa/

Hosted by

The Compassionate Friends of Tri-State PA



**The
Compassionate
Friends**
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

On this upcoming Mother's Day,
and every day, please remember:
Once a mother... *always a mother.*
Whether your precious child took their first breath
or not, you will be your child's mother forever;
no one can take that
away from you... *not ever.*
~ Cathy Seehuetter,
St. Paul, MN Chapter/TCF

Helping Others Help You

TEN RULES FOR SELF-HEALING

Ruth Jean Loewinsohn

compassionatefriends.org/blog/helping-others-help-ten-rules-self-healing

1. Tell friends to call you often. Explain that after the first couple of months you'll need their calls.
2. Tell your friends to make a specific date with you; none of this "we must get together for lunch." Remind them that you're bound to have "down" times and their patience would be appreciated.
3. Tell them to please feel free to talk about the person that has died — and don't avoid that person's name.
4. It's important for friends to understand that you may appear to be "doing so well" but on the inside you still hurt. Grief is painful, it's tricky and it's exhausting.
5. Ask your friends to care but not to pity you.
6. Make plain that friends and relatives can still treat you as a person who is still in command and can think for yourself.
7. Tell your friends that it's all right to express their caring. It's OK for them to cry; crying together is better than avoiding the pain.
8. Let your friends know too, that it's all right to say nothing. A squeeze or a hug are often more important than words.
9. Let people know that they can invite you to socialize, but that you might decline.
10. Ask your friends to go for walks with you. You and your friends can "walk off" feelings. Walks promote conversation and help fight depression.



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



FINDING SPRING AGAIN

It is the end of February, which means we are nearing the end of what has often been a brutal winter. While gazing at the mountains of snow piled high in my front yard and the foot-long icicles hanging from my roof, it is hard to imagine that spring will ever come. We have endured bitter cold winds that have chilled us to the bone and treacherous roads that we have cautiously traveled. The days have been long and dark and often free of sunlight. No matter how long you have been a native of the Upper Midwest, I know we all will be glad when it comes to an end.

However, as I described these thoughts about winter, I felt as if I was describing the days of my early grief. At that point, I did not believe that a day would ever come when I would thaw from the chill that had overtaken my body and mind. The bleakness of my existence during those early months after Nina died is almost frightening to remember; it is so difficult to even conceive of that much pain. I was anesthetized from some of its cruelty by the protective blanket of numbness that blessedly shielded me from the gale force of such overpowering sorrow. How could I ever feel spring in my heart again?

Spring had always been my favorite season. The air had a certain freshness to it that I would drink in. Simply put, it always made me feel happy and light of heart. Spring was our reward for surviving the freezing winter months that preceded it. It brought a smile to my face and a bounce to my step.

However, it was the spring of the year where my heart was irretrievably broken. It was during this exquisite season of warm, lilac-scented breezes and sun-kissed mornings where my sweet daughter Nina's life would end.

I wondered if my thoughts about spring would never be the same. Rather than anticipate with gladness the coming of spring, I dreaded it with the knowledge that it contained the anniversary of her death. The smell of the air and the look to the sky that I once found exhilarating now brought me back to my darkest day. I know that anyone, who has lost a loved one to death, no matter the season, understands.

Will spring come again to your life? In the almost six years since Nina died, has it come to mine? Looking back at my description of the winter of "my early grief", I know that I have come a long way from that time of desolation. I have found, especially after the first two years, that with each subsequent spring, I have rediscovered some of the pleasure I used to feel. I have learned that just because I have found things to feel joyful about again; it doesn't mean I am dishonoring my daughter's memory. I now take her along with me in my mind and my heart. I try to retrieve memories of the dandelion bouquets she so carefully gathered and presented to me, the rides to the park in the Radio Flyer, our talks while sunning on the deck, and, of course, shopping for spring clothes! Her favorite pastime! I will always feel tenseness, apprehension and sadness as May 11th draws near, but I no longer hold it against spring.

It is a slow, difficult journey, this grief pathway we travel. It is as treacherous as the roads we maneuvered following the winter storms, never knowing when we will hit an icy patch on the road and be thrown into a tailspin. Yet, we must travel it if we are to find any measure of peace and healing.

Please be patient with yourself as you are working hard to survive this winter in your heart. Trust that spring, though a much different one than the one we knew before our beloved child died, will come again.

With gentle thoughts,

Cathy L. Seehuetter, TCF St. Paul, MN

In Memory of my daughter, Nina

We Are Survivors

We are survivors, we are left behind

It may not be our choice to turn around and find

We must continue without what we had

When we may have lost a child, a mom or dad

And we must turn our deep pain into healing

A heart that's been broken and a spirit not willing

To want to go on and pick up the pieces of life

That have been devastatingly shattered with strife

But we are survivors and we must continue on

And turn our mourning voices into a victory song

For death has no victory where Jesus is King

The grave cannot claim those that to Him cling

Each day is a challenge to those left behind

We must take every opportunity
in our search to find

Ways to share Christ's message to love one another

We must share in the sorrow that others may suffer

For we are survivors and there is a reason

Why we are left behind for years
or perhaps just a season

He gives us a lifetime to build up our treasures

And the freedom to choose from earth
or heavenly measures

For when we have finally finished our earthly tasks

We must be prepared to answer when He ask

"As a survivor, what did you do for me?"

Did you let people know how to find eternity?

Did you share My Word and do it with pride

Or did you keep what you knew deep inside?

I made you a survivor for I felt you were strong

And could show so many others how to belong

To My kingdom and be a part of My flock

For survivors must know that I AM THEIR ROCK

Originally written in 1990 by P. E. Smith.

*This poem is in her first book of poetry
(written in memory of her daughter, K.) -*

"A Mother's Grief, Faith, Hope and Peace."

Submitted now in Memory of K.'s 28th

Anniversary in 2018

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:

BB, in memory of his son, JWB

LD, in memory of her daughter, DLD, and grandson, DLD

BH, in memory of her son, JGH, Jr.

GJ & KJ, in memory of their daughter, KCJ

EK & CK, in memory of their son, IK

LS, in memory of her daughter, SHB

CS, in memory of her son, PJS

BT & LT, in memory of their son, JT

CY & PY, in memory of their son, AY

Thank You

*To all of our members who so kindly donated
to our annual December Candlelight Remembrance Service!*

Your contributions greatly aided our efforts to provide another memorable and poignant candlelight service for our members. Because we are a non-profit organization, donations such as these are crucial for allowing our organization to provide ongoing support to our grieving members through monthly meetings, special events, the newsletter, etc.

Your generosity is sincerely appreciated!

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 **JUNE/JULY/AUG 2018** newsletter must be received by **May 1, 2018.**

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
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Next issue will be
June/July/August 2018
All love gifts, articles and speakers
will be due by May 1, 2018

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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 TCF, 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**