



March- April 2024

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS-CHAPTER 2358

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Charlotte, NC*

MONTHLY MEETINGS

Meeting place: St. Matthew Catholic Church, 8015 Ballantyne Commons Parkway, Charlotte, NC - Room 234-235

Meeting Time: 3rd Tuesday of Each Month at 7:00 pm

47th TCF National Conference July 12-14, 2024
New Orleans LA.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Our regular monthly meetings are held at St. Matthew Catholic Church, 8015 Ballantyne Commons Parkway, Charlotte, NC - Room 234-235
March 19, 2024
April 16, 2024

47th TCF National Conference
New Orleans, LA
July 12-14, 2024

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REGIONAL COORDINATORS

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NATIONAL OFFICE

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www.compassionatefriends.org

online private closed facebook pages:

<https://www.compassionatefriends.org/find-support/online-communities/>

TO OUR NEWEST MEMBERS!!

We congratulate you on having the courage to walk through our door for the first time. Please give our meetings at least 3 tries before deciding if they are right for you. We hope, with the resources available through TCF, you will find the right person or the right words to help you. You Need Not Walk Alone, We Are The Compassionate Friends.

TO OUR SEASONED MEMBERS:

We need your encouragement and support. TCF continues because of YOU. You give hope to the newly bereaved - hope that they too can eventually find joy in life again. Please attend when you feel you are able to reach out to another bereaved parent, grandparent or sibling.

Did you know that TCF Charlotte has its own Facebook page? Just search in facebook groups for - Compassionate Friends of Charlotte, NC

LIKE our Facebook page and please post any article, quote or personal musings that you feel may help another member. All information for meetings and special events will be listed on our facebook page.

PLEASE VISIT US ON OUR WEBPAGE!!

WWW.CHARLOTTETCF.ORG

WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE PART OF TCF CHARLOTTE STEERING COMMITTEE?

We need your help. Volunteering to be on our Steering Committee is a wonderful way to give back to the organization that helped you when you were starting your grief journey, and what better way to keep your child, grandchild or sibling's memory alive? Contact any of the leaders at our meetings if you would like more information. We need YOUR help to ensure our Chapter is as successful as possible in helping others. This is YOUR Chapter - help us make it a welcoming and caring place for bereaved parents, grandparents and siblings to come to for help.

Our Chapter survives by donations only. There are costs associated with the Chapter, i.e., supplies, books, refreshments, food and supplies for our annual events, and our fee for our website. PLEASE help support our Chapter!!! Please consider donating to your Chapter in memory of your child, grandchild or sibling on their special days or during the holidays. What better thing to do in their memory than to pay it forward for the help you have received from TCF.

You can also help your chapter by being a Steering Committee Member. Just contact one of our chapter leaders. We have lots of different areas that we need help in.

We would like to thank all the members who have made generous donations while attending monthly meetings to support our chapter.

Please Mail All Donations to Our TCF Charlotte Treasurer at The
Following Address:
Kay Thomas
5807 Cheerful Lane
Charlotte, NC 28226-8227

TO OUR MEMBERS

If there are any errors in dates or names in our listing of our children's, grandchildren's or sibling's, please let me know. We are trying to get our database as accurate as possible. Many of our loved ones names do not have a last name listed. In these cases, we assume it is the same as the parent, grandparent or sibling who is listed as a member in our database. If this is incorrect, please let me know. There are many names that do not have a birth date or a death date listed. We know this can be very difficult to list, especially in the early days of grief. If you feel like adding those dates, just email them to me at: fletcher1mom@gmail.com. We are only human so we do make mistakes, but I have tried to be as accurate as I possibly can. Thank you for understanding.

REMEMBERING THESE CHILDREN ON THEIR BIRTHDAYS - MARCH

Cory Abernathy 3/24
Zachary Anderson 3/5
Jack Hicks 3/26
Mary-Mattison Barnett 3/1
Vincent Chandler Edmund 3/19
Michael Crites 3/31
Alexander M. Williams 3/12
Jennifer Eanes 3/18
Lauren Ehele 3/8
Cliff Golla 3/21
Lauren Marshall 3/22
Homer Denver Graham III 3/25
Donald McDermott 3/17
Dylan Lamond 3/20
Missy Minor 3/8

Jason Lubeznik 3/14
Anthony McLain 3/29
Samantha Mertz 3/15
Aiden Miller 3/24
Isaac Rowell 3/21
Christina Rupp 3/19
Keandra Sheats 3/8
Danielle Jean Callahan 3/29
Robert Hunter Moyer 3/4
Jimmy Zacharias 3/31
Breondra Newman 3/13

REMEMBERING THESE CHILDREN ON THEIR ANGEL DAYS -
MARCH

Brandon Baldwin 3/26
Phillip Jason Bell 3/13
Kevin Bell 3/1
Dan Biffi 3/11
Nick Brendle 3/23
Andrea Skillman 3/25
Eric Carlson 3/9
Nicholas Cherry 3/26
Christopher Diehl 3/8
Alexander M. Williams 3/12
Bryan Andrew Dingess 3/15
Nathan Eply 3/1
Michael Gregory Finlay 3/15
Steve Hale 3/18
Jason P. Huff, Jr. 3/22
Chase Austin McCowie 3/23
Scott Aaron Katowitz 3/13
Joshua Brian Bronson 3/15
Tyler Lynn 3/6
Joey McKee 3/3

Lance Ferguson 3/2
Chaylan Tucker 3/27
Veronica Nicholson 3/4
Jaqueline Nicholson 3/4
Hudson Mankin 3/30
Cherilyn Jane Crawford 3/24
Hannah Quinton 3/26
Jason Kendall Ray 3/26
Jason Christopher Roberts 3/5
Christopher Eastman Tilsch 3/21
Allen Doak 3/9
Cory Vincent 3/3
Robert Hunter Moyer 3/4
Kelsey Anne Ward 3/5
Jonathan Holt Whitlow 3/31
Javon Brown 3/23
Derik Brown 3/23
Michael Matthews 3/2
Joshua Seidman 3/9

REMEMBERING THESE CHILDREN ON THEIR BIRTHDAYS -
APRIL

Brad Aylward 4/6
Nick Brendle 4/25
Christian Buell 4/12
Lauren Campbell 4/27
Kevin Carosa 4/1
Fausto DE Los Santoa 4/2
Garth Marshall 4/23
Ryan Jamal Hayes 4/1
Jaxson Hill 4/26
Luke Hoover 4/20
Brady Hopkins 4/27
Jordan Horeth 4/4
Sean McCormick 4/8
Michael Kern 4/30

Russell Kershaw 4/30
Joshua Brian Bronson 4/10
Gevaughti Lawson 4/25
Jeremy Lewis 4/26
William Buchanan 4/19
Brien Smart 4/15
Jason Smart 4/24
Andrew John Wesley 4/12
Laura Whittaker 4/21
Joey McKee 4/7
Gina Rosette Samuels 4/20
Michael Schexnayder 4/22
Cory Vincent 4/17
Emily Parker 4/28
Matthew Jordan Randolph 4/17
Kerrigan Rohsler 4/5

REMEMBERING THESE CHILDREN ON THEIR ANGEL DAYS -
APRIL

Kyle Bennett Allen 4/18
Peter Fowler 4/5
Will Blottman 4/26
Tarell Cooper 4/6
Nicholas Daniel 4/24
Fausto De Los Santoa 4/12
Creed Campbell 4/15
Garth Marshall 4/23
Donald McDermott 4/25
Jordan Horeth 4/7
Jordi Bone 4/26
Sergio Huerta Jr. 4/25
Carl S. Olsen 4/24
Michael Kern 4/13
Henry Temple 4/7

Brian Michael Kirchner 4/29
Bradley Lovell 4/6
Andy Yeager 4/20
Brittany Williams 4/14
Jamie McKinley 4/9
Jonah L. Gray 4/21
Kyle Bodord 4/23
Ashley Poole 4/16
Adam Powalski 4/12
Gina Rosetta Samuels 4/29
Loren Silva 4/12
Darron Stitt 4/1
Brian Colbert 4/7

47TH TCF NATIONAL CONFERENCE

JULY 12 – 14, 2024

We are very pleased to announce The Compassionate Friends (TCF) 47th Annual National Conference in New Orleans! TCF's National Conference is an enriching and supportive event for many newer and long-time bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings. Attendees come and find renewed hope and support, as well as strategies for coping with grief, all while making friendships with other bereaved people who truly understand the heartbreaking loss of a child, sibling, or grandchild. Lifelong friendships are often formed and rekindled each year at TCF conferences.

Unique and cherished highlights of our conference include our heartfelt Saturday evening Candle Lighting Program, Sharing Sessions, Keynote Addresses, Healing Haven, Butterfly Boutique, Crafty Corner, and Silent Auction. Our weekend of inspiration, sharing, and learning is followed by the Walk to Remember on Sunday morning.

This year's conference will be held at the New Orleans Marriott. Reservations can now be made online at TCF's dedicated reservation link. Our discounted room rate with the Marriott is \$144 per night plus applicable taxes and fees. Please note that each attendee can reserve a maximum of two rooms. Many attendees arrive on Thursday since the conference begins early on Friday morning. We also have pre-conference activities that are offered on Thursday evening, that attendees find beneficial. We look forward to seeing you in New Orleans!

SPRING CLEANING

We used to live in a townhouse, one of those inventions designed to minimize housekeeping chores, mortgage payments and a tendency to accumulate more things than one needs to cross the Sahara in summer. We moved there because I liked the idea of no yard work, and we would be unburdened by conversations of “It’s-Saturday-so-mow-the-lawn.” I hate housework (it hates me too!), and we wanted a less complex life.

Smaller places do have a certain appeal...especially during the “It’s Spring and that means let’s-get-organized-around-here-and-throw-out-all-YOUR-stuff” mood that tends to permeate the months of March and April.

When you only have one closet, cleaning it takes a minimum of time. Opening the door starts the process, and if you are clever, you will stand with an open trash bag as you pry open the door. Always do this at 2:00 a.m. when the other nearby occupants in your townhome are asleep, or during those few quiet moments of solitude you get after announcing that Dairy Queen is having a twenty-minute-only-special, and you have (thoughtfully) placed the keys in the car.

Designed by some psychologist in an effort to help patients rid their psyches of old memories, useless information and general “clutter,” spring cleaning has become an American phrase most often associated with grief. It is a painful process, this sifting and sorting of all the things that tell us (and the rest of the world) who we are or were.

There are as many ways to spring clean as there are homes and hearts and minds and spirits that need “adjusting” (a real psychological term thrown in just to remind you that I am a professional too!)

How many times have you been told “It’s time to move on,” or, “It’s time to get back to normal,” or, “You mean you haven’t gotten rid of that yet?” (That can refer to a multitude of things such as his favorite pipe, her bathrobe that the dog attacked during one his “spells,” or an odd assortment of baseball cards, used gum wrappers and dirty socks that were secreted under the bed, left behind for you to find and cry over.

How come everybody else knows when it is time for me to spring clean! How come everybody else knows when it is time for me to open that closet and sort through all those memories, trying to decide which ones to keep and which ones to pass on to the Salvation Army? How come everybody else knows when it is time for me to get back to living?

I am spring cleaning. I am sifting through the “stuff” that made up my loved one’s life and I am learning to let go of a few things...slowly.

When we moved to a townhouse, we thought life wouldn’t be so complicated. I wouldn’t have to go out into the yard and remember how wonderful it was to enjoy the first spring flowers...with him. I don’t want to cut the grass, because we loved playing in it, tickling our bare toes and laughing our way through spring into summer. We moved to a townhouse so we couldn’t keep everything forever. It doesn’t stay around anyway, so why have storage space? Why have cupboards that no longer need to hold cereal that turns the milk blue, or closets that no longer need to hold baseball shoes, bats and crumpled homework pages? Why have room for memories?

WHY? Because, I can’t live without them! Spring is a time for spring cleaning, for sifting and sorting and re-reading and remembering. Spring is a time for things to go and things to stay. We just have to decide which ones do what. Spring is a time for renewal, when the earth begins to defrost after a harsh and bitter winter. It doesn’t matter when your

loved one died ; it does matter when you begin to let spring back into your life. It does matter when you open that closet and let the memories come out, along with the hurts and the hopes that you buried one day not so very long ago.

You never know what you are going to find when you start spring cleaning. You might discover treasures you had long forgotten, or the tax papers you needed, or the Easter egg no one found last year. You might find a few bits of joy lurking under the bed (we found dust bunnies). What fun to remember how that stuff got there or who might have been hiding under the bed when you were looking for volunteers for trash patrol!

Spring cleaning is a tradition that follows the footprints across your freshly waxed floor. I wish there were still footprints to clean up, but since there aren't, I'll just have to spend a few extra moments with this box of treasures I found. No time like the present to inspect the "stuff" in search of few "bits of joy."

When we lived in a townhouse, we thought that maybe, in a few years, we could stretch out into something a bit larger (and have a maid, too!). Maybe we would just start a little patch of grass out front, plant a seed or two in a clay pot on the patio, and live with what we have. Eventually, my house got larger, and my heart has grown, too!

Darcie D. Sims, Ph.D., CHT, CT, GMS

HEART CONNECTIONS – DAILY ACTIONS TO SUPPORT GRIEF

Posted on August 29th, 2023

Grief is felt and experienced differently depending on the time frame since the death of your child, sibling, or grandchild. It's common to feel overwhelmed and hopeless at any

time, but especially when the loss is more recent. When those painful waves hit, you can take small steps to better support those moments. Some of the immediate things that help shift your feelings include moving your body, adjusting your environment, being in nature, and connecting with someone.

Taking a walk or practicing yoga moves your body in a way that aids the physical effects of grief. The combination of moving your physical body and changing your breathing affects your thinking and can gently shift current painful thoughts. Spending moments in nature similarly shifts your energy. Taking 20 minutes to tend a garden, water shrubs or flowers, or feel snowflakes fall on your face in the winter, helps to soothe you when you're feeling significant distress. Then it's easier to move forward with your day.

If a pet or animal is part of your life, spending some calm moments with them can comfort you when you're in pain. Hugging a dog or cat, touching their soft fur, listening to their heartbeat and soft breathing, and sharing gentle space with them has a calming effect. These small actions quiet your nervous system in ways that human interaction sometimes may not. Taking a few minutes to play with a pet also shifts your distress and can bring a needed smile.

Reaching out to talk with a comforting and supportive loved one when feeling low reinforces your human connectedness. You don't need to seek answers or have deep conversations. Hearing the life and vitality in someone else's voice helps as a surrogate for the life energy you may be struggling to feel. Feeling the warm voice of a friend or enjoying the belly laugh of a toddler can help lift you in that moment.

The grief and sorrow you feel are directly related to the deep and profound love you have for your child, brother, sister, or grandchild who has died. While you can't erase those moments of sorrow, small actions can nudge you forward when you can't find your way. You can give yourself these small steps of care at any time and ask for help from those you love to remind you to practice these whenever they are needed.

By: SHARI O'LOUGHLIN

IN THIS PLACE

Brave hearts, you are here. You have traveled
a dreadful distance. You have come,
seeking solace, understanding, hope,
threads to patch what death's so cruelly undone.

In this place you can relax and breathe . . .
the coats of others' expectations taken off.
Walk into these few days as into an oasis
where draughts of love and memories can be quaffed.

In this place all names can be spoken;
in this place each one's story can be told.
We will not be discouraged by your sorrow;
in this place ALL feelings, we enfold.

Here laughter does not mean we are forgetting;

we do not count how many tears are shed.

Both fuel us, fellow travelers, give us courage,

for the long and winding road we see ahead.

And those we love are pleased we are together,

smile down on us, and bless these days,

glad for every tiny step we are taking

as they send their light to guide us on our ways.

Traveling with us as we journey onward,

sending strength for what the miles may bring,

they are a part of everything we do that matters –

in every dance we dance, and every song we sing.

Written by Genesse Bourdeau Gentry for the 2004 Compassionate Friends National Conference in Hollywood, CA on 7/23/2004 for the National Conference First Timers.

AS THE HEART REMEMBERS SPRING

Some will be remembered

For their fortunes or their fame,

And some will be remembered

For the naming of a name.

But you will be remembered

As the heart remembers spring,

As the mind remembers beauty,

And the soul each lovely thing.

You have been the skies of April

And the fragrant breath of May

And like the season's coming,

Warm spirited and gay.

You have given freely

Of the beauty of your heart,

And you have made of friendship

Not a gesture but an art.

You have been as selfless

In the gracious things you do

As the sun that shares its kisses,

As the night that shares its dew.

You have planted roses,

In lives that lay so bare;

You have sown encouragement

To those who knew despair.

By spirit's inner beauty

In every lovely thing,

You will be remembered

As the heart remembers spring.

By:

BETTY STOFFEL

EASTER AND PASSOVER

The Easter and Passover seasons are upon us. They are special family times that make it more obvious that one is missing. Some parents are struggling with what they believe. The pretty dresses and hats don't seem to matter as much as they did. There are more important things on our minds now. We are facing the renewal of life all around us – and yet the missing child's life is not renewable. We hurt because life is going on and his or hers is not. These are normal reactions for some when grief is fresh, for the changing of seasons is a poignant time for many.

Those of us who have had the necessary time, wish to convey to those who have not that it won't always be this painful. When your grief softens (and it will), so will many of the hurtful responses. If you can, get out in the sunshine, go for a walk, smell the fragrance of the flowers and allow the warmth and beauty of the season to permeate your being. It just may make your day a little lighter.

Article written by Mary Cleckley of TCF/Atlanta, GA

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 imagine 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.

By:

Mary Lamourex, a member of The Compassionate Friends.

Time to "Spring Clean" Your Grief

Winter is finally almost over! Trees are budding, animals are coming out of hibernation—even people are "thawing out" after the long, cold days of winter. It's time to get ready for spring! **AFTER A LOSS** The death of a loved one can feel like the bitter days of winter. You go into hibernation, and turn inside yourself to cope with your pain and sorrow. It may be months before you pick your head up and look around and realize you've been immersed in your grief for so long that you've tuned out everything else—your family, your friends, even the change of seasons. You can only just now start to look around and move a little more outside yourself. This is what I call the heart and soul's "spring awakening." It is the time in your grief journey when your heart and soul begin to "bud" with little shoots of hope—where you can recall your loved one's death and still feel sorrow, but you also begin to remember the joy of your relationship. **"SPRING CLEANING" YOUR HEART AND SOUL** You will feel a momentum inside you when it is time to start "spring cleaning" your grief. Many people in your life may think they know when it's best for you to start this process. Friends and family may tell you to "get over it and move on," often before you are ready. But only you will know when the time is right. Respect your own timeline for grief; it will be different from everyone else's. One suggestion for everyone,

however: DO NOT DO ANYTHING DRASTIC FOR ONE YEAR. The first year after a loved one dies is full of "firsts:" first holidays, birthdays, anniversaries, etc. Your loved one's death is often too new and the grief too overwhelming for you to make any major decisions such as moving, changing careers or beginning new relationships. Let yourself ease back into life. How you feel right after a death and how you will feel in a year will be different. Commit to the one-year rule, and when that is over, take a deep breath and take stock of your life. Where are you now? THE "STUFF" DOES NOT EQUAL THE PERSON When you are ready to begin to "spring clean" your grief, you will begin to go through your loved one's "stuff," clothes, belongings, etc. It will be a sort of "life in review" for you. As you look through those papers and clothes and files and personal items, the things they loved and used and cherished, don't be surprised if it opens up the sadness all over again. The intensity of this grief may take you by surprise, like an unexpected snow in April. This is normal! Remember: as you go through their belongings, you are NOT giving away the person; you are only giving away and throwing out the stuff. You can never give them away; your love for them will always be with you and comfort you. It is actually very healthy for you to reminisce and cry and daydream of your loved one. While you are literally cleaning out your house, you are also cleaning out your heart and soul...and that is healing. "SPRING CLEANING" TIPS One really great way to do this "spring cleaning" is with someone who loves you and understands this bittersweet time. Reminisce about your loved one. As you go through their belongings, tell stories of the life you shared with that person. There is comfort in the shared joy and sadness this task will bring. Sometimes, knowing you are helping others can relieve some of the grief you are feeling. Many people give away some of the stuff they clean out to charities so that the gift of your loved one's life can go on. Keep your most treasured, favorite items to celebrate the life of the person who has died, and if you want, display them proudly! Time by yourself can often be good for "spring cleaning" your heart and soul, too. Alone time gives you the chance to reflect on your life with your loved one, and to start thinking about where you are headed. Lots of people will tell you it will take time, but you'll get "back to normal." A very important thing to understand about losing a loved one is that you will never be "back to normal." Things can never be exactly the same as when your loved one was alive. Instead, you will have to go on without that person physically in your life and create a "new" normal. Your loved one will always be with you, but now, it will be in a different way as you learn to live in the world without them there. How will it all turn out? No one knows...you cannot control the future or plan too far in advance. Make

small changes, lean on your friends and family for support, and take it one step at a time. You CAN do it. SEASONS CHANGE, BUT LOVE NEVER DIES. The death of a loved one is devastating. But death and loss are NOT the final word. Seasons change, and with death, relationships change, too. But in the circle of life, spring always follows winter, and new life grows from the greatest despair and loss. Embrace your pain, and when you are ready, do some "spring cleaning" and start letting it go. Your emptiness will be filled with new gifts and ways of loving your loved one, and you will be able to move on to the next season of your life.

By Megan Meade-Higgins, LMSW Megan Meade-Higgins is a Licensed Master of Social Work (LMSW) specializing in bereavement issues and grief management. From- A Journey Together.

A Letter from the Editor

Hello Friends,

The days are warmer, the trees are budding, and the daffodils are blooming! Sure signs that spring is arriving. We really didn't have much of a winter! Other than a few cold days, it was a mild winter. I would like to have seen a little snow, just enough to appreciate the serene beauty of a snow covered landscape. But spring is coming with longer, warmer days and a rainbow of colors that make everything brighter.

I want to recognize and sing the praises of two special chapter members, Scott Higgins and Lois Clark. We don't often see them at meetings but they are working tirelessly to support our chapter. Did you know that they maintain our TCF website, including the annual fees and that the website was designed by Scott's daughter. Scott also maintains our member database and updates it regularly. Scott and Lois work hard behind the scenes. They prepared the brochures for the Candle lighting event including printing expenses. They also copy and put together all our new member folders. Scott and Lois provide the speaker system/microphone that we use at large events. I am a "technically challenged" person so I am very grateful that they are so willing to share their time and talent with TCF. Lois and Scott demonstrate that there are a multitude of ways to support our chapter. If you have a particular skill or talent or just time to contribute, we

would love your help. You might consider becoming part of the steering committee, contributing a story, article or poem for the newsletter or helping with set-up and closing meetings and events. If you have any thoughts, ideas, suggestions, please talk with any of the chapter leaders or steering committee members. It takes a village!!!

I hope you will take the opportunity to do some “grief work” this spring. Go for a walk, plant some flowers, sit outside and draw or sketch or read or write. Take advantage of this season of rebirth.

Love and Peace,
Susan
Michael’s mom