



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

Katy, Texas Chapter Newsletter December 2016



Chapter Co-Leaders
Newsletter Editor
Treasurer

Jan Bigbee Weesner and Jo Wood
Annette Mennen Baldwin
Lisa Leonard

When a child dies, at any age, the family suffers intense pain and may feel hopeless and isolated. The Compassionate Friends provides highly personal comfort, hope, and support to every family experiencing the death of a son or a daughter, a brother or a sister, or a grandchild, and helps others better assist the grieving family.

December Candle Lighting Ceremony

There will be no regular meeting in December

When: Sunday, December 11, 2016

6:15 PM – Doors Open

Where: Kingsland Baptist Church

7:00 PM—Ceremony Begins

20555 Kingsland Blvd, Southwest side of church complex
Katy, TX 77450
Southwest corner of Church Complex

Program: CANDLE LIGHTING CEREMONY

Parking adjacent to Dominion Drive

Directions:

From East of Fry Road (coming from Houston): Go west on I-10 to Fry Road. Turn left (south) on Fry Road. Turn right (west) on Kingsland Blvd and travel 0.5 miles to Kingsland Baptist Church then proceed to Dominion stoplight. Turn left on Dominion for Church parking lot.

From West of Mason Road (coming from San Antonio): Go east on I-10 to Westgreen Blvd. Turn right (south) on Westgreen Blvd and travel 0.6 miles to Kingsland Blvd. Turn left (east) on Kingsland Blvd and travel 0.5 miles to Dominion. Turn right to church parking lot.



Welcome

We extend a warm welcome to all who attended their first meeting in November.

Jimmy & Linda Davis whose daughter, Jenna Davis, died in September 2016
Paige & Carmella Dean whose daughter, Nancy Marie Dean, died in September 2016
Bob & Cathy Koonce whose daughter, Whitney Michelle Koonce, died in June 2016.

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 all 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. We Need Not Walk Alone. We Are The Compassionate Friends.

TCF Credo

Plan Now to Attend Candle Lighting Ceremony

Plan now to attend the Katy Compassionate Friends Candle Lighting Ceremony on December 11, 2016.

The Candle Lighting will be held in lieu of our regular monthly meeting.

Bring one framed picture to the ceremony, preferably 5 x 7 in size.

Bring one food dish for the gathering after our ceremony for our Potluck meal and talking with other bereaved parents.



**Bring One 5 x 7 or 4 x 6
Framed Picture Of your child**

**Bring one food dish for our Potluck which
will follow the Candle Lighting ceremony**

Email Five Photos For Candle Lighting Presentation

Email five photos of your child, child's name and birth and anniversary dates, for inclusion in the Power Point presentation which will be showing intermittently throughout the evening.

Send your photos in JPG format to Ghislaine Thomsen:

Thomsen.tcfkaty@gmail.com

Send your photos on or before December 9, 2015, for inclusion in this year's presentation. Photos from last year will be included.

Our Children Remembered Birthdays

December 2	Matthew Joseph Salcevski, son of Rhonda & Joseph Salveski
December 2	Paul Dee Baker, son of Suzanne Kinsey
December 5	Nikki Danielle Thelen, daughter of Teresa Tropeano-Wilson
December 8	Brandy Alayne Westerfield, daughter of Adell & Jerome Supak
December 9	Nicholas Albert Tapia, son of Albert & Valerie Tapia
December 9	Patricio Aguilar, son of Paul Stack & Elissa Mora
December 10	Heather Marie Adams, daughter of Gary & Janet Adams
December 12	Nicholas Christopher Sayles, son of Scott & Vickie Sayles
December 13	Frank Christopher Pullen, son of Bill & Wilma Pullen
December 16	Lora Beth Adrien, daughter of Dora Palmer
December 17	Francis Layton, son of Beatriz & Carlos Rosal
December 17	Jamie Lynn Leasher, daughter of Brian & Joyce Dakin
December 18	Jerod Adam Nixon, son of Mark & Sharon Conti
December 18	Graeme McDaniel, son of Robby & Stephanie McDaniel
December 18	Alexis Theresa Rinicella, daughter of Randy & Lisa Rinicella
December 20	Janet Harris, Sister of Sherry Stevenson
December 22	Sebastian Michael DeRousse, son of Carla DeRousse
December 23	Leslie Noel Ayotte, daughter of Bonnie Damstra
December 28	James M. Braun, son of Jeff & Barbara Braun
December 29	Christopher Wayne Smith, son of Pamela Smith
December 30	Marissa Renee Sprowls, daughter of Cathy Miller



Anniversaries

December 2015	1 Year	Thomas Joseph Hegger, son of Al & Tracy Hegger
December 2015	1 Year	Zoe Marc-Charles, daughter of Sandro & LaVonde Marc-Charles
December 2014	2 Years	Gwendolyn Lee Danley, daughter of Bill & Carol Litton
December 2014	2 Years	Dustin E. Mercer, son of Bill & Debbie Mercer
December 2014	2 Years	Gage Daniel Geddes, son of Terrie Dagley
December 2014	2 Years	Lora Beth Adrien, daughter of Dora Palmer
December 2013	3 Years	Carson Cade Broussard, son of Desiree Broussard
December 2013	3 Years	Katrina Marie Barth-McDonald, daughter of David & Michelle Barth
December 2013	3 Years	Eric David King, son of Joe & Donna Gaggos
December 2012	4 Years	Paul LaVigne, son of Dena Bonner
December 2012	4 Years	Sean Kevin Mendoza, son of Mary Mendoza
December 2012	4 Years	Tyson Caley Nick, son of Karen Nick-Dobbs
December 2011	5 Years	Vincent Joseph Sansone, son of Tina & Sam Sansone
December 2011	5 Years	Matthew Moore, son of Susan & Bill Archer
December 2009	7 Years	Taylor Contreras, daughter of Sherry Contreras
December 2009	7 Years	Brian Heck, son of Debbie & George Heck
December 2008	8 Years	Patrick Ross Davidson, Jr., son of Leslie Barry Davidson
December 2007	9 Years	Heather Dee'anne Abke Burbee, daughter of Sue & Harvey Abke
December 2006	10 Years	Brian Keith Randall, son of Margie Randall
December 2006	10 Years	Tomarra Zenette Hopkins, daughter of Tabatha Hopkins
December 2006	10 Years	Jesus Manuel Flores, son of Bob & Adriana Hatcher
December 2005	11 Years	Zachary Wilson Morris, son of Michael & Lisa Morris
December 2005	11 Years	Anthony Joseph Leanard, son of Larry & Lisa Leanard
December 2004	12 Years	Patrick Robert Kibler, son of John & Vickie Kibler
December 2002	14 Years	Todd Michael Mennen, son of John & Annette Mennen Baldwin
December 2002	14 Years	Clint Thomas Rice, son of Judy Rice
December 2002	14 Years	Amanda Michelle Vonas, daughter of Rhonda & Nick Vonas
December 1998	18 Years	Jonathan David Nassar, son of Sherry Nassar
December 1997	19 Years	Evan Rajesh Gupta, son of Andy & Barbara Gupta
December 1990	26 Years	Blair Giles Benson, son of Fred & Sherry Benson
December 1990	26 Years	Frank Christopher Pullen, son of Bill & Wilma Pullen

Katy TCF Volunteers

Cards of Remembrance—Robin Conner
Welcome Cards to new members—Brenda Schmitt
Newsletter—Annette Mennen Baldwin amennenbaldwin@hotmail.com
E-mail to group—Annette Mennen Baldwin tcfkaty.messages@gmail.com
Publicity & E-Mail correspondence—Annette Mennen Baldwin
Picture Buttons—Annette Mennen Baldwin
Holiday & Craft Projects—Neela Sen
Welcome Packages—Sherrie Schurman
Library—Jan Bigbee
Web Site—Lee Schurman!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
Treasurer 2016—Lisa Leanard—lisaleanard@sbcglobal.net
Snacks—Laura Reding
Facilities Coordinator: Melinda Ginter
Memorial Bench Maintenance—Need a volunteer
Group Facilitators - Albert Tapia, Robin Conner, Lisa Leanard, Annette Mennen Baldwin, Jan Bigbee, Sherrie Schurman, Jo Wood, Viola Escareno, Sherry Contreras & Brenda Schmitt, Ghislaine Thomsen
Chapter Leaders—Jan Bigbee & Jo Wood

Join Our Chapter E-Mail List

Join our chapter e-mail list to receive timely notices, writings, articles, special information and more. This is an important communication tool throughout the month for our members.

To join, send an email to: tcfkaty.messages@gmail.com

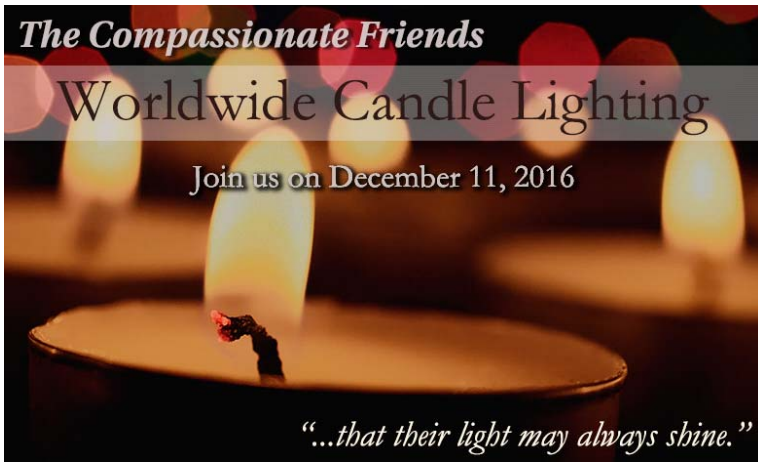
National TCF Contact Information

TCF National Office
P.O. Box 3696
Oak Brook, IL 60522



Toll Free: (877) 969-0010
www.compassionatefriends.org

Mark & Deborah Rambis
Regional Coordinators
Southern Texas



**Candle Lighting Ceremony
Invite Close Friends & Family For This Program**

Make plans now to attend the Worldwide Candle Lighting ceremony which our Katy Compassionate Friends Chapter will be holding to honor all of our children.

Each year on the second Sunday of December candles are lit at 7:00 pm in each time zone to honor our children who have died. At precisely 7:00 PM on December 11th, we will be joining in this world wide ceremony.

The Compassionate Friends website (compassionatefriends.org) also has a parallel cyber space candle lighting. You are invited to write a note about your child, your feelings and the meaning of this special ceremony on this website on December 11, 2015. Last year thousands of parents from across the world participated in this opportunity.

Please mark your calendar for Sunday evening, 7:00 pm, December 11, 2015. Following this lovely ceremony, we will be sharing a potluck meal brought by each of our members. We hope to see you there.

On Line Support for the Holidays

TCF "Online Support Community" Offers Opportunity for Grief Sharing. The Compassionate Friends national website offers "virtual chapters" through an Online Support Community (live chats). This program was established to encourage connecting and sharing among parents, grandparents, and siblings (over the age of 18) grieving the death of a child. The rooms supply support, encouragement, and friendship. The gentle atmosphere encourages conversation among friends who understand the emotions you're experiencing. There are general bereavement sessions as well as more specific sessions.

The sessions last an hour and have trained moderators present. For more information, visit www.compassionatefriends.org and click "Online Support" listed under the Find Support menu.



Loving Listeners

TCF Katy has established a phone-a-friend list for parents who want to talk with someone who shares a similar loss. If you would like to volunteer to be a phone-a-friend, please contact Annette Baldwin.

Accidental Death of Child Living at Home Jo (281) 347-1027

Loss of an Adult Child.....Annette (281) 578-9118

Only Child.....Annette (281) 578-9118

Murdered Child..... Robin (281) 851-5425

Neonatal Loss.....HAND (832) 752-1919

Death of Teenage Child..... Brenda (281) 804-7087

Jo (281) 347 1027

Accidental Death of Adult Child.....Annette (281) 578-9118

Death from long term illness.....Karen (832) 746-0279

Suicide.....Sherrie (281) 579-7741

Support for Fathers.....Albert (832) 885-4741



Candles in the Night

Candles flame in darkness,
flicker, steadily glow,
bringing light from shadows
and help to soothe us so.

Our loved ones, like the candles,
gave our lives true light.
We use the candles' beacons
to connect us in the night.

As we lit the candles,
our wish and our request
was that they'd see our signals
and know our love's expressed.

As their lights join our lights,
our worlds touch and flame . . .
Now we'll blow out the candles,
then softly say their names.

Genesse Bourdeau Gentry
from *Stars in the Deepest Night –
After the Death of a Child*



Birthday Table in January

If your child's birthday is in December or January, please bring a picture or memento to our January meeting to share with the group. In April and December we ask that you bring your child's picture for the birthday table in the month preceding or following the actual event.



National TCF Contact Information



TCF National Office
P.O. Box 3696
Oak Brook, IL 60522

Toll Free: (877) 969-0010
www.compassionatefriends.org

Printed in Loving Memory Of
Todd M. Mennen
1967-2002



Creating new traditions in this dreaded Holiday Season

By: Ghislaine Thomsen, *Andrea's Mom*

Here we are, a few weeks before Christmas, and what are we going to do? Is our heart ready to have fun? Do we really want to rejoice? NO, of course not. Most of us would just as well forget about the holidays and keep on working or go on vacation, far, far away.. right?

Most of us have young children in our lives, and in my mind we owe it to the children to put our best foot forward and make the best of the holidays. Last Christmas was our first one without our Andrea. Only 5 ½ months into our new journey, we were still in a state of shock. We knew that we should surround ourselves with loved ones, and more than ever, the presence of children would cheer us up. We spent Christmas with my brother and his family, including his beautifully innocent 5 year old granddaughter Emma!

None of us were in a mood to celebrate, but when you are with an innocent child, who thinks that Santa is on his way to see her, you do all you can to keep these moments magical, despite how much you hurt inside. At least that is how I felt. We planned ahead and decided to do Christmas crafts with little Emma, and trim the tree together the day before Christmas. It was a different tradition and it actually was fun. Many of the ornaments we made were Santa owls, which were full of meaning since we associate our Angel with the owl. Emma knew that Andrea was right there with us. Instead of buying "things", we made gifts and the ones we bought were very meaningful. In doing so, we felt that Andrea was with us every step of the way.

Instead of staying at home and being miserable, we thought that taking a trip and spending Christmas with our family in a neutral place which would work best; and it did. Don't get me wrong, we cried and it was difficult, but it was bearable and that is more than we expected that first year.

This Christmas will be almost 18 months since Andrea received her Wings, we will keep the tradition and take a trip to spend Christmas with our family abroad. I have already eyed many art projects that we will be undertaking with our now 6-year-old Emma. Many of these crafts have a direct connection to Andrea because it is important to keep our Angel's memory alive. If we make her part of our daily lives, then it is not scary or intimidating for the children, and they will get to know and love Andrea the way we do. What is the meaning of Christmas, or Hannukah, or the holiday season? It is FAMILY! What us moms do not always understand is that we do not have to stress ourselves out about how perfect everything should be. The main thing is to be together with our family, forget about the material things, let the others worry about that, and just enjoy our family. I have also seen that our daughters, Stephanie and Elizabeth want to be able to relieve some of the stress and take charge during the holidays. Bereaved siblings do not really expect their moms and dads to take care of everything at Christmas, so let them help make new traditions. It can be very important to them to take charge, and it does not have to be perfect.

We have also found a way to comfort our heart in a very small, but meaningful way. Andrea was passionate about children, especially those with special needs. We have decided to donate to a charity that she would approve of, in lieu of her Christmas and birthday presents. These donations are made on behalf of all the wonderful people who help us navigate through this journey, and in Memory of our beautiful Angel. We have created an Owlidays card (the owl represents Andrea), with our thanks, her picture, and what the "Camp For All" charity is about. By sending this card to all the people we know, we keep her memory alive and her legacy lives on. This is another new tradition we created. It is our second holiday season without Andrea, and we are looking forward to being with our family. It will be different than last year because we are no longer in shock. This is real life! I am not fooling myself, and I know that it will hurt deeply, but I am looking forward to making fun ornaments with Emma again. I am looking forward to having our girls with us to share these moments together. I know we will laugh and cry, and that's ok.

I am looking forward to some private time on Christmas by the Mediterranean Sea, listening to the wind and my thoughts about my Angel, before celebrating Christmas with all of our family. That is good enough for me. It does not have to be perfect, as long as I can have an Andrea moment to be with her.

New traditions are good, and I know Andrea would approve.

A Candle For My Child Gives My Heart Hope

For the past 13 years I have attended our TCF Chapter's Candle Lighting Ceremony to honor my son, Todd. Each Candle Lighting Ceremony was filled with a bit more hope. As I moved from mourning to grief, I discovered a new meaning in this beautiful service. After two years, I began to actively participate in the ceremony and read aloud about memories, love and hope, reaching out to other parents to help make this ceremony meaningful.

Hope is what we seek. Hope that we can go forward on our earthly journey with the love and memories of our child in our hearts. Hope that the sun will one day shine brighter, the raindrops will be softer and laughter will again return to our lives. Hope that the tears won't flow continuously, that a spontaneous smile might just light our faces and that peace will return to our hearts. Hope that our children will be forever remembered as the wonderful joy that they were to us.

As I light my child's candle this year and place it next to his picture, my memory will once again be filled with the collage that is his life. From infancy to parenthood, from kindergarten to graduate school, from the big corporation to the plans for self-employment, my son's life is filled with wonderful memories. The tears will flow, as well they should. For a life cut short is a tragedy beyond measure. The loss of one's child to death equates to the loss of part of oneself to death. This loss will never be resurrected, but we do rebuild. We rebuild in a different way than we once envisioned for our lives. This new life includes our children as well. The memory of their lives, their ambitions, hopes, dreams and future are forever kept in our hearts. These memories accompany us wherever we go on the rest of our life's journey. And that is the way it should be.

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

Building Bridges

"The bereaved can learn to be creative and flexible in customizing their holiday plans. Traditions bind families and societies tightly to one another. But altering our traditions to suit our current needs makes sense. Each moment, each stage of life, demands its own customs and its own rituals. By building our bridges moment to moment, we link the past and present to the future."

*From Ghosts of Christmas Past
By Joannetta Hendel*



Remember Our Phone A Friend List

If the holidays overwhelm you, and you feel you need to talk with someone, please check our Phone-A-Friend list on page three of this newsletter.

You will find a member of our support team who will talk with you and help you



discover things you can do to help you and your family during the holidays.

A LANTERN TO OUR FEET

When we lost our son, Robin, from complications due to Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy in August of 2006, our whole world fell apart. Our only child was gone, and we only had each other. My friend, Tonye Edwards, was grieving the drowning of her three year old son Jo-Jo and took both my husband and me to the Katy Chapter of The Compassionate Friends. Salil and I felt welcomed and immediately comforted by the great camaraderie exhibited by everyone we met that evening. I, for one, have never looked back since then and try not to miss a single meeting. All this time we imagined that this dark grief that had overtaken us was ours alone to bear, but we discovered that unfortunately many parents must experience the loss of a child for various reasons and give solace to one another in their time of uttermost pain.

Now that it has been ten years since Robin left us, we have the opportunity to give back to others who find themselves newly in bereavement. I was not always this sanguine about contemplating the departure of our only child from this earthly plane because when I first discovered that Robin would not live long, I railed against a God who could condemn him in this way but my sweet son taught me not to complain. At first he too had blurted out that we should have aborted him but then I told him that we would never have known him, a fact he could not refute. So, he went through life enjoying whatever joys and sorrows that came along the way. He possessed a wicked sense of humor and never took himself too seriously. He was brilliant, pragmatic and fun to be with. He was very popular throughout his school years and artistically inclined unlike the rest of his cousins. As his cousin Samir said at his funeral, "With Robin the cup was always half full."

Robin has now become an inspiration to his parents to carry on his legacy of indomitable courage to face the odds and triumph over adversity. We continue to support the Muscular Dystrophy Association with The Muscle Walk and other endeavors to assist children and adults with neuromuscular diseases. We also met with two representatives of University of Houston in order to set up a scholarship in Robin's name and we plan to implement this in 2017. We will always continue to celebrate the seasons, birthdays and other occasions that Robin enjoyed and never cease to think of him as 2016 draws to a close. While we continue to live, he, too, will remain as "A Lantern To Our Feet" and the reason to labor onwards.

*Neela Sen
In memory of my son, Robin Sen
TCF, Katy, TX*

Memorial Donations

The only money which our chapter receives for its operations is in the form of donations from parents and family and a few friends of parent members,

With this money, the Katy Chapter of Compassionate Friends works to print a newsletter, brochures, handouts for meetings, holiday programs, and much more. In addition, our welcome gifts for parents who attend their first meeting are paid out of these love donations. Help is given to financially challenged parents for retreats and other special programs. Our annual Candle Lighting ceremony costs money for decorations, room rental and other items that help us put together this lovely event.

In the 13 years and nine months that I have been in the Katy Compassionate Friends chapter, we have rarely asked for donations. However, we need donations now.

We have seen a dramatic increase in the success of our mission to reach out to bereaved parents.....that's the good news. Our success has forced us to seek help from all of our members to continue a quality outreach to each and every parent who finds us.

All donations are tax deductible on your Schedule A. If you are self-employed, a donation is deductible through your business.

Some of our members have been historically generous in their donations. Others give a small amount in a consistent fashion. Still others donate "in kind" in order to further the outreach of our chapter.

Your donation during the holiday season will be much appreciated by our current members and by parents who do not even know yet that they will be needing the Compassionate Friends next year.

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"**M**ourning is one of the most profound human experiences that it is possible to have...The deep capacity to weep for the loss of a loved one and to continue to treasure the memory of that loss is one of our noblest human traits"  
~Shneidman (1980)

**Christmas**

In this season of love  
When we know  
More than ever  
That we have forgotten nothing-  
In this season of love  
Let us also give thanks  
for  
knowing  
love.  
  
Time turns  
And at your doorstep waits  
Another Christmas  
And another year-



Time sings  
A gentle song for you to hear:  
"Let there be Christmas now,  
Invite the coming year,  
What you have loved  
Is always near."

*Written by Sascha Wagner  
From **The Poems of Sascha***

*In Memory of our Beloved Children*

|                            |                           |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| <u>Memorials Given by:</u> | <u>In Loving Memory</u>   |
| <u>of:</u>                 |                           |
| Robin Conner               | Christopher & Dawn Wilson |
| Ghislaine & Henrik Thomsen | Andrea Thomsen            |
| Jo & Michael Wood          | Brian Wood                |
| Lisa & Larry Leanard       | Anthony Joseph Leanard    |

**Thank you for your donation to  
The Compassionate Friends, Katy, TX Chapter**

*Our chapter is operated entirely by volunteers dedicated to furthering the work of TCF. Your voluntary, tax deductible donations honor your loved one in a meaningful way by enabling us to print and mail this Newsletter and meet other expenses involved in reaching out to other grieving families. Donations along with the name of the person being honored may be sent to:*

Lisa Leanard  
13814 Wheatbridge Drive  
Houston, TX 77041

## Five Years Into My Walk

I recently reconnected with a friend who knew Matthew from birth. We were neighbors and our kids played together. She related to me how she cares for her autistic son. I thought about how most parents who treasure their children will always stand up for them, try to protect them and fight for them. These devoted parents usually succeed in their efforts.

Some devoted parents who treasure their children will always stand up for them, try to protect them and fight for them but find themselves pitted against an overpowering opponent: the disease of addiction - in our case heroin addiction - the ultimate foe, and for us - undefeatable.

I seem to have felt a slight "easing" some of the time this year. I don't want to feel this because it makes me feel like I'm forgetting my child. There are two articles by John Pavlovich entitled "The Death You Die When Someone You Love Dies" and "The Day I'll Finally Stop Grieving." Paraphrasing his thoughts... when my son died, part of me left for good: the part of me that only he knew. There's no one to help me fill in the gaps of my memories during the special times when Matthew and I were together, just the two of us; no one to give me back the pieces of the life that belonged to the two of us. Any part of those days that exists outside of my memory is now gone. Matt would speak a random memory that allowed me to see myself through his eyes. I miss the *me* that he knew and the loss of our shared story.

A part of you does indeed die when someone you love dies. One day it will hit you: the truth of just how much of *you* is gone too and you'll grieve the loss of yourself as well, even as you are still living. Before I grieved, if I even thought about it, I must have assumed that grief had some predictable expiration date after which normalcy would return. Then *I grieved* and I realized that grief doesn't visit you for a horrible yet temporary time. It moves in, puts down roots and it never leaves. You are forced to face your inability to do *anything* but feel it and fall apart. You have been internally altered. It's a lifetime sentence, the cost of unconditional love.

During the tidal waves of despair (that we all experience) that come crashing over me without warning, those are the moments when I feel closest to my son. It's as if the pain allows me to remove the space and time that separate us and I can hold him close and be in his presence. This is a strange healing sadness that I feel will always be there. It is one way my love survives the beautiful son I lost. I've walked five years of this road now and know it's *my road*. At the end of my time here on the planet, I will either be reunited with my son in some glorious mystery, or simply reach my last day of mourning his loss.

Either way, the day I stop grieving is the day I stop breathing.



*In memory of my son Matthew,  
Susan Archer  
TCF, Katy, TX*

### **My Hope for You**

"This Christmas I plan to focus on the beauty of what is and what I have still, to look at Christmas again with the wonder of a child, and to trust that the promise of spring will be fulfilled."

"My wish for each and everyone of you is that you will find the beauty of what is and what you have still in the face of the deepest sadness—that you will be able to find Christmas in your heart."

*From My Hope for You  
Michelle Kissman, Atlanta TCF  
-reprinted from TCF Atlanta Online Sharing*

## Candle Lighting Ceremony Pictures Please Send Your Pictures Now

For the last two years we have done a picture presentation of our children. This presentation runs continually throughout the evening. It is such a beautiful way to honor our children. I encourage any of the new members to send me pictures, two to four, and in the email please include their date of birth and date of death. Please send the pictures in a jpeg format so I can open them and add them to the ones I already have. Since the ceremony is on December 11<sup>th</sup>, I would ask you to have the pictures to me no later than December 7<sup>th</sup> to give me enough time to put it together. The entire ceremony is just beautiful and very moving.

**My email address is: Thomsen.tcfkaty@gmail.com**

### Grief Share Offered in Katy

Grief Share, a Bible based grief program offered by many Christian churches in the Katy and Houston area, will begin again in January. To gain information on a Grief Share program near you, go to the website: [www.griefshare.org](http://www.griefshare.org).

Kingsland Baptist church, where our TCF chapter meets, will be offering Grief Share program in January, 2017. Call 281 492 0785 for information. The address is 20555 Kingsland Blvd, Katy, TX

Grace Fellowship United Methodist Church will be offering Grief Share again after the New Year. Call 281 646 1903 ext 177 for more information. This church is located at 2655 South Mason Road, Katy, TX.

### Centering Corporation

Grief resources for bereaved parents, siblings and grandparents  
<http://www.centering.org>

*May Peace  
Find Your  
Heart This  
Holiday  
Season*



**Candle Lighting Starts at 7:00 PM  
Arrive no later than 6:30 PM  
Doors Open at 6:00 PM**

**December 11  
Candle Lighting Ceremony**

**The Compassionate Friends**  
Katy Chapter  
13814 Wheatbridge Drive  
Houston, TX 77041

