



**Chapter Co-Leaders
Newsletter Editor
Treasurer**

**Bill & Debbie Mercer and Ghislaine Thomsen
Annette Mennen Baldwin
Terion Peloquin**

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.

*****November Meeting *****

When: Tuesday, November 13, 2018 **6:30 PM – Doors Open at The John Burns Building
7:00 PM—Meeting Begins**

Where: **Kingsland Baptist Church** 20555 Kingsland Blvd,
Katy, TX 77450
John Burns Building, east side of Church complex

**Meeting Room Change Meeting in Room C231, C233, C235, C237 2nd Floor
Enter the building from the BACK parking lot (Page 6 Map)**

Program: Handling the Holidays

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.

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 Kingsland Baptist Church.



November Program: The Holidays

The Holidays—just the mention of these words can bring anxiety and deep sadness to bereaved parents. But it does not have to be that way.

Over the years each of us learns ways to cope with the holidays and to lower the impact that holiday anxiety has on us. We invite you to join us in November for our annual group discussion about the holidays: handling the stress, the emotions, and the demands as well as finding a little bit of peace for ourselves in the midst of all that is happening. Many of our seasoned grievers will be at this meeting to shed light on the numerous coping methods we can employ during the holidays.

This is our last regular meeting of 2018. In December we will be holding our Candle Lighting Ceremony in conjunction with other chapters of Compassionate Friends in the US and across the world. We encourage you to attend the November meeting and hear what others have discovered about dealing with the holidays on their grief journeys.

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

Our Children Remembered

Birthdays

November 3	Jesus Manuel Flores, son of Bob & Adriana Hatcher
November 6	Jo Anna Kaitlyn Hanley, daughter of Ann Marie Hanley
November 7	John Michael Lee, son of Sandi Lee Gray
November 7	Robert "Hunter" Colvin, son of Susan & Drew Colvin
November 7	Alex Ernesto Cienfuegos, son of Adriana & Oscar, brother of Michelle Cienfuegos
November 12	Gabriela Amador, daughter of Emery Bush
November 13	George Nathaniel (JoJo) Edwards, son of George & Tonye Edwards
November 13	Brandon Michael Noland, son of Neshia Noland
November 14	Mark Vincent Korenek, son of James & Nancy Korenek
November 15	Rein Gregory Henderson, son of Rick & Kim Bozeman, grandson of Greg & Cheri Hartford
November 16	Christopher Andrew Ramirez, son of Patricia Chavez
November 16	Trevor "Lov-it Bob" Brigmon, son Richard & Shannon Simmons
November 18	Clint Thomas Rice, son of Judy Rice
November 19	James Ross King, son of Tanya & Mike Janik
November 25	Alicia Ann Norman, daughter of Bill & Vicki Norman
November 26	William Scott Court, son of Jeannie & Jerry Court
November 27	Philip "Evan" Bigbee, son of Jan Bigbee Weessner

Anniversaries

November 2017	1 Year	Jonathan Martin, son of Sonja Rolfes
November 2016	2 Years	Dylan Mikel Edwards, son of Allyson & Mikel Edwards
November 2015	3 Years	Benjamin R. Reed, son of Michael & Roselle Reed
November 2014	4 Years	Zachary Taylor Devane, son of Ben & Chantel
November 2013	5 Years	Kolin Eric Lionberger, son of John Lionberger
November 2013	5 Years	Heather Marie Adams, daughter of Gary & Janet Adams
November 2013	5 Years	William Scott Court, son of Jeannie & Jerry Court
November 2012	6 Years	Latashia Ann Scott, daughter of Yvette Scott
November 2012	6 Years	Sebastian Michael DeRousse, son of Carla DeRousse
November 2011	7 Years	Tyler Ray Richard, son of Veronica Malhiot
November 2010	8 Years	Sonya Ann Cunningham, daughter of Jean McKinney
November 2009	9 Years	Justin Richard Clinton, son of Robin Clinton
November 2007	11 Years	Megan Marie Small, daughter of Patti & Kevin Small
November 2006	12 Years	Edward (Eddy) Wesley Johnson, Jr., son of Trish Johnson
November 2005	13 Years	Jeffrey Matthew Cruse, son of Sam & Patsy Cruse
November 2003	15 Years	Hannah Henson, daughter of Karen Henson
November 2000	18 Years	Troy David Murphy, son of Kimarie Linehan
November 1999	19 Years	Chris Heard, son of Les & Andrea Heard
November 1998	20 Years	John Robert Ginter, son of Glen & Melinda Ginter
November 1988	30 Years	Brian Wood, son of Michael & Jo Wood

In your child's birth month, you are invited to bring a special photograph or keepsake of your loved one to share with the group. If you are unable to attend the meeting during your loved one's birth month, please feel free to choose another month to share with us.



Katy TCF Volunteers

Cards of Remembrance—Debbie Mercer
Welcome Cards to new members—Ghislaine Thomsen
Newsletter—Annette Mennen Baldwin
E-mail to group—Ghislaine Thomsen
Publicity & E-Mail correspondence—Ghislaine Thomsen
Picture Buttons—Ghislaine Thomsen and Bill Mercer
Holiday & Craft Projects—Neela Sen
Welcome Packages—Carolyn Porter
Web Site—Ghislaine Thomsen
Treasurer 2018—Terion Peloquin
Snacks—Carolyn Porter
Facilities Coordinator: Melinda Ginter
Memorial Bench Maintenance—Need a volunteer
Group Facilitators - Jo Wood, Terion Peloquin, Debbie & Bill Mercer, Ghislaine Thomsen
Chapter Leaders—Bill & Debbie Mercer and Ghislaine Thomsen



National TCF Contact Information

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

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

Henrik and Ghislaine Thomsen
 Regional Coordinators, Southeastern Texas
 713-557-6637

Welcome...

We extend a warm welcome to all who attended their first meeting at our Lantern Release in October.

**Plan Now To Attend
December Candle Lighting Ceremony**

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 in December.

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 9th, we will be joining in the 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 11th, 2018. Last year thousands of parents from across the world participated in this opportunity.



Please mark your calendar for Sunday evening, 7:00 pm, December 10, 2017. Following this lovely ceremony, we will be sharing a potluck meal brought by each of our members. We hope to see you there.

**Special Small Group Meeting
For Parents Whose Child
Was Lost to Suicide**

The Katy Chapter of TCF has a unique program for parents whose children died from suicide. All parents attend the opening of our meeting each month and then adjourn to their own private meeting for the remainder of the meeting. Death from suicide usually requires additional and unique group dynamics.

This program is offered only to parents who have lost children to suicide.

**Tailored Small Group Meeting
For Parents Whose Child Died
From Addiction or Related Cause**

By request we have established a group meeting for parents whose child died from addiction disorders, overdose or a cause of death related to the years of struggle with addiction.

You will still meet at the opening of our evening together with the entire group. Following opening remarks and special topical discussions, we will break into our small groups. If you would like to meet with this tailored group, you simply need to accompany the leader to the small group meeting room.

This is a unique group that was requested by our existing members. You are welcome to join this group and share your grief journey with others who have experienced a similar tragedy.

**Parents of Younger Children
Meet in Private Group**

If your child was still a minor and living at home...whether your child was two years old or 17 years old, the experience of your child's death at this young age is unique. Many parents of younger children have requested their own group to discuss their loss and establishing a new normal without their younger child.

SIBLINGS WALKING TOGETHER

We are the surviving siblings of The Compassionate Friends. We are brought together by the deaths of our brothers and sisters. Open your hearts to us, but have patience with us. Sometimes we will need the support of our friends. At other times we need our families to be there. Sometimes we must walk alone, taking our memories with us, continuing to become the individuals we want to be. We cannot be our dead brother or sister; however, a special part of them lives on with us. When our brothers and sisters died, our lives changed. We are living a life very different from what we envisioned, and we feel the responsibility to be strong even when we feel weak. Yet we can go on because we understand better than many others the value of family and the precious gift of life. Our goal is not to be the forgotten mourners that we sometimes are, but to walk together to face our tomorrows as surviving siblings of The Compassionate Friends.



Loving Listeners.....Phone-A-Friend

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) 795-3235
- Loss of an Adult Child.....*Debbie (979) 709-2557
- Only Child.....*Annette (281) 578-9118
- Murdered Child.....* Ghislaine (713) 557-6637 ** Looking for Volunteer
- Neonatal Loss.....*HAND (832) 752-1919
- Death of a child from Addiction or Related Cause...*Jan (979) 830 3442
- Death of Teenage Child...* Brenda (281) 804-7087, Jo (281) 795-3235
- Accidental Death of Adult Child.....*Annette (281) 578-9118
- Death from long term illness.....*Karen (832) 746-0279
- Support for Fathers.....*Bill (979) 265-9417
- Special Needs Child.....* Neela (713) 870-7296
- Suicide* Carolyn (281) 574-5715



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P.O. Box 3696
Oak Brook, IL 60522



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www.compassionatefriends.org

Created in Loving Memory Of
Todd M. Menmen
1967-2002



I HATE THESE SHOES!

I find myself on the path into the 6th holiday season since losing you. It's a lighted path and one that is so long I will never see the end.

On September 12, 2013, I donned a pair of leaden shoes – that I will wear for the rest of my life. They aren't comfortable. They aren't pretty, and they hurt so bad that I find myself crying so very often. These shoes are black, expensive, tear stained, and there is but one style, and I hate them. I walk with others that have the same shoes, and together we walk slowly and with heavy steps as we put one foot in front of the other. They come in all sizes and shapes but their commonality is their weight. They can't be bought in stores, ordered online, or borrowed. I walk, cook, hike, ride my bicycle, and even dance in mine. I show them off as they give me the opportunity to speak about Shaun, envisioning him alive to others, sharing my wonderful boy with those that were not lucky enough to have met him.



Sometimes I dress my shoes up because I know Shaun would like that and smile. I add a bow, a bit of glitter, a lighted button, or a cover to change the color. The weight of my shoes never changes.



Over time I have learned that the weight of my shoes is reduced when I put my feet up after a long day of trudging. A little bit of time to believe they don't exist, to close my eyes and think about better times from the past while putting a smile on my face even if just for a moment. After such a rest, the weight when walking seems a little bit lighter. I know they will get heavy again and it will be time for another rest. The shoes give me blisters and can make my legs cramp, bringing me to my knees crying and not wanting to walk another step. My legs are getting stronger, making it easier on some days to carry the weight of these shoes on my feet.

I can't sell them, throw, or give them away - they are mine for keeps so I must adapt and learn, learn that they are now a part of who I am and a symbol of Shaun's life lost too soon. Working to continue walking in these ugly shoes, sharing and honoring Shaun's life with others along the way, is the sign of my never-ending love for my sweet boy.

Marika Will
Shaun Witt's Mom

"The reality is that you will grieve forever. You will not 'get over' the loss of your loved one: you will learn to live with it. You will heal and you will rebuild yourself around the loss you have suffered. You will be whole again, but you will never be the same. Nor would you want to be."

~Elizabeth Kubler-Ross & David Kessler
From *On Grief and Grieving*

In Memory of Our Beloved Children

Memorials Given by:

Ghislaine & Henrik Thomsen
Bill & Debbie Mercer
Rhonda Salveski
Sherry Contreras
Neela Sen

In Loving Memory of:

Andrea Mary Stottrup Thomsen
Dustin E. Mercer
Matthew Salcevski
Taylor Noel Contreras
Robin Kumar Sen

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. We hold no fundraising events, and we rely on our members to sustain our chapter.

Donations along with the name of the person being honored may be sent to:

**Terion Peloquin
PO Box 366
Katy, TX 77492**

TCF E-Newsletter

An E-Newsletter is available through the National TCF Organization. To subscribe, go to TCF's National Web site home page (www.compassionatefriends.org) and click on "Register for E-Newsletter" link.

A Note to Our New Members

Attending your first Compassionate Friends meeting can be a frightening experience. Bereaved parents are vulnerable, lost, heartbroken and fearful of the unknown. Please remember, each of us was in this same place not so long ago. Bring a friend or your spouse for support to your first few meetings. Someone from our group will talk with you and sit with you as well. We are here for you...the newly bereaved parent. We suggest that you attend at least three meetings before deciding whether or not TCF will help you on your grief journey. You need not walk alone.

A Request of Our Longer-Term Members

Take a moment of your time today to think back to the beginning of your grief journey. It's difficult even to recall the events surrounding your child's death, let alone remember your first Compassionate Friends meeting. Yet you came, and when you arrived a sweet voice soothed your shattered nerves, talked with you, welcoming you and explaining the chapter meetings so you would know what to expect.

Someone was there for you. Many "established bereaved parents" were ready to give you a hug, dry your tears, hold your hand and support you as you said your child's name for the first time in an open group setting. There was a gentleness and kinship in this room that you would find no where else in the world.

Your unique perspective is needed by the many newly bereaved parents who enter our meetings each month for the first time. Each of these parents deserves a gentle welcome, a kindred soul upon whom they can rely. Trust is a sacred bond that gets us through the first meeting and perhaps the second and third meeting as well.

Remember who you were and all that you have become since coming to Compassionate Friends. If you can find it in your heart to give back to those who need the security of our group now, please return for them. The gift of hope is such a precious treasure.

Picture Buttons

The Katy Chapter of the Compassionate Friends makes free buttons for all parents who provide us with a picture or send a digital picture of their child. If you would like to have a picture button for your child, please email the digital file to thomsen.tcfkaty@gmail.com or give the picture to Ghislaine Thomsen at a meeting.



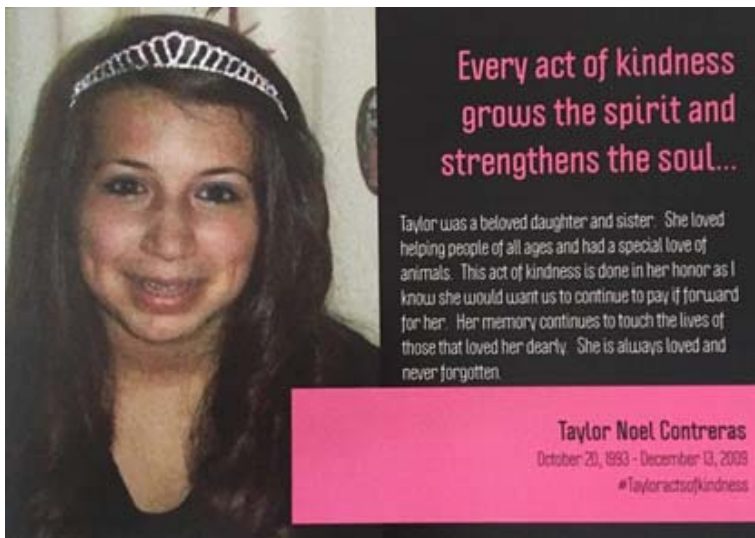
In Memory of Taylor

My daughter, Taylor's 25th birthday was October 20th. This is the 9th one without her here. It does not get easier. It feels like yesterday and feels like forever at the same time. At the beginning of the month, I had special cards printed. I decided to do random acts of kindness during October which I called Taylor Acts of Kindness in honor of her 25th birthday. Some of the things I did included donating to several charities and organizations, giving Starbucks cards to various people I encountered, purchasing animal food to donate to an animal shelter, paying for meals for strangers in drive thru lines, and several other random acts of kindness

On Taylor's birthday, my son, Christian and I ate dinner out to celebrate her. We left a \$25 tip in honor of Taylor's 25th birthday. Taylor loved helping others and it helped me to help others in honor of her birthday. While I would give anything to celebrate with her in person, I hope these little acts helped others as I know that is what Taylor would have wanted. She is forever loved and missed.

Sherry Contreras

In loving memory of my daughter, Taylor Noel Contreras



A WALK IN MEMORY OF ROBIN KUMAR SEN

Dear Robin,

On September 29, 2018, your dad drove me to the Muscular Dystrophy Association's annual Muscle Walk through the pouring rain. It felt like night because the horizon was so hazy, the skies so dark and the visibility non-existent. At the zoo I climbed out of the car immediately and walked over to the registration tents to sign up.

After registering, getting my entry-ticket and wrist-band, I moved to the donation tent to hand in the remaining \$561 dollars in checks to add to "Robin's Nest" team totals. Rob dearest, you can see that Ma has not been idle or sitting back on her heels since you have been gone. I will not rest until I can help find a cure for Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy, Spinal Muscular Atrophy, ALS, and the many other diseases under MDA's umbrella of care. I do this in your memory.

I certainly got soaking wet but enjoyed the sights at the Zoo. I used my cell phone, taking photos of gorillas, the tiger, lion, zebra, okapi, tapirs, big-horned cattle, elephants and other animals. My Uber driver, a nice Pakistani man, arrived in his black vehicle 3 minutes after my call, and I was home in 30 minutes flat. The rain had stopped, the sun came out and I could recuperate at home with Dad in peace. I always feel good when I do something special in your memory and know that you are smiling down on me, our sweet Angel and beloved son.

Love you always
Mom

Neela Sen

In memory of my son, Robin Sen

Thanksgiving

And now I consider the 16th Thanksgiving without my son at the table. Yes, after all these years my child remains in the forefront of my holidays...especially Thanksgiving. But this is as it should be. As a mother whose only child was lost to death, I have accepted my reality, I move forward and I keep hope and balance in my life.

Still I deeply miss my son at Thanksgiving and throughout the holiday season. We now share funny and interesting stories



about Todd and his life at the Thanksgiving table. He is part of our conversation because he remains an important part of our lives.

I imagine his happy smiles, his unique, contagious laughter, and his sweet hugs. I miss our conversations, our quiet times where nothing was said and nothing needed to be said.

And so it is for all of us. We move forward into hope and keep our children forever in our hearts. That will never change.

Annette Mennen Baldwin

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

November Again

Sascha Wagner

From the Poems of Sascha Wagner

November again, almost winter.
Muted world outside,
faded red, misty yellow-
fog in the morning.
Even the hardest wind
seems kind enough,
because we know
we know that stormy blades
lie waiting.

November again, almost winter.
Gently the heart reaches
for the awareness of things to
come.

Holidays, so we call them.
Gently the heart turns to
Christmas -

Songs everywhere. And lights.
Gently the heart must remember
the things gone by,
the time gone by,
the child gone by.



November again.

Candle Lighting Ceremony Pictures Of Our Children Needed

At each Candle Lighting ceremony, we present a slideshow of our children's pictures. This presentation runs continually throughout the evening except during the ceremony. It is such a beautiful way to honor our children. We encourage all our members to prepare four or five pictures in a jpeg format and email these to Ghislaine Thomsen at thomsen.tcfkaty@gmail.com by November 30. In that email please include your child's date of birth and date of death. Please send the pictures in a jpeg format so we can open them and add them to the ones we already have. Since the ceremony is on December 9th, we ask that you have the pictures to us by November 30th to give us enough time to put this together. You'll find the entire ceremony is gentle, beautiful and very moving.

We encourage you to get your pictures selected and emailed early so that Ghislaine, our volunteer, isn't working on this at the very last moment.

A Change in the Journey

I have been writing, editing and creating our Katy TCF Chapter's newsletter for over 14 years. This volunteer work has been done in memory of my child, Todd Mennen, and doing this work has been a truly healing experience for me.

I recently decided to step away from the newsletter and put together a book or two of the writings that I have done over the years. While this marks the end of an era for me, it also signals new beginnings on my grief journey.

I will miss talking with our chapter's members, I will miss their confidences and their stories. Compassionate Friends has given each of us the unique opportunity to relate to others who share our grief in the loss of a child. This gift has been invaluable to me...as I believe it is to you.

I hope to see many of you writing your stories and sharing your child with our group in the future. And I wish you gentle thoughts, sweet memories and the pure love of your child in your heart as you move forward on your grief journey.



Annette Mennen Baldwin
In memory of my son, Todd Mennen

Giving Thanks

Sascha Wagner,

From the Poems of Sascha Wagner

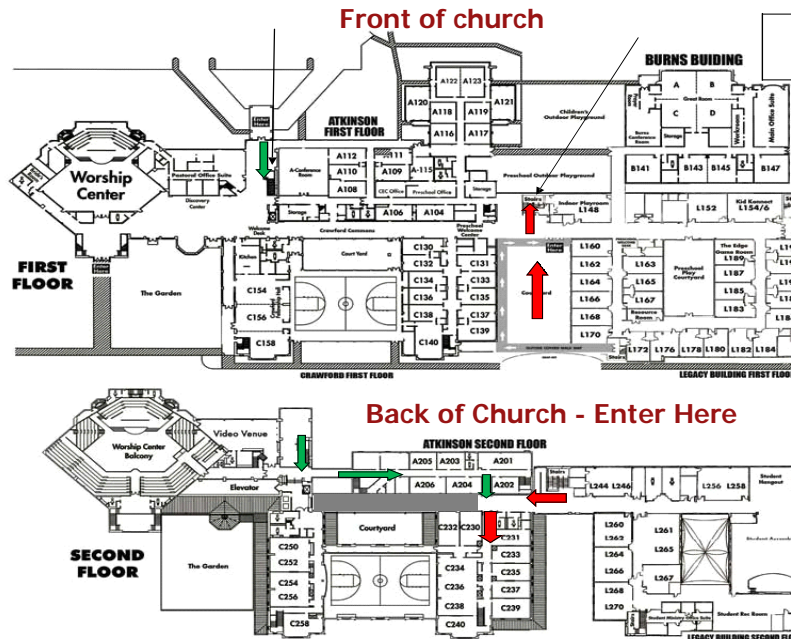
Submitted by Jan Bigbee in Memory of Evan Bigbee

I can not hold your hands today,
I can not see your smiles.
I can not hear your voices now,
My children, who are gone

But I recall your faces still,
The songs, the talks, the sighs.
And story times, and winter walks,
And sharing secret things.

I know you helped my mind to live
Beyond your time with me.
You gave me clearer eyes to see -
You gave me finer ears to hear -
What living means, what dying means,
My children, who are gone.

So here it is Thanksgiving Day,
And you are not with me.
And while I weep a mother's tears,
I thank you for the gift you were,
And all the gifts you gave to me,
My children, who are gone.



November's Topic:
Handling the Holidays
Doors Open at 6:30 PM
Meeting at 7:00 PM
November Meeting: November 13, 2018

