

**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.

*****May Meeting *****

When: Tuesday, May 8, 2018

**6:30 PM – Doors Open at Fellowship Hall
7:00 PM—Meeting Begins**



Where: **Kingsland Baptist Church**

20555 Kingsland Blvd,
Katy, TX 77450

**Meeting Room Change
To 2nd Floor**

**Meeting in Room C231, C233, C235, C237
Enter the building from the BACK parking lot (Pp 6 Map)**

Program: Reflections on Mother's Day

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.



Welcome

We extend a warm welcome to all who attended their first meeting in April:

Linda Corinth whose daughter, Veronique, died in December, 1972
Tricia Apostolo whose daughter, Amber Nichole Long, died in February, 2018
Viron & Froso Sendukas whose son, Ronny Sendukas, died in March, 2018
Wayne & Becky Watts whose son, Taylor, died in February, 2018
Martha Alvarado whose son, Joshua Alvarado, died in February, 2018
Sonja Rolfes whose son, Jonathon Martin, died in November, 2017
Gary & Lorelei Sinclair whose son, Joshua Adam Sinclair, died in February, 2018

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



**The Compassionate Friends
41st National Conference
St. Louis, MO July 27-29, 2018**

**Plan Now to Attend this Healing
Weekend Conference**

Our Children Remembered

Birthdays

May 1	Austin Michael Minks, son of Leonard & Suzanne Minks
May 3	Michael "Shaun" Witt, son of Marika Will
May 5	Scott Boykin, son of Sandra Wright
May 7	David Cooper, son of Skip & Melissa Cooper
May 9	Zoe Marc-Charles, daughter of Sandro & LaVonde Marc-Charles
May 10	Sandy Lynn Schurman, daughter of Lee & Sherrrie Schurman
May 13	Robin Kumar Sen, son of Neela & Salil Sen
May 15	Jordan Alexander (Jody) Crawley-Edwards, son of George & Tonye Edwards
May 15	Reagan Elizabeth Lee, daughter of Anne Lee
May 16	Christopher Frederick Wilson, son of Robin Conner
May 16	Latashia Ann Scott, daughter of Yvette Scott
May 17	Todd Michael Mennen, son of John & Annette Mennen Baldwin
May 19	Isabella Ramirez, daughter of Natalie Ramirez
May 20	Marijo "Colleen" Smith, daughter of Denise Smith
May 20	Nicholas Roland Kaschik, son of Rosalind (Roz) Turner
May 20	Joshua Adam Sinclair, son of Gary & Lorelei Sinclar
May 26	Misty Dawn Smith, daughter of Terri DeMontrond
May 26	Christopher Jason Pierce, son of Jason & Sherry Pierce
May 27	Michael Patrick Siebenthal, son of Cindy & Jim Siebenthal
May 27	Wesley Wayne Bode, son of Joyce Bode
May 27	William Bundy Shouse, son of Annie Thompson
May 28	Eric David King, son of Joe & Donna Gaggos
May 30	Evan Rajesh Gupta, son of Andy & Barbara Gupta
May 30	Keven Lewis, son of Mary & Richard Lewis
May 31	Joe Michael Cabellero, son of Rosie & Eddie Caballero
May 31	Christopher (Mikey) Michael Johnson, son of Chris & Kelly Johnson



Anniversaries

May 1989	29 Years	Leslie Noel Ayotte, daughter of Bonnie Damstra
May 1999	19 Years	Monica Ann Frederick, daughter of Dorothy Frederick
May 2003	15 Years	Nicholas Albert Tapia, son of Albert & Valerie Tapia
May 2003	15 Years	Austin Joseph Becer, son of Joe & Cindy Becer
May 2003	15 Years	Ian Geoffrey Woodham, son of Geoffrey & Pam Woodham
May 2006	12 Years	Ronald Howard McCall, son of Jeri McCall
May 2008	10 Years	Philip "Evan" Bigbee, son of Jan Bigbee Weesner
May 2009	9 Years	Scott Boykin, son of Sandra Wright
May 2010	8 Years	Emma Key, daughter of Sherry & Steven Key
May 2011	7 Years	Brandy Alayne Westerfield, daughter of Adell & Jerome Supak
May 2011	7 Years	Larry Gene Young, III, son of Janis Halfin
May 2011	7 Years	Travis Austin Welch, son of Kelly & Lance Golemon, brother of Kristen Hundley
May 2012	6 Years	Brandi Leigh Rushing, daughter of Tracy & Kim McCarty
May 2012	6 Years	Jo Anna Kaitlyn Hanley daughter of Ann Marie Hanley
May 2013	5 Years	Melvin "Papa" Bell, Jr, son of Diana & Melvin Bell
May 2013	5 Years	Whitney Ann Grissom, daughter of Janet Johnson
May 2014	4 Years	Alex Ernesto Cienfuegos, son of Adriana & Oscar, brother of Michelle Cienfuegos
May 2014	4 Years	Paul Dee Baker, son of Suzanne Kinsey
May 2014	4 Years	Alec Christopher Hilman, son of Laura Boyd
May 2015	3 Years	Graeme McDaniel, son of Robby & Stephanie McDaniel
May 2015	3 Years	Joshua William Freeborn, son of Cynthia Scott
May 2015	3 Years	Derek Daniel Elko, son of Daniel & Diane Elko
May 2015	3 Years	Heather Michelle Menzie, daughter of Bob & Janet Menzie
May 2015	3 Years	Abby Katherine Lee, daughter of Trent & Julie Lee
May 2015	3 Years	Stephanie Amanda Pena, daughter of David & Rosie Pena
May 2015	3 Years	Kevin John Agudelo, son of Luis Fernando & Diana Agudelo
May 2016	2 Years	Daniel Garcia, son of Juan & Ana Garcia
May 2016	2 Years	Jennifer Hollis, daughter of Scott & Betsie Hollis
May 2016	2 Years	Justin James Owens, son of Tom & Carol Owens
May 2017	1 Year	Mark McDonald, son of Tim & Cindy McDonald
May 2017	1 Year	Ivan Nazari, son of Medik Nazari



The death of your child is probably the most traumatic, life-changing event that you will ever experience. The Compassionate Friends is an organization of parents who have also lost a child to death. Each of us has experienced the deep, searing pain that you are feeling now. Each of us has turned to other parents who were farther into their grief journey for guidance, support and understanding. This is done through our monthly meetings, our newsletter, our website, our phone-a-friend program, our library, our e-mail program and our referral program. Each month parents find our meeting to be a safe place where they can talk about their pain and problems with others who are uniquely qualified to understand; bereaved parents offer gentle suggestions or often simply listen. We invite you to bring a friend to your first few meetings until you feel a level of comfort with the group. Do not be surprised if we talk about the happy times with our children, the wonderful memories and the various methods we have created to keep our children close to us. It is here that many bereaved parents find hope as those who are more seasoned in their grief shine the light of experience to help illuminate each grief path. We have no dues. We are self-sustaining through donations and the generosity of so many in our community. You Need Not Walk Alone.

May Meeting Topic: Reflections on Mother's Day

The May meeting will precede Mother's Day by five days this year. This meeting topic will touch on our apprehensions, anxieties, memories and anticipation of Mother's Day. As we all discover, the anticipation is almost always far more overwhelming than the holiday itself.

This year we will talk about our Mother's Day experiences; often those of us who are so new to this grief journey will find comfort in sharing their experiences of the day and the ramp up to the holiday. It is good to learn that what we are experiencing is normal, for we often doubt ourselves on this newly charted journey.

The birthday table will be available for April and May birthdays, and we hope that many of you bring a picture or a memento of your child so that you can share the essence of your child and some special memories with each of us. We get to know each other very well through our children.

We will also have small group discussions, snacks and lots of support team members at our May meeting. We hope you will choose to attend.

Please arrive by 6:30 pm if this is your first meeting with the Katy Chapter of Compassionate Friends. The meeting will start at 7:00 pm.

Birthday Table

If your child's birthday is in May or April, please bring a picture or memento to our May 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 before or after the actual event. We hold our balloon release in April and our Annual Candle Lighting Ceremony in December.



Special Small Group Meetings 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.

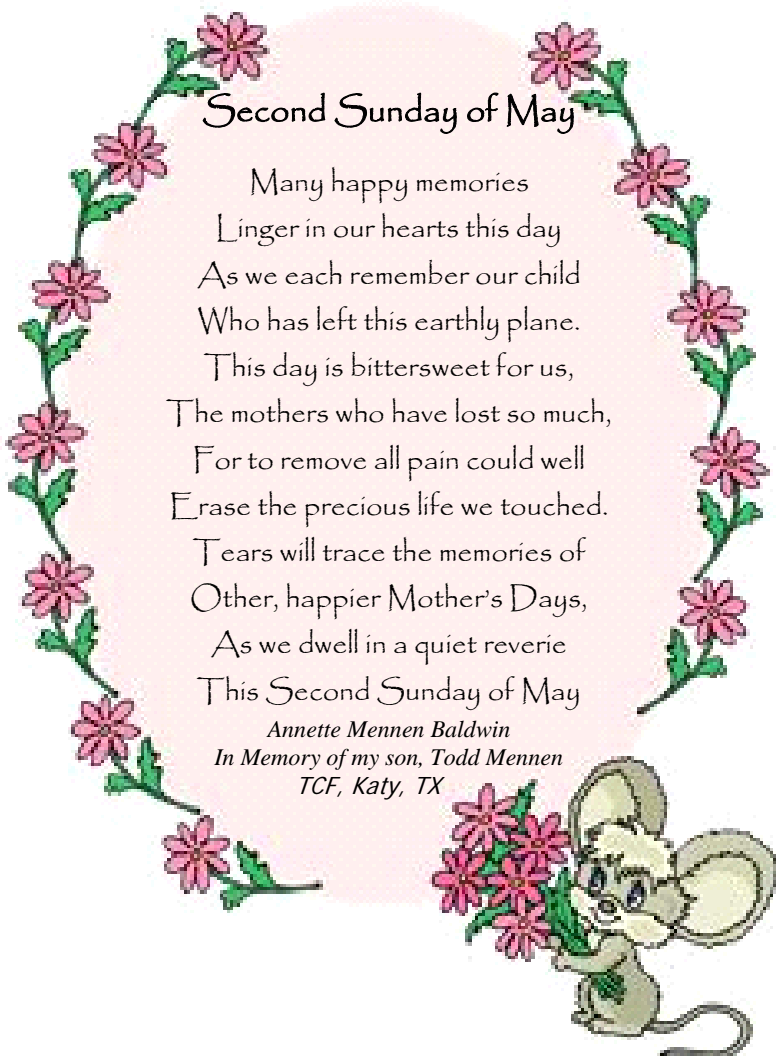


A Note to Our New Members

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.

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.



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

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

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

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.....Albert (832) 885-4741

Special Needs Child..... Neela (713) 870-7296

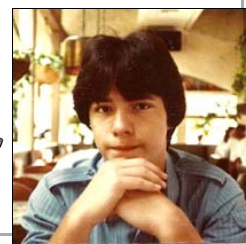
Suicide Sherrie (281) 579-7741

Printed in Loving Memory Of Todd M. Mennen

1967

ATM

2002



Helping Myself by Helping Others

By Ghislaine Thomsen, Andrea's mom

The death of a child is so painful, both emotionally and spiritually, that I truly wondered if my own heart and spirit would ever heal...I soon learned that I could help myself best by helping others...It wasn't until Robin died that I truly threw myself into volunteer work. That precious little girl left our family a great legacy: I know George and I care more for every living person because of her. We learned firsthand the importance of reaching out to help because others had reached out to us during that crucial time."

~Barbara Bush -1925-2018

Mrs. Bush wrote so eloquently what so many of us bereaved parents feel. I would have never imagined almost three years ago, that I would be involved with a group of bereaved families, and that my life would take such a different direction.

The support, the kindness, the understanding and the guidance provided by The Compassionate Friends saved me from going insane, from drowning in sorrow. So many wonderful souls reached out to me. They knew my pain, they had lived it, they were still living it, and they just knew how to comfort me. It will be 3 years on July 4th .. The day of my daughter's rebirth, the day my life, the life of my husband and daughters changed forever.

My family and I are so very grateful for TCF, for our previous chapter leaders, and for all the kindness that we received. As Mrs. Bush wrote, we too "learned firsthand the importance of reaching out to help because others had reached out to us during that crucial time", and this is why I have found my calling, and will likely devote my life to helping other bereaved families. It is a way to honor our Andrea. She is doing a fantastic job as an Angel, and I, and I know my family does too, want to make her proud :) Serving others and perhaps helping one bereaved parent getting through the day makes the departure of my child more bearable and manageable.

With Mother's Day coming up, I think of all the bereaved moms, and I hope that your child's name will be spoken, as it is always so comforting to hear people talk about our departed children. I also hope that we all find some inner peace on Mother's Day.



"To exist is to change, to change is to mature, to mature is to go on creating oneself endlessly."

~Henri Bergson

Poem for the Child, The Friend We Lost

By Lina Corinth

Like the wind
Blowing over the trees
I have come and gone
Softly and strongly
Over the sea of souls
Seagulls over the waves
Encourage and inspire
For a short moment
Such a short time.
I have come and gone
Inspiration left with you
Continue...the Mission



TO OUR ANGEL ON HIS 37TH BIRTHDAY

May 13th will be Mother's Day and your 37th birthday! There is still a hole in our lives that will never be filled and the pain of your passing can never be assuaged. It is only because of The Compassionate Friends that we have weathered the storms of our grief and come to a place where we can laugh again. We felt totally alone, overwhelmed and floundering after your departure from this earthly plane, but the people at TCF gave us hope that it wouldn't always feel like that. We soon discovered that there were, sadly, many other parents in our shoes who were bewildered and bereft; not knowing what to do or say. It was refreshing to not have to be embarrassed by our tears and be able to talk about Robin without any shame.

Twelve years have almost passed since we last held you close and looked into your handsome face. We ache to see you again but always feel your presence everywhere in this house that you said would be yours forever. Even though we cannot see you, we know that you watch over us every day. The years have been difficult, full of ups and downs. We went through Hurricane Ike, Harvey and other calamities, but nothing compared to the pain of losing you! You were the very core of our family and our only child. It is true that we still love, miss and celebrate your life as the greatest gift that God gave us. In spite of your disabilities we cherished and kept you safe from harm.

You were so courageous in living in the dorm at the University of Houston during your first two years there. We know that you felt more at ease when your Dad agreed to let you commute from home, he drove you to school, waited for you to complete your classes and then brought you home on a daily basis. We did not mind doing things for you, and you were profoundly grateful. When you were in the ICU during your last 34 days in the hospital, it was too upsetting for your Dad to visit you, but I was with you every day but the last. It is hard to admit that I still weep about you being gone but I do not regret that you were my child. We are honored to have been your parents and could not have had a better son.

*Neela Sen
In memory of my son, Robin Sen*

A Little More

There is always room for more,
 so focus on just a little extra.
 Love more and more,
 with greater depth and intensity.
 Sing a little more,
 with gusto and joy.
 Hug a little more,
 embrace those you love - tightly.
 Dance a little more,
 feel the mood of the music.
 Become a little crazier,
 it is okay to be a little weird.
 Praise a little more,
 wrapped in gratitude.
 Smile and laugh a little more.
 All it takes is just a little more.
 Life will be a lot more fun.

*Robert Haynie
 January 2018*

**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.

**Make Reservations Early for
 TCF National Conference**

The National Compassionate Friends Conference will be held in St. Louis, MO, this year. The dates are July 27-29, 2018 and early hotel reservations are highly recommended. The hotel requires a one night deposit for each room, but this is refundable if cancelled within 72 hours of the first date of your reservation for the hotel.

Although The Compassionate Friends has arranged a large room block for the conference, we recommend you reserve your room early if you wish to guarantee that you can stay at the host hotel as we believe the room block, although large, will be filled.

Go to the Compassionate Friends website for complete information and links to reservations for the conference and the hotel. www.compassionatefriends.org



Ten Years Later

My heart and soul have been traveling back in time to 2008 and the years without my Evan's bright presence in my life. As the ten year anniversary approaches on Mother's Day weekend, I have been revisiting this space in time that changed my world forever. The dreary winter months of 2018 have passed by, and I knew that I had a decision to make. How do I spend the upcoming days and weeks until Mother's Day arrives? Will I allow myself to be frozen in grief because of a date that has often cast a shadow on many calendars, or will I continue to follow my chosen path of acceptance and renewal that wholeheartedly embraces the pure joy that Evan brought to me in the 28 years that he lived?



At this point in my grief journey the answer was clear. I decided to live in a state of gratitude and spend time "visiting" with my youngest son who brought so much joy to me. I have renewed my spirit by sitting on the floor filling my lap with a few of his funky old shirts and bits and pieces of unusual keepsakes from his travels. A dusty storage container hiding in the dark under our guestroom bed contained college notebooks with hilarious doodles in the margins. I even remembered and actually enjoyed watching the memorial service video of his life that was created with love by his "tribe" of friends, one of whom eventually posted it on YouTube. None of the above could have happened in the beginning years of my loss.

Warmed by beautiful memories, I actually felt comfortable enough to sit and read the journals that I filled when I needed to "talk" to him during the first years without his presence. A rush of emotions swept over me as I read page after page of memories and moments in our family's lives that I shared with him. I felt as if Evan and I were sitting at the dining table across from one another and visiting while he stuffed his mouth with his mom's gooey chocolate brownies.

All of the above is my personal account of how I am living through just one more "countdown" to yet one more significant day, as all of us have to slip through roadblocks in our lives without our children. How many of our "seasoned grievers" at TCF are asked the question: "Will my life ever get better?" Just eight months after Evan's death, I wrote the following words in my journal that echo the pain of countless newly bereaved members: "I need someone to help me. I need to know that this dreary black and white existence that I live now will ever be filled with even a hint of color in my life again. I need to hear someone tell me that someday I will actually be able to smile, laugh and feel joy without my child. Please tell me that there is hope."

Ironically, as I continued to read ahead in my first journal, I discovered that I had answered my own cry for help in an entry written just two days before Mother's Day in 2011: "Spring is here, Evan. The wings of dragonflies shine in the sun; robins sing alongside the bluebirds at the birdfeeder and deer are grazing in the pasture. The Texas wildflowers are abundant this year and our country roads are filled with color! Your favorite bluebonnets are peeking their little noses out of the grass. After so many dark days of winter, I feel hopeful again. I know in my heart that you are standing by my side enjoying the beauty that surrounds us."

I never could have found the hope that I wrote about in my journal without the many years of unconditional love and support that I have received from my loving family and precious friends at TCF.

I wish all of our bereaved mothers a peaceful Mother's Day. May you experience moments filled with beautiful memories of your beloved children and the joy they brought into your lives.

*Jan Bigbee Weesner
 In memory of my son, Evan Bigbee*

In Memory of our Beloved Children

<u>Memorials Given by:</u>	<u>In Loving Memory of:</u>
Lee & Sherrie Schurman	Sandra Schurman Steven &
Brenda Schmitt	Matthew Schmitt
Mary Cook	Kasey Kamischke
Ghislaine & Henrik Thomsen	Andrea Mary Stotfrap Thomsen

**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:

Terion Peloquin
 P.O. Box 366
 Katy, TX 77492

Anticipating Mother's Day

Before we lost our children to death, Mother's Day was a happy time. We each reflect back on Mother's Days passed.....gifts, cards, special memories and one day set aside to acknowledge the best in our relationship with our treasured children.

With the death of our child, this dynamic was forever transfigured. Now, instead of looking forward to this day, we grasp at anything that will keep our minds away from it.



Yet the anxiety still creeps into our minds and hearts; our stomachs churn and tears fill our eyes at the most inopportune moments. The dreadful

countdown begins in late April and lasts for nearly three weeks.

I have endured 15 of these holidays since the death of my son. Each year I have the same, desperate anxiety, yet each year the day is a bit easier to handle. Each year the anticipation is far worse than the day itself... "borrowing trouble" as my dad would say. Since my son is my only child, I do not have the comfort of other children nor do I have the need to put on a happy face. Instead, I am able to choose what I will do without feeling the burden of guilt.

The choice to embrace or ignore Mother's Day is yours alone. Many bereaved mothers adopt a new perspective which honors their child and still gives normalcy to their family. Mother's Day is bittersweet for us. The pain is part of the love that we will feel for our children for eternity. We wouldn't trade one treasured moment for a cosmic reduction of our pain.

But on Mother's Day, as on each day of the year, I will think of my son, remembering the child he was and the man he became. I will honor his life by doing the best I can with what is left of my life. I will remain in the moment and treasure my memories. And for this mother, that is enough.



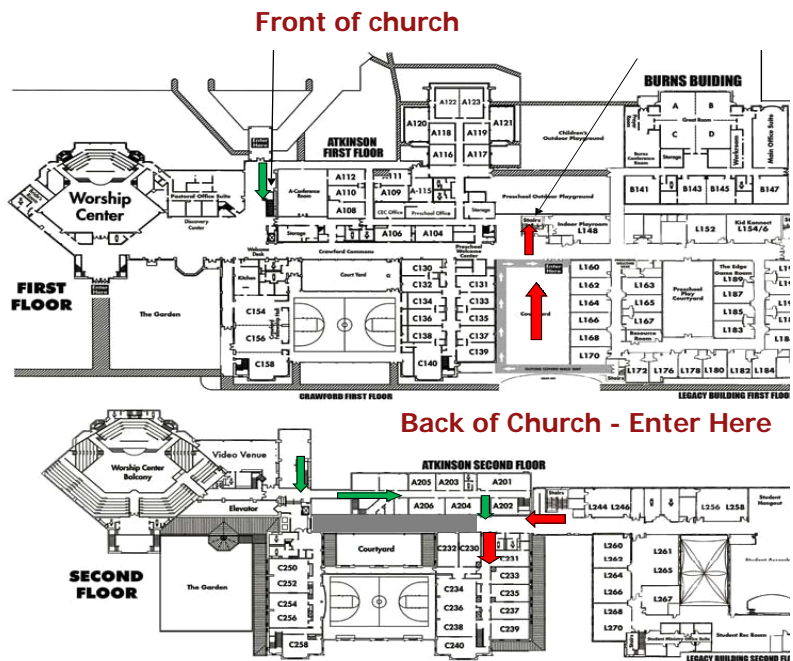
*Annette Mennen Baldwin
In memory of my son, Todd Mennen
TCF, Katy, TX*

Katy TCF Volunteers

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

"Let us not look back in anger or forward in fear, but around in awareness."
~James Thurber

Map of Kingsland Baptist Church Meeting Rooms C231, C233, C235, C237 on Second Floor



Happy Mothers Day



*Reflecting on Mother's Day
Small Group Discussions*

**Meeting: Tuesday, May 8, 2018
Doors Open at 6:30 pm, Meeting at 7:00 pm**

Return Service Requested



13814 Wheatbridge
Houston, TX 77041

The Compassionate Friends