The Compassionate Friends, Inc.

Livonia, Michigan Chapter



December 2026
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The Compassionate Friends is an international self-help organization offering friendship, understanding, and hope to bereaved parents and siblings.

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Meeting Information
When: First Thursday of each month. 7-9 p.m.
Where: St. Timothy's Church
16700 Newburgh Road, Livonia,
East side of Newburgh, 1/4 mile S. of Six Mile

Coming Events
December 3rd - - *7:00 pm - Meeting: see page 7 for more info*

December 15th -Tuesday, at 6:00 pm. TCF Dinner at: Sandy's Beech, 25853 5 Mile Road, Redford, MI 48239
Contact Joyce Gradinscak, 734-560-6883,text or call
No Craft meeting until further notice.
Dec. 13th - Annual Candle Lighting - Kellogg Park



Annual Compassionate Friends Candle Lighting

The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting unites family and friends around the globe in lighting candles for one hour to honor the memories of the sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, and grandchildren who left too soon.

The Livonia Chapter Candle Lighting will take place in Kellogg Park on December 13th at 7 pm. There will be music, readings and all the names of children that have been submitted will be read. Families and friends are welcome. Candles are provided.

If your child(ren)'s name was on the list last year, it will be read this year. If you would like your child(ren)'s name added to the list to be read, call 734-778-0800.

See page 8 about ornaments.

My New Christmas

I brace myself as the holidays approach, playing out my season greeting.
I remind myself it needs to sound heartfelt and cheerful even if it is not sincere.
I keep myself busy picking out special gifts for my children who grieve with me,
I must remember to paint that smile on my old face a little brighter this holiday.
I decorate my home to illuminate Christmas and all its meaning.
Going through all the familiar motions that I have done so many times before.
As my children wish for St. Nick to visit them to load up their stockings with this and that,
I sit in front of my Christmas tree wishing a Christmas wish just for me… an Angel.
Not any Angel of course, a very special Angel, one who entered my life many years ago.
One that had a smile that was brighter than all the stars of Bethlehem.
I sit and wonder how many other mothers are out there who share my wish.
A wish for a sign of hope, love and of course peace from their Angel Child.

(Continued on page 4)

Our Children Loved and Remembered Always

This month, we remember the children who are so deeply and sadly missed. Please take a few moments to place them and their parents in your thoughts.

Child	Parent, Grandparent, Sibling	Date	Age

Names available only for members.



Let Us Celebrate Their Births

Softly ... may peace replace heartache and cherished memories remain with you always on your child's birthday

My boys will leave cookies and milk for Santa as well as carrots for the reindeer.
I leave a letter I wrote to my son in his stocking as I did the year before.
After kisses and hugs have been given and Christmas books have been read,
I go downstairs for one more look at the heavens to see if perhaps,
Just maybe, my beautiful Angel is waiting to wish me a Merry Christmas.
I sigh and think there is always tomorrow.
I wake to the screams of children asking if Santa had arrived,
And smile thinking that excitement never gets old.
After the gifts have been opened and countless toys have been filled with batteries,
I look once more at the heavens wondering where my Angel is…
I sigh once more thinking there is always next Christmas.
Wherever you are my Sean…
Merry Christmas…
Christine Torricelli, Sean's Mother

Tradition, Tradition, Tradition

Even in normal times, tradition isn't what it is always cracked up to be, and sometimes "tradition" gets in the way of sanity. Often, we cling to tradition because it's easier, we don't want to offend others, we don't want to be embarrassed, or we don't know what else to do. When you are a grieving parent, giving in to tradition can drive you over the edge.

I found myself in the "tradition predicament" regarding putting up a tree the first Christmas holiday after my son, Chad died. I didn't want, need, or have the energy to put up a tree. Yet other family members wanted a tree and they wanted it as it always had been, big, bright, and decorated with ornaments they had purchased or made through the years. What eventually took place, with regard to a tree, changed our holiday forever and it has been a good thing for everyone involved.

I don't know the exact circumstances of how our "new tradition" came into being that first year. But I do remember frustration, tears, and upset people. I also remember my daughter saying to me it was her Christmas too and she needed a tree. It was her older brother, the one she remembered getting up with every Christmas morning when she was little that was dead, and she had to have something so she could deal with the emptiness. So she came up with a plan. She and her father would go find a tree and she would take care of the decorations all by herself.

That was ten Christmases ago and this year, once again, my husband and my daughter will leave early in the morning, a week before Christmas, and hunt for a tree, just the two of them. When they come home, I will prepare breakfast, while they get the tree in the holder, and move the furniture. We will sit down together and enjoy our meal and then my husband and I will leave for several hours. During that time we will do whatever we feel like doing. We have gone to the cemetery, gone for walks, gone to the bookstore, visited friends, etc. When we return, my daughter will have decorated our Christmas tree, and the whole house! Every year the tree has been different, limited only to my daughter's imagination and the budget we keep her on. She didn't use our regular ornaments for a while and when she did, she told me ahead of time and said how meaningful it was for her to be the one who put Chad's ornaments back on the tree.

We have continued this "new tradition" to this day. Now, I find angel ornaments to put on the tree to honor our missing angel, and enjoy with my husband, sons, and family, my daughter's traditional tribute to her brother.

This "changing tradition" has been so healing. Our family has had the brightness and beauty that a lighted tree can provide, and I have been able to save my energy for other things I wanted to do.

During the next few weeks, I hope you will make the activities of the season as stress free as you can. I hope that you will feel free to experiment with new traditions, knowing there is no "right way" to go through this season, only "your way." I hope that you will remember Christmas is only one day and that the time leading up to that "one day" will probably be more difficult than the actual day. And finally, I hope for peace in your hearts, if not today then tomorrow, or the tomorrow after, or the tomorrow after that.
Sue Anderson
TCF South Bend, IN

Hanukkah Thoughts

At this season of lights,
We remember the light you brought into our lives:
The light of your laughter
The light of your wit and intelligence
The light of your love
May the time not be distant
when the memory of these lights
Will illumine our hearts and minds
And eradicate the darkness therein.
Stephanie Hesse,
TCF Rockland County, NY

Dog Named "HOPE"

On December 24, 1989 my daughter Jeanne Marie died suddenly at the age of 31 of an aneurysm. I had given her a yellow lab puppy for Christmas 1988. Jeanne was going through some very difficult times and I thought a dog of her own would help. After she named her puppy, I asked how she came to name her Hope. She replied, "Whenever I look at her I'll know there is always Hope for me."

The two of them were inseparable. So much love between the two of them. Several weeks before Jeanne died, as she was playing with Hope, she looked up at me with her big brown eyes and said "Mom, if anything happens to me will you take care of Hope?" It was as if she knew.

Now I have Hope who is always happy to see me when I arrive home. When I cry Hope gets very upset with me; barking, running around me, licking my tears away; until I get so mad at her and THEN I get control of myself and love her for loving me.

At Christmas time when Hope opens her gifts we sit around laughing at how excited she gets opening her presents. Ripping the paper off to get to another treat, etc. It brings back memories of how excited Jeanne would become as she opened her gifts - opening one after another with such joy and many OH's.

It's such a warm/wonderful feeling to laugh at Hope and remembering the past Christmases. Just picture adults sitting around laughing at a dog opening her gifts, laughing so hard that we felt our sides would burst.

You see, Hope is an extension of Jeanne. She was her baby. Although I'm divorced, Jeanne's father and I are Grandma and Grandpa to Hope. When friends get talking about their grandchildren and showing pictures, I begin to tell them about my "Grand-Dog." If someone had told me years ago that someday I would love a dog as I do, I would have told them they were crazy. Now maybe I am!

Without Hope I would not have been able to survive this terrible loss. Since Jeanne's death the house isn't so quiet and lonely. I have someone who still needs me to care for them, to talk to, to play with, laugh at, and someone to love. I now have "HOPE"!!!

Betty J. Lambert,
TCF Dubuque Area Chapter, IA

The Roller Coaster

As a child I enjoyed the thrill of the roller coaster: gliding up the giant track, reaching the top with a momentary anticipation and the thrill of the quick dropping roll to the bottom of the track. The deep turns, first to the right and then to the left were designed to heighten the anticipation of the next climb and drop. In my childhood mind, these curves, climbs and drops were an isolated experience, temporary and fun. The ride would end.

A few months after my son's death, I dreamed of the roller coaster. But this time it wasn't fun. It was a nightmare of fear, anxiety and pain; I was so paralyzed that I couldn't breathe, that dream was the simple symbolism of life since my son died. Now I ride a different sort of roller coaster. The climb to the top is a slow, difficult rise to normalcy. The rapid descent to the bottom is yet another terrible setback. I hang onto the bar of sanity on the curves, first one way, then another. I really want to stop this ride, but it is forever. This ride won't end.

Today I recalled that roller coaster dream, in all its vivid detail, and I compare it to the roller coaster that is my life now. Are the highs lower and the lows higher? Are the curves softening? Yes, I believe they are. It's been two years and two months since Todd died. I still weep. Tiny tears still fall unexpectedly. I still have anxiety. I still feel as if the earth has dropped from under me. I still miss talking with my son. I miss seeing him. I ache for that special hug that only my child can give. Yes, I miss my only child very much. My heart has been shattered; my definition of myself has been altered and my loneliness is incomprehensible. But something has changed on the roller coaster of this life. That something is, of course, me. I work through my grief in many, many ways. I have consciously shifted the paradigms of my life. I have learned to evaluate people from a different perspective. I have become so sensitive to the pain of other parents that I feel it as if it were my own. I have stopped anticipating how I will handle stressful events, anniversaries, birthdays, and holidays. I have learned to keep negative energy and negative people at a far distance. I have learned that a routine provides necessary structure. I have learned to live in the moment, to take joy in simple things, to talk openly about my child's life and to acknowledge the things I cannot change.

As time moves forward, I will continue to accept what is given and give what I can. I know the roller coaster will level out eventually. For as long as I live, I will keep my child with me, in my heart. That's all I can do as I ride this changing roller coaster that is now my life.

Annette Mennen Baldwin



Hung With Care

It has been a year since my 18-month old granddaughter, Katie, died of a birth defect, and I could still feel the grief. "Maybe putting up Christmas decorations will make you feel better," my husband said, handling me the box of ornaments. "Christmas won't be the same without Katie," I said. I opened the box. There on top of a pile of tinsel was Katie's stocking. I hadn't thought about what to do with it. I couldn't leave it off the mantle. It would be as if she's never been part of the family. But I couldn't leave it hanging empty either. What should I do?

Christmas Day, I found the answer. "Katie was such a blessing in our lives," I announced. "I'd like to start a tradition in her memory." I passed around Katie's stocking which I'd filled with slips of paper, one for each member of the family. On each slip was an assignment to be completed in Katie's honor. Plant a tree, buy school supplies for an underprivileged kid, donate a book to the library.

Now every Christmas Katie's stocking turns out to be the best gift of all.

Sarah Gill, Northcutt, Miami, TX

SIBS

In Memory of James Franklin Fritz

The stockings are hung and the tree is trimmed bright,
With tinsel and ornaments and twinkling lights;
At four in the morning, I will wake with a start
And wonder why there is an ache in my heart.
At this time every Christmas, every year since I was eight;
You'd come to my bedroom and beg me to wake
To just come and see the job Santa had done;
And into the den, we'd head with a run!
Oh, thought of the magic of the early mornings,
By the light of the tree;
Send a shiver down my spine and a tear down my cheek.
What happened to those moments?
Why must we grow old?
Why has this season left me feeling so cold?
I think it must be, my brother, my friend,
That our childhood has come to an aching end
And me at the tree without you does not seem right
Us not together on a cold Christmas night...
It doesn't seem fair. It doesn't ring true.
All I want for Christmas is to be there with you.
Let Santa bring the toys that children will forget;
The only present I want; I haven't gotten yet.
I'm asking and begging for one gift this year:
To see a smile on your face and to whisper in your ear
How lucky I was to have a brother like you
How much I loved you and needed you too.
And how much I will miss you when Christmas morning arrives;
How I will miss the sparkle in your eyes.
I know heaven is nice, but please don't forget
The sister on earth who will always regret
Words left unspoken, things left unsaid
To a goofy little brother who wouldn't let her stay in bed!
I love you James, Amy

by my daughter, Amy on our first Christmas without her brother James. Submitted by Beth Bl

To All Siblings…

Be guided by the reality that there is no right or wrong way to celebrate the holidays after your sibling died. Do what you need to do to get yourself through the holidays. We grieve differently than our parents do. Yes, we need to respect their grief, but we need to remember ours. Our siblings would want us to laugh and sing along with the Christmas carols, but we just may not be ready yet. Guilt? Oh, yes, we will feel that this holiday season. But we may also celebrate their lives in our own special way. Whatever you choose to do, do what's good for you. Everyone is at a different stage in their grief. The holidays make the reality of loss even harder. I hope this holiday season you can find peace and love in memories. Please know you are not alone.

Vera, Sara's sister, TCF, Kansas City, MO



Need to Talk to Someone Between Meetings

The people listed below have volunteered to take your calls:
Linda Houghtby - Long term illness - (734) 591-3062
Catherine Walker - Loss of Only Child - (248) 921-2938
Charli Johnston - Suicide - 734-812-2006
Marlene Hofmann - Drug related death - 734-331-9919
Gail Lafferty - Sudden Death - (734) 748-2514

Remember that our chapter has a Facebook page. It is a closed page, so you just need to search for The Compassionate Friends of Livonia, Michigan and ask to join.
TCF Chat Room: www.compassionatefriends.org
The chat rooms are moderated and are open at different times. There is one open most evenings from 10-11 p.m. They are all moderated which means that all the chat rooms have a trained facilitator in them.
National Mailing Address: PO Box 46, Wheaton, IL. 60187
Phone: (877)969-0010; Website: www.compassionatefriends.org

Other TCF Chapters in our area:
Ann Arbor: Mike Fedel:mfedel2@gmail.com; 734-998-0360 ; 3rd Sunday, 2:30 to 4:30 pm - First Presbyterian Church (Vance Room)1432 Washtenaw, Ann Arbor; tcfanarbormich.org
St. Clair Shores: 2nd Wed. Kathy Joerin ; 586-293-6176, kjmac21@aol.com
Detroit: Kellie West Outer Drive Methodist Church,12065 West Outer Drive, Detroit ; 2nd Wed., 6:30 - 8:30; 734-660-9557.
Troy: St. Paul's Methodist Church, 620 Romeo, Rochester, MI 3rd Thursday7-9;
Tina@586-634-0239
South Rockwood TCF Chapter: Southwood United Methodist Church, 6311 S. Huron River Drive. South Rockwood, MI 48179; 3rd Tues. of month meeting - 7 pm; Sheri Schooley, Leader; Contact Karen 734-672-7469

Livonia Chapter Page

Meeting is Thursday, December 3rd, 7:00 pm - Newcomer and topic tables: "Any coping tips for the holidays?" There will be a Candle Lighting at the meeting (this is in addition to the Candle Lighting on December 13th).

A Love Gift -No dues or fees are required to belong to The Compassionate Friends. We have all paid the ultimate price, the loss of our loved ones. Parents and others may provide financial support for our chapter through Love Gifts. It is a beautiful loving way to remember our loved ones. Love Gift form is on back page.

Elizabeth and Gerald Golen in memory of their son, ***Andrew;*** "Dear Andrew, wishing you a heavenly Christmas. We all miss you so much! Love, Mom, Dad, Amy, Jeff, Blair, Rose & Teddy."

Jan and Mike Wortman in memory of their son, ***Justin;*** " Heavenly Christmas, Justin. Love & miss you, Mom, Dad, Shannon, Josh & Julia."

Judy Cappelli in memory of her son, ***Christopher***; "Happy Birthday, Christopher! I would trade all my tomorrows for just one more day with you. Love ♡

Sharon Curson in memory of her son, ***David***; "We miss you so much; can't wait to see you again. Love, always and forever, Mom and family. ♡

Greg and Sharon Black in memory of their son, ***Jordan***; "Miss you more each day. Love you forever and always, Mom, Dad, Stephanie and little Jordan."

Demise and Chris Falzon memory of her son, ***Brian***; "Merry Christmas in Heaven, Brian. You are forever loved and deeply missed."

Believing

As I steel myself for my third holiday season since losing my son, it occurs to me that one of the challenges – and there are many – is coping with a sense of being out of sync with the world and all the people in it. The "season of good cheer" seems compulsory. Yet I can't bear to open the boxes of ornaments and decorations. I can't bear to put candles in the windows. I can't bear to use the Spode Christmas tree china. I can't play Christmas carols. I can't bake the date nut bars that he loved. I avoid shopping malls and keep the radio turned off. It is all I can do to order gifts for my daughter and wrap them.

This season also implores us to "Believe." Whether it's an appeal to believe in the birth of the Messiah, or to believe that a single day's supply of oil burned for eight days, or to believe that Santa will deliver presents by sled from the North Pole, the message is the same: believe. Yet, I have lost my son. I am consumed by a sense of disbelief. Of incredulity. How could this have happened? How could he be gone? How could this have happened to me? How could this possibly be my life?

In Joan Didion's new book ***Blue Nights*** about the death of her daughter at age 39, she writes,

"This was never supposed to happen to her." Dennis Apple, a Nazarene minister and now author of ***Life After the Death*** of My Son, writes, upon discovering his son's lifeless body, "This isn't supposed to happen to me, God!"

I assumed I had some sort of contract with the Universe. I voted, I paid my taxes, I worked hard, I recycled, I volunteered. Our children were the cornerstone of our lives. We went to every single parent/teacher conference and never missed a Back to School night. The applications for summer camp were submitted on time. Every single school form was completed. We made sure they went to the beach, to Disneyworld, and to ski slopes. We loved our children with devotion and we loved them unconditionally. We were vigilant in protecting them. We followed the rules. Do you hear me, Universe? I followed the rules.

Since I did, I thought that surely my children would be healthy and happy and safe. Surely they would forge their own identities and find their place in the world. There would be graduations, and jobs, and apartments, and weddings. We would be approached for loans for down payments on first homes. We would negotiate about who came home when for the holidays. I didn't really ask for a Pulitzer-prize-winning kind of outcome. I didn't need for my child to become President (of anything). But I certainly counted on a satisfactory outcome. An outcome I could live with. Never imagined an outcome I cannot agree to. How does one continue to believe? I don't know yet. In the season of believing, here I am. Not believing. I'm out of sync.

Peggi Johnson,
Arlington, VA

grief also makes me
someone who believes
messages of love from heaven
can appear at any moment as
butterflies
ladybugs
dragonflies
feathers
pennies
songs
numbers
and
birds

Grief to Glorious Unfolding

TCF Livonia Chapter
Brenda Brummel
10531 Calumet Trail
Gaylord, MI 49735

December 2026

If any of you would be willing to get the newsletter via the internet,
please email me. Thanks, Brenda Brummel

LOVE GIFTS

Your Name:_____

Address: _____

City: _____State _____Zip: _____

Email: _____

Love Gift Donation of $_____ in Memory of _____

Message: _____

Direct my gift to: _____Outreach (Printing, postage, phone , web
_____ General Fund (90% local; 10% national)

Mail to: Mary Hartnett, 5704 Drexel, Dearborn Heights, MI 48127



Memory Tree

There will be a TCF tree at Kellogg Park that will be decorated with ornaments with our children, siblings and grandchildren's names.

If you had your child, grandchild or sibling on the list last year to be read at the Candle Lighting, an ornament will be made and placed on the tree. You can still contact the TCF at 734-778-0800 and give the names you want read and an ornament made for them. Ornaments will be available at the meeting and there are blank ornaments at the tree in Kellogg Park.