**December 2016 The Compassionate Friends Volume 30● Number 12**

***THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS***

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The mission of The Compassionate Friends is to assist families toward the positive resolution of grief

following the death of a child of any age and to provide information to help others be supportive.

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*Welcome: The Nashville chapter meets at 3:00 p.m. on the second Sunday of each month in the American Builders & Contractors (ABC) Building, 1604 Elm Hill Pike, Nashville, TN 37210 . Park and enter at the rear of the building.*

*We truly regret that we have no accommodations for young children, but teenagers and older siblings are welcome to attend.*

***Candlelight Memorial Service***

***December 11, 2016— 3:00 p.m.***

***Please arrive by 2:30)***

***All family members are cordially invited to join us as***

***we honor our children during this beautiful***

***candle-lit service.***

***Each family is asked to bring a picture 5”x7”***

***or smaller, or other small memento of your***

***child to place on tables at the front of the auditorium. This will be in addition to the picture you have already sent in for the big screen. (See the form on page 7.)***

**Refreshments will be served following the service and the birthday table will be set up for all those who wish to share their child’s December birthday.**

***This year’s service will be held***

***in our regular meeting place***

***the ABC Building, 1604 Elm Hill Pike.***

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*May the memories of this season*

*Come on gentle wings*

*To bring you love and peace.*

It is important that **everyone** wishing to have their child’s photo in the memorial service follow very carefully the instructions on page 7 of this newsletter.  **THERE IS A SUBMISSION DEADLINE THAT MUST BE STRICTLY ADHERED TO.** We invite all of you to enjoy this opportunity to see your child on the big screen! If you have not attended the candlelight memorial service, we encourage you to do so. This is a very moving and powerful program. All family members, siblings and friends are invited.

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National Office P. O. Box 3696, Oak Brook, Illinois 60522-3696—Phone 630 990-0010 or Toll free: 1-877 969-0010

TCF Website: [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org) National Office email:nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org

**2 TCF Nashville, TN December 2016**

***Only December***

*Feelings heavy*

*tears and tears.*

*Will the darkness last?*

*Or is it –*

*only December?*

*Hadn’t past months*

*brought peace and hope?*

*Where is the strength*

*of October –*

*and November?*

*Lights, carols, ornaments on trees,*

*Cards from friends,*

*Happy times in seasons past.*

*We remember.*

*We remember.*

*Will January bring*

*light at last?*

*Will we be stronger then,*

*for making it through*

*this December?*

*When people ask*

*How I’m doing, I say,*

*“Well,*

*You know,*

*it’s December…”*

From *Stars in the Deepest Night:*

*After the Death of a Child*

Genesse Bourdeau Gentry

*Image result for free clipart holly borders*

**Giving Myself Permission**

I

t has been nearly five years since my only child died, but this will be my sixth Christmas without his unique enthusiasm, anticipation and happiness at the prospect of the holiday season.

After two rocky attempts to handle the holiday season, I gave myself permission to do what I wanted to do. I am not accountable to anyone for my ups and downs at the holidays. Last year was easier than the previous year and that year was easier than the one before. But there is a reason for this: in talking with other members of our Compassionate Friends chapter, I realized that I owe no explanations. Therefore, I make it easy on myself and on those who love me.

Instead of getting caught up in the commercialism of the holiday, I contemplate the true meaning of the season and initiate activities that have little to do with the season. I intentionally avoid Christmas because it is, simply, too painful for me. Others in our Compassionate Friends group have returned to their normal celebrations with children and extended family. Some have modified their traditions; a few have chosen to take a trip and escape the holiday memories entirely.

We give ourselves permission to handle this time of year in a way that is most soothing to us. If we do not do this, we suffer setback after setback in our grief. We often make small concessions for others in our family, of course. But are we really in the spirit? Probably not. Does it really matter? Probably not.

Each year I now put a wreath on our front door. I buy a gift for an underprivileged child and include a card that is signed with my son’s name. I send gift cards to those who I am morally obliged to remember and buy small gifts for friends and family who truly appreciate the thought and effort I have made.

That’s Christmas now. I have given myself permission to handle it in the only way that keeps serenity, peace and hope in my heart.

Annette Mennen Baldwin

In memory of my son, Todd Mennen

TCF, Katy, TX

**Phone Friends**

We have all experienced the pain of losing a child. We understand and would like to listen. If you can’t reach one of us, feel free to call another person on this list.

**Accidental Death** ………...Mike and Paula Childers

615-646-1333

**AIDS**………………….….…….….......Joyce Soward

615-754-5210

**Illness**………….…………..David and Peggy Gibson

615-356-1351

**Infant**…………………..……………..…Jayne Head

615-264-8184

**SIDS**………….…………..…….……KrisThompson

931-486-9088

**Suicide**…….……………….Ron and Darlene Henson

615-789-3613

**Small Child**….……........Kenneth and Kathy Hensley

615-237-9972

**Alcohol/Drug Overdose**......…...............……Ed Pyle

615-712-3245

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**December 2016 TCF Nashville, TN 3**

**The 20th TCF Worldwide Candle Lighting**

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### The 20th Annual Worldwide Candle Lighting will be held this year on Sunday, December 11, 2016. This is a very special and moving event, when bereaved families join together from around the world in memory of all children gone too soon. As candles are lit at 7:00 p.m. local time, hundreds of thousands of persons commemorate and honor the memory of all children gone too soon. Now believed to be the largest mass candle lighting on the globe, the 20th annual Worldwide Candle Lighting, a gift to the bereavement community from The Compassionate Friends, creates a virtual 24-hour wave of light as it moves from time zone to time zone in quiet remembrance of children who have died, but will never be forgotten.

**Image result for free clipart holly borders**

**Holiday Lights**

D

uring the holiday season, both Christian and Jew light candles in celebration of their respective faiths, and as they do so even the darkest of rooms become warm and bright from the glow of the candle. Then, we can ask ourselves how powerful and sinister can the darkness be if it can be overcome by the light of one little candle.

There is then a message in this for all of us. When the darkness seems to overwhelm us, and it can be a mental and spiritual darkness as well as the darkness of winter night, we need to be reminded that it is powerless to withstand the smallest bit of illumination.

So as the world grows colder and darker during these winter months, we as Compassionate Friends must do what people of many faiths have been taught to do at this season. Light a candle in someone's life to make the darkness and fears flee. A little bit of light is all that most of us need, but, oh, we need that little bit so badly.

So, let us all in The Compassionate Friends extend a candle of light and hope not only to each other, but to the unfortunate people who, for whatever reason, become one of us this winter and will be in need of that light. It's the least we can do and it accomplishes so much.

TOGHETHER WE CAN MAKE IT.

Bettye and Sam Rosenberg  
TCF Louisville, KY

***Lights of Love***

*Can you see our candles*

*Burning in the night?*

*Lights of love we send you*

*Rays of purest white*

*Children we remember*

*Though missing from our sight*

*In honor and remembrance*

*We light candles in the night*

*All across the big blue marble*

*Spinning out in space*

*Can you see the candles burning*

*From this human place?*

*Oh, angels gone before us*

*Who taught us perfect love*

*This night the world lights candles*

*That you may see them from above*

*Tonight the globe is lit by love*

*Of those who know great sorrow,*

*But as we remember our yesterdays*

*Let's light one candle for tomorrow*

*We will not forget,*

*And every year in deep December*

*On Earth we will light candles*

*As................we remember*

Jacqueline Brown

TCF Peace Valley, PA

Friendship doubles our joy and divides our grief.

Swedish Proverb

**4 TCF Nashville, TN December 2016**

**Your Child — Gift or Possession?**

I

had a choice to either view Laura Lou from the vantage point of entitlement, and that is to say, “She was mine. I had a right to her. She was my child, and therefore her death is tantamount to theft”…or to look on her from the vantage point of grace and gift…that I’d ever had her for a single moment was more than I could claim was my “right.” I had a choice between which perspective I would put around her ten years as a part of my history, and I chose to regard her life as gift. I chose to regard her as someone whose very presence in my existence was utterly beyond anything I could have created. That did not take the sadness out of it. It did not in any way diminish the grief, but it did keep me from being angry and

resentful at God…or at doctors who didn’t know how to save

her, and I would say to you that you, too, have the same choice — you can either regard the people you have loved as your rightful possession and therefore their death as a kind of stealing of what rightfully belongs to you; or…you can stop asking, “Why did she die?” and step back and ask a prior question, “Why did she live?”…When you ask that question, you’re getting back to that mystery of grace that any of us exists for a single day, and the kind of gratitude that you feel in the presence of something that you know is a gift, is something very different from what you feel when something that is rightfully yours has been stolen.

Image result for free clipart holly borders The Rev. Dr. John Claypool

Twelfth Annual National TCF Conference

**Thoughts for the Bereaved during the Holidays**

**Plan Ahead.** Bereaved individuals who experience the most difficulty with the holiday season are those who have given little thought to the challenges they will encounter. Consider ahead of time what may be expected of you, both socially and emotionally, as well as your own preferences.

**Accept Your Limitations.** Grief consumes most of your available energy no matter what the season. The holidays place additional demands on your time and emotions. Plan to lower your expectations to accommodate current needs.

**Make Changes.** Your circumstances have changed. Expect to make necessary alterations in holiday plans to accommodate those changes. Consider changing your surroundings, rituals, and/or traditions to diminish the stress. Serve notice on family and friends that this year things may be somewhat different.

**Trim Down to Essentials.** Limit social and family commitments to suit your available energy. Shop early or use catalog sales. Reevaluate priorities and forego unnecessary activities and obligations.

**Ask for and Accept Help.** Accept offers for assistance with holiday shopping, decorating, cleaning, cooking, etc.

Image result for free clipart holly borders

Chances are loved ones are looking for ways to lessen your burden at this time of year. Allow those who care about you to offer their support in concrete ways.

**Inform Others of Your Needs.** Give family and friends the tools they need to help you through the holidays. Be specific about your preferences and desires, and keep them up to date when those needs change.

**Build in Flexibility.** Learn to “play it by ear.” There is no concrete formula for learning to deal with loss. You are the foremost authority on what is best for you, and your needs may legitimately change from day to day. Accept the fluctuations that must occur when walking in unknown territory, and learn to take each moment as it comes.

**Give Yourself Permission “To be.”** Allow breathing space and expect fluctuations in mood and perspective. The bereaved work overtime. Not only is life more complicated, but all energy is siphoned into mental and emotional resolution. Grieving is nature’s way of healing the mind and heart from the greatest injury of all. Allow yourself the privilege of limping till your wounds have healed and you can learn to run again.

Reprinted by permission from *Bereavement* Magazine,

November/December 1989

**How Many Stockings Shall I Hang?**

W

hat a torment! Funny how you worry what your friends will think. For days I worried…and finally hung three stockings on the fireplace and laid one gently on the mantle.





 But that was last year. This year I shall hang all four above the fireplace. For this year, the confusion of my mind has found new answers with conviction. Whether my oldest daughter lives in Tucson, or my youngest son is dead – these are my children – our family – and as long as we hang the Christmas stockings, we shall hang them all – with love.

Shirley Melin

TCF, Hinsdale, IL

**December 2016 TCF Nashville,** TN 5

**CANDLELIGHT MEMORIAL SERVICE—December 11, 2016**

Regardless of past participation, **EVERY FAMILY WISHING TO TAKE PART IN THE MEMORIAL SERVICE MUST RETURN THIS FORM.** We need to receive it no later than Saturday, December 3, 2016. Do not send photos to the TCF P.O. box—they might get bent or

damaged.

**Mail to:**

**Steve & Paige Czirr**

**1623 Fair House Road**

**Spring Hill, TN 37174**

**Instructions:** A computerized process (Power Point) is being used to display our children’s pictures on the big screen. An original 5x7 photo (no copies, please) may be used. If a 5x7 is not available, any size will do; however, the 5x7 or larger is easier to process. The original photo will be returned to you at the memorial service while the image will be stored for use next year.

**Place a sticky note on the back of the photo with the child’s name clearly printed. Do not write on the photo itself.**

**Child’s name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Please print the name as you wish it to be read at the service along with phonetic pronunciation, if needed.**

**\_\_\_\_\_\_ I will attend and am enclosing an original photo of my child. (First time in the memorial service.)**

**\_\_\_\_\_\_ I will attend and am enclosing a different photo of my child to be used in place of the photo you have from last year’s service.**

**\_\_\_\_\_\_ I will attend and would like for you to use the photo you have saved from last year.**

**\_\_\_\_\_\_ I will attend and would like for my child’s name to be called and I’ll light a candle, but I will not have a picture shown.**

**Your name\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Phone\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**You may alternatively e-mail your child’s picture to Steve Czirr at czirrs@gmail.com**

**Be sure to include your child’s name in the e-mail**

**C:\Users\Melanie & Joe\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary Internet Files\Content.IE5\UD8W4II5\Scissors-Silhouette-2191-large[1].png--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------**

**Holiday Gifts for Children Needed**

E

ach year, our chapter donates holiday gifts to children at a worthy establishment that works with children who are not living at home and are under care for the holidays. Since things went so well with Youth Villages in years past, it has been decided to provide gifts for them again this year. The children range in age from 6 to 18. For many of these children, these will be the only gifts they receive this holiday season. If you would like to help this year, you may participate by bringing new UNWRAPPED gifts to the TCF December 14 Memorial Service. Below is a list of the most requested items.

**Most Requested Items:**

Art supplies

Toys from the movie Frozen

Pre-paid Cell Phones (and minutes)

DVD’s (PG-13 and Under)

DVD players

MP3 Player

Gift cards such as Game Stop, Wal-Mart, Target, Amazon

I-tunes gift cards

Current Rap/ Pop CD’s (Teen Rated)

CD Players/ Boom Box

Gameboy Games (Teen Rated)

Xbox Play Station Games (Teen Rated)

Remote Control Cars, Trucks or Planes

Girlie things like journals, gel pens, scrap booking items

Board Games (Monopoly, Life, Mouse Trap, Jenga, Uno etc.)

Barbie Dolls & Accessories for Barbie

Matchbox/ Hot Wheels car play sets

Lego Sets

Books (Twilight, Harry Potter, Narnia, and current top sellers

Fashion Bracelets or kits

Action Figure Toys

Watches (Girls & Boys)

Puzzles for teenagers

Winter coats for teenagers

Hats/Gloves/Scarves

Hair accessories

Skateboards/helmets

Footballs, Basketballs, Soccer balls etc.

Nerf toys

Anything Batman,Star Wars, Spiderman, Spongebob or current popular items

**Stocking Stuffers:**

Matchbox cars

Small notepads , Pens and pencils

Candy, Decks of Cards , Jewelry

Hygiene products

Billfolds and wallets, Cute little change purses for girls

Makeup items/nail polish

Socks

Gift cards for fast food restaurants

***Gift wrapping supplies appreciated, but please,***

***DO NOT WRAP THE GIFTS***