



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

June 2008, Volume XXI, Number 6

# The Quad City Chapter

Dear Compassionate Friends,

**T**his past month the pain of bereaved parents has been frequently in the news. Thousands of parents in China are mourning the loss of their children, for many of them their only child, following the devastating earthquake there. The five-year-old daughter of singer and songwriter Steven Curtis Chapman was killed in an SUV accident. On the news I heard the announcement of the crib death of the two-month-old son of a Christian women's speaker, and on a personal note, the twin daughters of some acquaintances died shortly after birth. So much loss; so much pain.

Our efforts in this newsletter is a feeble attempt to bring information, hope, and encouragement to hurting families. The following excerpt from the book *Grace for the Moment* by Max Lucado, I find particularly encouraging in the face of sorrow.

His Broken Heart  
*When he saw the crowds, he felt*

*sorry for them because they were hurting and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.*

Matthew 9:36

I can't understand it. I honestly cannot. Why did Jesus die on the cross? Oh, I know, I know. I have heard the official answers. "To gratify the old law." "To fulfill prophecy." And these answers are right. They are. But there is something more here. Something very compassionate. Something yearning. Something personal. What is it? Could it be that his heart was broken for all the people who cast despairing eyes toward the dark heavens and cry the same "Why?" Could it be that his heart was broken for the hurting? I imagine him, bending close to those who hurt. I imagine him listening. I picture his eyes misting and a pierced hand brushing away a tear... He who also was once alone, understands.

The next newsletter is the July-August edition.

Sincerely,  
Jerry and Carol Webb

## Inside

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Resources for Grieving Parents and Siblings         | 2  |
| Simply Listen                                       | 3  |
| Seasons of Grief and Healing                        | 3  |
| TCF Bulletin Board                                  | 4  |
| Communication                                       | 5  |
| Life's Sweetness                                    | 6  |
| Jewish Prayer                                       | 8  |
| Some Thoughts for Those Whose Child Died by Suicide | 8  |
| Reflection from William Sloane Coffin               | 9  |
| Love Gifts  | 10 |
| Gratitude...The Key to Happiness                    | 11 |
| What's It All About?                                | 11 |



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Quad City Chapter



1830 6th Avenue,  
Moline, Illinois 61265

«WholeName»  
«Street»  
«City», «State» «ZipCode»



Nonprofit Org.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
Permit No.190  
Rock Island, Illinois

**To** those who are receiving our newsletter for the first time, we wish you were not eligible to belong to this group, but we want you to know that your family and you have many friends. We who have received love and compassion from others in our time of deep sorrow now wish to offer the same support and understanding to you. Please know we understand, we care, and we want to help.

*You are not alone in your grief.*

## Resources for Grieving Parents & Siblings

### The Compassionate Friends of the Quad Cities Chapter Meetings

**June 26, 2008 & July 24, 2008 — 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm**

**Bethel Assembly of God Church**

3535 38<sup>th</sup> Ave., Rock Island, IL

From John Deere Road, turn right at 38<sup>th</sup> St. (by Kmart) and go up the hill. Turn left on 38<sup>th</sup> Ave. The church will be on your right. We meet in the downstairs fellowship hall. (Or you can turn into the church driveway off of 38<sup>th</sup> St.; the church is on the west side of the road.) Call Sharon and Dave Ulseth (792-0529) for directions or information.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>The Compassionate Friends of Muscatine</b>     | Meets the second Sunday of each month at 2:00 at the George M. Wittich-Lewis Funeral Home, 2907 Mulberry, Muscatine, Iowa. Chapter Leaders are Linda and Bill McCracken. You can call them at (563) 263-2737 for directions or information.   |
| <b>Helping Heavy Hearts — Grief Support Group</b> | Meets the second Tuesday each month at 7:00 pm in the office of Family Resources located in Building 9 of the Annie Wittenmeyer Complex off Eastern Avenue in Davenport. For more information, contact Dave Happ at (563)785-6133.  |
| <b>Mom's Group meets in Aledo</b>                 | A group of moms who have had children die meet once a month in Aledo to support and encourage one another as they go through the grief process. You are invited to join them at the Happy Joe's in Aledo. For directions or more information, call Kathy Matkovic at (309)314-2485 or Kay Forret at (309)582-7789.  |
| <b>Rick's House of Hope</b>                       | Located at 4867 Forest Grove Drive in Bettendorf, this community resource is for children and adolescents dealing with grief. "Children and adolescents experiencing grief and trauma often need a safe place to express their feelings. They need companions for the journey of grief who are outside their family and not themselves grieving." The volunteer mentors at Rick's House of Hope provide this for young people and their families during painful and confusing times of grief. There is no fee for services. For more information, call Denise Tatoian at 563.324.9580 or 563.421.7970. Find Rick's House of Hope on the web at <a href="http://www.genesishealth.com">www.genesishealth.com</a> — Keywords: "children and grief." |
| <b>Quad City SHARE</b>                            | A support group for parents who have lost a child through miscarriage, stillbirth, or early infant death. SHARE meets the third Thursday of each month at Grace Lutheran Church, 1140 East High Street, Davenport, Iowa. For more information, call (309)792-7808.  |
| <b>Survivors of a Suicide Loss Support Group</b>  | For those who have lost someone to suicide, this group, facilitated by a peer survivor and a professional, meets the third Monday of the month in Moline, 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm. For details, contact Joel M. Moore (309)737-1363. <a href="mailto:moore-jm@sbcglobal.net">moore-jm@sbcglobal.net</a>   |

### Gratitude...The Key to Happiness

I am convinced that the real key to happiness is gratitude. I have thought a lot about this idea since my son, Mar, died five years ago. At first I was offended by people who smiled or even laughed during a TCF meeting. There were people who seemed to have somehow re-entered the land of the living... How dare they laugh? How dare they appear normal when their children have died? But over the last five years I have learned three valuable lessons:

- Life goes on and we must too. Gradually the pain eases and the warm memories replace the sadness. Gradually we return to life. One day we find that it is 11:00 AM and we have not thought about our child yet. At first we feel guilt, but then we also realize we are going forward. We will never forget, but we decide that the loss of our child will not be the all-consuming factor in our life...I am convinced that this is what our children would want for us.
- We become grateful for what we have, not focused on what we have lost. I see people in our chapter's meetings every month who have gone through "every parent's nightmare" and want no part of life again. But I ask that they also think about the ways they have been blessed, as well as hurt. In my experience, most people have more to be thankful for than they realize: health, other children, a loving family...life in a free country, faith that works for them, a true best friend, a spouse whom they love. Nobody has it all, but compared to most...we have a lot.
- The life we now lead will be better than it would have been. That does not make our child's death a good thing. It just means that our child's life mattered, and it has changed us forever. It means that in some small way the world will be better because our child lived. And we are the ones who can make it so. We have a new sense of priorities. We don't "sweat the small stuff." We know what matters because we know what is irreplaceable. And we know how deeply other people hurt, because we, too, have been there. We "know how they feel." *And when our life is different and better because our child lived, then that child is never forgotten.* Each of us would do anything in the world to go back in time, but we can't. It is up to us now to go forward, and we can.

Rich Edler, TCF/South Bay/LA, CA



### What's it all about?

The Compassionate Friends is a nonprofit, self-help organization offering friendship and support to families who have experienced the death of a child. The mission of The Compassionate Friends is to assist families in the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child and to provide information and education to help others be supportive.

Founded in England in 1969, the first U.S. chapter was organized in 1972. Since then, 635 chapters have been established. The current Quad City Chapter was formed in 1987.

#### TCF National Office

**The Quad City Area Chapter of The Compassionate Friends** meets bi-monthly on the fourth Thursday of the month in Rock Island, Illinois. See the newsletter for schedule.

#### Quad City Chapter Newsletter Editors

Jerry and Carol Webb  
Box 71, Cordova, IL 61242

**e-newsletter** is now available from the National Office! The monthly e-newsletter will contain notes and happening of interest to all TCFers. To subscribe to the e-newsletter, visit the TCF National Web site home page and click on the Register for TCF e-Newsletter Link. This newsletter is available to everyone.

# Love Gifts

There are no dues or fees to belong to TCF. As parents and other family members find healing and hope within the group or from the newsletter, they often wish to make a Love Gift to help with the work of our chapter. This is a meaningful way to remember a beloved child.

**L**ove gifts are used to provide postage for the newsletter and mailings to newly bereaved families. Some of the love gifts are used for materials to share with first time attendees at our meetings or to purchase books for our library. Our thanks to the many families who provide love gifts so that the work of reaching out to bereaved parents and families can continue. If you would like to send a love gift, please send it to our treasurers, Larry and Joyce Molitor, P.O. Box 191, Cordova, Illinois 61242. Checks can be made out to *The Compassionate Friends*. Your gifts are tax deductible.

## Volunteers for Healing Friends for the Future

31st National Conference of the Compassionate Friends  
July 18-20 — Nashville, TN

Check [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)  
for the latest information as it becomes available

**If** you read or write an article or poem which might be helpful to other bereaved parents, please share them with us, Jerry and Carol Webb, Box 71, Cordova, Illinois 61242.

**If** you move and would like to continue receiving the newsletter, please send us your new address. Because we send the newsletter bulk rate, the post office will not forward it.

**If** you know someone you think would benefit from receiving the newsletter, we would be happy to add them to our mailing list.

**If** you prefer to no longer receive the newsletter, we would appreciate you letting us know. Thanks. Jerry and Carol Webb (Editors), Box 71, Cordova, Illinois 61242, (309)654-2727.

## Father's Day Reflection

### Simply Listen



What about dealing with a father's grief? Many men, unlike women, feel uncomfortable discussing the death of their children. It is too deep and too emotional. Dad is the culturally recognized "Protector" and "Stronghold" of the family. It is his duty to remain strong and unyielding. Even if his heart is breaking, he may have difficulty expressing it openly. Do not push him to verbalize his feelings, but rather, encourage him by simply listening when he does choose to talk. If you attempt to comfort him while he is grieving, he may feel guilty for making you bear the burden of the "Protector" and quickly clean up his tears and move on to busy work. Remember that just listening can be an effective way to support a grieving father.

From the TCF/Central Iowa Chapter – no author noted

## Seasons of Grief and Healing:

### A Guide for Those Who Mourn

James Miller

This season cannot be all brightness and glow, however.

You still feel sad at times.

You get caught off-guard by sudden rushes of painful emotions. That's the nature of spring – gradual warming punctuated by brief stabs of chill.

Yet as you let your feelings evolve in ways most fitting to you, you promote the natural unfolding of your grief, the natural unfolding of your life.

You can begin to direct more and more what is happening around you. You can decide about the things you want to start doing again. You can experiment with things you've never tried before, realizing that something within you now is eager to try.

You can begin to turn your attention more to others offering what you have to give, welcoming what is there to receive.

You have every reason to do both, and every right.

# TCF Bulletin Board

Contact [www.preciousparents.org](http://www.preciousparents.org) which publishes a newsletter titled HEARTLINE for parents whose infants have died.

The June Meeting of the QC Chapter of The Compassionate Friends is on June 26th at 7:00 PM at the Bethel Assembly of God Church in Rock Island.

## GRIEF MATERIALS

Looking for a particular grief book? Look no further than the Centering Corporation, the official recommended grief resource center of The Compassionate Friends. With the largest selection of grief-related resources in the United States, Centering Corporation will probably have just about anything you're looking for – or they'll be able to tell you where to find it. Call Centering Corporation for a catalog at (402) 553-1200 or visit their Web site at [www.centering.org](http://www.centering.org). When ordering, be sure to mention you are with The Compassionate Friends and all shipping charges will be waived.

## Our Newsletter

For parents who have experienced the death or deaths of multiple birth children during pregnancy, at birth, in infancy, or in childhood, contact Jean Kollantai at P.O. Box 91377, Anchorage, AK 99509.

## Amazon. Com

When making a purchase from Amazon.com, enter through the link on the home page of The Compassionate Friends national Web site, and a portion of the purchase price will be donated to further the mission of TCF. This donation applies to all purchases, not just books, made from the Amazon.com site.

## We Need Not Walk Alone

The Compassionate Friends National Newsletter  
One complimentary copy is sent to bereaved families that contact the national office.

The Compassionate Friends, Inc.  
P.O. Box 3696, Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696 — (877)969-0010

Email: [nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org](mailto:nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org)

Web site: [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

Visit the sibling resource page at  
[www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)



Ten days after his son Alex died in a car accident, Rev. William Sloane Coffin delivered a provocative sermon on grieving and condolence-giving before his congregation at Riverside Church in New York City. A former chaplain at Williams College and Yale University, as well as a prominent activist for social justice, Coffin is no stranger to the beauty and wisdom of the Bible. But in this excerpt from his sermon, he dares to point out that Biblical quoting is not what many parents want or need in their early grief.

I mentioned the healing flood of letters. Some of the very best, and easily the worse, came from fellow reverends, a few of whom proved they knew their Bibles better than the human condition. I know all the "right" biblical passages, including "Blessed are those who mourn," and my faith is no house of cards; these passages are true, I know. But the point is this. While the words of the Bible are true, grief renders them unreal. The reality of grief is the absence of God – "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The reality of grief is the solitude of pain, the feeling that your heart is in pieces, your mind's a blank, that "there is no joy the world can give like that it takes away" (Lord Byron).

That's why immediately after such a tragedy people must come to your rescue, people who only want to hold your hand, not to quote anybody or even say anything, people who simply bring food and flowers – the basics of beauty and life – people who sign letters simply, "Your broken hearted sister." In other words, in my intense grief I felt some of my fellow reverends – not many, and none of you, thank God – were using comforting words of Scripture for self-protection, to pretty up a situation whose bleakness they simply couldn't face. But like God himself, Scripture is not around for anyone's protection, just for everyone's unending support.

And that's what hundreds of you understood so beautifully. You gave me what God gives all of us – minimum protection, maximum support. I swear to you, I wouldn't be standing here were I not upheld.

**Rev. William Sloane Coffin**  
from *A Broken Heart Still Beats*

Thank you to **Bethany for Children & Families** and **Maggie's Fund** for printing this month's newsletter. If you are able to assist in the final preparation for mailing of the newsletter in any given month, please contact Jerry and Carol Webb at (309)654-2727.

*It is hard* to sing of oneness

when our world is not complete, when those who once brought wholeness to our life have gone, and naught but memory can fill the emptiness their passing leaves behind.

But memory can tell us only what we were, in company with those we loved; it cannot help us find what each of us, alone, must now become. Yet no one is really alone; those who live no more, echo still within our thoughts and words, and what they did is part of what we have become.

We do best homage to our dead when we live our lives most fully, even in the shadow of our loss.

**Jewish Prayer for High Holydays  
from *A Broken Heart Still Beats***

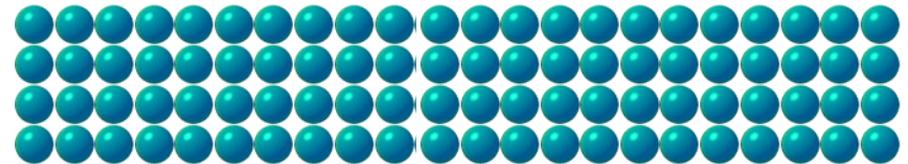
## Listen to Your Heart

– When your heart says, “Cry,” but your mind says, “Don’t,” listen to your heart. It could be pride, not your mind that is saying, “Don’t cry,” for tears are hard for one’s pride to accept. Crying because your child died does not mean that you are not a strong person. Tears do not mean you are having problems with emotional instability. You are crying because you hurt. Next time your heart says, “Cry,” listen to it. In the long run, you’ll feel better.

Rose Moen, TCF/Carmel-Indianapolis, IN

*When are you ready to live again? There is no list of events or anniversaries to check off. In fact, you are likely to begin living again before you realize you are doing it. You may catch yourself laughing. You may pick up a book for recreational reading again. You may start playing lighter, happier music. When you do make these steps toward living again, you are likely to feel guilty at first. “What right have I,” you may ask yourself, “to be happy when my child is dead?” And yet something inside feels as though you are being nudged in this positive direction. You may even have the sense that this nudge is from your child, or at least a feeling that your child approves of it.*

Horchler, J. N. and R.R. Morris. *The SIDS Survival Guide: Information and Comfort for Grieving Family and Friends and Professionals Who Seek to Help Them*. Hyattsville, MD: SIDS Educational Services, 1994, p 158.



## Communication

If you’re fortunate enough to have surviving children, when was the last time you:

Told them how important they are to you?

Thanked them for their patience with you during these dark hours?

Assured them that had it been one of them who died, it would have been just the same?

Told them that the reason you struggle so hard to survive is because you want to enjoy life with them again?

Reassured them there will be joy and some happiness in your family’s life again when you all have had the necessary time to create your new life?

If you haven’t told them lately – or even if you have - tell them again. Both you and they need that reassurance.

**Mary Cleckley**

## Some Thoughts for Those Whose Child Died By Suicide

Always remember that if you could have prevented your child’s death, you would have. There are a lot of reasons you weren’t able to do so.

You may have been too frightened to know what to do.

You may not have known the difference between normal growing up behavior and serious depression.

You may have been labeled overprotective if you did share your fears.

You hoped it would pass, get better, work itself out.

You wanted to give your child every benefit of the doubt and to trust your child.

You didn’t want to be an alarmist when maybe nothing was really wrong.

You may have actually tried to get help and were ignored or turned away.

You may have done everything possible, and it still happened.

From *Suicide of a Child* by Joy and Marvin Johnson; Adina Wroblewski

## Life's Sweetness

When my sons turned into teenagers I gave up the many baby talk endearments that I used when they were little. I think I started calling my youngest son, Andrew, "Sweetie-boy," as a toddler, but I later started using the endearment with all three of my sons, shortening the term to the single word, "Sweet." Once they became teenagers, I had to relinquish the cuddling. I couldn't pull them onto my lap or lavish them with hugs, so I called them "Sweet," sometimes, rather than use their names, like when they'd come home from school, I'd say, "Hey Sweet." Though they never said it, I always felt they liked hearing me use the word, maybe because it was so loaded with love, without laying on them the heavy direct expression, "I love you."

In the early months after Matt's death, I was staggering through the days. I had to go to work, but avoided all social and family commitments whenever possible. One day I came home from work and there was a message on our phone's voicemail. It was from a mother whose daughter was killed ten years earlier than my son. Her daughter, Katie, and my son, Matt, were classmates in grammar school. Her daughter was ten years old when she died. She was killed by a car in a freak accident. Matt had gone to Katie's services, which I now think was quite remarkable, as neither Tom nor I accompanied Matt to the funeral parlor, and he would not have been familiar with these customs, being only ten years old himself. I hadn't met Katie's mother, though I vaguely remembered the tragedy of her daughter's death.

This mother reached out to me after Matt was killed and offered to get together. I didn't want to be with anyone in my grief, but I returned her call and agreed to meet for lunch. She was very kind and asked me to talk about Matt, about what had happened to him. I was grateful to be given permission to say out loud the thoughts that were streaming through my mind endlessly. She asked me what made me call her back, and I said that when I heard her message, I heard love calling and thought I should answer, even though I was avoiding people, wanting to be alone with my grief.

I had some questions for her. I viewed her almost like a LRP, a term I learned from my husband when he told stories about his experiences during the war in Vietnam. LRP, long range reconnaissance patrol, someone who goes way out there into the field, learning the lay

of the land, gathering intelligence, someone who brings the knowledge back to others, so that the right plans can be made, defenses constructed to deal with the dangers detected.

This bereaved mother was ten years ahead of me on the road of grief, the grief born of burying a child. I wanted to know, "Will I ever feel joy again?" She looked directly at me and said, simply, "Yes. Yes, you will, though you will not think that possible for years." I told her it was important for me to know if it were remotely possible, because I was certain that the best part of my life was over, that Matt's death signaled the end of my ability to feel happiness. It seemed impossible that my heart would ever be patched up in a way that it could hold more than my unending sorrow.

It's been nearly four years since Matt died, nearly four years since I had that conversation with this bereaved mother. As I've lived through these days and years I have watched for the glimmering of my capacity to feel happiness. I have put signs in my life to remind myself of her wisdom, words emphasizing that it is possible to feel joy again. I bought tee shirts and a wall mirror imprinted with the words "life is good" as a promise to myself, that life could be good again, at some point. And I have collected a few quotes and phrases to light my path.

One of my favorite quotes comes from a 19<sup>th</sup> century poet, a Jesuit. His poem, "The Woodlark," was inspired by a walk in the woods; he hears the call of a bird, and he writes down what he thinks the bird is saying,

**"...With a sweet joy, of a sweet joy,  
Sweet, of a sweet, of a sweet  
Of a sweet – a sweet-sweet – joy."**



I still use this special endearment with my living sons, John and Andrew, calling them, "Sweet." But when I read this quote, I think of Matt, and I think he's telling me to keep going, that there's joy ahead, even in a woodlark's song.

Nancy Ronquillo, Chicago, IL