



# The Compassionate Friends

## Quad City Area Chapter

### Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Volume XXX

May 2017

Number 5

Dear Compassionate Friends,

**I**n the months before she died, our daughter, Maggie, had gotten into the habit of coming into our bedroom in the middle of the night claiming she had a nightmare. She knew that if she went to her mom she would be gently yet firmly walked back to her room and tucked in bed. She also knew that her dad was wrapped around her little finger and would make a blanket-bed for her on the floor so she could stay in the master bedroom. There was no need for Maggie to be told twice how to get her own way.

The day following Valentine's Day 2005, we, Maggie's parents, entered into the nightmare dreaded by all parents: the loss of one of their children. In the subsequent days, family and friends from our parish in Davenport, from Chicago, Kansas City, San Francisco, and the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit at the University of Iowa Hospitals in Iowa City walked with us through that terrible nightmare. They held us and hugged us, suffered and cried with us. They all asked, "What can we do?"

They sent letters, called, mailed cards, visited, and delivered numerous dinners, snacks, and desserts. But what helped the most were the prayers and kindness then and in the weeks, months, and years that followed.

Six years and six weeks prior, on Friday, January 8, 1999, our daughter barged into our lives. Laurie, her mom, was immediately worried when she saw her new baby — frantically telling the nurses that her son was missing an important body part, so set was she that this was to be our fourth son. The nurses introduced her to her daughter, Margaret Elizabeth, who would bear the names of three of our families' matriarchs and one cousin.

Continued on page 2

## Inside

Letter continued	2
It's A Family Affair	3
Facebook and TCF	4
About TCF	
Printed Resources for Grieving Parents & Siblings	5
Mother's Day and Being a Mother of a Child who Died	6
Normal Feelings While Grieving	7
Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings	8
Mother's Day and Miracles	9
Far Greater than Death	
From the Ashes of Grief	10
Contact the Editors	
Reflections Board	11



Continued from page 1

In the days and months that followed, our house suddenly became pink and a little smaller; and our three boys and we were blissfully ignorant of just how much our lives would change.

All too soon, we were inundated with beanie babies, horses, Barbie dolls by a variety of names, girlie-things galore. After learning how to parent a strong-willed, self-determined, hot-tempered, focused little girl; after changing, compromising, bargaining, and finally, surrendering, we five had discovered our lives had become energized and challenged by this little fire-ball who was full of honey and vinegar.

Her death though has taught us just how much this little girl had filled all our lives with love, laughter, and an enormous amount of clutter. The five of us still walk around with this terrible hole in our lives — much like those folks 2,000 years ago who saw their future and their hope to be like an empty tomb.

It was painful for us in those days following the death of Maggie to see life simply go on. The desk that she used at St. Paul's Kindergarten sat vacant for a while, but was eventually filled. Her bedroom in our home was in time given over to her best friend and youngest brother, who turned it into an incredibly messy man-cave. And our hearts have learned to live with her perpetual absence — but have also been healed with old friends made new and new



friends made familiar. Like the other believers before us, we know that the Resurrection slowly sneaks into life, just as spring breaks through after winter.

Yet, in the intervening years, we have been refilling our lives with faith, hope, and love. Resurrection is slowly occurring for us. We can laugh again; we celebrated a new daughter who joined our family when our oldest son married. With the patience and help of many individuals, we have come to know Easter again. It is still difficult for us to go on living without that little girl who colored our lives so vividly, yet we do.

We feel ourselves very fortunate to have had our daughter for the six years that she lived. We had hoped for so much more, but are most thankful for the time we were given. And like the women and men at that first Easter, we await the reunion that is promised.

*Sincerely,*  
*Laurie and Bill Steinhauser*

Continued from page 6

we make that give life value and help us face each morning. As G.K. Chesterton wrote, "We are all in the same boat in a stormy sea, and we owe each other a terrible loyalty."

Years ago, I chose words to say each time I go to my son's grave. It makes it easier to have a ritual. And over the years, the words have come to mean more to me. They aren't just about grief anymore. They are about who I am, what I have learned, and what I can give.

"I will always love you," I say. "And I will always be your mother."

Claire McCarthy, M.D.

# It's a Family Affair

When a child dies, grief is a family affair. It hits Mom, Dad, and siblings with equal despair. Mom cries and cannot get out of bed. Dad holds in emotions and leaves much unsaid. Sister and brother simply cannot understand why death came and dealt this kind of hand. No one acts as they should and nothing is the same.

The family wants to draw together but seems to only share pain. Someone must be responsible when a child dies. Each family member thinks in some way it's them, and cries.

But no one is responsible for things we cannot control. So reach out to each other and keep the family whole.

Don't let the differences in how each grieve change the love in your family or its belief. Be strong when you can and weak when you must, and love each other with kindness and trust. So treat the family with love and you will survive. For we who have been there and made it through together can say that holding on to each other makes love last forever.

**Jackie Roxen TCF/Broward, Florida**

## Love Gifts

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.

Thank you to:

**Sandra and Ron Sacco, in memory of their son, Anthony James Sacco.**

**William and Diane Stock, in memory of their granddaughter, Claire Glassford.**

**Donations and Love 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 donation or love gift, please send it or to our chapter leader, Doug Scott, c/o Bethany for Children & Families, 1830 6th Avenue, Moline, Illinois 61265. Checks can be made out to *The Compassionate Friends*. Your gifts are tax deductible.**



**TCF's Facebook Page** is a proven support area for bereaved family members to



come and talk about their grief. Stop by and visit with some of our more than 120,000 Facebook members. Please join our TCF/USA Facebook family. Tell us about your child, sibling, grandchild, or other loved one and find support in the words and concern of others. Check out the Discussion Boards! Every day we also provide thought provoking questions, grief quotes, and links to grief stories, as well as TCF news such as updates on the National Conference, Worldwide Candle Lighting, and other TCF programs.

Closed Facebook Groups: The Compassionate Friends offers several closed Facebook groups to connect with other bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings. The groups supply support, encouragement, and friendship. Recently added groups include Men in Grief; Loss to Long Term Illness; Loss of a Step Child; Loss of a Child with Special Needs.

## About TCF...

**The Compassionate Friends** is a nonprofit, self-help organization offering friendship and support to families who have experienced the death of a child. 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

P.O. Box 3696  
Oak Brook, Illinois 60522-3696  
Toll Free (877)969-0010  
TCF National Web site —  
[www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)  
<http://www.quadcitytcf.org>

## The Compassionate Friends National Newsletter

One complimentary copy is sent to bereaved families who contact the national office: The Compassionate Friends, Inc., P.O. Box 3696, Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696 (877)969-0010.

### email:

NationalOffice@compassionatefriends.org

**Website:** [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

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

It is also available to read online without charge.

### e-Newsletter Now

**Available!** An e-Newsletter is now available from the National Office! The monthly e-Newsletter contains notes and happenings of interest to all TCFers. To subscribe to the e-Newsletter, visit the TCF National Website home page and click on the Register for TCF e-Newsletter Link. This newsletter is available to everyone.



### Mission Statement

The mission of The Compassionate Friends Quad City Area Chapter is 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.

### Vision Statement

The vision statement of The Compassionate Friends is that everyone who needs us will find us, and everyone who finds us will be helped.

## Printed Resources for Grieving Parents & Siblings

<b>TCF Online Support Community</b>	<p>TCF's national website offers "virtual chapters" through an Online Support Community (live chats). This program was established to encourage connecting and sharing among parents, grandparents, and siblings (over the age of 18) grieving the death of a child. The sessions last an hour and have trained moderators present. For more information, visit <a href="http://www.compassionatefriends.org">www.compassionatefriends.org</a> and click "Online Support" in the "Resources" column.</p>
<b>TCF's Grief Related Webinars</b>	<p>Held monthly, the webinars are on various grief topics with well-known experts in the field. To reserve a seat for the next webinar (or to view the previous month's webinar), go to <a href="http://www.compassionatefriends.org/News_Events/Special-Events/Webinars.aspx">http://www.compassionatefriends.org/News_Events/Special-Events/Webinars.aspx</a>. Webinars are being archived in TCF's Webinar Library, accessible from the webinar page.</p>
<b>TCF National Magazine</b>	<p><i>We Need Not Walk Alone</i> is available to read online without charge. Go to <a href="http://www.compassionatefriends.org">www.compassionatefriends.org</a> and review the options at the top of the page. <b>TCF e-Newsletter</b> is also available from the National Office — to subscribe to the e-Newsletter, visit the TCF National Website home page and click on the Register for TCF e-Newsletter link.</p>
<b>Grief Materials</b>	<p>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 website at <a href="http://www.centering.org">www.centering.org</a>. When ordering, be sure to mention you are with The Compassionate Friends and all shipping charges will be waived.</p>
<b>Our Newsletter</b>	<p>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, Alaska 99509.</p>
<b>Amazon.com</b>	<p>When making a purchase from Amazon.com, enter through the link on the home page of TCF national website and a portion of the purchase price is donated to further the mission of TCF. This donation applies to all purchases made at Amazon.com.</p>
<b>Previous Newsletter Editions</b>	<p><b>Looking</b> for more articles or previous copies of this newsletter? Go to <a href="http://www.bethany-qc.org">www.bethany-qc.org</a> for copies of the last several years of The Quad City Chapter of TCF-QC Chapter Newsletter in Adobe Acrobat format.</p>
<b>Alive Alone</b>	<p>A newsletter for bereaved parents whose only or all children are deceased. A self-help network and publication to promote healing and communication can be reached at <a href="http://www.alivealone.org">www.alivealone.org</a> or <a href="mailto:alivealone@bright.net">alivealone@bright.net</a>.</p>
<b>Bereaved Parents' Magazine</b>	<p>Online articles and poems. Reminder emails are sent notifying readers when new issues are available. <a href="http://www.bereavedparentsusa.org/BP_NatlNews.htm">http://www.bereavedparentsusa.org/BP_NatlNews.htm</a>.</p>
<b>Our Newsletter</b>	<p>Published one to three times per year, when there is content to make a balanced issue. It usually contains 30 pages of personal stories and updates, poetry, subsequent birth announcements, and any new topical articles and information. Currently it is being distributed electronically (PDF), but a printout is available to anyone without email access. To request a sample copy, please email Jean Kollantai, <a href="mailto:climb@climb-support.org">climb@climb-support.org</a>. Include your full name, your location, and your reason for interest.</p>

## Mother's Day and Being the Mother of a Child Who Died

I am the mother of a child who died. And that makes Mother's Day very hard. Recently I was talking to a mother whose child had just died. "What about Mother's Day?" she asked, through tears. It was hard to know what to say, because it's a terrible day for those of us who have lost a child. Other days of the year you can maybe make it a few hours without thinking about your loss; other days of the year you can pretend that you are an ordinary person and that life is normal. But not on Mother's Day.

On Mother's Day it's in your face that your child is gone forever. On Mother's Day you can't pretend you are ordinary or that life is normal. All the hoopla, all the Hallmark hype, the handmade cards and flowers and family gatherings make it almost excruciating.

Our town has a Mother's Day road race for which I am eternally grateful — especially because, in a demonstration of grace's existence, the start and finish are next to the cemetery where my son is buried. On my way I can visit his grave and say what I need to say and look yet again at the name we chose for him carved into stone. At the end of the race, they give all the mothers a flower; on my way home, I go back to the grave and lay my flower there. And then I move forward with the day.

See, that's the real challenge after losing a child: moving forward. It's almost impossible to envision in that moment of loss; how can life continue after something so horrible? But life does continue, whether we like it or not. There are chores to do and bills to pay; morning



comes, again and again. So you pick yourself up and you live, but you are never the same.

At first, we are different because of our raw sadness. But over time, the sadness moves from our skin into our bones. It becomes less visible, but no less who we are. It changes into a wisdom, one we'd give up in a heartbeat to have our child back. We who have lost children understand life's fragility and beauty. We who have lost children understand that so many things just aren't important. All that is important is those we love. All that is important is each other. Nothing else.

It can feel very lonely, being the parent of a child who died. Especially on Mother's Day or Father's Day. We feel so different from those around us, all those happy people with children the same age our child was, or would have been. But over the years, I've come to understand that I'm not alone at all.

There is a wonderful Buddhist story about a woman whose son gets sick and dies. She goes to the Buddha to ask him to bring her son back to life; I will, he says, if you bring me some mustard seed from the home of a family that has not known loss. She goes from house to house but can find no family that has not lost someone dear to them. She buries her son and goes to the Buddha and says: I understand now.

That is what I understand now. It doesn't make me miss my son any less, or Mother's Day any easier. But it helps me make sense of it; loss is part of life. There are no guarantees, ever. Our children, and all those we love, are gifts to us for however long we have them.

I understand now too that we are together in this, all of us, in joy and in loss. It's the connections we make with each other that matter — it's the connections

Continued on page 2

## Normal Feelings While Grieving

- ♥ A feeling of numbness — no feelings at all. A sense of abandonment and desolation.
- ♥ A sense of protest — "No, this did not happen."
- ♥ Loss of appetite, an empty feeling in the stomach or "nervous eating" even when not hungry.
- ♥ Difficulty sleeping.
- ♥ Guilt. Awareness of aspects in the relationship that were less than perfect.
- ♥ A feeling of "If only..."
- ♥ Anger — at God, at the people around us, at the person who died for leaving us, at those who took care of the one who died, at things which did or did not happen in the relationship.
- ♥ Restlessness and a desire to be busy, but difficulty in concentrating or finishing what is started.
- ♥ Aimless activity and forgetfulness.
- ♥ Wondering if you are "going crazy."
- ♥ Searching for or expecting the loved one to walk in the door or call on the phone: hearing his or her voice; seeing his or her face; frequent dreaming about the loved one.
- ♥ A need to tell and retell the details of the death.
- ♥ Crying at unexpected times and experiencing mood changes for minor reasons.
- ♥ A desire to remember and talk about life experiences with the loved one.
- ♥ An awareness that other people are uncomfortable around us and don't know what to say for fear of "upsetting us."
- ♥ A desire "not to be a bother" to other family members, while at the same time, needing to express the feelings of loss.
- ♥ Difficulty enjoying special days, like birthdays, weddings, anniversaries and holidays. Feelings of loss seem acute at these times.

**Author Unknown**  
from Cape Fear, North Carolina  
TCF Chapter Newsletter April 2015

# Support Groups for Grieving Parents & Siblings

## The Compassionate Friends, Quad City Chapter

**Monthly Meeting, Thursday, May 25, 2017, at 6:30 pm at  
Bethany for Children & Families, 1830 6th Avenue, Moline**

Please call Doug Scott (563.370.1041) for information and directions.

**Summer meeting are held on**

**June 22, July 27, and August 24, 2017 at 6:30 pm**

**TCF website: <http://www.quadcitytcf.org>.**

<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 563.260.3626 for directions or information, or contact them at linmac67@machlink.com.
<b>Rick's House of Hope</b>	This is a community resource for children and adolescents dealing with grief. There is no fee for services. Groups meet on Monday and Tuesday nights. The group for 14 year olds and older meets Sunday from 3:00 pm until 5:00 pm. All meetings are held at 5022 Northwest Boulevard, Davenport, Iowa 52806. For more information, call Emily Gordon, Program Director, at 563.324.9580, or egordon@rhoh.org or go to <a href="http://www.rhoh.org">www.rhoh.org</a> .
<b>MJL Foundation Suicide Grief Support (DeWitt)</b>	A peer group for suicide grief support meets on the third Friday of every month, 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm at the Frances Banta Waggner Library, 505 10th Street, DeWitt, Iowa 54742. Contact Betsy Loehr, 563.843.3655 or at <a href="mailto:there.is.hope@hotmail.com">there.is.hope@hotmail.com</a> — <a href="http://www.mjlfoundation.org">http://www.mjlfoundation.org</a> .
<b>MJL Foundation Suicide Grief Support (Fulton)</b>	Survivors of Suicide Support Group meets on the second Monday of each month in Fulton, Illinois, at the Second Reformed Church, 703 - 14th Avenue, Fulton, Illinois 61252, from 7:00 pm-8:30 pm. Contact Laura Wessels, 815.589.3425, or <a href="mailto:laura@secondreformedchurch.net">laura@secondreformedchurch.net</a> .
<b>SHARE</b>	A support group for parents who have lost a child through miscarriage, still-birth, or early infant death. SHARE meets the third Thursday at 6:30 pm in the Adler Room #1 in the lower level of Genesis Heart Institute, 1236 East Rusholme Street, Davenport, Iowa. Questions? Contact Chalyn Fornero-Green at 309.373.2568, or <a href="mailto:chalyn@shareqc.com">chalyn@shareqc.com</a> or <a href="http://www.shareqc.com">www.shareqc.com</a> .
<b>Loving Listeners</b>	<p>If you need someone who understands and will listen, feel free to call or email (if address is given):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♥ Doug Scott 563.370.1041 <a href="mailto:doug.scott@mchsi.com">doug.scott@mchsi.com</a></li> <li>♥ Rosemary Shoemaker 309.945.6738 <a href="mailto:shoearthb3@mchsi.com">shoearthb3@mchsi.com</a></li> <li>♥ Judy Delvecchio 563.349.8895 <a href="mailto:delvecchiojudy@hotmail.com">delvecchiojudy@hotmail.com</a></li> </ul> <p>Doug, Rosemary, and Judy are willing to take calls from bereaved parents, grandparents, or siblings who want to talk to someone who cares that they don't feel alone.</p>

## MOTHER'S DAY AND MIRACLES

You might believe in miracles. I have been a bereaved mother for 38 months this May. This is the fourth Mother's Day that will include a visit to my 20-year-old son's grave. I miss him terribly.

Mother's Day reminds my heart of so much. I have been involved in The Compassionate Friends since soon after his death. I have met literally hundreds of other bereaved parents and am frequently asked by the newly bereaved, "When will I start to feel better?" I always try to answer as honestly as I can. I know that, as unique individuals, we all must deal with grief in whatever way brings the most positive results. I am different from the majority, because in those first months of overwhelming sorrow, I never asked someone further along, "When will I start to feel better?" I truly never felt it was possible to ever really feel any better. Maybe I didn't really want to. I felt that joy and happiness were gone from my life forever. The "candle" that was my son, David, had suddenly been blown out, taking with it my heart and my capacity for joy and happiness.

Everything I believed in was gone. Like "bad things happen only to bad people." And my belief that I had control over my life...Gone! Just like David - like the candle in the wind. I did expect to function again some day, and cope, maybe even smile again (usually at a memory), but true joy - never.

I was partly right. I do not feel exactly as I did before his death or look at the world in quite the same way. I have learned, as portrayed so beautifully in the book, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, that bad things do happen to good people. We truly do not know what tomorrow brings. It could be a miracle...

At a recent TCF meeting, with many newly bereaved in attendance, I took a moment to just look around the room. What I experienced was a miracle.

People surviving tragedies and finding hope and strength.

Sometimes our miracles come when we least expect them. Just when you feel you cannot go on, the unexplainable happens. It might be as simple as the message in a poem or song, a butterfly at just the right moment, a telephone call that lifts you up and lets you know you are not alone - a dream so real that you know your soul has been touched by a powerful and loving force.

You start to feel some hope, and with hope comes healing - and with healing comes, what for me was unexpected, joy and

happiness. When you let these miracles happen, you can almost hear your deceased child whispering in your ear - straight to your heart, *"Any happiness you give and receive is a tribute to me, and a beautiful statement of our unconditional and everlasting love. Happy Mother's Day, Mom ~ Keep believing in miracles."* ♥

**Sherry Hall, TCF, Lakeland/Polk Florida from TCF National Magazine, "Friends, Caring & Sharing"**



## Far Greater than Death

Life will not solve our sorrows, nor will it heal all our wounds, but the love we allow ourselves to feel, to receive, and to give, will be the thing which, after the party is over, after the final song has been sung, we will most remember and have been changed by.

Nothing, not even the death of those we have loved, can separate us from the love we shared with them. For love is far stronger than death, and in the end the greatest gifts of love will be received again and again. For more than we can imagine, we have been changed by those who have loved us, altered in every dimension, so that, at the center of our souls, they now inhabit us and we inhabit them.

from *A Garland of Love*  
Daphne Rose Kingma

## FROM THE ASHES OF GRIEF

In the early morning fog of a spring day the sunlight drifts slowly across the lake lifting the dark shadows of night. The honking geese frolic in the early morning rays of sunshine while the birds sing of promises yet to come. Through the dark clouds of grief slivers of sunlight filter down. The pain and fear residing in my heart is starting to give way to the hope of finding joy once again in my life. The warmth of the sun flows through my body and I now feel and see flickers of that joy. It is but a fleeting moment in my thoughts. But it fills me with the hope of perhaps finding peace once again. The forever tears cleanse my heart and my pain. They pave the way for love and laughter once again in my life. My heart will forever be empty from the loss of my precious child. But the sparkling sunlight spreads light around that hole in my heart. Gentle healing is beginning; springing anew from the ashes of grief.

Lana Golembeski,  
TCF/St. Paul, Minnesota Chapter

### Contact the Editors

**If** you read or write an article or poem which might be helpful to other bereaved parents and would like to share it.

**If** you move and would like to continue receiving the newsletter, send us your new address.

**If** you know someone you think would benefit from receiving the newsletter, send his/her/their name and address.

**If** you prefer to no longer receive the newsletter or if you prefer to receive this newsletter via email.



Please contact:

**Jerry and Carol Webb**  
**Box 71, Cordova, Illinois 61242,**  
**309.654.2727.**  
carolynpwebb@gmail.com

# Reflections Board

 I wish I could say that it gets easier. I wish it GOT easier. The good news is that it does get easier to recognize when it will be difficult. The passage of time, the repetition of holidays and of certain events, having gone through those occasions before lessens the anticipation. I'm also a lot better at letting people know what I need from them, And more importantly, what I don't.

Jordan Ferber, Russell's brother

Courage is not having the strength to go on; it is going on when you don't have the strength. 

Theodore Roosevelt

Be strong enough to stand alone,  smart enough to know when you need help, and brave enough to ask for it.

Mark Amend

We talk about them because we're proud. We talk about them, because they deserve to be remembered. We talk about them, because even though they are not physically with us, they are never far from our mind. We talk about them because we love them still and always will. Forever. Nothing will ever change that. 

Scribbles and Crumbs

## Comparisons

 It is useless to wonder what grief is larger or what grief is smaller.

The death of children fills to ultimate endurance every human dimension for pain.

There is no need to give rank to death. We only have to recognize that grief has filled a whole life to its ultimate boundaries.

 Sascha Wagner

## Safe Passage

 Life will not go on in the same way without him. If it were the same, we could only conclude his life meant nothing, made no contribution. The fact that he left behind a place that cannot be filled is a high tribute to the uniqueness of his soul.

Molly Fumia



**The Compassionate Friends**  
 Quad City Area Chapter  
 Supporting Family After a Child Dies



**1830 6th Avenue**  
**Moline, Illinois 61265**

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**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.***