The Compassionate Friends
Central Indiana Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Central Indiana Chapter Newsletter
November 2026

Compassionate Friends (TCF) is a non-profit, self-help organization that provides comfort, hope, and support for bereaved parents, grandparents, and siblings. We cordially invite you to attend our meetings.

Southside Meeting is the 1st
Wed. of each month @ 6:30 pm
New Hope Church
5307 W. Fairview Road
Greenwood, IN
Facilitator: Angie Groover
angie.groover@tcfcentralindiana.org
(317) 777 4258
Upcoming Meetings:
Nov. 4th & Dec. 2nd

Northside Meeting is the 3rd
Tues. of each month @ 6:30 pm
Epworth United Methodist
6450 Allisonville Road
Indianapolis, IN
Facilitator: Melanie Stewart
melanie.stewart@tcfcentralindiana.org
Upcoming Meetings:
Nov. 17th & Dec 15th

CENTRAL INDIANA TCF CHAPTER

Chapter Leader: April Leo
april.leo@tcfcentralindiana.org
Treasurer: April Leo
april.leo@tcfcentralindiana.org
Webmaster: Larry Gardner
larry.gardner@tcfcentralindiana.org
Secretary: April Leo
april.leo@tcfcentralindiana.org



ANNUAL WORLDWIDE CANDLE LIGHTING

Please join us on Sunday, December 13, 2026, for The Compassionate Friends 30th Annual Candle Lighting Ceremony.

If you have not submitted your loved one's photo for the slideshow presentation, please email it to: tcfindy@sbcglobal.net. The cutoff date for submitting a photo is Sunday, November 29th.

Please include the following information with photo: name, birthdate and angel date. Photos and information should be submitted as soon as possible to allow an ample amount of time to update the slideshow presentation.

If your loved one's photo was in the 2025 Slideshow Presentation you do not need to resubmit a photo unless you want to update the photo used in last year's annual service.



New Hope Church

5307 W. Fairview Road
Greenwood, Indiana 46142

Sunday, December 13th

Time: 5:00 pm – 8:00 pm

Program Leaders:

April Leo, Central Indiana Chapter Leader
Melanie Stewart, Kelli Clarke & Angie Groover Support Group Facilitators
Larry Gardner, Webmaster

Fellowship Hour:

5:00 pm – 6:30 pm
Make an ornament for the holidays in memory of your loved one.
Please bring your favorite finger food for the refreshment pitch-in.
Drinks provided by TCF of Central Indiana.

Candle Lighting Ceremony:

6:30 pm – 7:30 pm
Chapter Leader & Support Group Facilitators
Readings, Slideshow Presentation, Music & Reading of Children's names.

Photos:

Every family is welcome to bring a photo as well to place on the remembrance table.

HOLIDAYS, ONCE OUR FAVORITE TIME OF THE YEAR...

The holiday season is usually a time of joy, but for parents who have lost a child, it can also bring deep sadness and pain. The usual traditions and celebrations can feel overwhelming. While no guide can make the pain go away, there are ways to get through the holidays with kindness to yourself. Here are some helpful ideas for parents during this tough time.

1. Acknowledge Your Grief Holidays can make the loss feel even harder. It's important to allow yourself to grieve. Don't feel pressured to "move on" or "get back to normal." Your grief is personal. It's okay to cry, feel sad, or not want to join in the celebrations. Be kind to yourself and understand that your grief may look different from others.

2. Honor Your Child's Memory Remembering your child during the holidays can help keep the love and bond alive. Some parents choose to create new traditions or continue old ones in memory of their child. Here are some ideas:

- Light a candle for your child during a meal or special moment.
- Create a memory box or an ornament that represents your child.
- Donate in your child's name or take part in a charity event they cared about.
- Write letters to your child, sharing your feelings, and either read them aloud or keep them in a special place.

3. Consider Talking About Your Child If you're comfortable, talking about your child during the holidays can help keep their memory alive. Sharing stories, remembering special moments, or simply saying their name can help you stay connected. It can also help others understand and support you. Talking about your child can be healing for both you and those around you.

4. Reach Out for Support The holidays can feel lonely, especially if others don't fully understand your grief. It's important to seek support when you need it. This could be through support groups for grieving parents,

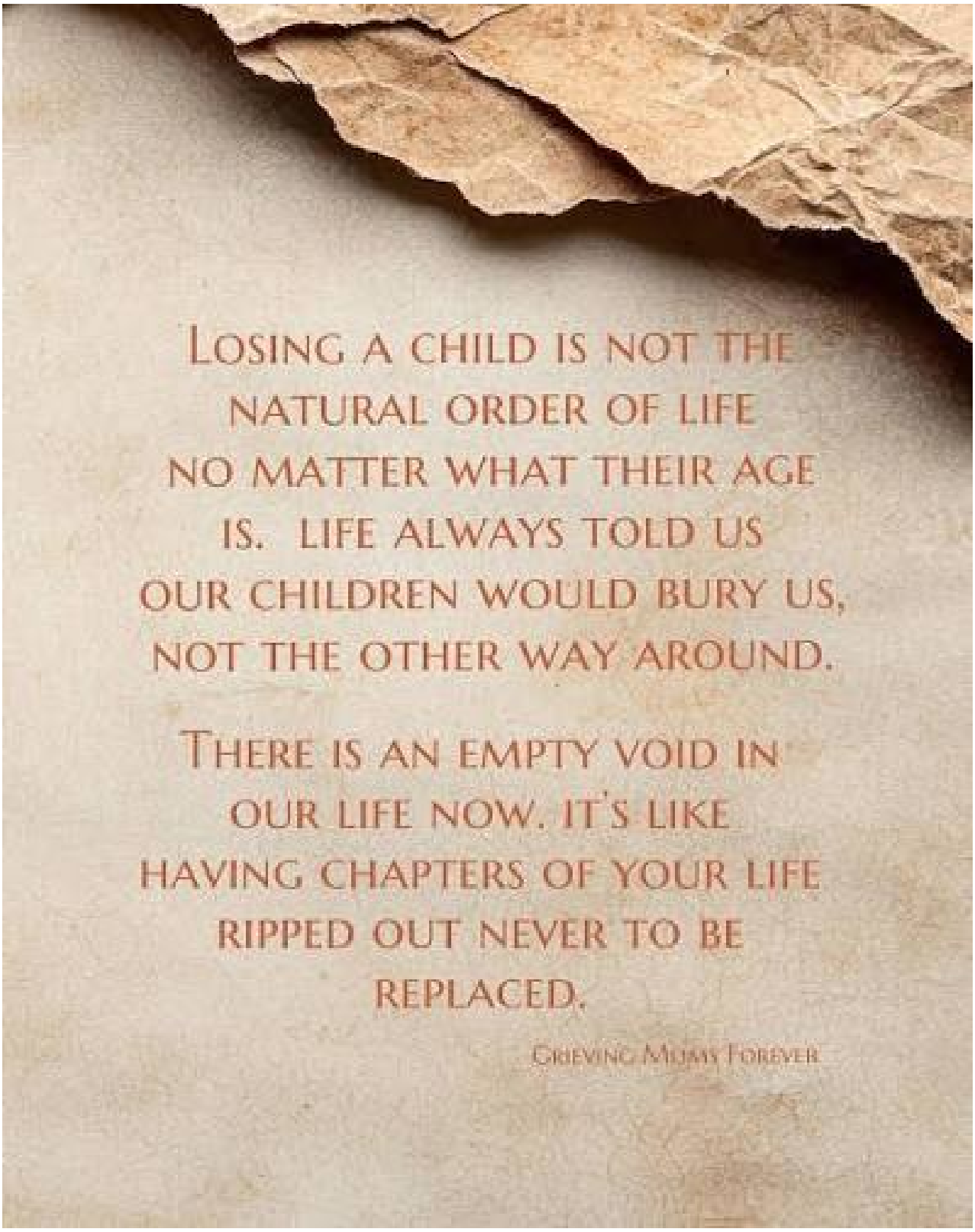
counselors, friends, family, or faith-based groups. Speaking to others who have experienced similar loss can provide comfort and make you feel less alone. You can also contact the psychosocial professional(s) who knew your child or reach out to the MCH Bereavement Program (lechildrensdeuil@muhc.mcgill.ca) for help.

5. Find Meaning in the Season For some parents, holidays can be a time to find new meaning or purpose. You might consider volunteering, connecting with others who are grieving, or finding small ways to practice gratitude. Some parents feel that supporting a cause or helping others in memory of their child gives their child's life more meaning. 6. Don't Let Others Dictate How You Should Feel Grief is different for everyone, and no one knows how you feel better than you do. During the holidays, friends or family may suggest how you should cope with your loss. Remember, there is no "right" or "wrong" way to grieve. Your feelings are valid, and only you can decide what feels best for you. Here are some things to keep in mind when others offer advice:

• Set boundaries gently: If someone tries to tell you how to act or feel, it's okay to say something like, "I appreciate your concern, but I'm working through my grief in my own way."

• Don't accept judgment: Sometimes, others might say things like, "You need to move on" or "You're not handling it well." These comments may come from a place of discomfort, but they are not helpful. Everyone's grief is different, and you don't have to listen to comments that feel judgmental.

• Communicate when you're ready: If you want, let others know that grieving the loss of a child, especially during the holidays, is hard. You don't have to explain everything, but it can help them understand that you are honoring your own grief. There's no single way to grieve, especially during the holidays. By respecting your own feelings, setting boundaries, and not letting others tell you how to grieve, you can make it through this time with more peace. Your journey through grief is yours alone, and only you can decide what's right for you.


LOSING A CHILD IS NOT THE
NATURAL ORDER OF LIFE
NO MATTER WHAT THEIR AGE
IS. LIFE ALWAYS TOLD US
OUR CHILDREN WOULD BURY US,
NOT THE OTHER WAY AROUND.
THERE IS AN EMPTY VOID IN
OUR LIFE NOW. IT'S LIKE
HAVING CHAPTERS OF YOUR LIFE
RIPPED OUT NEVER TO BE
REPLACED.
GRIEVING MOMS FOREVER

Grief reactions: yearning

The early grieving period often is accompanied by a sense of yearning for the child who died. You may feel an overwhelming desire to hold your child in your arms again, to be reunited with him or her. Your inability to fulfill this desire may make you irritable, restless, frustrated and depressed. You may struggle to keep a clear picture in your mind of your child's appearance, smell, voice and mannerisms. You may find it comforting to keep special remembrances of your child, such as a picture, a name bracelet, a blanket, a lock of hair, a special toy or cards from family and friends. Some parents attempt to fill the emptiness they feel by having another child. This decision is best postponed during the immediate period after a child's death to allow parents to mourn their loss. After some time, you can welcome a new baby for himself or herself rather than as a replacement for the child who has died.

Grief reactions: loneliness

You may feel an overwhelming sense of loneliness. Even when you are surrounded by loving and caring family and friends, you may still feel isolated in your grief. Your loneliness may be accompanied by a physical aching sensation. Your heart may literally hurt and feel as if it is breaking. Your arms and legs may feel heavy, and you may lack the strength to stand. You may feel as though you are functioning on a different emotional level than others around you. You may find it difficult to express your grief with words. Many parents describe feelings as if they have lost control of themselves and their emotions. Sometimes they fear they are losing their minds or sinking into a "deep hole."

Grief reactions: anger

You may also feel strong feelings of anger. You may feel angry with your spouse, other family members or your child's physicians and nurses. You may even be angry with your child for leaving you. Seeing other families with children may be painful. You may feel envious of their happiness and togetherness and upset by what feels like their insensitivity to your situation. You may become angry when other parents appear to lack appreciation for treasured moments with their children. Hearing about abandoned or abused children may be especially difficult. All of these feelings are normal. You may also direct anger toward yourself in the form of self-blame or feelings of failure. You may wonder if somehow, you caused your child's death. These feelings may challenge your perception of yourself as a loving, competent and protective parent. You may question your ability to care for surviving or subsequent children. You may feel like less than a whole person. While these are natural feelings following a child's death, it is important to remember your strengths as a parent and everything you did to help your child. Positive memories of your relationship with your child can bring comfort and renewed self-esteem

Grief reactions: sleep

You may find that you are unable to sleep or that you sleep all the time. When you do sleep, you may dream of your child. Initially, your dreams may be unsettling. Over time, however, you may find that your dreams reflect more positive experiences and become more of a source of healing.

Grief reactions: physical ailments

Physical ailments may be aggravated by the inner tension you are feeling. Physical reactions may include difficulty eating or overeating, gastrointestinal disturbances, exhaustion, heart palpitations, nervousness or shortness of breath. Also, bereaved parents commonly experience an inability to focus. If these reactions interfere with your daily responsibilities or are persistent, it is important to seek help from your doctor or counselor.

The “new normal”

One of the challenges of being a grieving parent is developing a “new normal.” Your life will never be the same and you may find yourself categorizing memories into “before and after,” marking time from the loss. Your child will always be a part of your life, but these changes are part of your new existence. You may find it helpful to talk to other bereaved parents who have found new ways to integrate the memories of their children into their lives. You may experience moments when a passing memory or a special date will trigger intense feelings of grief, but over time, you will be able to cope better with these experiences.

Relationships with family and friends

The death of a child affects immediate and extended family members, as well as parents. The ways people express their grief may vary greatly. Spouses may experience the loss differently and work through their grief in different ways. Other children may not fully understand the way a family changes after a death. It may be difficult for you to respond to the grief of others when you are struggling with your own. Family members sometimes find it hard to support and comfort each other. Immediately after the death of your child, family and friends typically gather to offer comfort and support. You may find that there are special people you wish to have near you and with whom you can share some of your feelings. You may want some time alone. It is important to let people know what your specific needs may be. As time goes on, you may find that family and friends are less available. Relatives and friends may be returning to their daily routines when you still need people who will listen and care. The support you felt at the time of your child’s death may seem to disappear. You may sense that people are uncomfortable hearing about your grief and loss. Some people may suggest that you put your grief aside and return to routine activities. You may feel as though you must hide your grief, but you need someone who will listen when you want to talk. You may feel most comfortable talking to a

family member or a close friend, or perhaps to a counselor or a therapist. Many parents find it helpful to talk with other parents who have lost a child.

Parents' grief

The death of your child is unlike any other loss you are likely to experience. Your child's innocence and vulnerability and your perceived inability to protect him or her from death may leave you feeling powerless and helpless. The loss of your child is the loss of a part of you. The grief a parent experiences lasts a lifetime, but the intensity of your feelings will vary over time and eventually happy memories of your child may be a source of comfort to you.

Initial shock

When your child has died, you are likely to experience shock. You may have trouble believing that your child's life has ended and cling to the hope that somehow your child remains alive. Life may seem unreal and you may feel overwhelming numbness or an inability to respond to people and events around you. Conversations may seem distant and hard to recall, as if you are in a "fog." You may be unable to hear details or ask questions regarding your child's death. Because decisions are difficult during periods of profound grief, consider asking relatives or friends to assist you with the burial and funeral arrangements. Family and friends can be tremendously supportive during this time. Their willingness to listen when you need to talk openly and express your grief can be comforting.

Response of family and friends

Family and friends are sometimes unsure about what to say or how to help. You may find that some people avoid you or seem uncomfortable around you, which can make you feel like an "outsider." Some people may be at a loss for words, while others may say things that sound hurtful to you. You might even feel angry with them. How you respond will depend on the circumstances and your level of emotional energy at the time. You may choose to ignore comments or actions that seem hurtful; you also may say, "That is not helpful to me."

Delayed impact

You probably will not experience the full impact of your loss for weeks, months or even a year later. Over time, as the emotional and physical pain of your grief enters your awareness, some of the numbness you felt initially will diminish. That is why the one-year anniversary of your child's death is likely to be a painful milestone. Many parents are filled with intense feelings of sorrow, despair, anger, fear and emptiness. They may replay and question the circumstances of their child's death again, experiencing feelings of guilt and frustration. These reactions are normal.

Grief is personal

The intensity of sorrow and grief that people experience is broad and unique. Each person, even within the same family, grieves in his or her own way, depending on past experiences, cultural patterns, relationship with the child who died, circumstances surrounding the death and current life stressors. There is no right way to grieve other than what feels right to you. Sometimes grief must be placed on the "back burner" when there are logistical concerns. You can always revisit your grief, but you cannot avoid experiencing it. Grief is a natural part of the healing process and will help you cope with your loss. Find comfort in knowing that this period of intense grieving will end. The pain will diminish and you will find ways to live with your grief and loss. Many parents reflect that this will not happen overnight and that you may frequently feel as though you are moving backward in your grief. However, the intensity of your grief will eventually decrease.

Thoughts to remember

Regardless of our age, we all grieve when someone we love dies. Most, if not all, parents say that the death of a child is one of the most devastating experiences of their lives. Grieving is painful but necessary. It is a very personal process, and each person grieves in his or her own way. In time, however, most parents find that their pain lessens, and they learn to have a "different kind of relationship" with the child who died. Their sadness changes from a bitter sadness to a sweet one. They remember their child with a deep love and appreciate the gift of his or her life.



Child's Name	Birthdate	Angel Date
Shauna Synesael	Nov 04	Mar 19
Matt Price	Nov 06	Apr 15
Walter Griffin	Nov 08	Nov 25
Harrison Conner Strader Wood	Nov 08	Apr 05
Tyler Rugg	Nov 09	Jul 24
Brady	Nov 10	Dec 20
Donovan Isaiah Burdine	Nov 13	Jan 25
Christopher Lamberg	Nov 13	Feb 22
Stephanie Michelle Toof	Nov 13	Jul 09
Austin Robinson	Nov 14	Sep 26
Lindsay Marie Johnson	Nov 17	Jun 09
Haven Mills	Nov 17	Nov 17
Bwembya Longwe	Nov 21	Jul 17
Kadentz Mills	Nov 23	Nov 23
Maurice Martinez	Nov 24	Apr 29
Jacob Westman	Nov 26	Oct 28
Zachery Groover	Nov 26	Sep 28
Sarah Kish	Nov 28	Feb 16
Xavier McDonald	Nov 30	Nov 13



Child's Name	Birthdate	Angel Date
Kyle Kania	Sep 10	Nov 01
Andres Ichiro Garcia Hoshiko	Mar 25	Nov 01
Tyler Cundiff	Jan 14	Nov 04
Shelby Wimmenauer	Mar 03	Nov 04
Jackie Quandt	Jun 09	Nov 05
Jessica Humpf	Sep 23	Nov 08
Kelsey Devine	Mar 19	Nov 09
Willie Kalin	Oct 31	Nov 11
Mandy (Russell) Rode	Feb 21	Nov 11
Tyler	Aug 07	Nov 12
Roxanne Young	Jul 07	Nov 12
Xavier McDonald	Nov 30	Nov 13
Kaitlyn Isbell	Apr 05	Nov 14
Ryan W Fry	Aug 14	Nov 15
Joshua Wright	Apr 08	Nov 15
Alex Dunn	Aug 11	Nov 16
Kendall Scout Wood	Sep 25	Nov 16
Haven Mills	Nov 17	Nov 17
Tanner Peckenpaugh	Mar 22	Nov 17
McKayla Myers	Dec 30	Nov 18
Luke Faul	Jun 01	Nov 19
Lora Pfiffner	Oct 10	Nov 21
Kevin Yanavich	Dec 04	Nov 21
David Stewart	Dec 22	Nov 21
Walter Griffin	Nov 08	Nov 25
Ashley Marie May	Jul 18	Nov 26
Linsey Parley	Mar 08	Nov 26
Linsey Parsley	Jun 27	Nov 26
Robert Parsley	Mar 19	Nov 26
Karlee Mason	Mar 14	Nov 28
Paul Gray (P.G.)	Jan 23	Nov 29
Aaron Miller	Mar 15	Nov 29
Corey Roberts	Feb 12	Nov 30

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The Compassionate Friends Credo

We need not walk alone. We are Compassionate Friends. We reach out to each other with love, with understanding and with hope. The children we mourn have died at all ages and from many different causes, but our love for them unites us. Your pain becomes my pain just as your hope becomes my hope. We come together from all walks of life, from many different circumstances. We are a unique family because we represent many races, creeds and relationships. We are young, and we are old. Some of us are far along in our grief, but others still feel grief so fresh and so intensely painful that we feel helpless and see no hope. Some of us have found our faith to be a source of strength, while some of us are struggling to find answers. Some of us are angry, filled with guilt or in deep depression, while others radiate an inner peace. But whatever pain we bring to the gathering of The Compassionate Friends, it is pain we will share, just as we share with each other our love for our children who have died. We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building that future together. We reach out to each other in love to share the pain as well as the joy, share the anger as well as the peace, share the faith as well as the doubts and help each other to grieve as well as to grow.

We Need Not Walk Alone – We Are The Compassionate Friends.

We welcome submissions for the newsletter from any of our members. If you have a poem or some other writing that has helped you, or just some helpful insights of your own, submit them to april.leo@tcfcentralindiana.org. Please be sure to include the author's name, whether it's someone else or yourself.

Love gifts are much appreciated.
You can mail them to our
Treasurer, April Leo
7133 Nostalgia Lane
Indianapolis, IN 46214
(317) 681 4292
april.leo@tcfcentralindiana.org

TCF National Headquarters – P.O. Box 3696,
Oak Brook, IL 60522
(877) 969-0010 (toll free)
Email: nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org
Web Address: www.compassionatefriends.org

Local Website: http://www.tcfcentralindiana.org/