Join with us as we honor the memories of our children!

Our Wake County 2014 TCF Candle Light Memorial Service
Apex United Methodist Church
100 S. Hughes Street
Apex, NC 27502

The Annual Candle Light Memorial Service for TCF will be held Sunday, December 14th. Please try to arrive at the church between **6:30 and 6:45 pm** as we will start our service promptly at 7:00 pm in order to coincide with the worldwide lighting of candles around the globe. Please bring a self-standing framed picture of your child, your votive candle holder and a goodie to share. New members will receive a votive candle holder. Candles will be provided for everyone. It has been our tradition that families bring a small dish of their beloved child’s favorite finger food or dessert for a little fellowship following the memorial service. We hope you and your family can join us in this remembrance of our beloved children! **Everyone who has participated in our service at Apex United Methodist Church the last five years thought this service to be beautiful, meaningful and uplifting!**

For more information about location, please see back of this page.
Directions:

Address:    100 South Hughes Street, Apex, NC 27502
Web Address:  http://www.apexumc.org

Service:   Discipleship Center Room 400 (second floor - enter at the south end; see campus map).
Gathering:   In Discipleship Center Room 400. Please stop by here to drop off your dishes!

From Raleigh (Points East and Northeast):
US 440 Beltline (North Raleigh takes outer beltline, South Raleigh takes inner beltline) to exit 293, merge onto US 1 South / US 64 West toward Sanford. Go 6.1 miles. Take Exit 96, Route 1010. Turn left at the light. This becomes Center Street in Apex. Go 1.4 miles. Turn left at North Hughes Street. Apex United Methodist Church will be on your right. Go past the Church on the corner and turn right at the first entrance to the parking area.

From Durham / Chapel Hill (Points North and Northwest):
I-40 East to exit 293, merge onto US 1 South / US 64 West toward Sanford. Go 6.1 miles. Take Exit 96, Route 1010. Turn left at the light. This becomes Center Street in Apex. Go 1.4 miles. Turn left at North Hughes Street. Apex United Methodist Church will be on your right. Go past the Church on the corner and turn right at the first entrance to the parking area.

From Morrisville:
Davis Drive South to Apex, NC. In downtown Apex, turn left at Chatham Street (light, Anna's Pizzeria on the left corner). Just after the tracks turn right on Elm Street. Turn immediately left onto the church property and park.

From Cary (center):
South on Kildaire Farm Road. Turn right onto Tryon Road. Take the US 1 South Exit. Take Exit 96, Route 1010. Turn left at the light. This becomes Center Street in Apex. Go 1.4 miles. Turn left at North Hughes Street. Apex United Methodist Church will be on your right. Go past the Church on the corner and turn right at the first entrance to the parking area.

From West Cary:
Take NC 55 East to Apex, NC. Turn right onto Hughes Street. Scott's Grocery Store is to your right. Church will be on the left. Turn left into the parking area (before the church buildings on left).

From Holly Springs / Fuquay Varina (Points South):
Take NC 55 West to Apex, NC. Turn right onto Hughes Street. Scott's Grocery Store is to your right. Church will be on the left. Turn left into the parking area (before the church buildings on left).

From Garner:
Take US 401 North to I-40 West. I-40 West to exit 293, merge onto US 1 South / US 64 West toward Sanford. Go 6.1 miles. Take Exit 96, Route 1010. Turn left at the light. This becomes Center Street in Apex. Go 1.4 miles. Turn left at North Hughes Street. Apex United Methodist Church will be on your right. Go past the Church on the corner and turn right at the first entrance to the parking area.

From Clayton (Points Southeast):
Take US 70 West to I-40 West. I-40 West to exit 293, merge onto US 1 South / US 64 West toward Sanford. Go 6.1 miles. Take Exit 96, Route 1010. Turn left at the light. This becomes Center Street in Apex. Go 1.4 miles. Turn left at North Hughes Street. Apex United Methodist Church will be on your right. Go past the Church on the corner and turn right at the first entrance to the parking area.

From Pittsboro (Points West):
Take US 64 East to NC 55. Turn right and take NC 55 East to Hughes Street. Turn left on Hughes Street. Scott's Grocery is on your left. Church will be on the left. Turn left into the parking area (before the church buildings on left).

From Sanford, NC (Points Southwest):
Take US 1 North to NC 55. Take NC 55 West to Hughes Street. Turn right onto Hughes Street. Scott's Grocery Store is to your right. Church will be on the left. Turn into the parking area (before the church buildings on left).
If you are receiving this newsletter for the first time, it is because someone has told us it might be helpful for you. We hope it is. We also invite you to our monthly meetings at Hayes Barton Baptist Church. At these meetings you may talk or choose not to say a word. There are no fees or dues. We are sorry you have had to experience the death of a child (or children) but we are here for you. We, too, are on this journey of grief and extend our hearts and arms to you.

If this is your first Newsletter

If you are receiving this newsletter for the first time, it is because someone has told us it might be helpful for you. We hope it is. We also invite you to our monthly meetings at Hayes Barton Baptist Church. At these meetings you may talk or choose not to say a word. There are no fees or dues. We are sorry you have had to experience the death of a child (or children) but we are here for you. We, too, are on this journey of grief and extend our hearts and arms to you.

Attention: December Meetings — Our TCF meeting room has been changed. We now meet in Room 224. Go left past Information Desk and at end of the long hallway turn right. Then halfway down this hallway take elevator on the right to 2nd floor. Meeting room is across from the elevator.

The Wake County Chapter meets every second and fourth Tuesday of the month at Hayes Barton Baptist Church, 1800 Glenwood Avenue, at the corner of Glenwood Avenue and Whitaker Mill Road at Five Points in Raleigh. Enter from Whitaker Mill Road into Main Entrance of the Family Life Center which is attached to and behind the church. Ask directions to TCF meeting room at desk just inside the entrance door.

Tuesday, December 9th — The meeting will start at 7:30 pm.

Tuesday, December 23rd — NO MEETING TONIGHT. It has been canceled.

Speaking from the Heart

Tonight I hold this candle ... In memory of you ... Hoping some way somehow ... My love will shine through ... I close my eyes ... Lost in the glow ... There are so many things ... I want you to know ... This candle says I love you ... This candle says I miss you ... This candle is saying ... That I remember you ... When I'm holding it toward heaven ... It feels like you are near ... If you're looking down tonight and see this candle burning bright ... It says I'm wishing you were here.

I wrote the words to this song in Atlanta Georgia in July of 2003 after attending the candle lighting service at our TCF National Conference. As the darkness of the hotel ballroom was lit by the glow of more than a thousand candles held by parents, grandparents and siblings grieving the death of a precious child in their life, I was overcome with emotion. I wanted to capture the feeling we get when we hold that most pure of light in honor of someone we love who has died.

It has truly been my honor to share this song with the world, but this song does not belong to me, it belongs to all of those who walk this journey with me.

On Sunday, December 14th, at 7 PM in your time zone, I invite you to participate with me and thousands of others from around the world in the 18th annual Worldwide Candle Lighting in honor of all of the children who have died too soon. The WCL is the largest mass candle lighting in the world and creates a virtual wave of light around the globe. Whether you choose to attend one of the hundreds of formal services being held, or simply light a candle in the privacy of your own home, my hope is that you will find hope and healing in the remembering of your child, grandchild or sibling.

I want to thank all of the volunteers who work so hard to make our WCL so special. Your efforts are what make this event so healing and helpful. For more information about how you can volunteer or participate in our 18th Annual Worldwide Candle Lighting please visit our website.

Blessings,
Alan Pedersen
alan@compassionatefriends.org — 916-367-7865
I N   M E M O R Y
DECEMBER LOVE GIFTS
Gifts Given In Loving Memory Of Children

John and Rita Edmond
In memory of our beautiful boy
Kevin Adam Edmond

Please send Love Gifts and pictures to:
Love Gifts – Wake County Chapter, The Compassionate Friends, P. O. Box 6602, Raleigh, NC 27628-6602

TCF Worldwide Candle Lighting:
The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting, Sunday, December 14, 2014, unites family and friends around the globe in lighting candles for one hour to honor the memories of the sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, and grandchildren who left too soon. 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 18th 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. TCF’s Worldwide Candle Lighting started in the United States in 1997 as a small internet observance, but has since swollen in numbers as word has spread throughout the world of the remembrance. Hundreds of formal candle lighting events are held and thousands of informal candle lightings are conducted in homes as families gather in quiet remembrance of children who have died, but will never be forgotten.

http://www.compassionatefriends.org/News_Events/Special-Events_Worldwide_Candle_Lighting.aspx

Handling the Holidays Webinar:
Holidays and other celebrated times of the year can be very painful for those who are grieving. We are here to help! We invite you to join Alan Pedersen, Executive Director of The Compassionate Friends, Dr. Gloria Horsley and Dr. Heidi Horsley of the Open to Hope Foundation, for a very special webinar, "Handling the Holidays after Loss." This one-hour presentation is filled with helpful information and practical tools which can help you navigate this difficult season. "Handling the Holidays after Loss" can be viewed at your convenience by going to the following link:

Handling the Holidays after Loss

To Start a New Year
If I can concentrate on the moral and spiritual side of the holidays
I can make it through.
If I can absorb the love and warmth that was the beginning
I can give love back.
If I can share the grief and love that is in me through these holidays
I can start a new year.

Tom Spray
TCF Ventura, CA

A Christmas Wish
I’ll miss you at Christmas when laughter’s everywhere,
When church bells chime in merry rhyme and frost is in the air.
I’ll think of you at Christmas of when you were with me,
of simple joys and silly toys and days that used to be.
I’ll miss you at Christmas when children’s faces glow,
and gaze in childish wondertime at Santa and presents in a row.

I wish a Christmas miracle could bring you back this way,
and we could be together for one more Christmas day.

Lily deLauder

Remember
Light a quiet candle
Send a quiet kiss
Say a quiet fare-thee-well
To the one you miss
Light a quiet candle
Shed a quiet tear
Sing a quiet lullaby . . .
And the quiet Christmas Star will hear.

Sascha Wagner
TCF Des Moines
TO YOU AT CHRISTMAS

If I could do whate’er I want to do
To make complete your gladsome Christmas-Day,
I would not bring a single thing to you
But I would come and take some things away.
I’d take away all trouble from your heart.
Each pain and sorrow I would have relieved
And every word that caused a single smart
And every hour through which you sadly grieved.
I’d have them all be gone — forever gone
Forgotten like the things that cannot be
And then each hour would be a joyful one
For only good things would be left, you see.
Now that is what I’d really like to do,
If I could do the things I wish for you.

~ Author Unknown ~

CANDLES IN DECEMBER

My sadness seems reflected in the music that I hear.
Every young one’s glowing face reminds me you’re not here.
Shoppers crowd the festive stores, emotion’s running high.
I was a part of this world once, before that sad July.

This season’s meant for happy times, for love, warm hearts, and cheer,
But grieving families ’round the world remember those not here.
We struggle through the season, lighting candles to proclaim
Our loved ones aren’t forgotten, ’round the world our candles flame.

I slowly pass through gates thrown wide one clear, cold Christmas day
No toys or playthings do I bring, those gifts of yesterday.
I carry with me just a polished heart of granite made
And walk with grief to where she lies in a silent, silvered glade.

"Merry Christmas, Love," I whisper - the quiet words sound so forlorn.
"I’ve brought my heart for you to keep, my gift this Christmas morn.
It comes complete with all my love, though this one’s carved of stone.
I’ll place it here - It will be near - You’ll never be alone."

We parents don’t forget, my Love; this month we will unite.
To honor all we’ll light a wall of candles through the night.
The world will know our memories glow with love that’s deep and true.
We’ll stand as one, and ’fore it’s done the Heavens will know, too.

Please keep my gift, beloved child, close to where you lie,
And know my love surrounds you ‘til the day I too shall die.
On the fifteenth of December my candle’s flame will light.
I pray you’ll see the love we’ll free into the starry night.

Sally Migliaccia - TCF, Baby/an NY

ONE LITTLE CANDLE

I lit a candle tonight,
in honor of you
Remembering your life,
and all the times we’d been through.

Such a small little light
the candle made
until I realized how much
in darkness it lit the way.

All the tears I’ve cried
in all my grief and pain
what a garden they grew,
watered in human rain.

I sometimes can’t see beyond the moment,
in hopeless despair
But then your memory sustains me,
in heartaches repair.

I can wait for the tomorrow,
when my sorrows ease
Until then, I’ll light this candle,
and let my memories run free.

Sheila Simmons, TCF Atlanta

The Holidays

With the changing of the seasons
The holidays come once more;
Busy shoppers, joyous laughter,
Pretty wreaths hung on the door

Though I pause in the twilight hour
And hear the children play,
My joy is forever silenced
By that dreadful day in May.

My love of the holiday season
Now lives in another time,
Memories of past Christmases
When all in my life was fine.

The tree lights no longer sparkle,
My heart is cold inside,
My holiday joy ended
The day my only child died.

I stand outside now looking in
To a world I no longer know.
My tears flow like a river
And melt the falling snow.

I turn now to the meaning
Of what Christmas really is,
My pain softened by believing
In spirit, he will always live

by Vicki Tushingham, Los Angeles

with Vicki Tushingham, Los Angeles

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TO YOU AT CHRISTMAS

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To make complete your gladsome Christmas-Day,
I would not bring a single thing to you
But I would come and take some things away.
I’d take away all trouble from your heart.
Each pain and sorrow I would have relieved
And every word that caused a single smart
And every hour through which you sadly grieved.
I’d have them all be gone — forever gone
Forgotten like the things that cannot be
And then each hour would be a joyful one
For only good things would be left, you see.
Now that is what I’d really like to do,
If I could do the things I wish for you.

~ Author Unknown ~


**All the Dread and Fear Was For Nothing**

We begin dreading “the holidays” shortly after our child dies. A birthday or anniversary coming up soon scares us, but not like the anticipation of Thanksgiving, Christmas, or Chanukah does.

We expend mountains of energy dreading and fearing these special times. We either “awfulize” about how we’re going to feel—painting dreadful mental pictures of searing, unbearable pain, hysterical reactions, or just plain fainting away.

Or, we absolutely refuse to allow our minds to even touch on thoughts of the days. Either way, the dread and fear can overwhelm us.

Let me make some suggestions. First, know that it is perfectly normal to be afraid of what we think might happen. Our reaction to the death of our child is so unlike anything we ever expected, that we are sure that the holidays are going to be even worse.

Let me assure you. Just as your grief reactions are normal, so is your fear.

Secondly, remember that by the time “the day” arrives, you have completed most of the hard work of the holidays. It’s in the doing of holiday tasks that the pain lies, so, by the time the day arrives, the real work is over.

Thirdly, know that the day is only twenty-four hours long. You’ll get through it like you get through any other day—some harder, some easier.

Lastly, take charge of your fear. Tell yourself that it’s okay to have any emotion you want about the holidays. Make concrete plans for your behavior. Give yourself permission to cry or scream or yes, even faint if you feel like it. Make contingent plans that you can put into practice if you actually become distraught.

But I’ll just bet you won’t.

I’ll never forget the first Christmas after my granddaughter, Emily, died. I expected the worst and prepared for it. I was going to lean into the pain. I set out a new box of Kleenex for the crying. I told my son and his family that I didn’t know what time I’d be at their house to open presents, or if I would even show up.

I arranged with a bereaved friend that we would call the other if the pain got too great. You know what happened?

Nothing! I didn’t feel the need to cry. I went to my son’s house in the early afternoon.

And I didn’t call my bereaved friend. All the dread and fear was for nothing. The work of preparing for the day was already over.

“‘The day’ was simply a day like any other in my grief. And I had taken control of the day by preparing for whatever my behavior turned out to be.

Many holidays have passed since my son and my granddaughter died. Some have been easy to go through and some haven’t. But I’ve found that I got through them a lot easier than I expected. So will you.

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**Tips for Handling the Holidays**

**DECIDE WHAT YOU CAN HANDLE COMFORTABLY AND LET FAMILY AND FRIENDS KNOW.** Can I handle the responsibility of the family dinner, etc., or shall I ask someone else to do it? Do I want to talk about my loved one or not? Shall I stay here for the holiday or go to a completely different environment?

- **MAKE SOME CHANGES IF THEY FEEL COMFORTABLE FOR YOU.** Open presents Christmas Eve instead of Christmas morning. Vary the timing of Chanukah gift giving. Have dinner at a different time or place. Let the children take over decorating the house, the tree, baking and food preparation, etc.

- **RE-EXAMINE YOUR PRIORITIES: GREETING CARDS, HOLIDAY BAKING, DECORATING, PUTTING UP A TREE, FAMILY DINNER, ETC.** Do I really enjoy doing this? Is this a task that can be shared?

- **CONSIDER DOING SOMETHING SPECIAL FOR SOMEONE ELSE.** Donate a gift in the memory of your loved one. Donate money you would have spent on your loved one as a gift to charity. Adopt a needy family for the holidays. Invite a guest (foreign student, senior citizen) to share festivities.

- **RECOGNIZE YOUR LOVED ONE’S PRESENCE IN THE FAMILY.** Burn a special candle to quietly include your loved one. Hang a stocking for your loved one in which people can put notes with their thoughts or feelings. Listen to music especially liked by the deceased. Look at photographs.

- **IF YOU DECIDE TO DO HOLIDAY SHOPPING, MAKE A LIST AHEAD OF TIME AND KEEP IT HANDY FOR A GOOD DAY, OR SHOP THROUGH A CATALOGUE.**

- **OBSERVE THE HOLIDAYS IN WAYS WHICH ARE COMFORTABLE FOR YOU.** There is no right or wrong way of handling holidays. Once you’ve decided how to observe the time, let others know.

- **TRY TO GET ENOUGH REST — HOLIDAYS CAN BE EMOTIONALLY AND PHYSICALLY DRAINING.**

- **ALLOW YOURSELF TO EXPRESS YOUR FEELINGS.** Holidays often magnify feelings of loss. It is natural to feel sadness. Share concerns, apprehensions, feelings with a friend. The need for support is often greater during holidays.

- **KEEP IN MIND THAT THE EXPERIENCE OF MANY BEREAVED PERSONS IS THAT THEY DO COME TO ENJOY HOLIDAYS AGAIN.** There will be other holiday seasons to celebrate.

- **DON’T BE AFRAID TO HAVE FUN.** Laughter and joy are not disrespectful. Give yourself and your family members permission to celebrate and take pleasure in the holidays.

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Margaret Gerner MSW MO
Shining a Light
by Cathy Seehuetter

As the major holidays approached in late autumn of 1995, I was filled with anxiety and deep sadness. In May of that year, my 15-year-old vivacious and beautiful daughter Nina was senselessly and tragically killed by an alcohol-impaired driver. With a shattered heart, I agonized and wondered how we would ever get through the holidays. Who would bake the traditional Spritz cookies with me or help set up the Christmas village she loved since she was a toddler? Who would shop with me until we dropped looking for just the right gifts for friends and family? The thought of it was incomprehensible and unbearable.

I realized early on in my grief that I would need support from others whose lives had also been irrevocably altered by the devastating death of their child, grandchild, or sibling. In December of 1995, I attended a candle lighting remembrance program at the St. Paul, Minnesota, chapter of The Compassionate Friends. There were approximately 50 people in attendance that evening. We sat together as poems were read and music was played. Through my tears, I barely remember that first candle lighting, however, I recall it to be an intensely moving experience as together we shared in the memory of our beautiful children who would be missing from the holidays forever.

In 1997, the national organization of TCF USA created the first Worldwide Candle Lighting to be held on the second Sunday of each December. TCF successfully lobbied the US Senate in 1998 to make this a national day of remembrance. President Bill Clinton signed a formal proclamation encouraging Americans to participate in the Worldwide Candle Lighting in remembrance of children who have died, and "to bring comfort to their families.”

What began as a small internet observance, TCF Worldwide Candle Lighting (WCL) is believed to be the largest mass candle lighting in the world. Hundreds of formal candle lightings are held by Compassionate Friends Chapters in the United States, and thousands more are held in the U.S. and around the world by allied organizations, churches, funeral homes, community centers and in private homes. Candles are lit at 7 PM in each time zone, as they burn down in one time zone they are lit in the next, creating a virtual wave of light for 24 hours around the globe honoring the memory of all children who have died.

TCF of Ventura County, California, has one of the most highly attended WCL programs in the U.S. In the past 10 years, attendance has grown from 250 to 800 people. Meticulous planning of their program begins months in advance and includes strong support from local newspaper and television coverage. Ventura County Chapter leader Janice Anderson says "great care is given to each detail to create a WCL program that is a beautiful, emotional and sacred evening for all who attend." Anderson, added, "We provide a safe haven for comfort to let all know that our children's light will always shine.”

The Ventura program begins with a bagpiper playing and music is also provided by a singer and pianist. When their candles are all lit, their custom is to play Alan Pedersen's song, "Tonight I Hold This Candle" or Paul Alexander's "Light A Candle." Anderson says when their program is over attendees "walk away with peace in their hearts.

Kelly Pelster has been involved in the planning of The Compassionate Friends WCL in Omaha, Nebraska, for many years. Pelster says "after we moved our program from a church to a hotel a few years ago, the attendance grew from 120 to 600 people. The Omaha WCL, like most programs, includes a slide show presentation featuring photos provided by the families of their children, siblings and grandchildren.

Pelster remembers one grandfather in particular who sent a photo of his daughter's entire family for the slide show, "I couldn't imagine how he even had the strength to get it into the envelope and mail it." The Omaha WCL also includes a "mixer"—a pause in the program to reach out to someone and say hello and share something about their child together. "Oftentimes people come to the candle lighting every year who have never attended a meeting. The mixer helps these people not feel so alone," Pelster said.

Most WCL programs welcome extended family members and friends to attend. This gives an opportunity for families to share this time together to focus on the child who died separate from their family holiday gatherings.

Tanya Lord, who serves as TCF Regional Coordinator for New Hampshire, Vermont and Maine, attends the Manchester/Nashua Compassionate Friends Chapter's WCL each year with her husband Glen. She says "the WCL is a special time we get to spend together remembering our son Noah. By taking that time to remember and honor him, we are able to face the rest of the season with a lighter heart, especially all these years later.”

Worldwide Candle Lighting events are held all over the world. Los Amigos Compasivos in San Juan, Puerto Rico, welcomes more than 500 attendees at their event each year. Nivia Vazquez, co-leader of the Los Amigos Compasivos chapter, says "our program continues to grow because families who attend for the first time look forward to it each year and never want to miss it." Vazquez adds, "what makes
Why is Christmas the hardest holiday? Is it because of all those traditions that mean so much but NOW lie broken and empty in my heart? Is it especially hard NOW ... because every time I try to roll out the cookie dough, tears drop into little salt pools on the counter? Is Christmas so hard NOW because of all the tinsel and tissue? Because of all the crowds dashing madly into and out of stores, buying something wonderful for someone wonderful? Is Christmas hard NOW because I don't need to shop or bake or decorate anymore? Is Christmas so hard because I don't have someone wonderful anymore?

It's been a long time since I endured my first bereaved holiday season. But even NOW, my heart sometimes still echoes with emptiness as I roll out the cookie dough or hang his special ornament on our treasure tree. I think that hurt will always be with me, but now I know it only as a momentary ache—not like the first year when grief washed over me in waves, each new wave hurling me deeper and deeper into despair.

And it's not like the second year's hurt when I found myself both surprised and angry that IT hadn't gone away YET. I grew anxious about my sanity in the third year when my hands shook as I unwrapped the precious ornaments. When was I going to get better?! When was the grief going to end?!! Was I doomed to suffer miserably at every holiday for the rest of my life?!!

The year the little satin balls wouldn't stay on the tree, I gave up. Even the Christmas tree died! As my daughter and I dragged the brittle (and shedding) mess out into the snow drift on Christmas morning, I knew we had reached the bottom. He had died, but WE were alive. Had our grief so permeated our house, our lives, that even a Christmas tree could not survive? His death was more than enough ... had we lost love too?

That was the year we began to understand. And that was the year we decided to keep Christmas anyway. So what if our now completely bare tree was stuck in the snowdrift, already waiting for the garbage men? So what if the cookies were still a bit too salty with tears?

So, in the middle of that Christmas day, we returned to that forlorn, frozen stick of a tree. Carefully, we hung the bare branches with popcorn strings and suetballs (not quite the same as satin!). I'm sure we were a strange sight that afternoon, but with a mixture of tears and snowflakes, we began to let the hurt out and make room for the healing to begin.

With each kernel strung, we found ourselves remembering. Some memories came with pain. Others began to grow within us—warming heartplaces we thought had frozen long ago. By the time we were finished, we were exhausted. Memories take a lot of work! At last WE had a tree, although it was not the one we were expecting. But we had one, decorated with tears and memories, sadness and remembered laughter.

And now we've grown older (and maybe a little wiser) and we've learned that love isn't something that you toss out, bury, pack away or forget. Love isn't something that ends with death. Life can become good and whole and complete once again ... not when we try to fill up the empty spaces left by loved ones no longer within a hug's reach, but when we realize that love creates new spaces in the heart and expands the spirit.
To Bereaved Grandparents Concerning The Holidays

Know that your grief over the loss of your grandchild is legitimate. You have the need and right to grieve.

Learn about the grief process, not only so you will know that what you are experiencing is normal, but it will help you know that your grieving child is not "going crazy."

Find someone with whom you can share your thoughts and feelings about your grandchild’s death.

Know that the holidays will be difficult for you as well as your grieving child. Don’t expect too much of yourself this year.

Your grieving child will be especially needing of you this year. Find ways to include memories and/or memorabilia of the dead child in your family holiday ritual. You may even want to change some of your traditional holiday plans this year.

Know that your children who have not lost a child may be uncomfortable with whatever you do, but explain to them how necessary it is for your grieving child.

Know that however you plan this year’s holiday arrangements it will not be as it has been in the past. The holidays will never be the same because your grandchild will never be there again. Know too that it does get easier as the years go by.

Take this opportunity to cement a very special relationship with your grieving child by being sensitive to their needs during the holiday season. Margaret Gerner, M.S.W. Bereaved parent & bereaved grandparent

What is the best Christmas gift for a person who is grieving? Fortunately, the most thoughtful present is inexpensive, fits all sizes, and is sure to be appreciated. It is the gift of peace—actions and words that help will bring a peaceful feeling to a mourner’s heart.

Wayne Rydberg, an expert grief counselor on the Human Resources staff of Aid Association for Lutherans (AAL), says friends or relatives can provide special comfort during the holidays if they know what to do.

"The message of Christmas is peace on earth, goodwill toward men. You can help restore peace in a mourner simply by showing that you care," says Rydberg.

Here are specific things to say or do during the holidays to help someone who is hurting:

— Help with daily tasks. Don’t just say, "Call me if I can do something." Go to the mourner’s home and help with the housekeeping, grocery shopping, running errands, or transporting children. (An important tip: when house-cleaning, stick to the public rooms such as the living room, kitchen, and family room. Avoid private rooms associated with the departed, such as a master bedroom, home office, or child’s room. A new mourner may feel upset by your bustling around and cleaning in that area.)

— Don’t force holiday festivity. Don’t insist on decorating the mourner’s house or putting up a Christmas tree. You may only make the person painfully aware of the contrast between the cheerful trappings and their deep sorrow. Invite the person to come to your home or go to a holiday activity, but if the mourner refuses, don’t insist. A grieving person needs quiet time to reminisce, mourn, and plan how they will live in the future.

— Phone and listen. Call the mourner and let the person talk. Don’t try to switch the subject away from the death or their grief. Don’t tell the mourner to get over it, to think about something else, or to get involved with activities or new relationships to help forget the death. Mourning is a process of adapting to the loss. Talking openly helps.

Also, different people take different lengths of time to complete the adaptation process. Some accomplish it in a brief time; others take years. There is no "right" or "normal" length of time to grieve. And, even when a person has adapted, the holidays may cause the pain to come back because the loved one is no longer present to share in the celebration. Be willing to listen again.

— Let the mourner cry. Offer your shoulder or your ear, and let the grieving person cry as long as the mourner needs to. The person will feel accepted, understood, and safe.

— If the grieving person is progressing, give support, not advice. As a mourner starts to move out of despair and begins to redefine daily life and the future, avoid saying, "You should..." or "You shouldn’t..." "Let the person find his or her own answers to the questions:

"What do I want in my life right now?"
"Who do I want in my life right now?"
"What do I want of myself in this moment?"
"What do I want to become?"
Show support for the person’s decisions, or at least their right to make their own decisions.

— Create a special holiday card. Start with such words as, "I offer you peace. Peace is found in the presence of people who care. I care. May you find peace in my words." Then express appreciation for your loved one’s unique talents and gifts. Tell them from your heart how much you care about them. Express confidence that—in their own time, in their own way—they will adapt to their loss and will continue to lead a meaningful life. If appropriate for the person, remind them of spiritual teachings that would be helpful to them. Promise to be there for them. End with a wish for peace in this holiday season and in their future.

Written by a contributing writer for the Winter 1997 edition of “Year Round Christmas”
THE HOLIDAY SEASON:

Getting through the holidays can be a difficult task for bereaved parents. We as bereaved parents need to handle the holidays in a way that we feel is best for ourselves and our families. There are many things that bereaved parents can do to help ease the pain of the holiday season.

Below are some suggestions that we thought may be helpful for you:

1. PLAN TO BE WITH PEOPLE YOU ENJOY.
2. VISIT THE CEMETERY and take a Christmas tree to the grave. Decorate it with popcorn or food for the birds.
3. DO SOMETHING FOR SOMEONE ELSE. Give a gift or make a donation in memory of your child. This can help to keep their memory alive.
4. INCLUDE YOUR CHILD IN CONVERSATIONS — once others realize that you are comfortable talking about your child, they can relate stories that will add to your memories of him or her.
5. DON’T BE AFRAID TO MAKE CHANGES. It really can make things less painful. Change the time you open packages, or when the holiday meal is served.
6. KEEP IN MIND THE FEELINGS OF OTHER CHILDREN AND FAMILY MEMBERS. Let your needs be known to others and try to understand their needs as well.
7. MOST IMPORTANT, it is pointless to pretend that everything is the same as it was. As you accept your loss, give yourself the necessary time for grieving during the holidays.
8. TAKE ONE DAY AT A TIME. Be realistic, and realize that we all need to set limits to do those things which are meaningful to ourselves and our families.

Cape Cod Chapter TCF

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Tonight I hold this candle... In memory of you...
Hoping some way somehow... My love will shine through...
~ Alan Pedersen ~
Candle Light Memorial Service
December 14th, at 6:30 PM.
Apex United Methodist Church

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