



**The  
Compassionate  
Friends**  
Sioux Falls Chapter  
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

September 2014

Upcoming meeting: September 2, 2014

Meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month at 7:15 with the exception of December.

Westminster Presbyterian Church  
3801 E. 26th Street  
Sioux Falls, SD

*There is no religious affiliation.*

[www.compassionatefriendsofsiouxfalls.org](http://www.compassionatefriendsofsiouxfalls.org)

**The Compassionate Friends** is a support group for those who have experienced the death of a child at any age, for any reason.



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*If you are no longer interested in receiving this newsletter,  
please contact us at:  
[rstoecker53@gmail.com](mailto:rstoecker53@gmail.com)*

The Compassionate Friends  
Sioux Falls SD Area Chapter  
2804 South Kingswood Way  
Sioux Falls, SD 57106

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# Q. & A.



Dr. Watson-Miller

Dr. Watson-Miller is a Clinical Psychologist who lost her own son while in Graduate School in 1997. She graduated from the University of South Dakota in 2002 and has worked in both the private and public sectors. She is on the faculty of USD Sanford School of Medicine where she teaches psychodynamic psychotherapy and provides supervision to psychiatry residents as they learn therapeutic techniques. She works from her own private practice on evenings and weekends.

Dr. Watson-Miller lost her son in a tragic automobile accident in 1997. The memories of her son standing in the bleachers as she graduated with a Bachelor's of Science in Criminal Justice and Psychology in 1995 compelled her to honor his memory by completing her education and allowing him to live through her. In her journey through grief, she has gained unique insights into not just coping, but thriving through adversity. She was gifted through her life experience by the support of her graduate program, her faith, and encouragement from others. She states, "Without adversity, we do not know how strong we really are. We have an obligation to share the gifts we have been given with others—to help them learn how to honor others through self-care and, by extension, others."

If you would like Dr. Watson-Miller to respond to your questions through this format, please email them to [tcfsiouxfalls@yahoo.com](mailto:tcfsiouxfalls@yahoo.com). The questions will be forwarded to Dr. Watson-Miller without identifying information and will be used in future columns.

**QUESTION:** I feel my loved one's presence, I know I do; but my family says that isn't possible.

**ANSWER:** It is always important to remember that the loss of a child is dependent on the relationship each person had with that child. This was your loss and, although others may not understand your experience, it is real to you.

There are many unexplained phenomena in the human experience, so the following thoughts are based less on research than previous columns. While there has been much work done on the Psychology of Spirituality, there are still many questions, many believers, and many skeptics who want hard evidence.

What is valid is your own experience with loss of loved ones: I would guess that you are a spiritual person (different from religious), and that this may be a dominant part of how you live your life. People who are by nature intuitive, tend to be more aware of the nuances in the environment than someone who is more "rational." This would also be true when comparing believers and non-believers.

What is most important, however, is how this affects you. If you are comfortable with sensing your loved one's presence, and it is not interfering with your daily functioning, then embrace it and honor their legacy to you as you would any gift. If their presence is not so comforting, talk about it with the folks at Compassionate Friends, or a mental health professional.

**DISCLAIMER:** The responses published in the newsletter in no way suggest that there is a therapeutic relationship between the individual who submitted the question and Dr. Watson-Miller. The responses are written for the purpose of providing general suggestions to the recipients of this newsletter.

As part of remembering our children, we will have a table set up for you to bring pictures and anything you wish to share about your child during the month of your child's birthday.

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### The Compassionate Friends

National Office: 877-969-0010

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

### DO YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR FAITH?

Make sure to attend September's Compassionate Friends Meeting (September 2nd). We are excited to have as our guest Pastor Val Putman who will share her experiences in assisting the bereaved and help give insight into those tough "God, I don't understand" questions.



### *The Gift of Love*



Please send in love gifts by the 5th of the month so that they may be included in the following month's newsletter.

Your donation is greatly appreciated.

In Memory of: \_\_\_\_\_

Love Gift Amount: \_\_\_\_\_

Submitted by: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Send your love gift to:

Joyce Buseman, TCF Treasurer  
1041 Lincoln St.  
Centerville, SD 57014

### *Love Gifts:*



From Gary and Shari Boetel



In loving memory of

**Austin Curtis Olivier**

### The Compassionate Friends Credo

We need not walk alone. We are The 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 a grief so fresh and so intensely painful that they 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 this gathering of The Compassionate Friends, it is pain we will share, just as we share with each other our love for the children who have died. We are all seeking and struggling to build a future for ourselves, but we are committed to building a 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.

## The Forgiveness Cake

Who would ever have suspected	Who could imagine such nonsense!
That grief had this many layers	(That's what we thought before IT...
Like a Neapolitan cake gone awry	That dark shadow called death visited us!)
The salt shaker broke open into the batter	
The (optional) salt overtook the sweet...	There's no frosting on this piece of cake.
No one, but no one wants to taste that.	We even have to forgive ourselves
Who would have thought	For not noticing that
We would be the ones left, first off	Forgiveness
Second, that we would have to forgive a child	Is yet another one of those
No matter how they exited (even harder)	Salty, Neapolitan layers
 You heard me	 <i>Lois Johanson</i>
Forgive your child for leaving you?	<i>TCF Sioux Falls</i>
What a farce? What folly!	<i>3-31-14</i>

## HONORARY ASSOCIATES OF COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Sponsors are considered Honorary Associates of our organization and are recognized at the level of their donation. We would like to offer our sincere and grateful appreciation to the following supporters:

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Special thanks to:

WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH—hosting our monthly meetings  
 MILLER FUNERAL HOME—providing cookies for our meetings  
 AVERA MCKENNAN HOSPITAL AND UNIVERSITY HEALTH CENTER—donating the printing of our newsletters

## Christian

Sweet little boy, I loved you so	And still God doesn't tell me why
I've never felt so all alone	If dying means to be with you
Every day worse than the last	I'm begging Lord, please take me too
All I want is what is past	No one understands my pain
Every breath I take is pain	They tell me we will meet again
No more sunshine, endless rain	Give her time, someday she'll see
My life without you isn't whole	That somehow this was meant to be
I need you here, why did you go?	Oh Christian, please come back to me...
I search but cannot find your face	
Please help me God, I need your grace	<i>Donna Hetland</i>
A little boy without his mom	<i>TCF Sioux Falls</i>
It can't be right, it feels so wrong	
All my prayers, the tears I cry	

## A Name for My Pain

I have given a name to my pain— it's called "Longing."	I long to take his place, so he may live and have sons too.
I long for what was, and what might have been	I long for time to pass much faster, so my longing and pain will lessen.
I long for his touch and smell of sweat; I long to hold him one more time.	Will they?
I long to look on his beautiful face and impress it upon my memories and heart.	<i>June Williams-Muecke</i>
I long to return to the day before and protect him from his death.	<i>TCF Houston West, TX</i>

## Reopening of School and No Child!

Summer ends, and across our nation, from the middle of August to the week after Labor Day, schools open for another year. For those parents surviving a child of school age, be that from nursery school to college or university, this can be as trying a time as the holidays.

School buses travel again the busy highways of our cities and the quiet lanes of our countryside. Anxious parents stand with children about to make the first ride to school. Gaggles of youngsters play at countless stops across our land. America's most precious and costly activity is renewed. The children are off to school.

I remember well the silences of the September mornings of those first years. The bus no longer stopped at our home. It simply drove casually by, the people within never realizing it once carried the focus of my love, the repository of my dreams. The drone of its wheels marked anew the mind-numbing dullness of my fragmented senses as it moved its way down the tree lined lane once alive with my son's comings and goings.

It was always possible to avoid "back to school" sales. Seeing young people and their weary parents gather school supplies and clothing was just too much in those earliest years. Somehow, the perfect notebook, the brilliant sweater, the odd-shaped erasers were simply unendurable. The stream of vehicles heading for Cape Cod for that final Labor Day weekend, the last family outing to end the summer, was another scene to avoid. It was a ritual from which we seemed excluded. Could we still be a family without him?

Those years are gone now. Having returned to education, I now have "back to school" buying to do myself. I see the buses arrive to unload their treasured passengers, no longer feeling the emptiness of a bus that drives on, barren of hopes and dreams. But I do and will forever remember the pain of those unhappy years and sometimes I reflect on the many parents who now feel as I did.

If you are such a parent, if you mourn a child who leaves a school desk somewhere unfilled, I promise that you are not alone in that pain. But even though you are not alone, you know that you are forever marked, that the death of your child or children has altered you in some basic manner.

Perhaps time and much grief work remain before your spirit can yield up the agony and permit a new self to emerge. That time and work was necessary for me, as it actually is for all of us. For me, grief resolution finally recalled me to my original work. I teach. I no longer administer or direct. The need for that fled before bereavement's assault.

I teach math, science, and social studies to sixth grade children, ages 11 to 12 over the course of a year. In wondrous ways they have restored love to my living. There is nothing of an intellectual character with enough value to equal that, so I have given them the love and caring that was mine, evoked by and for Olin. Thus do Olin's gifts live on, called forth and given new life through the innocent and selfless love of schoolchildren.

All who walk this road realize this is not substitution. Such is not possible. But it does reflect qualities of successful reinvestment, something each of us sorely needs.

Today as schools prepare for another year, I look forward to a new group of children. But cautions arise within as well, the legacy of that time over 12 years ago, when the world came to a sudden halt, when the laughter of lifetimes ceased, when dreams evaporated with a morning mist.

For those of us who dare live and love again, for those fortunate enough to have found a reinvestment encouraging the same, there is always risk. After all, tragedy can strike again. Our present or past pain grants no immunity. Students, the children within the school, invited me, albeit unknowingly, to take that risk again, although certainly not at the rich and deep level of father and son. Nevertheless, it feels right, and though I will never again know the depth of love which belonged to Olin and me, I welcome the chance to live once more on its margins.

So schools, which were once just another manifestation of hurt, have helped me to restore purpose and balance to daily living. There is surely such a reinvestment awaiting all of us, but we must seek the circumstances and create the opportunities for it to occur. I pray that all of us who have not yet had such good fortune may soon do so. All of our children would want this for us as well. With that thought in mind, it is indeed worth striving for that dimension in life once more.

*Don Hackett  
TCF Kingston, MA  
In Memory of my son, Olin*

## Love's Lasting Touch

Don't weep for me when I'm gone,  
Because I'll always be there.  
My spirit will exist in all the earth,  
In the water, trees, and air.

You'll hear me say, "I love you",  
In the whisper of a breeze.  
You'll know that I'm beside you,  
With the rustling of the leaves.

You'll feel my arms caress you,  
In the warmth of each sunrise.  
The moon will be my goodnight kiss,  
The stars my watchful eyes.

Your life will be my legacy,  
Your memories my epitaph.  
These ties will bind us together,  
Till we meet on heaven's path.

I'll not ever desert you,  
We'll never be far apart.  
I'll live within you always,  
Nestled deep inside your heart.

*Jacquelyn M. Comeaux  
In Memory of My Angels...  
Michelle, Jerry & Danny  
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## Choosing Life

“It will never be the same. Never.” As a betrayed parent, you have often heard or said these words to express grief’s profound feelings of sorrow and disorientation. Your life has suddenly taken an unexpected course that appears both uncharted and endless. Bewildered, you vainly search for pathways back to your former life, until you confront the reality that there is no way back. Your child is dead forever. It is then that you may say, “. . . never the same.”

This is the aspect of grief that Simon Stephens calls “The Valley of the Shadow.” It is that very long time between the death of your child and your reinvestment in life. *Between*. It is not supposed to be a permanent resting place. Although some people do take up residence in the valley, it is a transition from the death of your child to life with renewed purpose.

The key to this transition is yourself. You must choose between life and the valley. You and only you can decide. And you must make that decision again and again, each day.

Giving in to the hopelessness of the valley is tempting. Choosing to move on toward life requires a great deal of work. You must struggle with the pain of grief in order to resolve it. It is a daily struggle full of tears, anger, guilt and self-doubt, but it is the only alternative to surrendering yourself to the valley.

Little by little you choose to move on. Little by little you progress toward the other side of the valley. It takes a very long time, far longer than your friends or relatives suspected. Far longer than you had believed – even prayed – that it would be. When one day you find yourself able to do more than choose merely to live but also how to live, you will know you are leaving the valley of the shadow. There will still be more work to do, more struggle and choosing. The valley, however, stretches behind rather than in front of you.

When you have resolved your grief by reinvesting in life, you will be able to realize that nothing is ever “the same.” Life is change. We would not have it be otherwise, for that is the valley of the shadow. Change has the promise of beginning and the excitement of discovery.

Life is never the same. Life is change. Choose life!

*Marcia F. Allig  
TCF, Mercer Area Chapter, New Jersey*

## Our Children Remembered—September

Name	Date of Birth	Date of Death	Parents
Robert Lowell Scott	3-Sep	3-Feb	Robert & Michelle Scott
Tyler Newville	5-Sep	20-Nov	Renee & Tim Newville
Donald Stoltenberg	8-Sep	14-Sep	Delmar & Sharon Stoltenberg
Scott Allen Luke	9-Sep	23-Jul	Joseph & Karen Luke
John D. Stange	11-Sep	15-Aug	Doug & Lisa Stange
Andrew Paul Nester	14-Sep	16-Nov	Paul & Kris Nester
Zev Luna Audrey Leal	15-Sep	3-Mar	Lois Johanson (grand-mother)
Samantha Dawn Larson	16-Sep	7-Apr	Marcy & Dale Larson
Beverly Osteman	16-Sep	7-May	Arline Mustar
Casey Steven Braun	16-Sep	21-Apr	Laurie J Braun
Mark A. Chapman	17-Sep	18-Sep	Marilyn Chapman
Adam Michael Smith	17-Sep	15-Aug	Tim & Judy Smith
Jordan Ross Momen	21-Sep	20-Jul	Roger and Cheryl Momen
David A. Runyan	22-Sep	4-Jan	Lurlene Runyan
Angela Joy Post	25-Sep	2-Jun	Warren & Fonda Post
William Brooks Nichol	26-Sep	27-May	Cleo & Gloria Nichol
Cathryn Slinden	29-Sep	6-Jun	Harold & Doris Slinden
Craig DeLongh	30-Sep	26-Jan	Norma & Norman DeLongh
Owen Raymond Schuelke	30-Sep	30-Oct	Brian & Maggie Schuelke
Aecho Bryanna Holmes	13-Aug	1-Sep	Terri & Toby Lang & David & Jodi Holmes
Dylan Duane Fischer	20-Mar	4-Sep	Doyle & Kathryn Fischer
Scott Peter Nelson	5-Apr	9-Sep	Brenda Parisien
Tanner Becker	18-Apr	10-Sep	Mark & Julie Becker
Eric Walter Kondratuk	24-Jul	13-Sep	Michael & Laura Kondratuk
Joslin Kayana Winkowitsch	23-Jan	14-Sep	Jo & Darwin Winkowitsch
Chad Michael Holm	30-Aug	14-Sep	Cindy & Mike Holm
Alexia Dee Deffenbaugh	21-Jul	14-Sep	Dawnette Deffenbaugh
Cassie Mandeville	29-Aug	14-Sep	Holly Wheeler Wanda Williamson (grandmother)
Liam Samuel Duncan	13-Nov	17-Sep	Aaron & Samantha Duncan
Kelly Kuper	12-Jul	19-Sep	Mary & Wayne Kuper
Gene Van De Stroet	29-Jul	20-Sep	Alice & Case Van De Stroet
Monique Carlson	29-Nov	22-Sep	Jim Carlson
Brandi Wahl Lueders	14-Dec	23-Sep	Lynn & Starr Cheeseman
Darla Van Nieuwenhuizen	8-Mar	24-Sep	Lorraine & Don Van Nieuwenhuizen
Marcus Joseph Peterson	18-Dec	24-Sep	Julie Forster Raap & Michael Peterson
Toby Colwes	7-Apr	25-Sep	Sarah Colwes
Travis Kenyon	26-Jul	26-Sep	Peggy Naessig
Stacy Lackey	22-Mar	26-Sep	Kandy & Gene Stoverding
Chad Butterfield	3-Aug	27-Sep	Gary & Sandy Butterfield
Ashleigh Christine Mauseth	10-Mar	28-Sep	Keith & Lisa Mauseth
Robert Daniel Ribbe	21-Jan	28-Sep	Pat & Patty Ribbe
Brian VanWagner, Jr	20-Jul	29-Sep	Brian & Deb VanWagner, Sr.
Joel Alan Neugebauer	17-Feb	29-Sep	Leon & Carol (step-mom) Neugebauer