



**The
Compassionate
Friends**
RVA Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Email: tcfrrva@hotmail.com Website: www.compassionatefriendsrva.org Phone: (804) 458-9000

*"So long as we live, they too shall live.
They are now a part of us."*

- Sylvan Kamens & Rabbi Jack Riemer

MEETING INFORMATION

Monthly Meetings are held at
7:00 pm on the last Tuesday
of each month at

St. Matthias' Episcopal Church
11300 W. Huguenot Road
Midlothian, VA 21113

UPCOMING MEETINGS

December 18 – Candlelight Service
January 29 – TBD



**Need to Talk?
We're here to listen!**

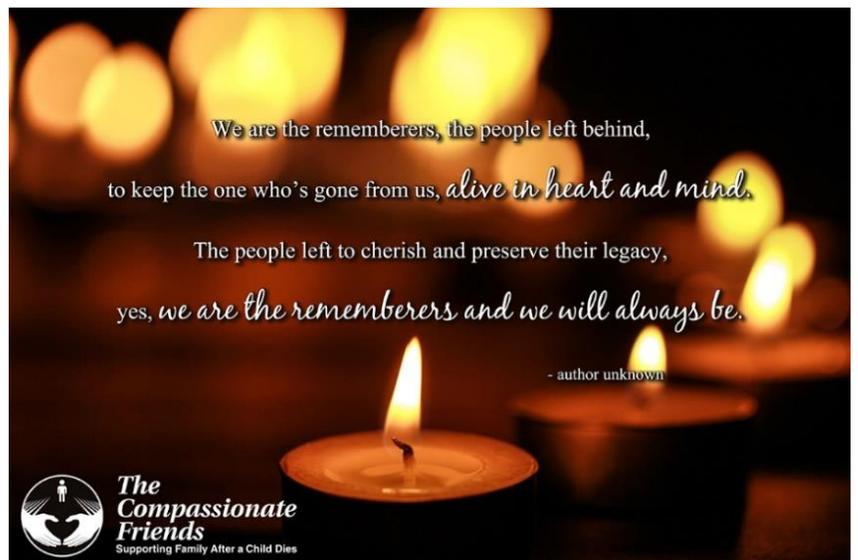
We know that meeting once a month is not enough for some people. If you need someone to talk to in-between meetings please call us! We do our best to answer every call as it comes in, however, sometimes we are not able to do so. If that happens, please leave a message and we will return your call within a day. Please call us anytime at (804) 458-9000.

Candlelight Service

Tuesday, December 18th 7:00pm

As you may be aware, our candlelight service had to be cancelled due to the snow that came into our area recently. The ceremony is very important to many members of our chapter. So, the decision was made to have the ceremony during our scheduled monthly meeting on Tuesday, December 18th. While our meetings are generally the last Tuesday of the month, the December meeting was adjusted due to the holidays.

We invite you to join us for the candlelight ceremony on Tuesday. Please bring a photo of your child for the memory table and bring a friend. We will have plenty of refreshments after the service. Plan on arriving early to fill out a name card for your child, sibling or grandchild. The service will be in the sanctuary. A beautiful slideshow was created by member Steve Day. You can watch it by clicking this link: [Candlelight Slideshow](#)



CONTACT INFORMATION

The Compassionate Friends RVA

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Meeting Address:

St. Matthias' Episcopal Church

11300 W. Huguenot Road

Midlothian, VA 21113

<http://compassionatefriendsrva.org>

Regional Coordinator

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READ THE LATEST ISSUE OF

"We Need Not Walk Alone"

The Autumn/Winter 2018 issue is available for free on **TCF's website**. You can also sign up for future issues. May you find the articles, poems and other information in it - written by grief professionals and other bereaved family members - to be helpful and inspiring as you journey towards hope and healing.

Surviving the Holidays After the Death of a Child

Written by Alice Wisler on Saturday, November 21, 2009

That holiday-pang hit my stomach the first October after Daniel died. Greeting me at an arts and craft shop were gold and silver stockings, a Christmas tree draped with turquoise balls and a wreath of pinecones and red berries. What was this? And was "Santa Claus Is Coming to Town" playing as well? It was only October.

I had anticipated that Christmas and the holidays would be tough. In fact, I'd wake on those cold mornings after Daniel died in February and be grateful that it was still months until his August birthday and even more months until Christmas. I dreaded living both without him. I would have preferred to have been steeped in cow manure. At least then I could take a hot bath with sweet smelling bubbles and be rid of the stench. But bereavement isn't that way. As those who had gone on before let me know, you have to live through it.

Christmas came. I did live through it. It continues to happen as do the other significant days of the calendar year. Daniel never arrives at any of them although his memory lives on. By incorporating him into these days of festivity, I can cope.

Some of you have your child's birthday and/or anniversary day within the November through January season. These days, in addition to the holidays everyone else is celebrating, make the season even more complicated and painful, I'm sure.

I offer eleven tips I've used to survive the holidays. Some are my own suggestions and some are borrowed from the many who walk the path of grief.

1. **Know you will survive.** Others have done it and you will, too. Keep in mind that your first Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day will not be easy.
2. Find at least one person you can talk to or meet with during the holiday season. Perhaps this person has gone through a few Thanksgivings and Christmases before and can give you some helpful ideas that have worked for her.
3. Things will be different this holiday season and perhaps for all the rest to come. Don't think you have to do the "traditional" activities of years past when your child was alive. Your energy level is low. If no one in your household minds, skip putting up the tree. Forget spending hours making your holiday cookies.

WELCOME

though we are sorry you're here

It is always hard to say "Welcome" to people coming to our meetings for the first time because we are so very sorry for the reason which made you eligible for membership in The Compassionate Friends (TCF). However, we are glad you found the courage to come. We cannot take away your pain, but we can offer our friendship and support. We ask that you attend 3 – 4 meetings to see how TCF can help you. It might be that you hear just the right words or make just the right connection with another parent which will make a world of difference to you. Discover the special acceptance that occurs with those who truly do understand!

4. Spend the holidays with those who will let you talk about your child. You will need to have the freedom to say your child's name and recall memories, if you choose to do so. Your stories about your child are wonderful legacies. Tell them boldly again and again.

5. If going into the mall or stores brings too much pain, shop for gifts online or through mail-order catalogs. Thinking everyone is happily shopping at the malls with intact lives while your heart is crushed is terribly tough. Go easy on yourself.

6. Getting away from the house is an idea that worked for my family. The first Christmas without Daniel we went to a nearby town and lived in the Embassy Suites. The kids enjoyed the indoor pool and breakfast buffets. Christmases that followed were spent at a rented cottage on the shore and the Christmas we rented the beach house, we were able to invite extended family to join us. We all shared in the cooking.

7. Create something to give to those who have helped you throughout the year. I made some very simple tree ornaments with "In Memory of Daniel" stamped on them and gave them to friends that first Christmas.

8. Decorate the grave. Put up a plastic Christmas tree with lights. Sometimes being busy with decorating the grave gives a feeling of doing something for a child we can no longer hold.

9. Do something in memory of your child. Donate to a charity or fund in his memory. Volunteer. My oldest daughter Rachel and I volunteer at the Hospice Tree of Remembrance each December and share memories of Daniel as we spend this time together.

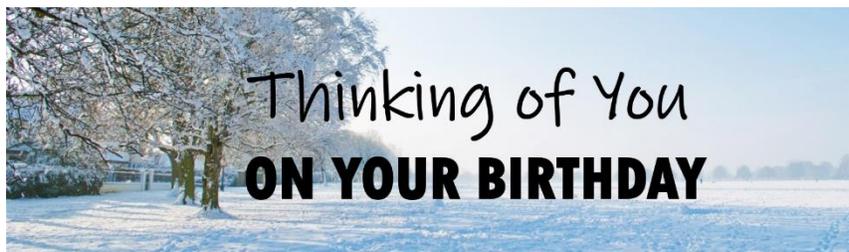
10. If your bereavement support group has a special candle-lighting service to remember the children in your area who have died, **attend it**. Doing something in memory of your child with others who understand the pain these holidays hold can be therapeutic.

11. Spend time reflecting on what the season is about. Everyone around you may be frantic with attending parties, services, shopping and visiting relatives. Perhaps you used to be the same way. Now you may want to avoid some of the festivities. Give yourself permission to excuse yourself from them. Light a candle in your favorite scent. Record some thoughts in a journal. This is great therapy, too.

One day you will wake up and it will be January 2. The holidays will have ended. **You will have made it**. If you are like me, you will find that surviving the tinsel has made you stronger and although you may cry, somewhere within you, you will feel that core of new steel.



We Remember - December 2018



| | |
|---------------------------|-------------|
| KEVIN CROSSAN | DECEMBER 4 |
| JOHN ROBERT HUTCHINS | DECEMBER 13 |
| MATTHEW (SLIM) WEST | DECEMBER 13 |
| JEFFREY D. NEBLETT | DECEMBER 18 |
| WALTER RICHARDSON CRAYMER | DECEMBER 22 |
| MATTHEW DUNCAN LANE | DECEMBER 27 |
| FARZAD SULTANI | DECEMBER 31 |



| | |
|---------------------------|-------------|
| MIA CHRISTINE BASINSKI | DECEMBER 1 |
| ROBERT A. RANSON III | DECEMBER 1 |
| CASEY VANFOSSEN | DECEMBER 7 |
| STEVEN GRICH | DECEMBER 8 |
| CHRISSEY ANDREWS MILLER | DECEMBER 12 |
| THOMAS BAILEY | DECEMBER 17 |
| JOSHUA LOGAN HELMUTH | DECEMBER 20 |
| NATHANAEL (NATE) FLETCHER | DECEMBER 21 |
| NATHAN PEEBLES | DECEMBER 23 |
| RUSSELL BABER | DECEMBER 27 |



The Compassionate Friends

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Please show your support by donating now.

“My sister will die over and over again for the rest of my life. Grief is forever. It doesn't go away; it becomes a part of you, step for step, breath for breath. I will never stop grieving Bailey because I will never stop loving her. That's just how it is. Grief and love are conjoined, you don't get one without the other. All I can do is love her, and love the world, emulate her by living with daring and spirit and joy.”

*Jandy Nelson,
The Sky Is Everywhere*

“When someone you love dies, and you’re not expecting it, you don’t lose her all at once; you lose her in pieces over a long time — the way the mail stops coming, and her scent fades from the pillows and even from the clothes in her closet and drawers. Gradually, you accumulate the parts of her that are gone. Just when the day comes — when there’s a particular missing part that overwhelms you with the feeling that she’s gone, forever — there comes another day, and another specifically missing part.”

*John Irving,
A Prayer for Owen Meany*

LOVE GIFTS

Never expected. Always appreciated.

There are no fees or dues to belong to The Compassionate Friends. As parents, grandparents, and siblings find help within the group, they sometimes make a “Love Gift” to our chapter. It is a way to honor special people in their lives or remember children and others who have passed on. Love gifts allow us to offer resources such as this newsletter, books, and brochures to assist grieving families. They also allow us to provide information to professionals and others who impact the lives and feelings of the bereaved. Love gifts are just that, gifts. They are not required of anyone, but they are very helpful and very much appreciated. We are grateful for all of the generous gifts that have been provided that allow us to continue to support our [mission](#).

The Compassionate Friends is a 501c(3) non-profit organization and your donations are fully tax deductible. If you would like to make a love gift you can either [click here to donate](#) via PayPal or you can complete and print this form and mail it with your donation to:

The Compassionate Friends Richmond Chapter #1422
1119 Worsham Green Terrace, Midlothian, Virginia 23114

Contributor’s Name:

Address:

Phone and/or Email Address:

This gift is made In Memory / Honor of:

This is a Chapter Gift (without memorial or honorarium)

Donations may also be made from our website by visiting:

http://www.compassionatefriendsrva.org/support_our_chapter.aspx