



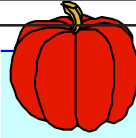
# The Compassionate Friends



El Paso Chapter



September



October



November



## WELCOME TO OUR FALL MEETINGS

**Picnic:** October 14, 5:00 PM  
Madeline Park

**Meetings: Wednesdays**  
September 27, 2007  
No October Regular Meeting  
November 28, 2007

**Program:**  
To be Announced

**Time:** 7:00-9:00 p.m.

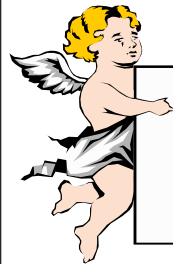
**Place:**  
St. Paul's Lutheran Church  
1000 Montana Avenue  
El Paso, Texas

**Board Of Directors:**  
Chairman: Susan Crews  
542-0908  
Sec/Treasurer: Lou Cain  
Newsletter, Copies & Mailing:  
The Winkelmans

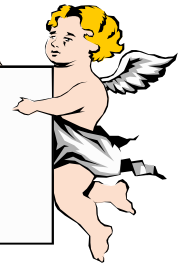
### Mark Your Calendar For Future Meetings

Dec 9 Around the Globe  
Candlelight Ceremony  
Jan 29 Monthly Meeting  
Feb 27 Monthly Meeting

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS is a self help organization offering friendship and understanding to bereaved parents. The purpose of TCF is to aid parents in the positive resolution of the grief experienced upon the death of their child and to foster the physical and emotional health of bereaved parents and surviving children. The El Paso chapter meets in donated church facilities, but no religious creed or affiliation is involved. There are no dues and no one is required to talk at any meeting. Listening is okay! Please join us, together we can make it.



## Editor's Notes



In October, we will be having our annual balloon picnic at Madeline Park. Everyone is invited, parents, children and other family members. We all **bring our favorite dish**, eat, socialize, then send off a balloon with a special message to our child(ren). Each person is asked to **bring one or more helium balloons** to send off to their child. We also suggest you **bring lawn chairs** to sit on. The picnic will be held at **Madeline Park on October 14, at 5:00 PM, located off of Cincinnati Avenue, in Kern Place**. See you there. There **will not be a regular October meeting** due to Halloween on the same evening as the TCF monthly meeting

Mail all Entries to: Eric Winkelman  
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El Paso, TX 79932  
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National Office: TCF National Office  
PO Box 3696  
Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696  
(630) 990-0010 or (877) 969-0010  
[www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

If you would like to receive this monthly newsletter, please e-mail [ejwinkel@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ejwinkel@sbcglobal.net)



## Welcome... The Classroom for Learning to Live Again

Many of us are very aware of classrooms at this time of the year as the new school year begins for our children and young people of all ages. For some, the experience is not one they look forward to with pleasure, and it means the end of the carefree, unscheduled days of the summer. There was no need in their lives for continuous disciplined thinking and living. There were happy vacations, lots of swimming in a pool, picnics, and lots of baseball playing — all requiring lots of running and yelling, and of course the quiet lazy times when they could read about their special interests, work on hobbies, or just do nothing.

Now they are required to settle down into a set schedule and routine of doing what they may not especially enjoy at school, in the classroom and at home. They must adjust to the confinement of sitting behind a desk for a specific time and to the need to concentrate for long periods of time on courses that are required for their education, but in which they have no special interest and which they may not even be able to comprehend. So, they must discipline their thinking, or they will be disciplined with extra work, low or failing grades, seemingly unfair, demanding teachers, and with questioning parents.

We can liken this setting somewhat, but in a much more intense way, to bereaved parents as they attempt to pick up the pieces of their lives after their child has died, and attempt to make some sense out of it all. Our happy carefree summer was the time before we experienced this most crushing loss, no matter how large or numerous our problems may have been in reality. Compared to this loss, all other problems simply fade away as if they never existed. And now, at least for a time, we are faced with the belief that there can never be any more summers. We must learn to climb out of this abyss. For those who have accomplished this, they report that this education is the most difficult work anyone will ever do.

We can imagine that we are in a classroom. Here, we are encouraged because we learn that all the other students are bereaved parents. So, the first step upward is when we learn that we are not alone, that there are those around us who do understand, and who really do know how it feels and how painful it really is. Next, we discover that there are no teachers to tell us what is right and what is wrong. Instead, there are guides to assure us they and others more advanced than we are, have also had the same thoughts and feelings, or similar ones. This assurance that we are not "cracking up" gives us the confidence we need to climb up several more steps.

At this point, we find that it is becoming easier to concentrate on at least some of the simple daily tasks, such as grocery shopping or planning and preparing a meal or making

a special dessert the family hasn't had for so long. Seeing their approval and appreciation gives us the power to discipline ourselves to try even harder because we see and feel that we have made a lot of progress with this "course" which we are required to "pass".

It doesn't matter if, during our most difficult periods, we slip back down a few steps. Because by this time, we have climbed the steps of concentrations and disciplines. We have the assurance that there are many hands reaching out to us and voices encouraging us, assuring us that we are almost there. However it is always necessary for each one of us to take each step by himself. Finally, we just know beyond a shadow of a doubt, that if others did it and they believe in us, then we can do it, too. So no matter at what step you are in the "course" in this classroom, you can receive the help, the assurance, and the encouragement you may need to "graduate". Then you may help the many others who every day are just beginning and are just entering this classroom.

For you the first step may be to come to our meeting where you can meet and talk with the other "students" who are still struggling at various levels with the same "course" that you are. Even if you don't need us, we need you. Take that first big step and come to the meetings... you will get the help you need.

Reprinted from the  
—Bereaved Parents USA of Tri County, MO Newsletter

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### A ninth birthday....Nine Years Later

Tomorrow is August the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2007

The 22<sup>nd</sup> would have been Jarod's ninth birthday.

He was born on Aug. 22 1998 and died on Oct 28, 1998, just two months later of SIDS. Here we are, with only a slight memory of him. His beautiful face, thoughts of what he might have been like at this age.

School is due to start on the 13<sup>th</sup> of August and he would have been in the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> grade Registration would be soon. Tax free weekend is coming up. The things we could have bought for school, paper, pencils and all the crayons, markers, glue - A set of new clothes to wear and new shoes....

A birthday present for a boy that would have been nine years old.

A ninth birthday-that we cannot celebrate.

We can only wish you a Happy Birthday Jarod, for your ninth birthday,

Nine Years Later

Love, Mom

Peggy Wills 7/31/07

TCF Gwinnett

# Fall Angel Dates

*If your child's name has been left out of this section, or their is missing/incorrect information, please mail or e-mail me immediately so I can update our data base.*

LIKE LEAVES IN AUTUMN



HERE AND THEN GONE

## BUT ALWAYS REMEMBERED

DEATH DATES:	AGE:	CHILD:	PARENT(S):
9/2/1983	3	Jonathon	Son of Mrs. Susan Crews
9/4/1998	12	Adam	Son of Rondina Burgess
9/5/1997	41	Harlow III	Son of Mr. & Mrs. Harlow Paul
9/18/1993	29	Steven	Son of Mr. & Mrs. Raymond Waite
10/6/2005	47	Fred	Son of Fran Zimet
10/16/2001	26 Days	Elsie	Ann Sigholz
10/19/1991	8	Jeremy	Alvin and Carmen Dobardl
11/28/2004	19 Days	Gabrielle	Andrew and Edna Racelis-Simmons

## Autumn Tears

We look back on September and we realize that somehow we made it through those dreaded first days of school. Whether it was the anticipation or the actual days that were the worst, we survived. We used our faith, our support systems or just plain hard work and made it over yet another hurdle. We watched small children heading for their first day of kindergarten, listened to excited teenagers talk of high school and heard stories of children leaving home to attend post-secondary school. Somehow we rode the waves of grief and found ourselves ashore again.

As these waves subside new ones will build as we head into the holidays that speak of, and to, children. Halloween will soon approach and for some, painful memories. Thanksgiving arrives to exemplify family and togetherness and Christmas looms ahead. These special

days are forever reminders of our loss – the costumes we'll never sew, the empty chair at turkey dinner, the fun and magic we'll never share with someone we love. Forever reminders that our child has died.

To survive when these events and anniversary days come around let's find time to think of the good memories we have – the announcement of our long awaited pregnancy at Thanksgiving dinner, the look of excitement on our son's first Halloween night, the vision of our daughter helping prepare the turkey dinner. These holidays will always be reminders that our child died. Let us also make them reminders that our child lived! They left us memories more precious than any others to hold and celebrate!

By Penny Young, TCF Powell River, British Columbia

## 10 Years...How Can It Be Possible?

This Sept. 22, 2007 marks the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the day James made the decision that ended his life, and in turn, also changed our lives forever. It just seems impossible that it's been ten years since that day when we were faced with the most painful unimaginable, grief, sorrow and despair we have ever endured. When we went to our first TCF meeting in November, it seemed that we would never find the kind of hope and level of acceptance that some parents, further down the road, had seemed to achieve. Truly, I never thought I would live a year without my son. The heartache was utterly unbearable, the sadness was a gut-wrenching pain that would leave me physically doubled over. I thought for sure I would die of a broken heart, and many nights I would wonder if I would wake up the following morning, but much to my surprise, and sometimes dismay, I did. My husband & I continued to attend TCF for a couple months until we learned that couples grieve differently and while I had found a source of comfort and understanding that I needed, it wasn't the right place for my husband. Another lesson that we had to learn was that it is okay for couples to grieve differently, in spite of the fact that we, as parents, were both suffering the same loss, the death of our only child. Month after month I willingly went to TCF meetings, even though sometimes it was difficult as I drove there, once again realizing that attending a meeting was another jolt of reality that where I was going was a place where I fit in and that because James died, I belonged to such a group. I listened to other parents and when I heard seasoned bereaved parents talk calmly without crying, I thought "that will never be me". My world as I knew it was over and trying to rebuild a life seemed impossible, and I really didn't even care about tomorrows anymore either. Just making it through each day, one day at a time, took all the physical and emotional strength I could muster. It was quite a surprise to me when the first anniversary came to be and I was still alive. I was convinced that people could die of a broken heart, but it didn't happen to me. I knew that I was alive and I had to live; I had to care about myself and the life I had left. It has been ten long years of rediscovering how to enjoy life, learning coping skills, having to compensate and compromise with what I've got and what and whom I don't have. Dealing with all the grief issues, handling all the constant questions, being haunted by the what ifs, should be's and supposed to be's, the many why's, gradually subsided to a level that didn't deplete my emotional energy on a daily basis.

In these ten years I've learned more than I ever wish I had to and I constantly wish I could have learned these lessons from another way. I'd give anything to have James back but it will never happen. We won't be reunited again here on earth; every day brings me one day closer to seeing James again in our eternal life. In the meantime, my husband and I have overcome so many obstacles that it truly seems a miracle that we are alive, still married, and seemingly mostly normal adults (at least to most people) while living a life that is just not the way it's supposed to be. Of course we dreamed of the day we'd see James graduate from high school, that we could support his college and career choices, that we'd dance at his

wedding and rejoice when he would become a daddy and we would be proud grandparents. Instead so many dreams are left unfulfilled and we watch friends and relatives life paths follow "the way it's supposed to be." There's always an ache when it's someone else's wedding and someone else's grandchild, but that's just the way it is. We are blessed with the many wonderful memories of the 14 years and 2 months that we had with James, and we try not to focus on the sadness and bitterness that we can no longer create more memories.

For those who are beginning their journey, I wish I could say that it gets better. Some days are better than others. Sometimes it gets easier and the pain is not so sharp. There are still the triggers that bring up tears. Holidays are not the same and never will be. I've learned that what works for me and how I feel and how to deal with a situation is what I need to do, no matter what people tell me I should do or how I should feel. Their "shoulds" are a burden I don't need. Figuring out what I'm capable of and what's right for a particular circumstance in my world that seems so wrong without James, guides me in the direction for hope & healing. Not a day goes by that I don't think of James. Every morning when I wake up he's the first person I think of, no matter where I am, at home or away. I think of what he would say in a certain situation, what he would do, where he would be now, all the wonderings fill my thoughts daily.

There have been many many moments of healing, comforts and support over the past ten years, as well as tons of anguish, pain, guilt, sorrows and regrets. Compassionate Friends is now a place where I help others, instead of being the one who needs help. Reaching out to other families in the school where I work has given me an outlet to help others, in memory of James. My husband continues to volunteer with Scouts and has worked with so many teenagers, in memory of James. We've been host parents to five foreign exchange students and our lives have been enriched. Our marriage has had more than its share of rocky times, but we've endured and recently celebrated our 29<sup>th</sup> anniversary. We can't help James anymore, but we can help ourselves and help others, in his memory. We know now how important it is to have patience, kindness, compassion, sensitivity, and thoughtfulness toward each other and to friends and family. We treasure each and every day because we know how precious life is. James taught us so much with his life and with his untimely death and those are lessons we can't turn our backs on. His life was important, made a difference and we remember him every day, miss him every day and love him every single day. We validate his life by living our lives to the fullest for all three of us.

So on this tenth anniversary, although we are filled with sadness as we remember and relive the tragic moments of that terrible day, we know we have to be proud of ourselves and how far we've come and we thank James for coming into our lives, being the terrific son that he was and we celebrate his life, on his anniversary and every day. He is forever young, forever loved, forever missed & forever remembered.

By Meg Avery, James' mom 7/15/83 - 9/22/97



# Love Gifts

A LOVE GIFT is a gift of money or service to The Compassionate Friends. It is usually in honor of a child who has died but it can also be a gift to help in the work of the El Paso Chapter of TCF. Your gifts are tax deductible and are our Chapter's only monetary support. Your donation will help us pay for postage and labels for sending our newsletter each month.

## LOVE GIFT

Name of Person to be Remembered \_\_\_\_\_

Special Occasion of Person \_\_\_\_\_

Given By \_\_\_\_\_

Send To: Mary Lou Cain  
5664 Beth View  
El Paso, TX 79932

## Love Gifts

Harlow and Ruth Paul in Loving Memory of Their Son Harlow L. Paul III, Death Day September 5, 1997

### A Poem for All Parents in Memory of Shane A GRIEVING PARENT

A grieving parent is someone who will;  
never forget their child no matter how painful memories are,  
A grieving parent is someone who;  
yearns to be with their dead, but cannot conceive leaving  
their living ones.

A grieving parent is someone who;  
has a part of a heart as the rest is buried with their child.

A grieving parent is someone who;  
begs for relief from the memories which plague them, and  
then feels guilty when they get it.

A grieving parent is someone who;  
pretends to be happy and enjoying life when they are really  
dying inside.

A grieving parent is someone who;  
can cry or laugh at the drop of a hat whenever they  
remember their beloved child.

A grieving parent is someone who;  
feels as though they just lost their child yesterday, no matter  
how much time has passed.

A grieving parent is someone who;  
fears for their remaining family because they cannot bear to  
have any more losses.

A grieving parent is someone who;  
sits by their child's gravestone and feels a knife stabbing their  
heart.

A grieving parent is someone who;  
wants to help others who have lost loved ones  
because somehow their loss is theirs all over again.

Written by Judy Skapnak In Memory of Shane Martin,  
9/1/77 – 10/14/05 Son of Gail & Hillman Martin,  
Winder, GA - TCF Gwinnett

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*Grief is not a mere word, but a  
journey through the pathways of  
our heart. To where our journey  
leads us is never certain, but is  
painful just the same. Grief  
should not be measured by pain,  
but also by love. To love is to  
hurt, to hurt is to heal, to heal is  
to accept. No grief is ever the  
same. Please, be kind to yourself.*

*By Susie Cross  
In Memory of her son Jasper  
Burns, 3/16/83 - 2/11/99*

## Halloween

It is here, this day of merriment  
And children's pleasure.  
Gremlins and goblins  
And ghosties at the door  
Of your house.  
And the other children  
Come to the door of your mind.  
Faces out of the past,  
Small ghosts with sweet, painted faces.  
They do not shout.  
Those children  
Who no longer march laughing  
On a cold Halloween night,  
They stand at the door of your mind –  
And you will let them in,  
So that you can give them  
The small gifts of your Halloween –  
A smile and a tear.



By Sascha Wagner, From her book "Wintersun"

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### First Thanksgiving

The thought of being thankful  
fills my heart with dread.  
They'll all be feigning gladness,  
not a word about her said.

These heavy shrouds of blackness  
enveloping my soul,  
pervasive, throat-catching,  
writhe in me and coil.

I must, I must acknowledge,  
just express her name,  
so all sitting at the table,  
know I'm thankful that she came.

Though she's gone from us forever  
and we mourn to see her face,  
not one minute of her living,  
would her death ever replace.

So I stop the cheerful gathering,  
though my voice quivers, quakes,  
make a toast to all her living,  
that small tribute's all it takes.



By Genesee Bourdeau Gentry from "Stars in the  
Deepest Night – After the Death of a Child", in  
memory of her daughter, Lori Ann Elizabeth Gentry

## An Unbreakable Bond

From the same roots  
Nourished by the same soil  
We grew, side by side.  
One a little older, the other a little taller,  
Such different blossoms,  
Different, yet strangely the same.  
We grew, our lives entwined,  
Held together by shared experiences,  
Common joys and sorrows,  
Whispered secrets known to us alone.  
Through that bond of love,  
We shared strength.  
We grew, our different paths parting us,  
An ocean between.  
Yet slender tendrils of love still reached out one to another  
They touched and they formed a bond once more,  
An unbreakable bond like steel,  
Through which strength and love flowed once more.  
Then, too soon, the bond tightened,  
As I was drawn to her side.  
Entwined once more, I held her  
And watched helplessly,  
As she withered and died.  
I am alone.  
Yet that bond of love,  
That bond between sisters  
Is eternal  
Even death cannot sever it,  
Because my sister still lives  
In heaven and in my heart.

By Sharon Gray

Written for her sister, Jenny

Reprinted from "We Need Not Walk Alone"

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### Thanksgiving Prayer

Today, we give thanks for our friends,  
Those that time has taken far from us,  
Those we cherish now and those we have yet to meet.  
We give thanks for our family,  
Those members who are with us in spirit  
And those who are a distance away.  
We give thanks for our expanding family,  
For relatives need not always be family  
And family need not always be relatives,  
Love creates families.  
We give thanks for our children,  
For the ones who are here,  
And the ones that live on only in our memory.  
We thank you.  
Amen

TCF Madison Chapter

## Coping With Grief During the Holidays

Whether it is the first holiday season without your loved one, or the twenty-first, the holidays can be a difficult time. While others around us celebrate the joy of the holiday season, it can be a piercing reminder of the missing loved one in your life.

This season can be especially difficult because of the commercial nature of our society. With holiday items and sales displays being put up in mid-October, we have almost three months to dread the sharp reminder of our loss. This dread is often an unnecessary feeling, in that the special day is often more painful than its predecessor or the following day. The dread is often worse than the actual day, which leaves us with an anticlimactic feeling.

A common question asked by those mourning a loved one or struggling to make sense of other losses is "How can I get through the holidays?" The easiest answer is that there is no one right way, much like the path to healing is unique for each person.

Here are some suggestions for people experiencing bereavement for coping during the holidays:

**Plan ahead for the approaching holidays.** Accept that this might be a difficult time for you. The additional stress this season brings may impact you emotionally, physically, and spiritually. These are normal reactions. Be prepared for rushes of emotions that may occur.

**Recognize** that this season will be different. Include those in your family in the decision making process. Decide what traditions you want to continue and possibly start a new tradition honoring the memory of your loved one.

**Know Your Limits.** Don't over commit yourself and give yourself permission to be where you are in your grief. If you do not feel like attending social functions, give yourself permission to stay home. Go easy on yourself.

**Rely on Your Support System.** Your friends and family want to be there to support you during this difficult time. Try not to isolate yourself from that support. Know that it might require more energy to attend social gatherings, but the support you receive may contribute to your healing. Talk about your feelings. Let people know if you are having a tough day.

**Expect to have grief affect you in many different ways.** Try not to be caught off guard when you find yourself having "grief bursts" at unexpected times. You may find that you need more rest during this time, as grief can take a physical toll on your body.

**Start a new Tradition.** Slight changes to your holiday routine may make big differences. Attend a different service than you traditionally attend. Buy an ornament that reminds you of your loved one. Let someone else do the cooking - unless that is your therapy.

**Volunteer.** Ring a bell for the Salvation Army, serve a meal at the Firehouse Shelter, do something outside yourself and you will find meaning through service to others.

Written by Brian S. Rodgers and reprinted from *Tears to Hope*, Volume 8, Number 10 a newsletter for **The Amelia Center**, providing a place of hope for grieving children, parents and families in Birmingham, [www.ameliacenter.org](http://www.ameliacenter.org)

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## Rebuilding Your Life One Piece at a Time

Death, especially unexpected death, changes one's life in ways that cannot be expected. With the death of someone close, one's world is forever changed

One analogy I have found myself using with clients is the following: If you were to imagine the day before your loved one died, there was an intact picture of your life. The picture may not have been perfect, but it was there and it made sense. There was a beginning, a middle and an expected end. With death comes the destruction of that picture. It is as if the picture is taken out of your hands, smashed to the ground in a thousand pieces and then some of the most treasured pieces are forever taken away.

The challenge with grief is to then take all of those pieces which are left and attempt to make a new picture. The picture of the life you once had is impossible to recreate, as much as one may try, it cannot be recreated with pieces missing. A new picture must be assembled with the pieces that are left and with new pieces that are picked up along the way.

The process of "putting the pieces back together" is one that often feels chaotic and confusing. It may sometimes be surprising to find out how much thinking is involved in the grief process. Thoughts bounce around trying to connect "what was" with "what is" and struggle to make sense out of what seems to be incomprehensible.

With each piece, the bereaved, through trial and error, find where each piece belongs or even if it belongs at all. This process is different for every person and does not adhere to any kind of timeline. This (what feels like endless) thinking is the work that grief demands - it is the creation of a new picture of your life - created one piece at a time.

Written by Stephanie Elson, lifted from the *Tears to Hope* August/September 2007 newsletter of The Amelia Center, Birmingham, AL, providing a place of hope for grieving children, parents and families, [www.ameliacenter.org](http://www.ameliacenter.org)

**Mark Your Calendar**



**The Annual El Paso TCF**

**Picnic**

will be on Saturday, **October 14, 2007** from **5:00 – 7:00** at Madeline Park in Kern Place. The main dish will be provided by El Paso TCF. We would like for you to bring a favorite salad, side dish, appetizer, snacks (chips, pretzels, etc.), sodas and water, or dessert. We will have our **Memorial Balloon Release between 6:00 and 6:30.** Please bring your own balloons, lawn chairs or a blanket to spread out. As always, you are welcome to bring friends and/or family members. **Check our local website: [www.elpasotcf.org](http://www.elpasotcf.org) for pictures of last year's picnic.**



**National Children's Memorial Day**

The senate at the request of The Compassionate Friends, proclaimed the second Sunday in December as National Children's Memorial Day to coincide with The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting. Members of all TCF chapters join tens of thousands of families worldwide in lighting candles at 7 pm as an act of symbolic remembrance. This is an annual event where persons around the globe, united in the loss of a child, light candles for one hour the second Sunday in December. Candles are first lit at 7 pm local time just west of the International Date Line. As candles burn down in one time zone, they are then lit in the next, creating a virtual 24 hour wave of light as observances continues in countries around the world. The El Paso TCF Chapter will hold their annual Candle lighting ceremony beginning at 6:30 PM at St. Paul's Lutheran Church, 1000 Montana Avenue. Please bring a candle for each person participating and a small memorial of your child. We will have a small Holiday gathering following the ceremony so plan to bring a favorite Holiday dish or dessert. This is a very poignant ceremony to remember our child, sibling, grandchild during the busy holiday season. Many of us have discarded old traditions, kept some traditions and found new rituals to connect us with our children. This may be one of your new traditions, a memory to cherish. Please join us on December 9<sup>th</sup>.

Self Help Organization Offering Friendship and Understanding to Bereaved Parent

Address Correction Requested



**THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS**  
ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH  
1000 MONTANA  
EL PASO, TX 79902