



The Compassionate Friends

Modesto/Riverbank Chapter

Supporting Family After a Child Dies

A self-help organization offering friendship, understanding and hope to bereaved families that have experienced the death of a child.

modestoriverbanktcf.org

May 2019

tcfmodestoriverbank@gmail.com

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAPTER LEADERSHIP

Ten years ago, I was 16 months out from the sudden, unexpected, and unimaginable passing of my son, lost in the anguish of early grief. I had come across the name of the Compassionate Friends in the books I had read, but really didn't know anything about the group. Their website indicated there was a chapter in Tracy, but nothing closer. As I debated traveling to Tracy, I saw a notice in the *Bee* that a TCF chapter was forming in the Modesto/Riverbank area.

Joanna Rose-Murray and her husband, Dick, organized the chapter here in memory of her daughter, Melinda Rose. The Bridge Covenant Church kindly offered the use of its facility for the first meeting on May 14, 2009, and has generously continued to provide the space these past ten years. Two of the moms from the Tracy chapter came to that first meeting to help the nine of us there get started.

Our chapter has welcomed bereaved moms, dads, grandparents, and adult siblings to our meetings each month since May, 2009. We have celebrated the lives of our children each December at our annual candle lighting. To all of you who have connected with us over these years, thank you for sharing your stories of love, loss, perseverance, and hope. We have learned from each other how to survive our unthinkable loss.

TCF has taught us that helping others helps ourselves. There are many opportunities to help, whether it's bringing refreshments to a meeting, donating a book to our library, or participating in an event. As we celebrate our chapter's 10th year, our steering committee invites you to reconnect, whether by phone, email, our Facebook group, our new website, or in person. We look forward to the years ahead, helping each other and helping those who are yet to come.

Janet Neal,
Josh's mom



MONTHLY MEETING

7:00 PM

**Bridge Covenant Church
2201 Morrill Road
Riverbank, CA 95367**

(Corner of Oakdale Rd and Morrill Rd)

*Please join us at our
next meeting on
Monday, May 13th.*

**Please arrive by 6:50 PM
so we may begin promptly
at 7:00PM**

Upcoming Meetings

June 10th

July 8th

Aug 12th

MESSAGE LINE

(209)622-6786

*If you leave a message
a steering committee member
will return your call.*



Visit us on Facebook
The Modesto-Riverbank
Area Chapter of TCF



MAY EVENTS

Lunch with the Ladies

Date: Friday, May 24th 2019

Time: Noon

Location: Panera Bread 3401 Dale Road, Modesto

RSVP - call or text Tracey at 209-996-2040 or email tcfmodestoriverbank@gmail.com.



Saturday Morning Breakfast with the Dads



Save the dates Saturday, May 4th and Saturday, June 1st for breakfast with other bereaved dads in our chapter. 8 am at Perko's in Riverbank, 2120 Patterson Road, at corner of Oakdale Road.

Confirm with Chad at 209-338-8496 or chomme@gmail.com, or Norm at 209-345-0601 or nandrews6863@charter.net, & they'll save a seat for you.

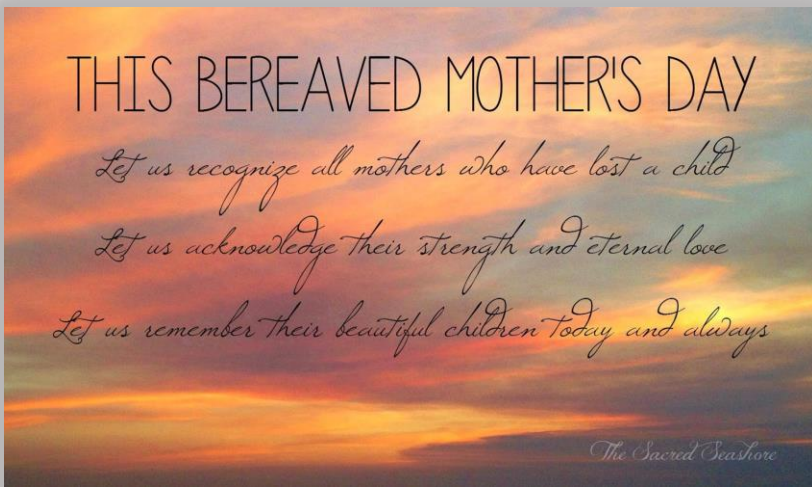
Suicide Loss Support Group

7 pm at the Sutter Health Education Center
in the back of McHenry Village, suite B.

The group meets the third Monday of each month.

For more information, contact Norm at 209 345-0601
or at nandrews6863@charter.net.

Bereaved Mother's Day ~ Sunday, May 5th, 2019



Never-in your wildest imagination or most endearing thought could you ever envision that you would need a day set aside for your broken heart and your empty arms. Who thinks when they learn a new life is growing inside that this same life might be cut short? What heart is brave enough to consider the possibility? Yet here you are. I'm so, so sorry.

But there are a few things to know deep within your heart. Important truths to remember on this broken road, that can help you hold onto hope and finish strong. Ways to honor your child by living your best life.

~ ***You are not a failure.*** You are not omnipotent nor omniscient. You did the best you could. That's all ANYONE can do.

~ ***You are a mother even if you don't have a single child to hold on earth.*** You have a child – just not one that others can see. When people ask how many children you have, answer boldly and count the one (or more!) that wait for you in eternity.

~ ***Your love is valid and worthy of expression.*** Love for your missing child may look different than love for a child still walking the earth with you. That's OK. Grief is love with no place to go. Tears are fine. Laughter is fine. Speaking his name is your privilege. Carrying her legacy is your honor. No one gets to tell you how or when to express your heart.

~ ***You are brave.*** Bereaved mothers are not the only brave ones on this planet but they are some of the bravest ones I know. You have received the heaviest blow a mama's heart can know and you are still standing. You get up every day and carry on. You continue to love the people in your life and serve your family. You have not given up although giving up would be the easiest thing to do. Don't discount your own courage.

~ ***You are strong - not because you want to be but because you have to be.*** Other people depend on you and you are trying your best not to let them down. It's no compliment when someone says, "I just wouldn't be able to survive." Because, really-what choice do we have? We bear up under the burden because the alternative is to further burden our families.

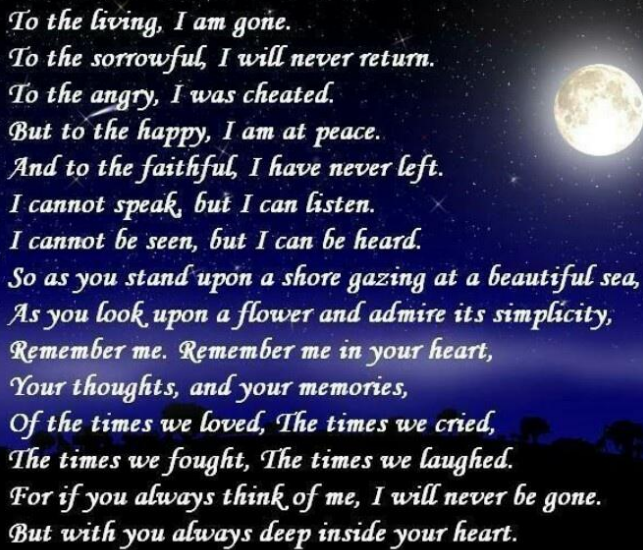
~ ***You are beautiful.*** Every time you look in the mirror and notice the circles under your eyes or the lines around your mouth, don't think that makes you ugly. They are scars-scars of love and sacrifice. They bear witness to the fact that you choose to carry on and carry your child's legacy even though it costs every ounce of energy and will you can muster. You may not like the way you look in pictures, but trust me, you are beautiful.

~ ***You are a living legacy for your missing child.*** You carry his light. You honor her memory. You keep it fresh and alive and present and refuse to let others forget or ignore it.

~ ***You have a story to tell so tell it.*** Your story may be the key to unlock another mom's prison. We cannot do this alone. We need one another. Don't let fear of being dismissed or misunderstood silence you. Speak up. Stand out. Shout your truth for others to hear.

~ ***This day is for YOU.*** It is set aside for all the mothers who love a child they can no longer hold. Observe it however is meaningful and healing for YOU. There's no right way or wrong way to grieve.

Thoughts and Poems of Remembrance and Love



To the living, I am gone.
To the sorrowful, I will never return.
To the angry, I was cheated.
But to the happy, I am at peace.
And to the faithful, I have never left.
I cannot speak, but I can listen.
I cannot be seen, but I can be heard.
So as you stand upon a shore gazing at a beautiful sea,
As you look upon a flower and admire its simplicity,
Remember me. Remember me in your heart,
Your thoughts, and your memories,
Of the times we loved, The times we cried,
The times we fought, The times we laughed.
For if you always think of me, I will never be gone.
But with you always deep inside your heart.

*"And we wept that
one so lovely, should
have a life so brief."*

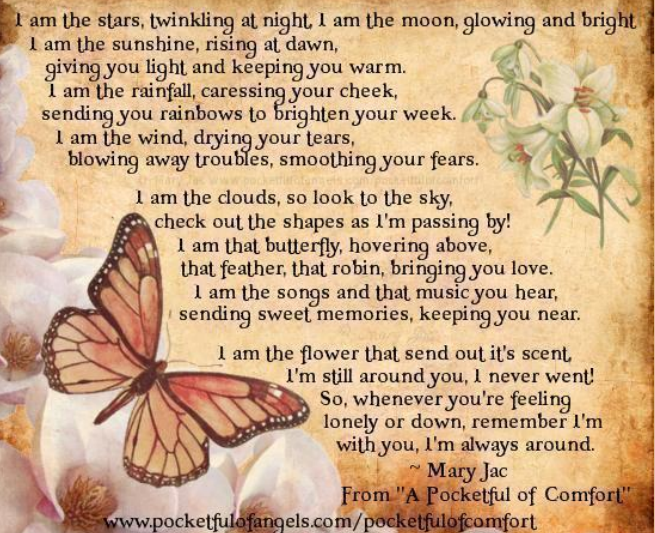
"We do not "get over" a loss.

We learn to carry the grief
and integrate the loss in our
lives. In our hearts, we carry
those who have passed on.

We grieve and we love.

We remember.

*"And can it be that in a
world so full and busy
the loss of one creature
makes a void so wide
and deep that nothing
but the width and depth
of eternity can fill it up."*



I am the stars, twinkling at night, I am the moon, glowing and bright
I am the sunshine, rising at dawn,
giving you light and keeping you warm.
I am the rainfall, caressing your cheek,
sending you rainbows to brighten your week.
I am the wind, drying your tears,
blowing away troubles, smoothing your fears.

I am the clouds, so look to the sky,
check out the shapes as I'm passing by!
I am that butterfly, hovering above,
that feather, that robin, bringing you love.
I am the songs and that music you hear,
sending sweet memories, keeping you near.

I am the flower that send out it's scent,
I'm still around you, I never went!
So, whenever you're feeling
lonely or down, remember I'm
with you, I'm always around.

~ Mary Jac

From "A Pocketful of Comfort"

www.pocketfulofangels.com/pocketfulofcomfort

GRIEVING YOUR CHILD ON MOTHER'S DAY

I miss my child every day. This grief of mine will never leave me, and honestly, why should it? I love my child more than I ever could have imagined, and yes, I do mean present tense *"love"*. It is excruciating knowing that my child will never return to my arms. However, a mother's love for her child doesn't require physical presence; this can be proven by the fact that most mothers love their children well before they are even born. I will love my child forever, and therefore, I will grieve my child forever. This is just how it goes.

I know it's difficult for some people to understand my ongoing grief, I guess because they want me to *"get better"* or return to *"normal."* Actually, I *am* normal. I'm just different now. I believe those who say they want to support me on difficult days like Mother's Day, but part of this is accepting me as a grieving mother who will always love her child.

My grief is like the weather. Somedays it's calm, quiet and maybe even a little sunny. Other days it's a devastating storm that makes me feel angry, exhausted, raw, and empty. I wake up in the morning and wonder – *"Am I even alive at all? And if so, how am I supposed to make it through this day?"* This is why when you ask me how I feel about Mother's Day, all I can say is, *"It depends"*. I'm going to try my best to cope with the day, but while you're hoping that your Mother's Day picnic doesn't get spoiled by actual rain, I'll be praying that the grief storms stay at bay.

Like many things in a grieving mother's life, Mother's Day is bittersweet. On the one hand, I feel immense joy because I was blessed with my child and I feel gratitude for every moment I was given with them. On the other hand, the pain of missing my child – my greatest happiness, my life's purpose, and my forever friend – is intense.

Bereaved mothers live with so many of these confusing contrasts. They are like undercurrents that tug and toss about our hearts and minds. I am a mother to a child who is not alive. Perhaps a child who you've never met. You can't ask me about their school year, or if they're enjoying piano lessons, or if they've chosen a major in college. I've imagined my child doing all these things. People don't realize that I grieve each of my child's milestones, even though they don't get to experience them.

Most people don't know how to validate my child's place in the world or my ongoing role as my child's mother. This is a difficult concept for others to grasp. Sometimes even I grapple with the answers to questions like *"Do you have children?"* and if so, *"How many?"* Most bereaved mothers long for these questions to have straightforward answers.

Sadly, mothers who have experienced the death of their *only* child may even wonder whether they get to call themselves a mother at all. So, in addition to the pain of grief, these mothers have to cope with a sense of being left out, forgotten, and ignored. Can you imagine how that might feel? I think it must be like being stabbed through the heart and when you turn to others for help they say *"What blood?" "What knife?"*

www.whatsyourgrief.com

Then, for mothers who have surviving children, there is this gem of a comment – *"Don't forget, you're lucky to have other children."* A mother does not forget *any* of her children. A mother loves each and every one of her children in unique and special ways, but one of her children has died and so her love for this child looks a little untraditional. Mothers do not have a finite amount of love to be shifted, divided and spread around depending on the number of children they have on this Earth. So please be careful with your comments. It's difficult enough for grieving mothers who often feel torn between feeling joy and happiness for their living children and grief for the child who has died.

So, *"What is it like to grieve a child on Mother's Day?"* There are as many responses as there are mothers. Each grieve in their own unique way. Here are a few things a bereaved mother might say: *"This day will forever be hard. I live with an emptiness that no one can fill; so I may be sad, I may be unsociable, and I may need to take a break to be by myself in a quiet place. Whatever shape my grief takes on this day, please allow me to feel the way I feel."*

"Please, acknowledge me as a mother. It makes me feel forgotten and as though my child has been forgotten when people act as though my child never existed. Also, I can sense that people feel uncomfortable talking about my child, honestly, I find it really comforting when someone talks about my child. I love hearing their name! I love hearing stories. Maybe you know a story I've never heard, or maybe I've heard it a hundred times before, it doesn't matter to me. Your acknowledgment alone is a great gift to me."

If you're worried about Mother's Day, you're not alone. Try not to get overwhelmed or wrapped up in anxiety. You may actually find that the anticipation of the day is worse than the day itself. There is no *"right"* way to handle Mother's Day – but do try to plan ahead a little. You may want to reach out to others who are struggling with the day &, if you can, it always helps to face the day with people who love & support you."

Whatever you do, *believe* you will make it through the day. With time, the grief storms will grow smaller and less frequent and you will find a little more balance and room to breathe. Believe you will be okay, have hope that in the future you will find yourself in a place where you can grieve & celebrate on Mother's Day at the same time.

*Mother's day is a day of
appreciation and respect.
I can think of no Mother's
who deserve it more, than
those that had to
give a child back.*

~ Erna Bombbeck

May Reminders

*Please remember to send in your child's photo so that it can be added to the new TCF Modesto-Riverbank website.
scasity@comcast.net*

You can still get photo button made of your child, grandchild or sibling with our new button machine! Buttons can be made at 6:30 pm on our meeting nights. Bring an extra copy of a photo or a photocopy of it, that can be cut into a circle 3" in diameter. Close-up photos usually work the best. You may bring a graphic design instead of a photo, if you wish. This will be a wonderful way to get acquainted with each other's children!

Magnets are also available!!



WATER LANTERN FESTIVAL EVENT

The awe-inspiring event is filled with happiness, sharing & smiles. A time to come together & remember those we love & heal together!

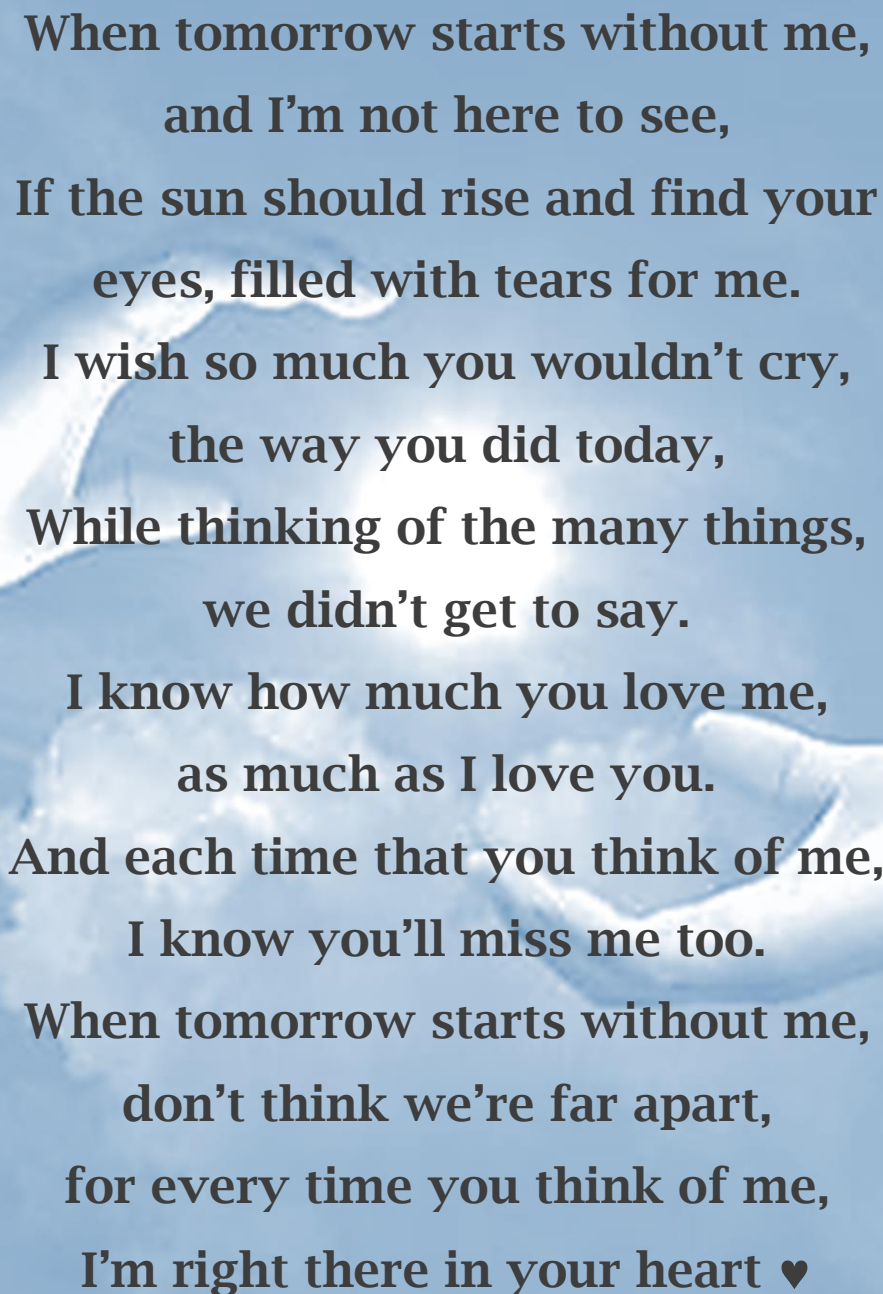
www.waterlanternfestival.com

Mother's Day & **Father's Day** are intended for celebration. For those who mourn these special days, it can also become a time to celebrate the faith and courage it takes to live a life of peace and joy while also carrying earth's greatest sorrow.

Creating memorials or tributes to our beloved child/children is a large part of coping with bereavement and going through the grieving process. Here are some beautiful and extraordinary ideas that may honor our children & their lives.

- ♥ Plant a tree in their memory, either in your garden or in a public place (may require a permit) where you will be able to visit (you can even have a plaque attached to the tree, dedicating it to your child). You could even hold back a small portion of your child's ashes and place them in the planting hole so that the ashes become part of the tree as it grows.
- ♥ Create a memorial garden and fill it with beautiful flowers and plants. You could also include a memorial garden bench or seat made with a plaque dedicating it to your child. This would provide a personal place for reflection and solitude.
- ♥ If you have a patio in your garden you might consider having a special paving slab engraved and laid within the existing patio. You could even have a photo sealed within it so you can go out onto the patio or into the garden and spend time with your child whenever you wish.
- ♥ Consider having a Star named after your child. What comfort and joy it would bring to look towards the heavens on a starry night, and to know that one of those glowing orbs has your child's name attached to it. www.starregistry.com
- ♥ Memorial tattoos are a popular way to never forget your child and keep them close to you. You can even ask for some of their ashes to be mixed in with the tattoo ink. This is an excellent way to show the level of love you hold for them.
- ♥ Having a small portion of their ashes converted into jewelry or even diamonds is another idea. This way you can wear the jewelry and keep your child close to you.
- ♥ In much the same way as parents do for their children who are still living, why not wear an old fashioned locket with a piece of your child's hair in it, or a photo of them, or both. When you feel 'down' you can hold the locket and know they are always close to your heart.
- ♥ Write a poem as a tribute to your child. It can be written up by a calligrapher and then framed to hang on a wall within your home.
- ♥ Make a memorial DVD by going to all your child's favorite places and recording them. You could ask friends and family to make a short speech about their favorite memories of your child, what they loved about them, why they will miss them, funny stories etc. The DVD can be copied and given as a remembrance of your child.
- ♥ There are now many online Memorial Websites where you can post photos, videos, tributes etc. These are a wonderful way to immortalize your child.
- ♥ Sponsor a trophy for an annual event within your community. The trophy will be engraved with your child's name and it will be an annual dedication to him/her for you to celebrate and participate in.
- ♥ Pay for an annual scholarship in your child's name. A local high school would gladly welcome such a tremendous gift. Fundraising could be done during the year to help contribute to the funding of such an award.
- ♥ Create a Facebook page in their memory. This will allow everyone that cared about and loved the person in life to leave their own personal thoughts and sentiments on the page.
- ♥ Set up a charity in their memory, whether to support research into a medical problem they died from, or to increase public awareness of dangerous drugs that contributed to their death etc.
- ♥ Commission a piece of music to be written especially in their memory. Whenever you feel sad you can play the music and think of them.

Dear Mom & Dad,



When tomorrow starts without me,
and I'm not here to see,
If the sun should rise and find your
eyes, filled with tears for me.
I wish so much you wouldn't cry,
the way you did today,
While thinking of the many things,
we didn't get to say.
I know how much you love me,
as much as I love you.
And each time that you think of me,
I know you'll miss me too.
When tomorrow starts without me,
don't think we're far apart,
for every time you think of me,
I'm right there in your heart ♥

I love you,
♥ Me



LOVE GIFTS

Love gifts can be made in memory of your child, sibling or grandchild in any amount. The donations received are used for our annual Candle lighting Program each December. Funds are also used for sending our newsletter via US mail and for community outreach. We would like to reach out to other bereaved families who may not be aware we are here to lend our support after the death of a child.

Please send your tax-deductible donation to the PO Box below.

Heyam Khacho in loving memory of her daughter, Rita Farha

If you wish to make a Love Gift donation, please fill out the information below and send with a check to:

The Compassionate Friends
Modesto/Riverbank Area Chapter
PO Box 578713
Modesto, CA 95357

Child, Sibling or Grandchild _____

Date of Birth_____/_____/_____ Date of Death_____/_____/_____

Donation amount_____

Your Name_____

Telephone_____

Your email address_____

Your address_____ City_____

Zip_____

Would you like your love gift listed in our newsletter in memory of your child, grandchild or sibling? The amount will remain anonymous Yes_____ No_____

The Compassionate Friends is a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization. Donations are tax deductible



Thank you 7- Eleven stores at 2500 Geer Rd.,
Turlock, CA and 3225 McHenry Ave.,
Modesto, CA for sponsoring our monthly
newsletter!!

"I loved the boy with the utmost love of which my soul is
capable and he
is taken from me - yet in the agony of my spirit, in
surrendering such a
treasure, I feel a thousand times richer than if I never
possessed it."

William Wordsworth
www.missfoundation.org

Our Mission

The mission of The Compassionate Friends: When a child dies, at any age, the family suffers intense pain and may feel hopeless and isolated. The Compassionate Friends provides highly personal comfort, hope, and support to every family experiencing the death of a son or a daughter, a brother or a sister, or a grandchild, and helps others better assist the grieving family.



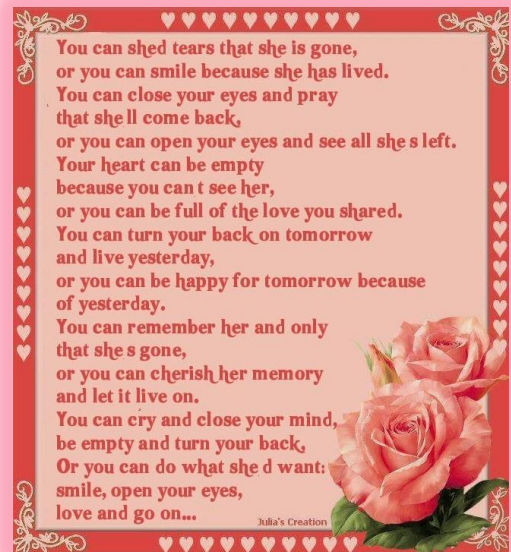
Visit our website for information
and to stay up to date on chapter
events.

www.modestoriverbanktcf.org

2019 Steering Committee Members

Tracey Parker – Chapter Leader
Devon Homme – Secretary
Elsie Freeman – Treasurer
Kris Leitner – Newsletter Editor
Janet Neal – Outreach Coordinator
Lori Leitner – Hospitality & Library
Chad Homme – Public Relations
Mike & Suzanne Casity – Website

Our Steering Committee wants to provide the best possible support to each of our TCF Chapter members and friends. Please contact a member of the Steering Committee with any concerns you have or any ideas about how our Chapter can be of support to you and others. We're also available if you'd like to talk about your child or some aspect of the challenges of your bereavement journey. You can reach us by: email at tcfmodestoriverbank@gmail.com or by phone at 209-622-6786 or on Facebook.



Check out our closed Facebook page,
**Modesto-Riverbank Area
Chapter of TCF.** Make a request to
join the page & an Administrator will
approve your request. It's a great way
to keep in touch between chapter
meetings & activities.