



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

Volume 28 Number 12

Fargo ND/Moorhead MN

December 2011

PLEASE NOTE OUR MAILING ADDRESS ON THE BACK PAGE
REGULAR MEETING: 7:30 P.M. SECOND THURSDAY OF EACH MONTH

This month's meeting is on December 8th

Next month's meeting is on January 12th, 2012 @ 7 P.M.

FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH - 127 2ND AVE E - WEST FARGO, ND

Please enter on the West side (Elevator entrance). Our meeting is in the Fellowship Hall - lower level, west side.

Meeting Topic - Candlelighting Ceremony

DATES TO REMEMBER:

December 11, 2011 - Worldwide Candle Lighting 7 pm

NOTE: As of January 2012, our meetings will begin at 7 P.M.

If you have topic ideas for future meetings, please let us know.

The Compassionate Friends National Office, P.O. Box 3696, Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696

Phone number: 877-969-0010 - E-mail: nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org - Web Site: www.compassionatefriends.org

Website for the Fargo/Moorhead Chapter - www.tcffargomoorhead.org

If you have any pictures, stories, or poems of your child/grandchild/sibling that you would like to share on our website, please submit them to Sheryl Cvijanovich at sherylcv13@msn.com or mail them to the PO box listed on the back of the Newsletter. Anything sent to the PO Box will be scanned for the website and returned.

Help us save money and paper.....

To receive the newsletters via email in a pdf format, please send an email to the newsletter editor, Nancy Teeuwen at FMTCFNWLTR@LIVE.COM. Please be sure to include your name in the email.

*****DECEMBER LOVE GIFTS*****

Denny & Pat Wateland in memory of their daughter, Tracy Ann Wateland 12/1971 - 7/1993

Lori Brady & family in memory of their son/brother, Greg Sears 12/1987 - 8/2009

Ralph & Ethel Hest in memory of their daughter, Nancy Hest 7/1951 - 12/2004

Scott & Ruth Blilie in memory of their daughter, Nicole Anne Blilie 12/1989 - 12/2007

Jim & Suzie Hill in memory of their son, Jon Poitra 2/1982 - 12/2010

We are deeply grateful for the LOVE GIFTS given this month.

Our chapter and all chapters, are financed solely through your Love Gifts.

Donations make this newsletter, postage, books, tapes, etc. possible.

Thank you for your tax deductible gifts.

OUR 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. ©2007

For information on other chapters: TCF National Office.....877-969-0010

"It isn't for the moment that you are stuck that you need courage, but for the long uphill battle to faith, sanity, and security."

~ Anne Morrow Lindbergh - (who lost her first born son in a kidnapping and murder in the early 20th century.)



ANGEL OF HOPE MEMORIAL SERVICE

The Annual Candlelight Memorial Service will be held at the Angel of Hope statue on Tuesday, December 6th, at 7 p.m., for all parents and families who have lost a child. The statue is located at the north entrance of Island Park, Fargo. Attendees are invited to bring a white flower to place at the base of the statue in memory of loved ones.

Christmas is the Hardest Holiday!

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 of all the tinsel and tissue? Because of all the crowds dashing madly in 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?

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 any-way. So what if our new 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?

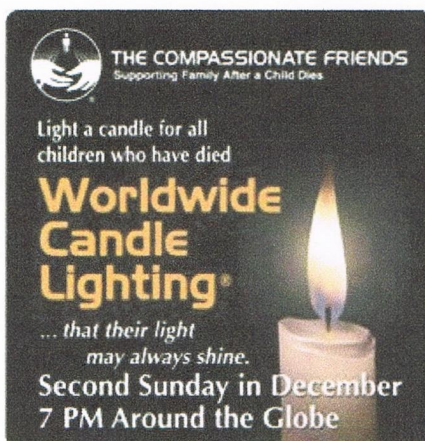
So, in the middle of that Christmas day, we returned to that forlorn, frozen stick of a tree. Carefully, we hung the bare branches with popcorn strings and suet balls (not quite the same as satin!). I'm sure we were a strange sight that afternoon, but with a mixture of tears and snowflakes, we began 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 with us . . . warming heart — places 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 and deepens the joy of simply being alive.

We saved a tiny twig from that frozen tree . . . to remind us of what we almost lost. That was the year we chose to let Christmas come back. Now we don't have to wait for joy to return. For now we know it lives with us . . . where Christmas is EVERY DAY.

~ Darcie Sims



Worldwide Candle Lighting

The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting, held annually the second Sunday in December, this year December 11th, unites family and friends around the globe as they light candles for one hour to honor and remember children who have died at any age from any cause. As candles are lit at 7 p.m. local time, creating a virtual wave of light, hundreds of thousands of persons commemorate and honor the memories of children in a way that transcends all ethnic, cultural, religious, and political boundaries.

CHRISTMAS PAST, CHRISTMAS PRESENT

As the holidays approach, most bereaved parents feel anxiety, apprehension and some little bit of fear. The past is gone, along with our beautiful children. We live in the now, the new reality of holidays without our children.

This will be my fifth Christmas without my son, Todd. It will be my fourth Christmas without his children. And yet, I find that on some small level, I am looking forward to the holiday. I imagine the Christmases of the past when Todd was growing up and after he started his family. I also imagine Christmases of the future where Todd's children share in the traditions that their Dad so dearly loved. But that won't happen. I have come to accept that wives and children go on with their lives. I have come to accept that my son's children will not be a part of their father's family, his heritage or his legacy. That is the reality. But I have also found that wonderful people can help make the holiday special.

We won't be decorating this year, but we haven't decorated for five years. We have changed our traditions — traditions that Todd loved so much. It is simply too painful to do this alone. Christmas will never be what it once was, but I no longer dread the holidays as I once did.

Some of my Compassionate Friends have returned to old traditions with their surviving children and maybe even with grandchildren. Each of us learns to deal with Christmas in our own way. Each year I am a different person with a new perspective on the holidays. Next year I may decide to skip it all or immerse myself in the season. My truth is changing.

Find what is right for you. Pressures from others mean nothing. You choose whether a celebration is in order. You choose how to celebrate. You choose the old traditions or you choose some new ones ... maybe you choose nothing and decide to go with the flow of the moment. As bereaved parents, you will always remember your child at Christmas, but as the years add up and grief starts to release its grip on your soul, you may find that you can keep your child in your heart and have room for the spirit of Christmas as well.

The holidays do get better. Life does get better. The days will gradually become softer and sweeter. The nights will ease into gentleness. Friendships will again have luster, and relationships will become deeper and more meaningful. That is the future for each of us. The present is driven by where we are in our grief. So for this, and every Christmas Holiday season, be who you are and mark the day as you choose. May we all have serenity throughout the Holiday season and in the years ahead.

~ Annette Mennen Baldwin, TCF/Katy, TX
Mom of Todd Mennen

First Christmas

It can't possibly be Christmas without her being here.
Yet the world is singing 'round me, joyful tidings and good cheer.
Though I try to put on armor and brave the sights and sounds,
a few moments worth of shopping, and the tears are spilling
down.

I pray for strength to do it, find a path through holidays,
look for shortcuts, good ideas, some directions through the maze.
Then I find at last the answer: I'll include her symbolically.
And the giving becomes perfect; her love's flowing down
through me.

Genesse Bourdeau Gentry
From *Stars in the Deepest Night--*
--After the Death of a Child

Newly Bereaved ... Burden of Grief

As I struggle with words to find answers

Reading and writing my pain

The pages grow blurred
before eyes that are tired

From this crushing emotional drain.

The relief that comes from the writing

Parallels what I feel when I read—

To open myself to the torture of loss

Seems to soothe this unbearable need.

There's no pleasure in life at this moment

It's an effort to get through the day

And I labor to stay above water...

But the shoreline is so far away.

So I pick up a pen or a book about grief

And it serves as a raft for a while.

And I hope, as my tears fall

On pages of pain

That I'll learn once again how to smile.

As I swim toward the

Shore of acceptance

I pray for the peace of belief

That heaven's your home and

You're waiting for me

Then I'll finally be free of this grief.

~ Sally Migliaccio, TCF/ Babylon, NY

Please Don't

Please don't ask how I'm doing....

My child is dead, and my heart is broken

But you don't want to hear that.

Please don't tell me my child is in a better place.....

The best place for my precious child

Is right here by my side.

Please don't tell me I am lucky

To have had my child as long as I did,

There's nothing "lucky" about me,

My precious child is dead.

Please don't ask when I will be back to normal,

There is no normal for me without my child,

I am forever changed.

Please don't say you know how I feel,

Unless you have walked in my painful shoes,

You really don't have a clue as to how I feel!

Please don't tell me it took you two years to "get over"
the death of your husband, mother, sister or whomever.....

There is no comparison to the pain of the death of a child.

I know you mean well, my friend,

But please don't try to make me "snap out of it".....

Just be there, and hold my hand, say

"I'm here for you, and I am so sorry"

~ Lou Odom, TCF/Fort Worth Chapter

If your loved one ever laughed, then trust that you, too,
will laugh again. Let the joy of your loved one's LIFE
seep up through the layers of hurt to emerge into a
single moment of light.

~ Darcie D. Sims, "Footsteps Through the Valley"



2011 Holiday Angels



Given By:

LARRY & LOIS GANGNES
RALPH & ETHEL HEST
RON & PATTY LANDMAN & FAMILY

GRACE WOLF
ERNIE & BIRDINE GRAFSGAARD
CRAIG & BARB LARSON
ED & ELSIE FOSS
STEVE & LISA EICHOLTZ
JOHN & KYLENE MILLIGAN
LOWELL & MARLYS LUNDBERG
JANET & HOWARD GALLAGHER
LEROY & DONNA KORNELIUS
GARY & CAROL DUGGAN
GORDON & VIRLYN HOFF
MARY VASECKA
SHERRY LASSLE
JOAN & STEVE HALLAND
LYNETTE HALLMAN
JOE LEGGIO
RANDY & DEBBIE FREED
ANNE & JERRY BARBEE
JAMIE, SHERRI & MANDY THOEMKE
DOLORES HARRIS
RORY, KAREN & TERRY HUNTER
CURT & CHRISTI SWANSON
TOM & LEAH TVEDT
JACKIE BUTH
LYLE & TAMMY HELGESON
CRAIG & DEANNA BRAUN
CLARE & RICHARD ELLESS
JERRY & ARLENE MUNIGHAN
LAURA & KEITH KUEHL

CLARA J. LOCK

TROY, AMANDA & FAITH FYRE
NEIL & KATHLEEN PROCHNOW
MARIAN GREENWOOD
DONNA HOLLEY

JOHN & NANCY TEEUWEN & FAMILY
MARK & LAVERNE CZICHOTZKI
RICK & TAMMY DERHEIM
WENDELL & EDNA CORBET
ARLEN & JULIE KOTTA
JIM, JODY & DANA KUTTER
JOHN & MARY TOBOLT

In Memory of:

BRENT M. GANGNES
NANCY HEST
PATRICK MICHAEL LANDMAN
HAZEL CLAIRE LANDMAN
ELIJAH STEPHEN LANDMAN
VERONICA HOPE LANDMAN
JUSTIN JAY WOLF
DAVID GRAFSGAARD
ERIC C. LARSON
BRIAN FOSS
TYLER JUSTIN EICHOLTZ
MATTHEW MILLIGAN-OLSON
TRACY A. FORD
BRUCE THORNBY
LANNIE LEE KORNELIUS
ROBERT (BOB) DUGGAN
KARLTON YORK HOFF
CORRINE HOEFKER
JAYME LASSLE
COLE HALLAND
DAVID WILLIAM HALLMAN
ANNIE PAGE LEGGIO
TYLER FREED
MATTHEW J GAFFNEY
TYLER JAMES THOEMKE
ALLEN HARRIS
TABATHA HUNTER
AMANDA JO SWANSON
DANE TVEDT
RANDY BUTH
JARED HELGESON
ANDREW BRAUN
TARI ELLESS HELLER
JEFF MUNIGHAN
DAVID KUEHL
WENDY KUEHL
CHARLES (CHUCK) LOCK
BABY BOY LOCK
CONNOR FYRE
REED JOEL PROCHNOW
BENJAMIN SCHOFF
MATTHEW CVIJANOVICH
JASON HOLLEY
BRANDI ROSE IRENE TEEUWEN
MICHAEL CZICHOTZKI
KEEGAN DERHEIM
ERIC CORBET
BENJAMIN KOTTA
MICHELLE KUTTER
SCOTT ANTHONY TOBOLT



2011 Holiday Angels



Given By:

RICHARD & LINDA OLSON
JACK & KELLY BORGEN
GEORGIE MECHEL
GERALD & DELORES BEYERS
ROBERT & ELEANOR INFELD
JOHN, TAMMY, & ANDREW SADEK
JOEL & JANE DIEMERT

DEB MARKEY
ROBERT & JOANN CORDOVA
JUNE VOLK

CHARLES & MARY BETH PILON

DAVID HALLMAN & FAMILY
DENNIS & SHIRLEY BJERKEN
GEORGE & PATTI PRATT
NORBERT & LUELLA KLEINGARTNER
LARAE JENSEN
BECKY NELSON
SHARON & JOHN MAURER
LARRY & MARY HANSON
RICHARD & DENISE ESKILDSEN
NANCY TEEUWEN

MIKE & SHERYL CVIJANOVICH

MARY & GALEN SCHROEDER
ANDY & RHONDA BJELLAND
CAROL & JIM SHERIDAN
BLAKE & CHRISTINA DAHLBERG
SHARON WATELAND

MARK & HELLA HELFTER
JASON & TANDY PRATT

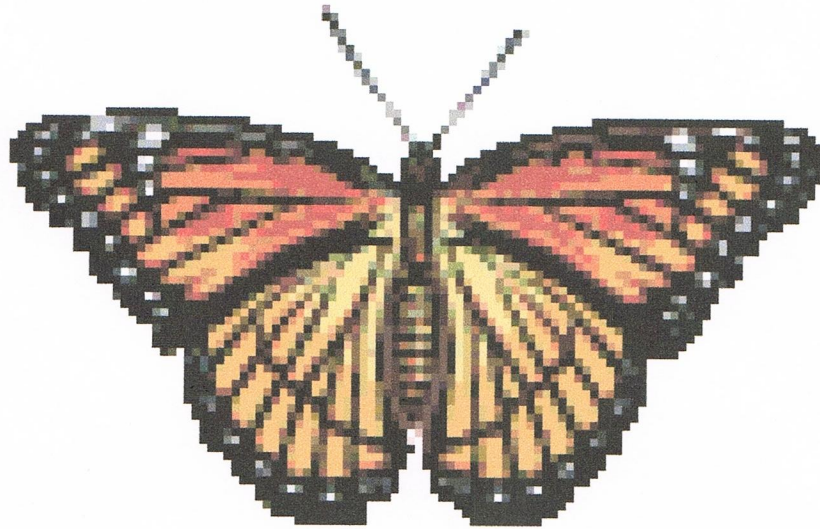
WAYNE & COREEN PIKE
DEWAYNE & ARLENE PETERSON
PAUL & KARA BAILEY & FAMILY
SEARS FAMILY
DIANE FENSKE
JIM & SUZIE HILL
ROY & MYRTLE MCDONALD
SCOTT & RUTH BLILIE
AL & CHAR ZAESKE
ELLEN PAZDRO
DOREEN HALVORSON

In Memory of:

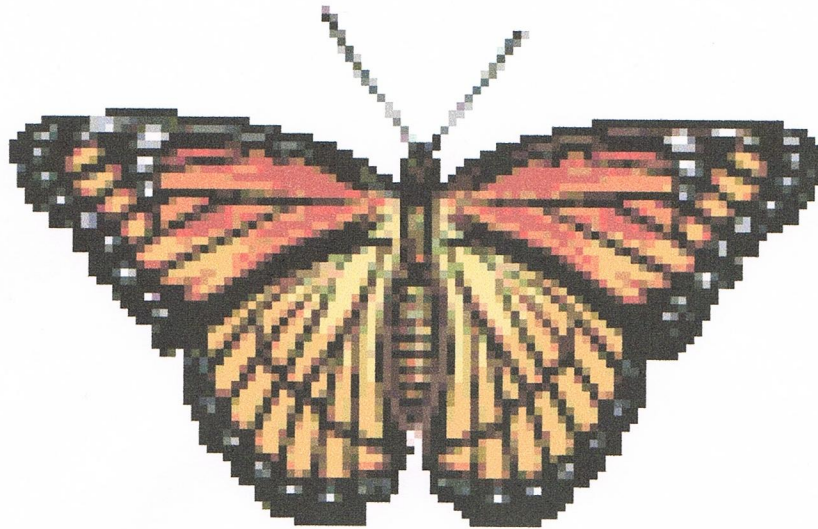
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KARI BORGEN
MATTHEW MECHEL
TAMERA KAY CHAPUT
DARRYL INFELD
NICK SADEK
JARED DIEMERT
JENNA DIEMERT
TIM MARKEY
MEGAN MARIE NEMER
JEFFREY VOLK
DAVID VOLK
CYDNEY CAROLINE PILON
MCKENZIE MAE PILON
DAVID WILLIAM HALLMAN
BRIAN BJERKEN
NANCY PRATT COASH
DAVID MARK KLEINGARTNER
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NICHOLAS LEE BAILEY
GREG SEARS
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JON POITRA
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NICOLE ANNE BLILIE
BRUCE ZAESKE
MATTHEW CVIJANOVICH
LEE HALVORSON

KORSMO FUNERAL SERVICES

OUR BELOVED CHILDREN REMEMBERED



Birthdays and Anniversaries have been removed from the Internet version of our newsletter for security purposes



SIBLING PAGE

A Journey to the "New Normal"

May 31 marked seven years since my only sibling Dave died from cancer at age 32. This June 28 we would have been celebrating Dave's 40th birthday with a big party, and I'd be kidding him about going bald, just like all the Snepp men before him. Instead, I'll be getting ready for the TCF National Conference, at which I'll share memories of his brilliance, great smile, and sense of humor with those who will never have the pleasure of meeting him in person.

At this point in my grief journey, most will be good memories of how Dave lived, rather than bad memories of how he died. I can't recall the moment when that shift of perspective occurred, but I would like to share a few memories and milestones that have marked the way:

- Months after Dave died, I went to see the movie "Big", starring Tom Hanks, and "lost it" when his mother stared out the window wondering if she'd ever see him again. I watched the movie again recently and didn't lose it.
- It was three months before I felt up to sharing with anyone the details of the day my brother died at his home in Bellevue, Washington, in the company of Mom, Dad, and me. On the way home from that emotional conversation, I drove the wrong way down a one way street in downtown Chicago – it might be smart to have a friend drive you to your first few TCF meetings!
- I discovered that the grief path is not a straight line. A few good days can be followed by several bad ones. I've heard other TCF members call this their "roller coaster ride."
- For a year, I couldn't keep the radio on if "Wind Beneath My Wings" came on. For the next year, I kept it on but cried through it. Now, I can usually make it all the way through without any tears!
- With the help of TCF, I realized that despite friends expecting it to be possible, I'd never be "back to normal." My focus instead shifted to finding my "new normal". While I can't point to a time when that happened (probably after the 1990 TCF Conference), THAT was a milestone.
- For three Christmases after Dave died, I didn't put up a tree in my condo. For Christmas, 1991, as I was getting out ornaments for my first tree since his death, I came across a bunch of ornaments that he had had in his apartment. I came totally unglued then, but now I look forward to seeing those ornaments each Christmas.
- It was three years before I felt that I had enough emotional energy to pursue a relationship. Even now, I don't have a lot of tolerance for guys I go out with that gripe about their brothers or sisters.

My most vivid "landmark" to date along my grief journey came in February 1993. Following my Dad's father's death in December, 1992, we were in Atlanta cleaning out my grandfather's apartment, and I came across a pile of post cards and letters that Dave had written to my grandparents through the years. Earlier in my journey, a "blind side" such as that would have sent me into a tailspin. In this case, though, my immediate reaction was one of happiness, for I had found a part of Dave that I didn't know I still had! I saved a few of the post cards, sent a couple to my cousin who was referenced in some of the letters, and (amazingly) threw the rest away. It was fun to share the memories, but I didn't feel the need to hang onto them. It was at that point, nearly five years after Dave's death, that I truly felt as if I was closing in on that "new normal."

~ Karen Snepp, TCF, Frisco, Texas, from the TCF Stages Newsletter, Summer 1995

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS
 OF THE F-M AREA
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MISSION STATEMENT:
 The mission of The Compassionate Friends is to assist families toward the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child of any age and to provide information to help others be supportive.



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

A SINCERE WELCOME TO ALL COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS... We are a nonprofit self-help organization offering friendship and support to families who have experienced the death of a child. We offer group support, understanding and friendship. Our purpose is to promote and aid parents and siblings in the positive resolution of the grief they are experiencing and to foster physical and emotional health. If you have questions or wish to talk directly to a member of the Fargo-Moorhead Compassionate Friends, please call any of the numbers listed.

FARGO-MOORHEAD COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS BOARD

YOU ARE INVITED TO JOIN THE BOARD AT ANY TIME!

Chapter Leader	John Milligan..... 701-282-4794	Secretary-Treasurer	Sheryl Cvijanovich..... 701-235-8158
Librarian		Initial Contact	Kylene Milligan 701-282-4794
Newsletter Editor	Nancy Teeuwen..... 701-730-0805	Newsletter Database	Mike Cvijanovich..... 701-235-8158
Newsletter Printing	Joyce at Olivet Lutheran Church	Mailing Committee	Contact Us to Join

LIBRARY INFORMATION: We have an extensive library available. Please feel free to check materials at our next meeting.

TELEPHONE FRIENDS

HAVING A BAD DAY OR NIGHT? Feel free to call and talk to any of the following:
 John Milligan (son, 25 - car accident)..... 701-282-4794
 Duane Skramstad (daughter, 20 - car accident; son, 2 - drowning) 701-437-2507
 Cheri Eraker (son, 23 - accident) 701-451-0045
 Carol Nelson (son , 13 - leukemia) 218-346-3854
 Nancy Teeuwen (daughter, 15 hours - illness)..... 701-730-0805
 Mark & Hella Helfter (miscarriage & son, 35 - accident)..... 701-235-9622

Love gifts must be received by the 15th to be included in the next month's newsletter. If you wish to give a love gift please complete:

Love gift given in Memory/Honor of _____
 Name _____
 Address _____
 Relationship _____ Born _____ Died _____