



# The Compassionate Friends of Canada

National newsletter, February 12, 2016



Hey! What happened? One day the calendar says 2015, and the next thing you know, everything is hearts and flowers and it is mid-February 2016.



January brings to mind the ancient Roman god Janus, who could look both backward and forward. Looking back, your TCF Board of Directors can report the results of the motion that went out last fall to registered chapters concerning revision of our TCF Canada constitution and bylaws. That motion passed unanimously, thank you. Looking forward, we can advise you that a Canadian conference is in the works for summer 2017, in Medicine Hat, Alberta.

On the international scene, this message came in while I was travelling at the end of January:

*My Dear and Compassionate Friends*

*It is now 47 years since TCF was founded on 28 January, 1969.*

*I had heard of this organization from my friend who joined up here in East London, South Africa, soon after her 21-year-old son shot himself. But I was never going to need such an organization because I was never going to lose a child. Or so I thought. Two years later this friend was one of the first on my doorstep when my own 21-year-old son died while driving an Army ambulance. Two weeks later, I attended my first meeting with her and was so smitten with the whole wonderful concept that I am still here almost 26 years later.*

*You know the rest of the story through the deaths of your own beloved children – the sorrow, disbelief, desperation, heart-wrenching pain, tears that we would never recover.... And our own gradual reinvestment in life, spurred on by those who had trodden the road before us – the road paved for us by our Founders.*

*Having visited the very hospital and indeed the very room where Simon Stephens, Joe and Iris Lawley, Bill and Joan Henderson and Betty Rattigan met to discuss how they could reach out to bereaved parents and their families through the loss of their young sons, Kenneth, Billy and Jimmy, keeps me ever mindful of the candle of hope that still burns around the world today.*

*So this is just a reminder to light your own candle in memory of your child or children, not only in gratitude for their lives but in deep gratitude for the hands of hope that were held out to each one of us and to thank you for holding on and reaching out to those who follow us in the name of The Compassionate Friends.*

*Hoping to see you all again at The International Gathering in Frankfurt and thanks to Wolfgang Book, Karin Grabenhorst and their tireless team for their attention to detail as they prepare for our arrival at the end of July 2016.*

*In warmest compassion - Myrtle Fleming, Chair, TCF International*

*It is never, ever, too late to light the candle of gratitude in our hearts!*

This is the International Gathering that Myrtle is referring to:



6th International TCF Gathering and the 20th National Conference VEID (Bereaved Parents and Siblings in Germany e.V.)

Welcome to the International Gathering of Bereaved Parents and Siblings in Frankfurt/Main from 28<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2016.

<http://mourninginmotion.org/en/>

Meet one more member of your national Board of Directors, yours truly:



**Michael Frank  
Lawrence  
1965-1968**

*I first became a bereaved mother in the summer of 1968 when the body of our three-year-old son, Michael, was found in the ocean near our home. (He had disappeared from our yard at the end of May.) The Society of The Compassionate Friends was founded just a few months later, in Coventry, England, in January of 1969, but three decades would pass before I found TCF after the death of our thirty-one-year-old daughter, Irene, in 1998. She died of sudden, undetermined natural causes while sitting on the sofa one evening, leaving a seven-year-old son for us to raise. Because of the active grief work that I had done over the years in response to our Michael's death and other significant losses, I was able to survive the initial shock of Irene's death, and eventually I was able to move toward reinvesting in life.*



**Irene Susan  
Lawrence  
1967-1998**

*TCF played a huge part in helping me move through my grief, so I soon made a commitment to give back to the organization, first by editing *The Next Step*, the TCF newsletter for Vancouver Island, and later, when Rick Lepinsky retired from leading the Victoria chapter, as a facilitator and chapter leader. I also feel a strong personal commitment to offer hope, and a helping hand, to more recently bereaved parents, so I have presented workshops in Canada since 2003 (*Collateral Damage: How Past, Present and Concurrent Losses Affect Our Grief Journey*) and in the USA since 2009 (*When Good Things Happen to Sad People; Daughterless Mothers; The Second Year – Why So Difficult?*)*



**Susan Doyle Lawrence  
Victoria, BC**

*I was elected to the board of TCF Canada in 2015 and currently serve as Vice-President, Secretary and U.S. Liaison. May we all work together to fulfill our mission as stated by the founder, the Reverend Simon Stephens:  
**Transforming the pain of grief into the elixir of hope.***