



# *The Compassionate Friends*

## *Marin County Chapter*

### **Supporting Family After a Child Dies**



**January—February, 2022 ISSUE**

**Vol 43, No. 1**

**#1184**

This issue of the TCF Marin Newsletter is sponsored by love gifts from our members.

#### **Chapter Leader:**

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#### **Facilitator:**

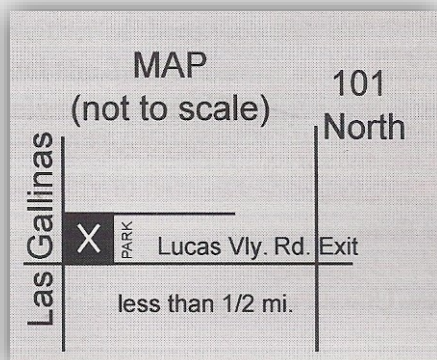
Mark Rosengarden

#### **TCF Marin Monthly Meetings:**

Group meetings are normally held on the third Monday of the month from 7:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at the Hillside Church at Lucas Valley.

2000 Las Gallinas Avenue  
(at Lucas Valley Road)  
San Rafael, CA

**First time attendees** are encouraged to arrive at 7:00 for orientation. All attendees arriving before 7:00 p.m. are asked to sign in and be seated in the lobby until the meeting room is ready. The TCF Newsletter and informational pamphlets will be displayed for attendees to browse.



#### **FORWORD to this edition and note from the editor:**

We are once again holding our usual monthly support meetings at the Hillside Church in Terra Linda. Attendees must show proof of Covid-19 vaccination and a picture ID. Facemasks are required.

Please let us know if you are not receiving periodic email information or if your email address is not on our contact list. We will add you to the list. Thank you for your continuing support.



#### **A brief word about TCF Marin**

We have a small, dedicated group of volunteers who are responsible for all we do. But the Compassionate Friends is all of us. We each have talents that could help out our group. If our chapter has helped you in dealing with your loss, please think about how you can participate a little more in the coming year. Assist us with your time ... assist us with your contributions.

Help to continue our work - and by helping - hopefully our chapter can become a greater source of comfort for you. Thank you in advance for your help.

#### **Bob Portnoy**

*TCF Marin, Treasurer*

It's Easy to be a Sponsor of the TCF Marin Newsletter

Our TCF families and friends now have the opportunity to sponsor our TCF Marin Newsletter. This is a meaningful way to honor your child, grandchild or sibling and help our chapter at the same time. Sponsorship donations are \$200 for an entire issue or it may be split with two families for \$100 each. Your name and your child's name will be included in the dedication or you may choose to donate anonymously. Please email [tcfmarin@gmail.com](mailto:tcfmarin@gmail.com) with any questions.

Donations may be sent to TCF Marin, P.O. Box 150935, San Rafael, CA 94915. Thank you for considering this generous contribution to our chapter.



#### **Meeting Calendar**

##### **Third Monday of the Month:**

Monday, January 17, 2022  
Monday, February 21, 2022  
Monday, March 21, 2022  
Monday, April 18, 2022



## TCF RESOURCES:

### ***The Compassionate Friends, Marin County Chapter***

P.O. Box 150935  
San Rafael, CA 94915  
www.tcfmarin.org  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/36595597804>  
Info: Eileen Rusky (415) 457-3123

### ***TCF San Francisco and Peninsula Chapter***

Meets: 2nd Wednesday  
Taraval Police Sta. 2345, 24th Ave  
Contact: Audre Hallum  
650.359.7928, [cwhallum1@mac.com](mailto:cwhallum1@mac.com)  
Co Leaders: Meg Cunningham, Doug Cameron

### ***TCF Sonoma County Chapter***

[tcf.sonomacounty@gmail.com](mailto:tcf.sonomacounty@gmail.com)  
(707) 490-8640

### ***Northern CA Regional Coordinator:***

Nancy Juracka  
[nancy\\_juracka@yahoo.com](mailto:nancy_juracka@yahoo.com)

### ***TCF National Office:***

P.O. Box 3696  
Oak Brook, IL 60533-3696  
Phone: (630) 990-0010  
Toll Free: (877) 969-0010  
Fax: (630) 990-0246  
Email: [nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org](mailto:nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org)  
[www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

### ***Additional Support Sites***

[opentohope.com](http://opentohope.com)  
[survivorsof suicide.com](http://survivorsof suicide.com)  
[griefspeaks.com](http://griefspeaks.com)

### ***Other Grief Counseling Resources***

Hospice by the Bay offers individual and group grief counseling.  
Free monthly drop in 1st Thursday 11am-12pm 17 E. Sir Francis Drake, Larkspur.  
Marin and SF (415) 526-5699  
Sonoma (707) 931-7299  
Email: [griefsupport@hbtb.org](mailto:griefsupport@hbtb.org)  
Website: [www.hospicebythebay.org](http://www.hospicebythebay.org)

### ***North Bay Grief Recovery in San Rafael***

[www.NorthBayGriefRecovery.com](http://www.NorthBayGriefRecovery.com)  
Ph.: 415-250-3027

[LINK TO WEBSITE](#)

### ***American Foundation for Suicide Prevention***

[www.afsp.org](http://www.afsp.org) Ph.: 707.721.4062

## Communicating with My Child

Eighteen months ago, I dedicated a bench to Philip. It's in a space Philip would like, out in the natural world, with abundant wildlife and wonderful views across hills and sea.

I go there often to spend time alone with my beloved son. I sit on the bench, look at the vistas, and remember our family as it used to be. I talk to Philip. I make him promises; I ask for his guidance. I muse on what his life would be like now. I tell him how deeply I love him, how missing him gets harder with each passing year. I tell him about his brothers, about his sister-in-law and his little nephew, both of whom he never met. I tell him how important he is to us. I tell him that we will never forget him, that though our lives are five years past his death, we still think of him all the time and want him with us. I tell him that I am having a terribly hard time accepting that he has died, and that I am doing the best I can.

I have no idea if I am communicating with a Philip who has survived death or with myself, who hopes he has. Sometimes I think I feel an impatient nudge, a sort of, "Get on with it, Mom, it's not what you think" message. Sometimes I feel his arms around me in compassionate understanding. Sometimes I don't feel any response at all.

I am grateful for these private times with my child. Whether he lives on in some other sphere—and how I hope he does!—or whether he resides only in our deepest hearts, there is an honoring of him in these conversations, a recognition of his existence and its importance, that matters very much to me.

I believe that we all need to find our individual ways of keeping the channels to our children open. My conversations with Philip may seem odd to some people, but they are right for me. I encourage you to honor your own private ways of communicating with your beautiful child, whatever they are. If you are searching for the channel that will work for you, consider what some other bereaved parents have found helpful: poetry, painting, journal writing, hiking in the natural world, day-dreaming, music, meditation, lighting candles, wearing a deceased child's clothing, sitting in his/her room, playing a sport she/he loved, among many, many others. May the time spent in private dialogue with your child bring you peace-filled moments, a renewed sense of connection, and strength to continue the difficult journey we are all on.

Kitty Reeve  
TCF Marin County and San Francisco Chapters, CA  
In Memory of my son, Philip



### **Parents who have lost a child find support, hope**

By Mary Niederberger, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*  
POSTED: 04/11/16, 12:47 PM PDT

Spouses who have lost their partners are widows and widowers. Children who have lost their parents are orphans. But there is no term to describe a parent who has lost a child. Some of those parents gather at a Mt. Lebanon, Pennsylvania, church each month to share memories of their children and sorrow that only they can understand.

Others soldier on alone or lean on family, friends or faith, sometimes founding charities, scholarships or anti-violence groups to keep alive the spirit of their loved one.

Whatever the circumstance of their children's passing, whatever the ways in which they chose to grieve, the parents share a common, painful void. The death of a child steals away the past, present and future.

"You always have plans for your kids. We certainly fill our lives with hope. When our child is gone, that hope goes away," says Bob Boyle, of Jefferson Hills, Pennsylvania, whose daughter Kelly was killed in a car accident in South Park, Pennsylvania, at age 22 in 1994. Nancy Kirkwood of East End mourns "not being able to see, hear or speak" with daughter Tess Senay Raynovich, 20, who died in a car accident in October 2012 not far from her Sewickley, Pennsylvania, home.

## Carol's Corner

by Carol Kearns, PhD  
author of "Sugar Cookies and a Nightmare"



### Columns for The Compassionate Friends

I have found great solace volunteering for The Compassionate Friends, a hard-working group that supports families seeking "the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child" ([www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)). My columns discuss topics of continuing concern in the Marin County CA newsletter. Please visit my newly updated website at [www.carolKearns.com](http://www.carolKearns.com). - Carol

### Moving Beyond Grief

Recently I went to the wedding of my niece, who was born a few months before Kristen. Most likely, my daughter would have been one of her bridesmaids. Kristen's absence was obvious and felt by many. So many years, yet so many tears, and again those crazy mixed-up emotions emerged all at once. I was so joyous for my radiant niece on the happiest day of her life, and yet so sad.

At these times, I am once again struck by the power of grief, but instead of that heart-breaking sense of loss hanging on for days, it only lasts for minutes, and I can go on to enjoy major events in my life, like the wedding. I have learned how important it is to be gentle and loving to myself at these times. When I care for myself, grief finds its place and no longer takes over my life.

I came back from emotional death. My dreams for a future with Kristen ended with her death, but I built others. I'm no longer detached from life, moving about in an unknown world, numbed by pain. At one time, overwhelmed by emotion, I thought I might die in the process of reconciling Kristen's death. I didn't. I feel very much alive and fulfilled by new dreams.

Not long ago, my precious grandson was born, and only four months later, my beloved mother unexpectedly died. I look into baby Joseph's sweet face, and I see a glimpse of my son in his smile, his mother in his eyes, and Kristen in his profile. When I look in the mirror, a reflection of my mother looks back. Time, and with it generations, like the waves of the ocean that took Kristen out to sea, continues.

Kristen's death taught me this: The truly wonderful things in life are so simple that one is often not aware of their wonder until they are beyond reach. What is most important is what we often take for granted. Anyone who has lost a loved one knows this. The beauty in life lies in the quality of our relationships, for what else could possibly matter?

Excerpt from the Epilogue of Carol's book,  
*Sugar Cookies and a Nightmare*

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### REMEMBERING KRISSIE

Dear Krissie,  
Thought I'd write you a letter...  
Time has dimmed the memory  
Of that gray November day.  
When God reached down  
His loving hand  
And carried you away.  
I do not know the reason  
Why this had to be.  
I only know, when my day comes,  
Reach out your hand to me.

Grandma Michel  
November 13, 1980

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# Our Children Remembered

## January

Child	Dates	Bereaved
Peter Demitrius Alex		Bill & Pat Alex
John Christopher Alioto, Jr.		John Alioto
Eric Tyler Anderson		Bill & Liz Anderson
Daniel Zacharia Ashkenazy		Pamela Ashkenazy, Dan Ashkenazy
John Charles Berges		Mary Berges
Jonathan Eugene Brilliant		Girija & Larry Brilliant
Christopher Abram Bruce		Mike & Louise Bruce
Laura Alicia Bruce		Mike & Louise Bruce
Daniel Keith Cracchold		Linda Winslow
Misty Dollwet		Ronald & Joan Crook
Nina Embervine		Barbara McNeil
Adam Teplin Emmott		Kristina Teplin, Michelle J. Maguire
Kristopher Manuel Espinoza		Kristina Espinoza, Judy Duenas
Matthew Christopher Fields		Cathy Morocco
Basilio Nathan Garza Jr.		Renee Garza
Peter Alexander Helldoerfer		Peter Helldoerfer, Kathleen Freitag
Vincent Alfred Hinds		Henry & Ginny Hinds
Mina Hornor		Christa Kaufmann-Hornor
Stefanie Helen Jacobs		Nanette Jacobs, Rob Jacobs
John Nicholas Klingel		John & Karen Klingel
Dylan Clarke Krings		Randy & Sioux Krings
Trey Lagomarsino		Mike Baxman & Susan Kim
James Scott Lambert		Linda Hicken
Trevor London Leopold		Michelle & Jeff Leopold
Mathew Gary Luce		Alice Clary, Christie Clary
Marci Eilene Meyring		Gary & Natalie Meyring
Brian David Mixsell		Bill, Sandy & Belinda Mixsell
Michael Patrick O'Riordan		Mary O'Riordan
Eli Thomas Olaeta		Lonnie Olaeta
Luke Benjamin Pedemonte		Richard and Therese Pedemonte
Lindsey O. Quinby		Jean Quinby Reiss, Paul Quinby
Anna Elizabeth Russell		Lorene Jackson
Ruby Salkeld		Cathie Merkel
Dennis Howard Schonborn		Felicia Schonborn
Kyle Aaron Scourbys		Bill & Kimberly Scourbys
Dwayne Anthony Simón		Donna & Flennis Simón
Julian Ali Thomas		Fariba Thomas
Karl Ingemar Thunstrom		Avghi & Bert Thunstrom
Adrian Rodolfo Valderrama		Rosa Sandoval & Rodolfo Valderrama
Gregory Brian Wilhelm		Patricia & Roger Wilhelm
Malika Ziani		Phyllis Callahan



Today I choose life. Every morning when I wake up I can choose joy, happiness, negativity, pain... To feel the freedom that comes from being able to continue to make mistakes and choices - today I choose to feel life, not to deny my humanity but embrace it.

*Kevyn Aucoin*



# Our Children Remembered

## February

Child	Dates	Bereaved
Maraina Lee Arik		Rich & Linda Arik
Cailin Faith Baldes		Diana Baldes
Tobias M. Biedul		Charles Feeney & Holly Biedul
Kevin Connor Bledsoe		AnnMarie Bledsoe
Jacob Westley Brumbaugh		Mark & Deborah Brumbaugh
Joey Burger		Bob & Darlene Burger
Max Hart Chappell		Jeanne Vukasovich
Joey Ciatti		Becky Oken
Lisa Danielle Clark		Julie & Bruce Clark, Lucy Martinez
Michael Anthony Dollwet		Ronald & Joan Crook
Debra Lynn Ferrua		Ronald & Joan Crook
Matthew Christopher Fields		Cathy Morocco
Matthew Finzen		Barbara & Fritz Finzen
Lori Ann Elizabeth Gentry		Genesse & Bill Gentry
Pamela Dawn Heaster		Ila Benavidez-Heaster
Dana John Hudson		Diana Hudson
Chris Leach		Marcie & Don Leach
Ruth Dasha Goldie Levy		Shary Levy, Arthur Levy
Sabrina Elizabeth Lew		Teri Miller
Laura Catherine Maatz		Russell & Marcia Lizza
Marco Antonio Joseph Martinez		Samuel Martinez & Brenda Bloomfield
Christopher J. Murphy, Jr.		Tina Smith
Michael Patrick O'Riordan		Mary O'Riordan
Alexander Rayburn		Mindee & Steve Rayburn
Justin Daniel Reynolds		Carole Bonnici
David Arthur Ross		Joan Ross
Warren James Ruehle		Kate & Glenn Ruehle
Theodore "Teddy" James Russell		Anne & Tim Russell
Michael Kevin Sadler		Kathy Miles
Colin Edward Schreck		Daly & David Schreck, Lesley & Ireland Cannan
Richard Sielert		Diane Sielert
Dwayne Anthony Simón		Donna & Flennis Simón
Flennis Anthony Simón II		Donna & Flennis Simón
Andrew Phiip Swig		Maureen Swig
Brigham Robert Thompson		Elizaberth Thompson Mollner
Elizabeth Torlakson		Kathy Bodnar



“They say time heals all wounds, but that presumes the source of the grief is finite”  
— Cassandra Clare, *Clockwork Prince*

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“To weep is to make less the depth of grief.”  
— William Shakespeare

## Love Gifts

Love Gifts are "messages" published in our newsletter that honor children who have died. We are grateful to parents, grandparents and others who, by their Love Gifts donations, allow us to offer resources such as the Annual Candle Lighting Event, the newsletter, books, brochures and pamphlets at no cost to assist bereaved families. They also allow us to provide information to professionals and others who impact the lives and feelings of the bereaved. The donation amount is your choice.

### The following love gifts were received for January/ February:

Donor/s: Eve Pell  
Children: Peter & Daniel McLaughlin

Donor/s: Becky Oken  
Child: Joey Ciatti  
Dates:  
"Forever Remembered, with Love on your 52st Birthday & Always."

Donor/s: Barbara Fivis  
Child: Willy Fivis  
Dates:  
"I cherish my memories of you. You are always with me."

Donor/s: Diane Sielert  
Child: Richard Sielert  
Dates:

Donor/s: Gerri Behan  
Child: Sean Behan

Donor/s: Joan Ross  
Child: David Arthur Ross  
Dates:  
"Sending love to my son David. Born on my birthday. The best present ever!"

Deadlines for Love Gift information for Newsletters:

Jan/Feb issue	Dec. 15	Jul/Aug issue	Jun. 15
Mar/Apr issue	Feb. 15	Sep/Oct issue	Aug. 15
May/Jun issue	Apr. 15	Nov/Dec issue	Oct. 15

### Bereaved Parents

Different ages  
Different stages  
Different issues

Same pain  
Daily strain  
Occasional tissues

Our children have died  
Often is all we know  
A fact we fear to hide

Despite our ever-present woe  
We live with pride  
Though broken-hearted  
To love, remember, and grow

Victor Montemurro  
TCF Medford, NY

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"The darker the night, the brighter the stars,  
The deeper the grief, the closer is God!"

— Fyodor Dostoyevsky,  
*Crime and Punishment*

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"Give sorrow words; the grief that does not speak  
knits up the o-er wrought heart and bids it break."

— William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*

### Love Gift Form:

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_ Donor's name \_\_\_\_\_

Child's Birthdate & Anniversary Date \_\_\_\_\_

Newsletter month \_\_\_\_\_

Message \_\_\_\_\_

Include your name, address and phone # if not on check in case of questions:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Mail the information above along with your donation (check) made payable to TCF/Marin  
to: TCF/Marin c/o Love Gifts, P.O. Box 150935, San Rafael, CA 94915.

"When you lose your child, when a young person dies, there is so much that is lost. Much pain is caused by thinking of everything she is not getting to do, never having a baby, just so much," Kirkwood says. "This is an incredible sorrow and I have to learn how to live with that."

An aspiring artist, Raynovich was getting ready to move to a ranch in Montana where she planned to teach art to children when she died. "Everything is marked by that. Her friends graduated from college, her cousins got married. All of these things are happening without Tess and that seems impossible," Kirkwood says.

Disruption of the expected natural order and helplessness felt by not being able to protect or save their offspring bring a heartache that can be fathomed only by others who have experienced it, the parents say.

"It's a lifelong process. You are going to be dealing with it for the rest of your life," says Valerie Dixon, of East Liberty, who lost her only son, Robert, 22, in a street shooting in Lincoln-Lemington in June 2001.

Lori Malazich is a bereavement coordinator at UPMC Children's Hospital who follows up with families after the death of the child.

"Parents experience this profound sadness and it happens out of order. Parents have this belief that they are protectors, that we can somehow protect our kids," Malazich says.

### FEELING GUILTY

Guilt over not protecting a child exists even when an illness takes a child's life and "even when a medical professional says 'There is nothing you could have done or not done,'" Malazich says. The first year after a child's death is torture as parents mark the first birthday, first Christmas, first Mother's Day or Father's Day without their child.

The second year is worse. "That's when it really sinks in they are gone," Boyle says. And it's not always the major events that pack the hardest punch. For Dixon it was grocery shopping after her son's death and spotting Quaker oatmeal with apples and cinnamon on the shelf. "I broke down right there in the store. I always bought that for him," she says. Anger and questioning of religious faith is common following the loss of a child. So is asking the question, "Why us?" Malazich says.

"Who is going to give me the answers on what happened and how to get through it," questioned David Fabus, of Bethel Park, Pennsylvania, whose son Joey, 8, died from a rare brain tumor in January 2015. It was the second time the Fabus family lost a child. Their 15-month-old daughter died in 1997 from a rare kidney disease. "It's devastating to think that two of your six children are being taken away from you," Fabus says. "I have a lot of questions for God, if he does exist."

For those who seek support in group meetings, the Compassionate Friends holds meetings one Sunday a month at the Bower Hill Community Church in Mt. Lebanon for families who want to share their experiences or just sit and listen.

Telling the story of how their children died and talking about the child's life is part of the healing process. At the meetings, parents find others who never tire of hearing the stories, unlike others in their lives who expect them to move past their grief.

Ron Werkmeister, of Bethel Park, was part of a group of fathers who told their stories at one such meeting. His daughter, Amanda, 21, died in March 2010 of a rare, undiagnosed heart condition, several months after being named homecoming queen at Robert Morris University and just several months before her college graduation. Just three days before Amanda died her parents came to campus to watch her perform in a Greek Week show.

"I didn't realize my daughter was dying. I thought she would live forever," Werkmeister says.

### MANY 'IF ONLYS'

Blame and guilt often plague parents who have lost children to accidents, overdoses and suicides. Some experts refer to the "if onlys" — thoughts such as "if only I had paid more attention, if only I had made one more check." For Kirkwood it was "why did I let her drive a small car?"

"I have a roomful of 'if onlys,'" the mother of a young adult daughter who died of a drug overdose told the group at a Compassionate Friends meeting. Another mother, whose son committed suicide, told the group she can't find closure because "he should still be here because he took his own life. He had a chance not to do that," she says. Parents who have lost children to violence have an added dimension to their grief — the desire to see justice in the court system and the pain of hearing details during the trial. There can also be a letdown after the trial. Even if there is a victory, it rings hollow because their child is still gone.

"It's a distraction from your grief, but sometimes you start all over again after the trial," Dixon says. Losing an adult child can mean losing a relationship with a son or daughter-in-law as they heal and move on with their lives, particularly if they find a new spouse or partner. "People don't think about how it affects the extensions of the group," says Wilma Stoeckle, of Mt. Lebanon who lost her son Richard at age 43 to esophageal cancer three years ago.

"What happened is that we were a family unit. In the beginning everybody grieved. But now his widow is moving on. She can have a new husband and the grandchild can have a new stepfather. But we don't get a new son. The parents don't get that," she says. "You want them to move on, but you still want them to remember."

Some parents find comfort in creating fundraisers or memorials to their children. Kirkwood started the Tess Senay Raynovich Art and Earth Fund, which sponsors Eco-Art summer camps for children and provides scholarship money for college students. Dixon formed a nonprofit that raises money to erect billboards, highlighting unsolved murders and the Fabus family raises funds to find a cure for the cancer that took their son.

### BIDEN'S LOSSES

Grief over the loss of a child has no race, cultural or class boundaries. It mows down parents at even the highest levels, including Vice President Joe Biden, who lost his son Beau to brain cancer last May. That loss followed the 1972 losses of his first wife and 13-month-old daughter. Biden spoke about grief just weeks after his son's death to members of the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston — the site of a church shooting that killed nine people.

"I wish I could say something that would ease the pain of the families and of the church but I know from experience — and I was reminded of it 29 days ago — that no words can mend a broken heart. No music can fill the gaping void."

Bob Boyle, who is more than two decades into working through the death of his only daughter, offers hope to newcomers at the Compassionate Friends. "What I learned was that you could survive this. That it was possible to survive the loss of a child. I want you to know that hope is possible."

*Distributed by Tribune News Service*





# *The Compassionate Friends*

## *Marin County Chapter*

### **Supporting Family After a Child Dies**

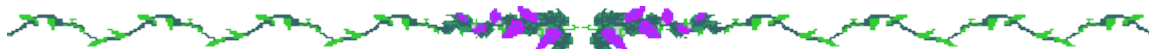
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The Compassionate Friends, Marin County Chapter  
P. O. Box 150935  
San Rafael, CA 94915

**JAN—FEB, 2022**

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**Dated Material - Please Deliver Promptly**



### **A Painless Way to Support our TCF Chapter**

TCF Marin survives largely on generous love gifts throughout the year and at the Candle Lighting Ceremony in December. But there is another way to support TCF-MC that is easy and painless. That is, whenever you purchase something from Amazon, if you do so through Amazon Smile, .5% of the purchase price of selected items will be sent to TCF-MC automatically.

It's easy, it places no additional economic burden on you or your family and, when enough of us participate, it will add up and TCF-MC will be stronger and be able to provide more services.

It's simple. Here's how to do it.

To shop at AmazonSmile simply (1) go to [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com). (If you have one, you can use the same account on [Amazon.com](https://Amazon.com) and [AmazonSmile](https://AmazonSmile). Your shopping cart, Wish List and other account settings are also the same.) (2) On your first visit to AmazonSmile, [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com), (3) just select TCF-MC to receive donations from eligible purchases before you begin shopping. AmazonSmile will remember your selection, and then every eligible purchase you make at [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com) will result in a donation. Eligible products are marked “Eligible for AmazonSmile donation” on their product detail pages.

