



The Church's Role in Supporting Bereaved Parents

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"I'm a pastor's wife, and everyone in the church thinks I'm so emotionally strong and have overcome the loss of my baby. I go to the altar seeking prayer, but instead people ask me to pray for *them*. How can I make others understand my pain and ask for compassion when my efforts are so often exchanged for their cramming scriptures down my throat and ridiculing me for not being 'more than a conqueror'?"

This is a paraphrased excerpt from several correspondences I had with a grieving pastor's wife a couple of years ago. For months following the stillbirth of her baby she sought help from her congregation but received little, if any. How sad! Ideally the church is where we should find help, comfort, and fellow believers to encourage us and lift us up. Tragically, just as the pastor's wife complained, our comrades in Christ have a tendency to be so heavenly-minded that they are of no earthly good.

Oftentimes Christians want to have a profound revelation to give to someone in grief, when really all that is necessary is a listening ear and an offer to pray for peace and comfort. Like the pastor's wife, I, too, experienced well-meaning people rattle off scriptures to me, thinking it would make me feel better. All I needed to hear was a simple "I'm sorry and I'm praying for you." And believe it or not, "I don't understand" was far more helpful than those who searched for the spiritual explanation of my losses.

When we think of "the church" we think of it being a specific congregation. But really the church is the body of Christ. *We* are the church, despite our denominational affiliation. When others hurt and are going through a tough time, we expect the pastors and teachers to reach out and minister to them. Certainly it is the leaders' responsibility, but it's ours as brothers and sisters in the Lord to reach out, too. We are

instructed in Philippians 2:4 to look not only to our own interests, but also to the interests of others. And that includes interests that we may not understand. I believe Christians lack in their ability to reach out to those of us who have lost a baby because it is a loss that is hard to comprehend and does not make much spiritual sense. Surely a loving Heavenly Father would give us the desires of our heart (a baby). Even more so, a God of mercy would not allow an innocent baby to die. These are tough concepts. It is much easier to say that "all things work together for good" instead of admitting that there are no answers.

I am deeply grateful for the compassion and love I received from my congregation, and especially my pastor's family, after the loss of my stillborn baby Jonathan in 1995 and the little baby I miscarried in 2001. Having lost a seven-year-old daughter many years ago, they understood the heartache I felt and empathized with me. My pastor acknowledges mothers who have lost a baby on Mother's Day and regularly mentions M.E.N.D. from the pulpit. If other church leaders would do the same and not be afraid to venture into such an uncomfortable area of grief, undoubtedly there would be less sorrow and bitterness among congregants.

So what is the role of the church in supporting bereaved parents? It is to suffer with them (1 Corinthians 12:26), offer hope (1 Thessalonians 5:11), and most importantly pray with and for them. If the body of believers fail, then it is our responsibility to educate them and not find ourselves in a state of anger and bitterness, which will only prolong and intensify the grieving process. When we are met with insensitive remarks and reactions to our loss by the church, we cannot allow ourselves to become so angry and hurt that we turn away from our assembly and lose sight of our faith. If you feel your house of worship has not adequately supported you during the aftermath of your loss, you may consider making a copy of this newsletter and giving it to someone in leadership. Then hopefully when faced with this sort of loss again, the pastors and staff will have better insight and know how to help hurting parishioners.

Rebekah Mitchell

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The National Sudden Infant Death Program Support Center has a publication available called *Guidelines for Christian Clergy* for professionals who interact with families who experience a perinatal loss, neonatal death, SIDS or other infant death. It is available to download free at www.sids-id-pcs.org.

Infertility and the Church

A Letter to the Church

by Jeannie J. Beidler



To: Our Pastor and Congregation
 From: Several Infertile Couples in the Church
 RE: What Hurts? What Helps?

Dear Pastor and Members of the Congregation,

We are several couples in your congregation. You may not know that all of us are facing infertility issues (including habitual pregnancy losses) because some of us tend to keep our infertility problems as a hidden hurt. You may chide us for that, if you will, but whether we choose to share our infertility or not, we are hurting. And our church has the power to add to our injury or be an agent of healing. In this letter we want to share with you both what hurts and what helps us as we experience our journey of infertility.

For many of us it seems like yesterday when we walked down the aisle of the church to say, ‘I do.’ Then like clockwork, the inquiries started coming. ‘So, when are you having children?’ This light-hearted question seems harmless to most, but not to the couples facing infertility challenges or who have just suffered (another) early pregnancy loss. Even more difficult are the well-intentioned comments from our Christian friends and fellow church members, telling us to ‘just relax and it will happen,’ or urging us to take a ‘second honeymoon,’ or ‘encouraging’ us by suggesting that ‘maybe it’s not the Lord’s will’ for us to become parents. Such comments only make us more anxious and full of doubt.

Sometimes LESS is MORE! We understand that as Christians you want to quote the right scripture, say the right ‘spiritual thing,’ or offer helpful advice and counsel. Usually, that’s not what we need most. Sometimes it is more helpful to us if you just offer a hug or drop a note letting us know that you are praying for us. You don’t have to understand us to support us. All you have to do is be willing to listen, to pray, and to love us just as our Lord does.

The dreaded day for most childless women, or those grieving miscarriages, is Mother’s Day. Many of us would just as soon stay in bed on that day until the sun comes up on Monday. It feels terrible to sit in the pew as the pastor calls for all the mothers to stand up. It seems as if he is telling the entire congregation that we are, once again, alone without children.

Thankfully, our church is learning to reach out to those hurting while still honoring mothers. We are so grateful that in recent years our pastor has always prayed for those waiting on the Lord to make them someone’s mommy. This acknowledgement means more to us than anything anyone has ever said. It is wonderful to know that our pastor recognizes those who can’t be mothers (or fathers). This brings comfort on an uncomfortable day. Many of us say, ‘Wow! My pastor is praying for me today, too!’

Perhaps it is just us, but sometimes it seems as if the women’s ministries in the church are based solely on being a mom. Sometimes, we who are wives but not mothers feel as if we cannot truly be godly women if we do not have children. Perhaps this is also true for many women who, by circumstance, are not married and not moms. We believe the church has a role in communicating to women that the Lord has a plan for each of us whether or not we drive in a carpool or go to Mothers of Preschool Children (MOPS).

Also, please be sensitive to the fact that there are some roles in the church which are painful for us. Serving in the church nursery with a room full of babies—while their parents attend church or Bible study—is more than many of us can handle.

We tend to think of the women when it comes to infertility. Let’s not forget our men who are hurting too. These men, who appear so strong in front of the other men in our church, are sometimes putting on a good front. Often they have no one with whom to share their feelings. Don’t let the tough exterior fool you. Some men, especially if they have a low sperm count or other male factors, feel less than a man. Let the men in our church who are facing infertility know that you care about them too.

In closing, we want to say how grateful we are for those in our church who have helped us in this journey. The love of those who made themselves vulnerable by reaching out to us is priceless. Just having someone ask us how a certain procedure went or tell us that they prayed for us is incredible. To experience Galatians 6:2, which encourages us to ‘carry each other’s burdens,’ is a wonderful blessing.

Thanks for listening!

Editor’s Note: Jeannie Beidler has become a mother through the blessing of adoption. She also wants to thank her church family in Virginia for being extremely supportive of couples struggling with the God-given desire to parent.

Reprinted with permission from *Stepping Stones*, a Christian newsletter for couples facing infertility. For information email step@bethany.org or call 616-224-7488.

My Tiny Valentine

Gwen Flowers

Valentine's Day, a day of love,
For partners, lovers, friends.
A day I also remember
A love that never ends.

A love that grows more every day
From somewhere deep inside.
A love that found life of its own
When my baby died.

When everywhere I go I see
Cherubs smiling sweetly,
I think of my little one
Whom I love so completely.

When cards bedecked with hearts and lace
Are passed from hand to hand,
I think about the pregnancy
That didn't go as planned.

When heart-shaped boxes hold their wares
Of chocolates to eat,
My heart swells with the memory
Of one so small and sweet.

So on this day when I think of
All the loves of mine,
A great big portion of my heart
Holds my tiny valentine.

March/April Topic

Grandparents Grieve, Too
Deadline—January 31, 2004

May/June Topic

Mother's Day and Father's Day
Deadline – March 31, 2004

Stories, poems, thoughts, and/or feelings regarding these topics are welcomed. Submissions must be received by the deadline to be considered for publication in the newsletter. Unfortunately, there is not enough room to include all submissions. Choices will be left to the discretion of the editors. Please see the back page of the newsletter for the appropriate address to send your submissions. Any submission printed in our newsletter will also be posted to our website indefinitely unless we receive notice in writing that you are only granting permission for your submission to appear in the printed version of the newsletter.

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M.E.N.D. Support Group Meetings

Regular M.E.N.D. meetings

are held the
2nd Thursday of every month from
7:30 – 9:00 p.m.

**Mommies AND daddies are both
welcome at all of our meetings.**

Matters of Faith

Bible study

meets every 3rd Thursday, 7-9 p.m.
Please contact Jana Spigener
at (817) 468-9963 or
heartblossoms@msn.com if interested.

Playgroup

*For families with children born prior to
or subsequent to a loss.*

Contact DaLana Barsanti
at (817) 589-0588
fivekids@ev1.net

*(Playgroups meet at various locations
around the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex.)*

Join us in a time of sharing experiences.

Our daddies group

meets the 2nd Thursday of

March, June, September, and December
from 7:30 – 9:00 p.m.

This is a special time for daddies to get together and discuss concerns unique to them as fathers. Our moms and dads meet together for introductions before dividing into two groups for discussion.

All support group meetings are held at:

**1159 Cottonwood Lane, Suite 150
Irving, Texas (Las Colinas) 75038**

(This is on the west side of MacArthur Boulevard, across the street from the Four Seasons Resort. There is a Holiday Inn Express at the entrance of Cottonwood Lane.)

For more information or directions,
call (972) 459-2396.

Subsequent pregnancy group

meets the 4th Tuesday
of each month from
7:30 - 9:00 p.m.

For families who are considering becoming pregnant or are currently pregnant after a loss. Led by Christine Oxendine (bearpals@charter.net).

Subsequent pregnancy birth class

For families who are near their due date with their subsequent pregnancy.

This one-night childbirth refresher meets once every three months and is conducted by one of our M.E.N.D. moms, Allyson Smith, R.N. The group requires a minimum of three participants to meet. For more information contact Allyson at ssmith@dallas.net or (972) 899-0405.



Birthday Tributes to Our Special Babies

Baby Rotello "Peanut"

On this day we think of you in the arms of God, wishing you were here and knowing we will see you one day. We love you little Peanut.

Due date: Dec 4, 2003
Miscarried on May 7, 2003
Parents: Paul & Angela Rotello



XOXO
Mama & Daddy

Baby Rotello "Little Sumpin"

Happy 1st birthday sweet angel! We had such hopes of spending this day with you blowing out candles and eating cake. We hope that you know how very much we love you and think of you all the time.

Due date: January 8, 2003
Miscarried on May 31, 2002
Parents: Paul & Angela Rotello



XOXO
Mama & Daddy

Happy 3rd birthday little one!!!

We know you are still watching over us, and we still think about you every day!
We miss you and love you!

Mommy, big brother Kristopher, and little siblings Jenni and Carson



In loving memory of
Natalie Grace Powell,
our watchful angel
January 3, 2001

Complications from hypertension during pregnancy
Parents: Hallie Powell and Greg Powell
Siblings: Kristopher, Jenni, and Carson



Happy birthday Maya!

Love,
Mommy, Daddy,
little brother Brandon
and little sister Erin.



Maya Denise Ates
Born/died January 6, 1998
Cord accident

Parents: Tammie and Horace Ates
Siblings: Brandon and Erin



For Joshua

May the angels in Heaven hold you until we can, and may Jesus watch over you until we meet again, our little lamb of God. Happy 3rd Birthday, our sweet little angel!! Mommy and Daddy and your brothers and sisters miss you very much. We love you dearly, and you are always in our thoughts. We know that you are having a very blessed day, and we know that you are having a truly happy birthday in Heaven.



Love Always,
Mom, Dad,
big sisters Christina and Tolina,
big brother Michael,
and little brother Jordan!!

Joshua Christian Rowlands
Stillborn January 4, 2001
Cause unknown

Parents: Michael and Shelly Rowlands
Siblings: Christina, Tolina, Michael, and Jordan



Richard James Smith

Happy 4th birthday to our SWEET son in Heaven! It doesn't seem like it's already been 4 years since we last held you! We miss you and love you!

Love,
Mommy, Daddy,
Ashley,
and little brother Matthew

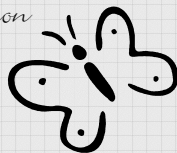


Richard James Smith
Stillborn March 1, 2000
Spiral and pinched cord
Parents: Daryl and Diane Smith
Siblings: Ashley and Matthew

Happy Birthday to our precious Olivia Grace Hunt!!!!!!!

We love you,
Mommy and Daddy
and little brothers, Mason and Cameron

Olivia Grace Hunt
February 8-9, 2000
Unknown heart condition/possibly Long QT Syndrome
Parents: Richard and Stacy Hunt
Little brothers: Mason and Cameron



Two Years

Two years old this month.
 The "terrible twos" is what you should be entering,
 The terrible two is what we have just lived.
 Time has no beginning nor ending with God,
 Therefore, to Him thanks we give.
 The greatest thing we have learned is to love and be loved in return.
 Tomorrow is another day you will live in our hearts,
 This is the day we remember you until we are no longer apart.
 Through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, we are able
 To have peace and grace
 To know that eternity awaits us alongside Gabriela Faith.



Monica Gregory
 In loving memory of
 Gabriela Faith Gregory

Gabriela,

My darling angel, words can't describe my longing to see you, be with you, smile with you and just love you! I can't believe two years have passed so quickly but daddy has never forgotten you, especially on your birthday. My sweetie, I know you are the prettiest angel in Heaven. Daddy wishes you a happy birthday and I send my love to you always.

Your daddy forever!

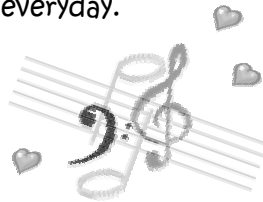
Gabriela Faith Gregory
January 24, 2002
Anomaly of umbilical cord
Parents: Chris and Monica Gregory

Happy birthday to Christopher

Happy Valentines Day to you-
 Happy birthday to Christopher
 We love you!!

Happy 3rd birthday from sisters Madeleine and Camille.
 Mommy and Daddy still carry your precious love in our hearts and miss you everyday.

Christopher Parker Williams
February 14, 2001
Genetic-short rib polydactyl syndrome
Parents: Larry and Paige Williams
Siblings: Madeleine and Camille



Lovingly remembering our little Angels

Miscarried 9/94, Miscarried 5/98, Ectopic 1/99, Miscarried 7/02

We love each of you,
 Mommy, Daddy, and brother Hunter

Parents: Nikki and Richard Wynne
Brother: Hunter



Lauren,

Happy 4th birthday in Heaven. I can't believe how fast time has gone by. It seems like yesterday I had you and Zachary together with me. We will be sending special love to you on your birthday. I think of you everyday and look forward to the day I can hold you again.

Love,

Mommy & your twin brother Zachary

In memory of Lauren Grace Allen

February 13, 2000

Cord accident

Remembering Blake Leland Allen

April 21, 1999

Premature labor/incompetent cervix

Parents: Sean and Jan Allen

Sibling: Zachary Chase



To our Rose Adriel

delivered still @ 16 weeks

Excerpt from "Baby Mine"

by Dorothy Mae Foley

There is a wee girl
 Who won't grow up at all
 Did your angel bear her gently
 Because she was so small?
 I wondered that you bothered
 It's such a long long way
 From Heaven to a parent's heart
 And then not let her stay.
 Forgive the tears and pleading
 And bitterness we've shown,
 We really did not understand
 That she was just a loan.
 We forgot in all the sweetness
 And joy from day to day
 Somehow we never really thought
 She'd have so short a stay.
 You are our forever little girl
 and are missed more each year.

Love,

Mommy, Daddy,
your 5 brothers here
and Lael and Joseph in Heaven

Rose Adriel Morris

January 13, 2000

Unknown cause

Parents: Tracy and Chris Morris
Siblings: Sam, Jake, Elia, and Zane

Remembering Lael (miscarried September 1994),
and Joseph (miscarried October 19, 2002)

Interview with Kathe Wunnenberg

Excerpt taken from www.ZondervanChurchSource.com

Kathe Wunnenberg is a speaker and writer known for her ability to connect with people and offer them hope. The author of Grieving the Loss of a Loved One, she speaks on such topics as loss, leadership, faith in the workplace, mentoring/networking, transitions, prayer, and encouragement.

ZCS: What kind of support did you receive from your pastor and church after your miscarriages and the death of your infant son? Is there anything they could have done differently to comfort you?

KW: When I experienced my first miscarriage in 1988, I did not share this loss with my pastor or church. I was disappointed but didn't feel deeply about the loss of this child. Why should I? I never knew this child and at that time was unaware that I had swept the pain of my loss under the rug of my life and minimized my loss. I pressed on in life. Although I mouthed the words to a few close friends, "I lost a child," the meaning didn't sink in until years later after I adopted a child and experienced the birth and death of our infant son and my second and third miscarriage.

Through my journey of losing four children, I've learned that grief is unique and personal. I've also discovered that validating someone who has lost an unborn child through miscarriage or tubal pregnancy is often more difficult for pastors, the church, others, and even those who are experiencing the loss than providing support to someone who has lost an infant. I hurt just as much (maybe more) from losing children in the first few weeks of my pregnancy as I did from carrying a full term child, yet the way I expressed my loss to others and the tangible support I received was noticeably different. "I'm sorry for your loss" or "I'm praying for you" was what I received when I suffered a miscarriage. Although I greatly appreciated those comforting words, looking back I would have appreciated the opportunity to connect with someone who had experienced a similar loss or to have my pastor or someone from my church encourage me to grieve my loss and provide resources to help me do that and initiate regular communication with me for a few months after my loss.

In 1996, during the fourth month of my second pregnancy, we discovered that our son had a fatal birth defect, and we immediately shared this news with our pastors and the ministry where I served as the director (Christian Business Women's Association). During the next several months we were supported in numerous ways: prayer, cards, personal meetings, books, tapes, a "labor of love shower", hourly recorded messages on our phone line for friends and family to receive an update once I went into labor, the "gift of presence" while we were at the hospital, participation in our memorial/praise service two days after our son died, and meals.

I wasn't prepared for my "delayed reaction" to my grief (which occurred six months after my son's death) and the variety of events that would trigger my pain (Mother's Day, baby dedications, walking by the church nursery, and two more miscarriages). I encourage pastors to stay in regular contact for the first year or to assign someone from the church who has also suffered a similar loss to be an available encourager and to be sensitive to occasions or opportunities to serve (i.e. asking to work in the nursery) that may be particularly painful.

ZCS: Are there any "right" words a pastor can say to someone who is mourning the loss of an unborn or newly born child?

KW: Words can be a soothing balm to the suffering soul. Here are some suggested words that may encourage someone who has lost an unborn or newly born child:

"I'm sorry that you lost your child." (Use the name of the child whenever possible)

"I'm sorry that you are hurting."

"I can't even imagine the void that you must feel from losing your child."

"Although I don't know exactly how you're feeling or what you need most, I want to support you. How can I do that for you today? This week?"

"I know another woman/couple in our church who also lost a child and could be a great support and resource to you. Would you like for me to connect you?"

"Grief is a natural, necessary part of losing a child. Have you given yourself permission to grieve? Tell me about your grief journey."

"What kind of support are you receiving from others? Would you like to receive?"

"What has been the most meaningful thing someone has done for you to support you through your loss? Most hurtful?"

"How is your family coping with the loss? husband? children?"

"Would it be okay if I called you in a couple of weeks to see how you are doing?"

"How would you like me to direct others who want to support you but don't know what to do or say?"

ZCS: What stages of grief do people who have lost an unborn or newly born child go through?

KW: I believe grief can't be confined to a method, time frame, or event; it's a process. Grief is an unpredictable, solitary, and unforgettable experience, one that can't be healed in a moment, a month, or even a lifetime.

Based on my research and the survey results from those who lost an unborn or newly born child I have outlined six sections in my book that represent common responses to grieving an unborn or newly born child: hiding, suffering, questioning, forgiving, relating, and seeking.

ZCS: How can pastors help them get through these stages?

KW: I believe Pastors can be a comforting companion to a person who has lost an unborn or newly born child and encourage them through their process of grieving by helping the person *recognize* where they are in the process. Are they hiding, suffering, questioning, forgiving, relating, seeking? (It's possible to experience one or more responses at the same time!)

It's important that pastors *validate* the person's loss by giving the person permission to grieve and to encourage them to be where they are, to not compare their response to loss to other persons and to move through the process at their personal pace. You can't hurry grief!

The pastor can be a cheerleader to help others choose to *respond* appropriately and grieve well! Allow The Holy Spirit to be your counselor, guide and truth as you communicate. If you sense the person is hiding their pain through activity then confront them, or if you see them making progress by sharing their loss with others, tell them, "I see you are relating." Often they may not realize it!

Lastly, because I believe you never "get over" loss, but learn to live "with it", pastors can help *integrate* loss into others' lives by helping them see how loss has enlarged their life, increased their empathy or trust in God. What was once a brown ugly stump of loss can, in God's timing, be surrounded by a beautiful garden and a larger, lovely whole. Sharing your story can also be a healing part of the journey. I have included "Sharing Your Story" as the final section in my book which provides practical how-to help.

Pastors can also help others *integrate* their faith through their loss by helping them see who God is personally to them in every part of the process (Please refer to my prayers at the end of each devotion. you'll see a glimpse of who God is!). I believe it's important to help a person see beyond the pain and the process to the person and presence of God. Teaching a person to *praise* is the pathway through any kind of pain or loss.

ZCS: How might a pastor handle hard questions from the grieving, like "Why did God allow this to happen?"

KW: Don Baker, author of *Pain's Hidden Purpose* says, "If there is anything a sufferer needs, it is not an explanation, but a fresh, new look at God."

Often we don't understand the whys of our circumstance. Our questions remain unanswered and we find ourselves flailing in the Sea of Why. What we believe about God during those times of uncertainty will influence how we respond. If we believe that our circumstance is something Satan slipped by God when He wasn't looking, we will plummet to the depths and drown in despair. But if we view the God of the Bible as sovereign, supreme, and the One who calms the waters, we are buoyed with hope. We see purpose, even though we may not know now what the purpose is. During times of questioning I reflect on Job's life and remember that God allows suffering and has purpose in our pain. I must choose to look beyond "the why" to "the Who" and view my loss through the lens of God rather than human sight. Look to Him. Sometimes that's the only answer there is.

ZCS: What can a pastor or church do to validate or commemorate the loss of an unborn child?

KW: Here are some practical ideas to consider....

Initiate conversation or a personal meeting to discover the person's needs/desires.

When words fail, share silence or a hug.

Fill her arms with something to hold: a stuffed animal or pillow with the child's name.

Use the name of the child. Although many who miscarry may not choose to name their child some find that naming the child they lost is healing and validates the child.

Remember Mother's Day, her due date, anniversary of death and other occasions with a card, note or act of kindness.

Give her a copy of *Grieving the Child I Never Knew*.

Invest in a person/cause in the child's name and tell the parents you did.

Purchase an item for the children's ministry to commemorate the lost child. (My church had a painting created for the church nursery of Jesus with several children. It stated "In memory of..." and listed the names of all the children who were lost that year.) Please note the dedication section of my book.

Incorporate grieving and loss illustrations into your sermon or in the right season invite the person to share her story of loss publicly with your church.

Start a small group for those who have lost a child using my book as the text for the 6-8 weeks.

Host a *Grieving the Child I Never Knew* or *Grieving The Loss of a Loved One* seminar/workshop.

Pray.

ZCS: How can a church balance the need to comfort grieving couples and families with the need to respect their privacy and the way they grieve?

KW: Every person is unique and grieves the loss of an unborn child differently. It is important for churches to pray for wisdom and discernment and to "personalize" encouragement to meet the needs of each person/family for each stage of the grieving process.

Ask the person directly and also ask a friend who knows the person well what kind of support is needed when loss first occurs, a few weeks after, months after, etc. If the person is involved in a small group, Sunday School class or Bible study this "community" may provide most of the encouragement and the pastor's role can simply be to encourage the encouragers or provide resources and suggestions as needed. I believe there are times when a person may resist help, but a pastor, leader or friend may need to intervene. (I had this happen on numerous occasions when I stayed in isolation too long and wanted "to be left alone," but loving friends sought me out and gently led me into community again.)

Offer specific suggestions of encouragement that your church can provide (people, grief mentors, resources, prayer, meals, information, training) and enlist others in the church to help. In the devotion "Seeking others before you, beside you and behind you", I share the importance of having a network of people in your life who understand your loss (mentors, peers, and those you can mentor through loss) The church has an abundance of people who can formally or informally be companions in a person's journey for a season. Challenge your church to get involved.

ZCS: How can a church be sensitive to those who have lost a child, or any loved one, during holidays like Christmas, Easter, and Thanksgiving?

KW: Special occasions, holidays and personal circumstances may trigger a person's grief and expose a new dimension of losing a child or a loved one. In both of my books, *Grieving the Loss of a Loved One* (Zondervan-2000) and *Grieving the Child I Never Knew* (Zondervan 2001), I have included a special reading section directing the reader to a selected devotion for a specific day or need. Pastors who are aware of "trigger days/times" can become more sensitive to responding to those who may need additional encouragement and can enlist a group of people in the church to brainstorm creative ways to

In Loving Memory

**Matthew Joel Mifflin**

Stillborn June 6, 2003
Cord Accident
Given by parents,
Dennis and Janet Mifflin
and siblings, Thomas and Michelle

Aiden Xavier Sohn

October 13, 2002
HELLP Syndrome

Baby Sohn

Miscarried May, 2003
Given by parents,
Angelique and Doug Sohn
and big brother, Josh

Duncan Bray

November 29 - 30, 1997
Given by parents,
Donald and Denise Fischer
and siblings, Devin and Dixen

Matthew Joel Mifflin

Stillborn June 6, 2003
Cord Accident/True Knot in Cord
Given by parents,
Dennis and Janet Mifflin
and siblings, Thomas and Michelle

Matthew Joel Mifflin

Stillborn June 6, 2003
Cord Accident/True Knot in Cord
Parents, Dennis and Janet Mifflin
Siblings, Thomas and Michelle
Given by grandparents,
Neal and Betty Frederick

M.E.N.D.

gratefully acknowledges these gifts of love given in memory of a baby, relative, friend, or given by someone just wanting to help. These donations help us to continue M.E.N.D.'s mission by providing this newsletter and other services to bereaved parents free of charge. Please refer to the back page of this newsletter for more information regarding where to send your donations and what information to include.

Thank you so much!

Olivia Grace Wayne

Stillborn May 11, 1995
Jesse Wayne
Miscarried April 20, 1996
Angel Wayne

Miscarried July 22, 1998
Given by parents, Richard and Jeanette Wayne
and siblings Emmaline, Chloe, and Benjamin

Michael Garabedian, Jr.

Stillborn February 2, 1998
Cord Accident/Villamentous Cord Insertion
Adam Michael Garabedian

Stillborn July 25, 2001
Parents, Mike and Cindy Garabedian
Sisters, Victoria and Elizabeth
Given by Garabedian Homes

Jonathan Daniel Mitchell

Stillborn June 24, 1995
Cord Accident
Baby Mitchell
Miscarried December, 2001
Parents, Byron and Rebekah Mitchell
Big brother, Byron, Jr.
Given by grandparents,
Dennis and Sue Brewer

Jonathan Daniel Mitchell

Stillborn June 24, 1995
Cord Accident
Baby Mitchell
Miscarried December, 2001
Parents, Byron and Rebekah Mitchell
and big brother, Byron, Jr.
Given by grandparents,
Lyle and Marnie Mitchell

Jonathan Daniel Mitchell

Stillborn June 24, 1995
Cord Accident
Baby Mitchell
Miscarried December, 2001
Parents, Byron and Rebekah Mitchell
and big brother, Byron, Jr.
Given by Dentistry of Las Colinas/
Byron L. Mitchell, D.D.S.

Brianna Rae Carroll

November 13 - December 5, 2001
Congenital Heart Defect
Given by parents, Brian and Sheryl Carroll,
big sister Courtney,
and twin sister Merideth

Abby Crump

Stillborn July 1, 2003
Trisomy 18
Parents, Gerald and Jaimie Crump
Given by grandparents,
Russ and Rosemary Massey

Joseph Charles Libby

May 26, 1999
Cord Accident
Given by parents, Wim and Sharlene Libby
and siblings Will, John, and Mary Grace

Angel Hope Brimmage

June 8, 2002 - June 8, 2002
Spina Bifida

Precious Brimmage

Miscarried December 23, 2002
Given by parents,
Ashley and Jennifer Brimmage
and siblings, Lindy and Mark

Faith Elizabeth Durham

Stillborn September 25, 1999
Triploidy
Parents, Leighton and Lisa Durham
Little siblings, Leighton IV and Olivia
Given by grandparents,
Fred and Teresa Durham

Olivia Grace Hunt

February 8 - 9, 2000
Unknown Heart Condition/
Possibly Long QT Syndrome
Given by parents, Richard and Stacy Hunt
and siblings, Richard and Cameron

Jackson David Crowe

August 22 - September 9, 1998
Congenital Heart Defect/Heart Failure
Given by parents,
David and Marie Crowe
and siblings, Hannah and Andrew

Logan David Iliff

Stillborn May 5, 2000
Placental Abruption
Given by parents, Joseph and Samantha Iliff
and little brother Blake

Angel Hope Brimmage

June 8 - June 8, 2002
Spina Bifida

Precious Brimmage

Miscarried December 23, 2002
Parents, Jennifer and Ashley Brimmage
Siblings, Lindy and Mark
Given by Joseph and Samantha Iliff

Subsequent Births

Gary and Michelle McHone, along with big brother Ryan

of Frisco, Texas,
announce with great joy the arrival of
Eryn Paige,
born September 20, 2003.
She weight 8 lb., 7 oz.,
and was 21 inches long.
The McHones remember with love
Kassandra Voulis,
stillborn November 11, 1998,
due to a cord accident,
and Baby McHone,
miscarried September 19, 2002.

Halie Powell and Matthew Toone, along with big brother Kristopher

of Mead, Oklahoma,
joyfully announce the arrival
of their twins,
Carson Gage,
6 lb., 12 oz., 19 inches long,
and Jenni Paige,
5 lb., 11 oz., 18 ¾ inches long.
The twins were born
November 14, 2003.
This family lovingly remembers
Natalie Grace Powell,
January 3, 2001,
placenta damage due to hypertension
during pregnancy.

**Matthew and Carolyn Park,
along with siblings Dustyn,
Koleton, and Nohah**
of Bakersfield, California,
joyfully announce the arrival of
Rebekah Suzanne,
born November 15, 2003,
weighing 7 lb., 9 oz.
The Parks lovingly remember
Michael,
born and died September 2, 2002,
due to prematurity.



Music Resources

The following music has been helpful to others during their time of grief.

Home Free

Words and music by Wayne Watson
Watson's *Home Free* CD can be found at
most Christian bookstores.

Thought You'd Be Here

Words and music by Wes King
From his CD *A Room Full of Stories*,
available for purchase at most Christian
bookstores.

With Hope

By Steven Curtis Chapman
From his CD *Diving In*, available for
purchase at most Christian bookstores.



Goodbye for Now

Words by Kathy Troccoli, music by Scott
Brasher and Kathy Troccoli
From Troccoli's CD *Corner of Eden*,
available for purchase at most Christian
bookstores.

Glory Baby

Written by Nathan and Christy Nockels
Found on Watermark's *All Things New*,
can be purchased at Christian bookstores.

Empty Arms

Words and music by Teri Curp
From her CD *Look Ahead*
Teri Curp Ministries
1413 NE Grand Avenue
Lee's Summit, MO 64086
816-246-8374
tcsings@swbell.net
www.tericurp.com

Keepsake Resources

For Brittany

www.forbrittany.com
*Offers mommy bracelets that come in a variety
of styles, or design your own. Mention that you
were referred by M.E.N.D. and a percentage
of the sale will be donated to M.E.N.D.*

A Loss Remembered

2908 South Clemont Dr.
Denver, CO 80222
(303) 692-9668
lossremembered@cs.com
*Provides beautiful remembrance cards on the
anniversary of a child's death.*

Haley's Creations

P.O. Box 13242, La Jolla, CA 92039
Toll Free Phone:
877-538-6446
www.haleyscreations.com
*Offers remembrance cards, journals, and keep-
sakes relating to infant loss.*

Keri's Kreations

221 W. Hillview St.
Winslow, AZ 86047
(928) 289-0715
*A book of remembrance for parents who have
lost children through miscarriage, stillbirth,
or infant death.*

My Heart's Missing Link

P.O. Box 0992, Allen Park, MI 48101
www.myheartsmissinglink.com
*Offers heart-shaped pendants with a birthstone
and a "missing link" to help remember loved
ones who now live in heaven and your heart.*

Perinatal Loss Certificate of Life

[http://www.tearsoup.com/pl/
certificate%20of%20life.htm](http://www.tearsoup.com/pl/certificate%20of%20life.htm)
*Makes hand-calligraphied certificates
acknowledging your baby's life.*

Angels in Heaven Ministries

www.angelsinheaven.org
*Offers framed poems, cards, and audio tapes
relating to infant loss.*

Once Upon a Family™

www.onceuponafamily.net
Contact: Amy Gill
(214) 725-6116
*Offers special pieces to keep memorabilia safe.
Donates a percentage of sales of the
Baby Keepsake Box, Tiny Treasures Box, and
Memory Trunk made to M.E.N.D. members
back to M.E.N.D.*

Angel Babies in Heaven

(843) 871-3071
[http://www.galaxymall.com/children/
angelbabies/](http://www.galaxymall.com/children/angelbabies/)
*Offers hand-painted memorial stepping stones to
honor babies gone too soon.*

Angel Lady

www.angelady.net
*Artist Ethel Pontsler offers custom artwork
of deceased loved ones based on photographs.*

(from page 7) acknowledge and validate those who have experienced loss. It's amazing what a song, drama, or spoken word through the sermon can do to lift another.

The year of "firsts" is usually the most difficult for someone who has lost a child or loved one. I usually keep a list of people who have lost someone and significant dates to them (i.e. due date if they lost a child through miscarriage, anniversary of their loved one's death, birthday, wedding anniversary if they lost a spouse, etc.). Remembering them through a call, e-mail, card, act of kindness, flowers on the altar in honor of their loved one, sharing a memory of their loved one or encouraging word, can be meaningful and validate the void the person may be feeling. Both books give a multitude of practical ideas.

Here is an idea I created for Mother's Day your church may want to use:

This Mother's Day Join Us in Validating Moms Who Have Lost a Child!

Mother's Day represents a meaningful day of outward celebration for most women who are honored with corsages, cards, calls, dinners out or public recognition at church. But for women who have lost a child, it may be a poignant occasion that triggers inward pain and is a day that is often overlooked and misunderstood by others. Although these women are mothers, they have nothing tangible to show for their title. Even women who have other children may experience bittersweet feelings on Mother's Day from the void of losing a child. Make this Mother's Day meaningful and memorable for moms who have lost a child. Consider the following ways you can validate a grieving mother and her child:

- *Send her a card*
- *Donate your time or resources to a meaningful children's cause and let her know you did this to honor her and her child.*
- *Purchase a children's Bible for your church and list "In memory of ____."*
- *Give her a copy of Grieving the Child I Never Knew*
- *Encourage your church to acknowledge moms who have lost a child with drama, music, prayer, flowers on the altar signifying the named or unnamed children who were lost or read an excerpt from the book, Grieving the Child I Never Knew.*
- *Give moms a white ribbon with a baby diaper pin to wear acknowledging the child she lost too soon.♥*

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M.E.N.D. Fundraisers

As a non-profit organization M.E.N.D. is funded solely by private donations and fundraisers. Any assistance you can give us by participating in any or all of these fundraisers is greatly appreciated.

Kroger grocery stores donate a percentage of all purchases of those shoppers who have and use a Kroger Share Card back to M.E.N.D. To obtain your Share Card, contact Rebekah via one of the ways listed on the last page of this newsletter and let her know how many you need. This program is valid in Texas, but residents of other states may need to check with store managers to see if they participate.

Tom Thumb also has a program in Texas that can benefit M.E.N.D. If you have a Tom Thumb Reward Card, please ask your Tom Thumb cashier to link your card with M.E.N.D. Our number is **6265**. If you are already linked to another organization, they will split a donation of one percent of your purchases between the organizations. It only takes about five minutes to get a Reward Card, and it can also be used at Randall's and Simon David stores.

Kim Robinson, a **Pampered Chef** kitchen consultant and M.E.N.D. family member, is donating 40 percent of sales to M.E.N.D. members back to our organization. You can browse products at www.pamperedchef.com, then e-mail Kim at kimr@cheerful.com to place an order.

Stamps.com offers a \$10-\$20 referral program. If you would like to purchase stamps from home and receive a free postage scale, visit www.stamps.com, and use referral code C-4FTJ-TWR. Stamps.com will give the incentive money to M.E.N.D. in the form of free postage.

Kevah Kreations has developed a special Infant Memory Scrapbook Kit to help families develop their babies' memory scrapbooks. This is a very delicate and sensitive 20-piece kit. Cost is \$5 plus \$2 for shipping and handling. Info may be requested at Kevah955@cs.com or by calling 843-871-3071. All checks may be made payable to Kevah Kreations. Mention M.E.N.D. while ordering and a small percentage of the sale will be donated back to M.E.N.D.

Diana McInelly is a consultant for **Usborne Books at Home**, a children's book company. Diana is donating 10 percent of purchases made off her Web site by M.E.N.D. members back to M.E.N.D. You must e-mail Diana if you purchase from the Web site so that she'll know you are a M.E.N.D. member. The Web address is www.luvusborne.com, and you can e-mail Diana at rmcinelly@hotmail.com.

Once Upon a Family offers beautiful keepsakes to keep memorabilia safe and sound. Consultant Amy Gill is offering M.E.N.D. 20 percent of sales of the Baby Keepsake Box, Tiny Treasure Box, and Memory Trunk made to M.E.N.D. members back to M.E.N.D. The items can be viewed at www.onceuponafamily.net, and Amy can be reached at 214-725-6116 or texasgills@hotmail.com

Shannon Outen, a M.E.N.D. member and co-owner of **Paper Patch**, represents several lines of business stationary, specializing in customized holiday/Christmas cards at a discounted price. Shannon will donate 10 percent of her profits to M.E.N.D. from each Christmas card order. Contact Shannon at (817) 557-4733 or email outencs@aol.com to receive a current catalogue.

Christine Oxendine is now a representative of **Avon**. She has offered to give to M.E.N.D. 10 percent of any orders placed by M.E.N.D. members. To receive a catalogue, contact Christine at 940-381-6617 home or 682-365-7448 cell or e-mail bearpals@charter.net.

M.E.N.D. is a Christian nonprofit corporation whose purpose is to reach out to those who have lost a child to miscarriage, stillbirth or infant death and offer a way to share experiences and information through monthly meetings, this newsletter, and our web site.

For inquiries, subscription requests, deletions, and submissions to the newsletter, contact us at
M.E.N.D.
P.O. Box 1007
Coppell, TX 75019
(972) 459-2396
1-888-695-M.E.N.D.
Fax (972) 459-2396
E-Mail: Rebekah@mend.org,
Sharlene@mend.org

Donations make the printing and distribution of this newsletter possible.

Your tax-deductible contributions are greatly appreciated and should be sent to:

M.E.N.D.
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Coppell, TX 75019.

If your gift is made in memory of a baby, please include that baby's name (if named), date of birth and/or date of death, the parents' names, and the name of the benefactor. You may also include the cause of death (if known).

Visit our web site at:
<http://www.mend.org>

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