



THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Bridgeport, Connecticut Chapter
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

March & April 2020

Newsletter

Volume 20 No. 3&4

Dedicated with love to all children who have died, and their parents, families, friends...

The Compassionate Friends

(TCF) is a national non-profit, self-help support organization offering friendship, understanding, and hope to families grieving the death of a child of any age from any cause. There is no religious affiliation and no individual membership fees or dues are charged.

Founded in England in 1969, TCF was established in the United States in 1972. Presently, under the provision of the not-for-profit national organization, there are more than 700 local chapters in operation throughout the United States.

Mission Statement:

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

*"THERE ARE NO SHORTCUTS TO GRIEVING.
WE'RE GOING THROUGH THE PAIN
IN ORDER TO HEAL.
BECAUSE PAIN DOES HEAL."*

Dr. Susan Zonnebelt Smeenga

Please contact us at 475-882-9695. Leave your name, number, and message, and we will return your call.

Please send all correspondence to the following address:

The Compassionate Friends Bridgeport Chapter
P.O.Box 112
Stratford, CT 06615

National Office
The Compassionate Friends
P.O. Box 3696
Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696
(877) 969-0010
nationaloffice@compassionatefriends.org
www.compassionatefriends.org

Regional Coordinator
Mary Lemley
203 483-9935
Mklem43@aol.com

Monthly Meetings

When: Meetings are held on the **SECOND TUESDAY OF EVERY MONTH** year round. **If the Stratford School system lets the children out early or if school is closed due to inclement weather, Sterling House will be closed, and the meeting for the month will be cancelled.**

Our next two meetings will be held on: Tuesday,
March 10, 2020 6:45 - 8:45 pm
April 14, 2020 6:45 - 8:45 pm

Where: Sterling House Community Center
2283 Main Street, Stratford, CT 06614

DIRECTIONS:

Take 1-95 North from Bridgeport. Get off Exit 32 West Broad Street. At the end of ramp, go straight to the second traffic light which is Main Street. Turn left. Sterling House Community Center is a Victorian Brick House. It will be on the opposite side of the street. Park in Sterling House's driveway. Use side entrance. Phone: 203 378-2606

Please bring a canned good or nonperishable food item to the meeting for Sterling House's Food Pantry.

Bridgeport/Stratford & Vicinity Chapter Steering Committee

Chapter Leader

Claudia Margitay-Balogh

Co-Chapter Leader

Dr. Charles Kochan

Secretary

Janet Spray

Treasurer

Leslie Minasi

Website Co-ordinator

Leslie Minasi

Newsletter Editor

Claudia Margitay-Balogh

Hospitality

Dee Tutka & Anne Castaldo

Community Outreach and Librarian

Michele Peloso

Bridgeport Chapter's New E-Mail Address:

contact@tcf-bridgeport.org

TCF Bridgeport's New Website Address:

www.tcf-bridgeport.org

Bridgeport Chapter's Facebook Website:

www.facebook.com/pages/The-Compassionate-Friends-Bridgeport-Chapter

CONTACT NUMBER: 475-882-9695

Editor's Notes

Tidings of peace are sent to you as we look forward to the end of winter and the beginning of spring. Spring is about deluges of raindrops and sunny days pushing past huge, gray clouds. We are impatient for the weather to get better. So, too, is our grief impatient to change. Out of great pain and sorrow comes learning, possibilities, and growth, maybe even a deeper knowledge of eternal spring. So at this season of rebirth and new beginnings, how will our grief be different? What can we do to support our grief's impatience to change?

After months and sometimes even years of asking Why? Why? Why?, we realize that we still don't know why. We only know that asking "why" is normal, and that even if we knew the reason why, we would still cry, we would still hurt, and we would still not like the realization that our beloved children are absent from our lives.

So the "why" question eventually changes to the What? question. What do we do with our lives now? Moving from the "why" question to the "what" question is part of the healing process. The "what" question will take time to answer, but the "what" question takes us into a positive and creative state of mind. If we begin to understand that the "what" answer will honor the life of our child, possibilities begin to emerge. Soon we imagine a third question that will need answering and that is "How?" In the How answer we find hope, meaning, and comfort.

Darcie Sims, P.H.D., has answered the what and how questions after her son Austin died in 1976 by becoming the co-founder of Grief, Inc, an international grief consulting firm. Darcie, a well-known author, international speaker, and a favorite keynote speaker at TCF conferences, was the copy editor for Bereavement Magazine for fifteen years. She received the 1999 TCF Professional Service Award given to a professional who has contributed greatly in the areas of supporting, assisting, or educating others in accordance with the mission and goals of TCF.

At the 2005 National Conference held in Boston, Massachusetts, I was privileged to hear Darcie speak. What makes Darcie so special is that she has been able to retain her sense of humor. A sense of humor is a priceless gift, and Darcie Sims shares her gift of humor by parting the darkened clouds that grief brings to reveal rays of sunshine that can occur in a lightened

heart, even if for a little while.

Even though Darcie Sims knows the what and how that has allowed her to survive the death of her child, she still asks questions in the article "Bereavement and Humor... Just Wondering" which I hope will bring insight and some shaking of heads in agreement. She writes:

"How do the tulips know which way is up...especially when I couldn't remember last fall when I just tossed them in the holes? Are some of them now poking through the other side of the world?

And why does the ground hog control the arrival of spring? For anything THAT IMPORTANT it should at least be reported by something more elegant than a rodent with a fur coat...maybe a gazelle or a unicorn.

Why are income taxes due during the gentle month of April...just when everything in the world is waking up and growing brand new? They might as well be due in January along with colds, post-party depression, and the blahs. Why waste such a lovely month on taxes?

Why are some people thoughtful, and why are some like those tulips I planted upside down? Some speak with their hearts and some without benefit of a brain.

Winter comes before spring? Is it so we will fully comprehend the blessedness of rebirth after the quietness of the earth's deep sleep?

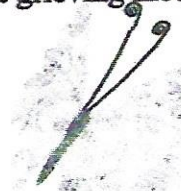
Why do we clear the land before we do spring planting? Can't the roots go around the rock...like I have to? No one seems to be clearing my path...yet the roots hold fast. Why am I still growing when I once thought (and maybe wished) that I had died?

Why is spring the time for things to go and things to stay...for the snow to melt and the earth to stretch?

Why do I continue to search for new beginnings when I like the way it was, and why do I still hurt when it has been so long...?

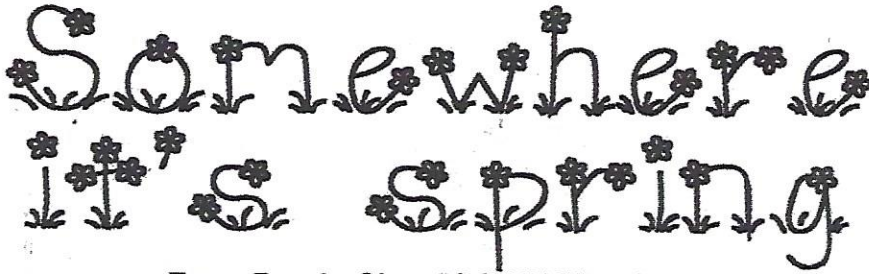
Why do I think these whys, especially in the spring? The rest of the world seems to be celebrating a reprieve from winter. Why are parts of my heart still frozen?...WHY?"

Darcie Sims is a compassionate friend to all of us. Her writing grounds us in reality, yet her experience as a grieving mother speaks to our hearts.



Taking one step at a time,
Claudia Margitay-Balogh

Grieving, Healing, Growing...



From Darcie Sims "COPING" article
Bereavement Magazine March/April 1993

It's spring in some places now. And in some places, it will be winter for another couple of weeks. Somewhere the tulips are beginning to push through the soft earth and somewhere the birds are returning to sing. Somewhere the air is warmer, the breezes more gentle, the land begins to awaken from a frozen sleep. The trees are beginning to bud and even the air smells fresh and clean.

Somewhere windows are open and the sound of the vacuum can be heard, marking the beginning of Spring Cleaning...a ritual given to us long before our forefathers set sail for a new world.

Spring is the reawakening season...the great WAKE UP CALL for the earth. Somewhere, someone is answering that call... greeting the new season with vim, vigor, and vitality. There are smiles and renewed energy, and hope seems to simply float on the softened air. Somewhere, all that is occurring, but not within me.

It's still snowing inside my being. It's still winter inside here, and there aren't any tulips about to burst open in my spirit. I've still got my snow boots on, and the sun hasn't quite made it to my world. It's still winter inside me. I wonder if spring will ever come????

Oh, there have been moments of spring in the past. Wonderful, warm fleeting moments. Moments when I "forgot" about the pain, the emptiness, the despair, the grief. Moments when the world was right side up and the music made me dance. But, they were

only moments, and I'm still waiting for the forever-good feelings to come back. I'm still waiting for spring to arrive in me.

I wonder where HOPE HAS GONE. Hope, the major ingredient in spring, seems to elude my grasp. Just when I think there might be some hope, a memory comes creeping across my soul, and it's winter again in my heart. I haven't had a memory free of pain in what seems like a loooooong time. WHEN WILL IT BE SPRING FOR ME AGAIN?

It's this lack of hope that seems especially cruel during springtime. I thought this winter inside me would end, and I was looking forward to a more peaceful time in my life. I thought we would settle down, plant a garden and live our lives filled with memories and the opportunity to make new ones. HA! I thought grief would end at some point. The books all say it will...everyone else looks as if their griefs have subsided...how come spring missed me????

A season without hope is the ultimate in despair, and I've spent too many such seasons. I want the warmth of the spring air to blow past my windows, too. WHERE DOES HOPE GO, AND HOW DO I GET IT BACK?

Hope is that elusive something that keeps us moving, even in the dark. We are only powerless when we have no hope, no vision, no faith in our own abilities. We may be helpless at times. We may question the arrival of spring, but we are only truly powerless when

we have no hope.

There are times in our lives when spring seems far away, and perhaps spring is the farthest away when we demand its return. We keep looking for the DAYS and WEEKS and MONTHS and YEARS of feeling good. We keep demanding perfect days...all strung together to make a good life. We keep kicking the rocks instead of bending over to pick them up and move them.

As we keep waiting for the SEASON OF DESPAIR to end, we end up missing the moments when despair is less. We keep demanding that it always be light, always be pleasant, always be pain free. And if we can't find those magical times when spring reigns supreme, then we cast away whatever it is we do have...rejecting the moments of lightness because we wanted days of happiness...not mere moments.

Somewhere it is spring, and somewhere it isn't. But, it can be spring inside us if we will let it begin.

Spring begins with a remembered joy, a cherished moment when we allow a spark of happiness to permeate the gloom. When we are mourning intensely, if that tiny spark of joy can be ignited for only a few seconds, we know there is hope. And hope is the opposite of the helplessness that is reflected in our anger, in our guilt, and in our sadness.

Don't lose the hope! Search for it! Fight for it! DEMAND its return. Hope changes as we do, and it can be so disguised that we may not recognize it, but it can be found - in the MOMENTS of our memories. We probably won't ever have totally happy lives again...but so what? We probably didn't have that kind of life anyway; we just thought we did. Bend over! Pick up a rock! Move it! Find new moments to cherish, blending them in with the old to mend the torn fabric of our lives with tiny stitches; each one made with joy and remembered laughter. Demand less of yourself and accept more. Don't let death rob you of the moments of joy still to be remembered, to be found. Don't let grief rob you of those SPRING PLACES where love and joy live forever in the heart.

Somewhere it IS spring. Deal with the anger, the guilt, the depression as it comes, and then let it go as you can - so there will be room for joy to come again.

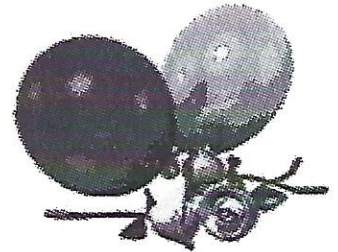
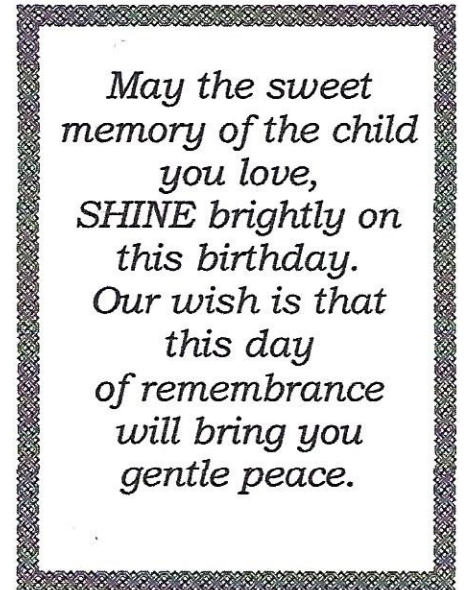
Let hope come in...it's spring.

Our Children Loved, Missed, and Remembered...

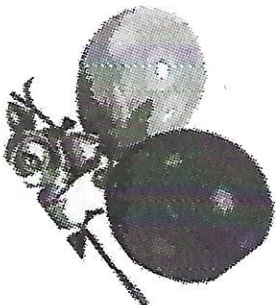
We all know how difficult these special days - Birthdays and Death Anniversaries- can be. This feature in our newsletter helps us to be aware of who is facing these special days each month. We ask that you keep parents, siblings, and grandparents observing such dates during March and April in your thoughts and in your hearts.

MILES JON JENNESS	March 1
ANGEL GRACE McMANUS	March 1
WILLIAM (BILLY) RUDOLPH	March 1
JOSEPH DAVID LONGO	March 3
BRANDON SEAN LYNCH	March 4
MATTHEW MAKAR	March 5
LINDA POPPA	March 6
STEVEN SPRAY	March 6
JOSEPH MINNIX	March 7
BETH LOGAN	March 7
SHERRI A. MUNZ	March 8
KEVIN MICHAEL KOCHAN	March 8
TONY BROWN	March 9
DEIDRE STEWART	March 10
JOVANNI NATAL	March 10
NANCY P. KELLER	March 11
MATTHEW PERRY	March 17
MICHAEL ROE	March 17
JOAN P. BURBY TELLONE	March 17
JOHN E. MURPHY, JR	March 18
GREGORY HARTZ	March 19
JESSICA ELIZABETH KOLARIC	March 21
THOMAS PATRICK DALLING	March 22
WILLIAM (BILLY) A. SLOSSAR	March 22
OZZY ZACK	March 23
CHRISTOPHER JOSEPH HALEY	March 24
DAVID MICHAEL VOGT	March 24
MARISSA NICOLE ARGUETA	March 27
JOHNNY CORSA	March 27
MELISSA STUPAK MONTUORI	March 29

AMY ELIZABETH CLEVELAND - JOHNSON	April 3
MARC ROSEN	April 3
RYAN THOMAS WALSH	April 3
JALYN FRANCIS	April 4
CHARLIE BERSZAKIEWICZ	April 6
KEVIN SUTHERLAND	April 8
MICHAEL JOSEPH HURTA	April 9
CHRISTINE ANN SOLTIS FILAKOVSKY	April 9
SCOTT MILO	April 11
COREY MICHAEL CERRONE	April 13
SETH ROBERTS	April 15
AMBER PHILLIPS	April 16
JOSHUA GALPIN	April 19



SCOTTY THOMAS	April 23
JOLENE DeCIUCIS	April 23
NICK FELISKO	April 24
JUSTIN SMITH	April 24
ANTONIO GONCALVES	April 25
ERIC A. JONES	April 25
TATE ARLETTA SCHEER	April 25
LEIGH SABO	April 28



Birthdays

Our Children Loved, Missed, and Remembered...

A life that touches the hearts of others goes on forever .

JASON WILLIAM CANNON	March 1		
ROY H. SMITH, JR	March 1		
ANGEL GRACE McMANUS	March 1	COREY MICHAEL CERRONE	March 29
GRACE MARIE EVANKO	March 2	TIMMY GAROFALO	March 30
JOHN NAPOLITANO	March 3	CHRISTOPHER McETTRICK	March 30
KAREN WIEGMAN	March 4		
MICHAEL JAMES JR	March 4		
LEO FARRELL	March 6	DAVID STANCZYK	April 1
CHARLES PATAKY	March 8	BOBBY PROVENZANO	April 1
BRANDON GIORDANO	March 9	DAN O'SULLIVAN	April 2
CHRISTIE LEA ENDRE	March 10	WILLIAM J. SAVO	April 4
RYAN PHILLIPS	March 12	JOSEPH SANTE CAJIGAS	April 4
JOSEPH MCFADDEN	March 13	DANIEL SOUZA	April 4
CHRISTOPHER TOKARSKI, JR	March 13	FRANK ARGONESE	April 5
ALEX RECUPINO	March 14	ANNETTE KEMEZA	April 7
JAMES (JAMEY) GUENTER DINA	March 14	JOHN SAMUEL SMITH	April 9
RYAN EDWARD SIMPSON	March 14	JOSEPH F. MINNIX	April 10
VICTORIA "TORI" LYNN KOETSCH	March 16	AUSTIN BUONI	April 12
JERESA JUNE MINCEY	March 17	THOMAS REDGATE	April 18
JARED ARTHUR LEVINE	March 17	JENNIFER McLEOD	April 20
BERNARD E. KOETSCH II	March 18	GARY SALVATORE BELLARD	April 21
THOMAS VAZZANO	March 18	ANDREW BOBKO	April 23
DAWN KOSARKO	March 18	MARCUS RAMOS	April 24
BRIAN TUZIK	March 19	AALIYAH GABRIELLE DUNN	April 24
TAMIKA CAMERON	March 20	SCOTTY THOMAS	April 24
BRANDON SEAN LYNCH	March 21	CHRISTOPHER R. ETES	April 24
LAURIE POVINELLI	March 21	WILLIAM A. BAKER IV	April 26
CARL R. WENNERSTRAND TALBOT	March 21	JOHN McPADDEN	April 27
KEITH DRAP	March 23	ADAM GARDNER	April 29
KIM THIBODEAU CHIARALUCE	March 26		
JENOE VARGA	March 26		
MICHAEL ROWLEY	March 27		
DAWN ANN KALMAN	March 27		
JIMMY PIFER	March 27		
DIANA-ALEXANDRA BREAZ	March 28		



Angelversaries

Love Gifts



A "Love Gift" is a donation given in memory of our children by family or friends who wish to support the work of our chapter. There are no fees or dues to belong to The Compassionate Friends. All contributions are voluntary. Our Bridgeport & Vicinity Chapter depends solely on donations to fund our meetings. A Love Gift will help pay for expenses such as our website, meeting place, newsletter, telephone, Candle Lighting Event, books, brochures, and supplies which help to assist grieving families. These gifts are much needed and are always welcome. "Love Gifts" are acknowledged every two months in the newsletter. Your gift(s) is tax deductible to the extent allowed by the law.

The Compassionate Friends is a registered 501(c) (3) organization.

The Compassionate Friends Bridgeport Chapter
 c/o Leslie Minasi,
 P.O. Box 112, Stratford, CT 06615
 Please make out the check to:

The Compassionate Friends Bridgeport Chapter.

Since the newsletter is published 6 times a year, please note that if you want to commemorate a birthday or anniversary in the exact month, please send the love gift in advance. All love gifts will be acknowledged as promptly as possible. The chapter leadership is grateful for your contributions of any amount.

Compassionate Verse

A Prayer For Spring

*Like springtime, let me unfold
 and grow fresh and anew,
 from this cocoon of grief
 that has been spun around me.*

*Help me face the harsh reality of
 sunshine and renewed life,
 as my bones still creak from
 the winter of my grief.*

*Life has dared to go around me,
 And as I recover from the insult
 of life's continuance,
 I readjust my focus to
 include recovery and growth
 as a possibility in my future.*

*Give me the strength to break out of
 the cocoon of my grief.
 But may I never forget it as
 the place where I grew my wings.
 Becoming a new person
 because of my loss.*

Janis Heil

In remembrance of
Joseph Anthony Peloso IV,
 You are always in our hearts!
 With love,
 from his mother and dad

A Valentine Love Gift
 in loving memory of
Viviana Rose Cavalli
 With love, Mom

In loving memory of our son
Kevin Michael Kochan
 on his Birthday (March 8)

from Dr. Charles and Sharon Kochan

There is no winter
 harsh enough to withhold
 the promise
 of spring!
Karen Kaiser Clark

TCF Bridgeport Chapter "Love Gift" Form

Name _____
 Address _____ City _____
 State _____ Zip Code _____ Phone _____ E-Mail _____
 Message _____

RENEWAL AND GROWTH

This is the season of the year when we look forward to respite from the bleakness of winter and its effect on those in grief.

Grief is similar to a cold winter season; for in the beginning, there is that stark emptiness when we feel empty and bare. There is great doubt in believing that a change will take place in our winter, but it does come.

You will, with time, start to heal and look forward once again to your day in the sun where you will feel its warm, comforting, healing power that reaffirms for us the continuance of life for nature and more important...for us.

This doesn't all happen at a set time or pattern, but continue to believe in yourselves.

Life as we all know, will continue on, never as before...it cannot...but with you as a healing survivor with the well earned joy that you have made it and are a stronger person than you ever could have imagined.

May the holidays of Passover and Easter bring you peace. Each of these holidays share the symbol of hope; may this hope be shared in abundance.

*Helen Prokop
former Bridgeport TCF newsletter editor*

SPRING CLEANING

I am a "spring cleaner." As one who works full time, my usual house-cleaning is what is often called "a lick and a promise." But once a year I really enjoy taking everything out of a closet, bureau, cabinet or cupboard - examining it -remembering (if I can) where it came from - thinking about its potential uses - and often wondering why I am keeping it!

Recently, as I was rummaging around on a shelf, finding a few things I'd forgotten about, I thought about how much of what I was doing could apply to my "personal closet," as well as to our living room closet. My "personal closet" is that part of me where I store all sorts of things - anger, guilt, hope, joy, love, caring. If I could dig way down into that closet and find something I'd forgotten I had, and could put to good use, I'd like to find a big box labeled "FORGIVENESS."

One of the things we must do before we can move ahead in any situation is to completely forgive whatever wrongs, real and imagined, (and we do

have both) have been done to us.

This isn't easy. I have to forgive the doctors and nurses, whose training had not prepared them to deal with a child whose illness they couldn't understand - or how to be supportive of her grieving parents and sister.

I have to forgive the people who stayed away from us because they had never been taught about the needs of bereaved parents.

I had to forgive the people who tried to "cheer us up" or "take our minds off it." They, too, were baffled by the horror of it all and were, in their own way, trying to be helpful.

I have to forgive the people who told us that Linda's death was God's will. They were trying to comfort us.

I have to forgive myself - for so many things. This is a really tough one - the times I was cross or demanding - the situations I handled badly as my child Linda was growing up - the times I screamed or spanked out of my own frustration. I think she has forgiven me, yet the guilt remains, and I must

forgive myself.

Then, there are the questions that so many of us ask, "Why didn't I realize sooner how sick she was?" "Why didn't we transfer her to Children's Hospital sooner?" There are no answers to these questions.

If I made mistakes, then I must accept them and forgive myself for them. I know that carrying the burden of *blaming myself and passing judgment on myself* will only weigh me down and hold back whatever potential I have for future growth. But still, it's difficult.

I have to forgive people who don't understand where I'm coming from now and make derogatory remarks about their children. I do wish I could help them to appreciate how very valuable and precious those little lives are.

And finally, I have to forgive Linda. Her dying really messed up my life, by creating a situation I didn't know how to deal with. It took a relatively normal, uncomplicated life, smashed it to smithereens, and forced me to attempt to reconstruct it - to put it back together - a hard job when some of the pieces don't quite fit anymore!

Yes, I'd like to find deep down inside me a great big box labeled "FORGIVENESS."

*Evelyn Billings
TCF, Springfield, MA*

Compassionate Wisdom

For the Garden of Your Daily Living

Plant Three Rows of Peas

- 1. Peace of Mind*
- 2. Peace of Heart*
- 3. Peace of Soul*

Plant Four Rows of Squash

- 1. Squash Gossip*
- 2. Squash Indifference*
- 3. Squash Grumbling*

Plant Four Rows of Lettuce

- 1. Lettuce Be Faithful*
- 2. Lettuce Be Kind*
- 3. Lettuce Be Patient*
- 4. Lettuce Really Love One Another*

No Garden is Without Turnips

- 1. Turnip for Meetings*
- 2. Turnip for Service*
- 3. Turnip to Help one Another*

To Conclude Our Garden, We Must Have Thyme

- 1. Thyme for Each Other*
- 2. Thyme for Family*
- 3. Thyme for Friends*
- 4. Thyme for Prayer*

Water Freely with Patience and Cultivate with Love

There is Much Fruit in your Garden

Because

You Reap What You Sow.