The M.E.N.D. Garden of Hope, dedicated on October 1, 2016, is a place of peace and solace. Located on the campus of Calvary Church in Irving, Texas, visitors find their way to the Garden, day or night, for a quiet time of reflection, prayer, or even to celebrate the life of their loved one. Just as Jesus went to the garden to spend time with His Father, He welcomes us to spend time with Him, even in our "unexpected gardens."

In this issue...

Evelyn’s Eastern Redbud
Becky shares of finding the beauty in the Redbud Tree planted to celebrate and remember their Evelyn.

Hope in the Midst of Miscarriage
A mama shares her journey and reflections in the losses of her precious babies.

Growing the Garden with Grief
Sometimes grief impacts the garden we are already planting, as Stacy shares through her experiences.
July/August Topic
Juggling What is Normal
Deadline: May 31, 2023

September/October Topic
When Things Don't Turn Out As Planned
Deadline: July 31, 2023

Stories, poems, thoughts, and/or feelings regarding these topics are welcome. Submissions must be received by the deadline to be considered for publication in the magazine. Unfortunately, there is not enough room to include all submissions. Choices will be left to the discretion of the editors. Please send any submissions to our Magazine Editor, Jennifer Harrison, at jennifer@mend.org. Any submission printed in our magazine will also be posted to our website indefinitely. Because our magazines are posted online, please understand your name will be attached to your submission when searched on the Internet.

Letters to the Editor should be sent to jennifer@mend.org. All letters submitted to the editor are subject to be published in future issues, both in the print version and online, unless a letter’s author expressly requests it not be published.

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“Grow Where You’re Planted” was the theme at our recent annual M.E.N.D. Leadership Conference. During the weekend we were encouraged to think of our M.E.N.D. chapters like gardens, and most of the training incorporated this simile into the sessions we attended. With gardens still freshly on our minds, this magazine edition will focus on the idea of our families as our little gardens.

When I was a young girl, I imagined my “garden” would grow three little boys. I planned for my first son to be named after my “fellow gardener” (my husband), the second boy would be called Jonathan, and the third bud…well, I never could come up with a name for him, so I decided to figure that out later.

Three years after Byron and I married, our first son, Byron, Jr. was born. So far, my Mitchell Garden was growing and thriving as planned. When we became pregnant with our second baby, I was elated it was another boy. Again, so far so good! But Jonathan was stillborn! A death in my garden was never, ever considered! Years later we were expecting our third child, who I thought would brighten our incomplete small garden, but he or she was miscarried at 10 weeks. Another loss in our little field. The Mitchell Garden did eventually sprout again years later when our beautiful daughter-in-law was added, then it truly came to life once more when our grandson, Elias Jonathan, was born nearly four years ago.

In the meantime, an unexpected sprout bigger than I could have ever imagined popped up a year after Jonathan’s stillbirth, when God planted M.E.N.D. in my heart. The Master Gardener sowed this seed the moment our Jonathan went to be with Him in 1995. This very unexpected purple beauty has grown into something more lovely, magnificent, and amazing than I could have ever imagined. For 26 years I have stood in awe at the handiwork God created from the hard seasons of my life. By no means does my garden look like the sketch I drew in my head when I was young, nor is it the garden I really wanted. But oh how grand it truly is! As a little girl, I imagined myself growing up to be a wife and a mom to three busy boys. I did grow up and became a wife and a mom but to only one son. Creating a huge garden of M.E.N.D. families was not in my plan. Spending hours and hours for years in my office every single day managing, directing and cultivating a national pregnancy and infant loss organization that was birthed from the death of my baby was never part of my dreamy garden. But the lush fruit of this beautiful garden is rare and like no other. The bond we M.E.N.D. families have is precious, the friendships are cherished, and the understanding we have with and for one another is sacred.

As you are re-planning and re-tilling your little family garden, I encourage you to ask the Lord, “How do You want me to grow through this?” Consider what unexpected gifts may emerge from your sorrow. Think about if your suffering has grown you, changed your attitude, softened your heart, humbled you or enabled you to have empathy and compassion for others. It may not seem like it now, but eventually I pray you will view these attributes as blessings from your heartbreaking experience. As we often reiterate at our M.E.N.D. support groups, we never want to insinuate our babies died so good things could emerge within us, but rather, think of it as our babies’ legacy: what has grown out of us from the precious seed that awaits us in heaven. Allow God to continue to grow you in the garden where you’ve now been planted, and watch what beauty will blossom.
Happy 14th Birthday, Jackson Glen and Tyler Ray!

Heavenly Father, 14 years ago You blessed us with our precious first born sons, Jackson Glen and Tyler Ray. While our time with them was so short, they changed our lives forever. We have deep faith that our beloved sons sit daily at the feet of King Jesus, as Your face was the first thing their tiny eyes ever saw. We are so thankful, Lord, for the promise of heaven and the reunion we will have. And yet we wish we could go back, have just one more day. That we may feel the comfort that only You can offer. So today, Lord, while we praise You in our sorrow, we also ask for Your Peace. Amen

Jackson Glen and Tyler Ray Light
February 23, 2009
Placental Abrupton
Parents: Kirk and Diana Light
Siblings: Brayden and Lexi

Happy 1st Birthday, Mateo!

Mateo, we all miss and love you so much! We think about you every day. We wish you were here, but we can't wait to see you again someday. Happy birthday!

Love,
Mom

Happy 1st birthday to my 3rd grandson and 3rd grandchild, Mateo! You were born asleep yet so alive! You are your big brother Malik's twin, and we love seeing you in his face! We celebrate and remember you in all we do! Our love for you is beautifully painful and filled with HOPE! Each night your brothers pray you get a little tickle from Jesus! I sang "Jesus Loves Me" to you the day you were born, and we continue to every night! Until we shall be caught up with you in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and be together with Him forever, we will miss you and love you deeply! 1 Thess. 4:13-1

Mateo David Gurrola
Stillbirth June 6, 2022
Parents: Jamaika Mercer and Jorge Gurrola
Siblings: Quincy, Malik and Romeo

Happy Birthday to our Babies in Heaven!

Mommy, Daddy, Brie, and Laurel hope all our babies in heaven have the grandest birthdays. We love and miss you more than words could ever say.

Baby Gray Nale
Miscarried December 10, 2015
June 30, 2018
Bilateral Renal Agenesis
Baby Nale
Miscarried March 17, 2021
Parents: Gary and Tiffany Nale
Sibling: Brie and Laurel

Happy 2nd Birthday, Arlo!

Happy 2nd birthday to our firstborn son, Arlo! I can't believe it has been two years already. I can still feel your life like it was yesterday. You have paved the way to bring your little brother, Renzo, into our lives last October. Thank you for protecting him, loving us and giving us so much strength. We can't wait to tell Renzo about his older brother. We love and miss you every day.

Your family, Mom, Dad, Flo, Bean, and Renzo

Happy 5th Birthday, Claire!

Happy birthday to our Claire Bear! I can't believe you would be 5 years old already. I think about you every day and wish you could be here with your brothers. Your brothers and I planted a rose bush for you this year and we all participated in a race in your memory. I hope we make you proud, and you feel our love. You are so loved and cherished, little Claire. Happy birthday, and we miss you and love you.

Love,
Mommy, Daddy, JoJo and Jonathan

Claire Apa
May 8, 2018
IUGR, placental insufficiency
Also remembering
Baby Apa
Miscarried October 2017
Parents: Garrett and Charla Apa
Siblings: Joseph and Jonathan
Happy 1st Birthday, Milo!
How has it already been a year since your beautiful birth? We will forever treasure that moment we finally got to meet you, sweet boy, after 41 weeks of waiting. Your Daddy got to catch you, and your Mommy cried tears of joy, both of us admiring every little perfect feature. We had a lifetime of love to give you, but your time with us was so short. While our hearts ache to hold you again, we are grateful for the assurance that someday we will. In the meantime, we know you are in Jesus’ arms, safe and warm and loved beyond measure. Precious Milo, we miss you and love you with all our hearts.

Milo Liam Kostrna
May 3-4, 2022
Congenital Alveolar Dysplasia
Parents: Ariel and Stephen Kostrna
Older siblings Alan and Georgiana

Happy 9th Birthday, Paul!
Happy 9th heavenly birthday, son! This year is different. This year you have your papa in heaven with you celebrating; we sure do miss you both. Older sister Missy graduated a couple of days before your birthday, and your older brother graduates college in December. This year will be different, yet know that we love you very much. Your older sister, Kristen, is going to state this year for band, so even though we will not be able celebrate your birthday like we have before, know that we will always love and miss you, and that it’s nine years closer to seeing you, son. We love you very much.

Paul Bradley Brady
May 29, 2014
Born sleeping
Parents: James and Jessica Brady
Siblings: Matthew, Melissa, Kristen, Ruby and Bella

Happy 6th Birthday, Levi!
Our dear Levi, this day is never easy. How much we wish you could be here in our arms celebrating your birthday. You will always be the baby that made us parents. You will always be our first baby. We love you so much, and we miss you every day. Happy birthday, baby boy.

Levi Michael Gonzalez
Stillborn June 23, 2017
Parents: Michael and Meagan Gonzalez
Siblings: Isaac and Caleb

Happy 2nd Birthday, Nova Tikvah!
Happy 2nd birthday, Nova! We miss you and love you more than words can say. We hope that your birthday is filled with rainbows, bubbles, cupcakes, and all the things that make a 2-year-old smile. We so desperately wish you could be here to celebrate with us and share your beautiful smile with us. You are missed every day. Thank you for watching over us that terrible November night. We know you were looking out for your big sister that night. You are loved beyond words. We will continue to honor your memory, and help you make your impact on this world.

Nova Tikvah Brown
May 13, 2021
Parents: Kevin and Annie Brown
Big sister: Sarah

Happy 4th Birthday, Vida Lizette!
Mi Vida, I cannot believe you are 4 years old! Happy birthday, my angel! We will never forget this day, and you will forever be celebrated. There is not a day goes by I don’t think about you. I always wonder what you would look like as a toddler and what kind of personality you would have. You will forever be my only baby girl. Your brothers and I miss you so much, but know you are in good hands with Grandpa. We love you and miss you so much, baby girl.

Vida Lizette Rodriguez
June 30, 2019 - January 2, 2020
Premature birth at 22 weeks
Mommy: Josette Galloway
Big brothers: Aiden and Jude

Happy 20th Birthday, Matthew!
Twenty years! Can it really be 20 years since you went home to heaven while we had to say goodbye to you here? That day, my life took a turn that was quite unexpected and undesired, but God has been with me, healing and growing me through all these years. You are all grown up now, and I often wonder what you would be like or what you would be doing. You hold that sweet place in my heart, and I thank God for you. You are God’s gift to me, and I love you forever. I look forward to the day when we will be together again. Happy birthday, Matthew!

Matthew Mifflin
June 6, 2003
True knot in cord
Parents: Dennis and Janet Mifflin
Happy 2nd Birthday, Adilynn!
Happy 2nd birthday, Adi! We miss you so much...I always think about what you would be doing if you were here with us right now. I’m sure running around the house doing “terrible twos” things. Even though we have welcomed your little sister into the world, we will never forget our precious angel, and we will make sure she knows her big sister. Thank you for choosing her for us. She represents hope, faith and the rainbow after the storm.

Love,
Mommy, Daddy and Halie

Adilynn Grace Barnes
Stillborn May 1, 2021
Parents: Nakia and Thomas Barnes
Little sister: Mahaylia

Happy 2nd Birthday, Deon!
Our sweet baby boy, in more ways than one you changed our lives forever. We are grateful to God for the time we were able to have with you here with us, as short-lived as it was. Our hearts still ache for you daily. You will always be our first blessing and we will love you forever.

Until we get to hold you again,
Mommy and Daddy

Deon Maurice Stouton
Stillborn May 18, 2021
Unknown cause
Parents: Ruth and De’Von Stouton

Happy 4th Birthday Lucas!
My sweet boy I cannot believe you will be turning 4! I can imagine you running around with your sissy. You would be such a great big brother to Belle. I hope you will be celebrating with family in heaven. We love and miss you so much

Love you to the moon and all the stars
Mommy and Isabelle

Lucas Grant Bush
June 18, 2019
Pregnancy loss at 19 weeks
Also remembering
Baby Bush I
Baby Bush II
Baby Bush III
Jacob Bush
Baby Bush IV
Baby Bush-Anderson V
Mommy: Tara Bush
Little sister: Isabelle

Happy 4th Birthday, Baby Joel!
Happy 4th birthday, baby boy! We hope another birthday in heaven is celebrated with lots of cake. We miss you dearly and are celebrating you here.

Baby Joel Muñoz
May 25, 2018
Ectopic pregnancy
Also remembering
Emelyn Rose Muñoz
January 16, 2016
Parents: Allison Ortega Muñoz and Joel Muñoz Jr.

Grieving in the Garden
written by Alexandria Harrel on March 24, 2022, for Catholic Women In Business

There was grief in the gardens.
Adam and Eve doubted God’s goodness and ate the forbidden fruit, leading to their expulsion from the Garden of Eden. Before Jesus’s arrest, he went into the Garden of Gethsemane to beg the Father to take away the pain that was coming and to place His faith and trust in the Father’s will. In our own interior garden, there may be areas of doubt, brokenness, and sadness for our plans and expectations that have not come into fruition.

A Story of Love and Grief
God created us to belong to Him, and our very being and purpose are oriented toward the Father. In His goodness, God gave us free will to choose Him. Imagine His heartbreak at Adam and Eve’s rejection of their purpose—of the Father himself. Did His heart grieve as He sent Adam and Eve out of the garden and original sin entered into the world? Adam and Eve’s realization that eating the fruit changed everything is somber: “Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked” (Genesis 3:7). The moment when they saw that they had lost what they had with the Father must have been agonizing (“I heard you in the garden; but I was afraid, because I was naked, so I hid”). With the sorrow of knowing that what was would be no more, that there would be suffering, pain and sadness, made the creation story become a story of both love and grief.

Jesus is fully human and fully divine. On a human level, He did not want to undergo such a public, painful, humiliating and gruesome death. So, Jesus was honest with the Father, laying out his heart:
“My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me” (Matthew 26:39). Maybe there were hopes and dreams that Jesus’s human self had to grieve before accepting His cross. He was a carpenter, He had friends and community, and He felt love and
concern for His mother. Jesus Christ, the King of Kings, experienced great grief in the garden.

**Healing in Our Garden**

Perhaps your interior garden is grieving right now over what you think should be happening in your life: that position at that company that you have wanted to work at since college, the level of personal and professional success you feel you should have achieved at this stage in your life, the husband and family that you thought you would have by now, the goals you told yourself in high school you would reach within a certain time frame.

There can be so much that we grieve within our interior garden, but we so often think we should not grieve over the plans and expectations that have not come to be— that to grieve means to be bitter and resentful forever. Yet to grieve is to heal, and we have beautiful examples of grieving and surrendering that grief—and healing.

God grieved, Jesus grieved, and we, too, can grieve. God the Father and God the Son taught us how to grieve and how to surrender our grief. In the Garden of Eden, God the Father grieved at Adam and Eve’s rejection: “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree which I had forbidden you to eat?” (Genesis 3:11). God the Son earnestly prayed and surrendered His grief, placing His faith in the Father’s will. Ultimately, the grief experienced in the gardens led to the death of sin and the Resurrection.

God turns grief into victory, and we can surrender our grief to help bring about the glory of the Kingdom. Jesus wants to sit with us in our grief; He understands why we grieve over lost plans and unfilled expectations. We need to grieve to heal our heart and surrender our plans to the Lord, letting Him work through our grief to do things that we cannot even imagine.

This Lenten season, we can grieve, knowing that God the Father and God the Son grieves with us. We may never know this side of heaven why our plans and expectations do not come into fruition, but we know that the Lord is working with and through our grief. Our grief does not have to be the end of the story; it can be the part of the story where God heals us.

We are created to belong to God. I pray that whatever grief is in your interior garden can be turned into moments of healing and surrendering. May we grow ever closer to our Lord.

Hope In The Midst Of Miscarriage: Thoughts From A Loving Wife & Mother

Written By Anna Broderick on Wallflowerjournal.com

I have identified with the title of this piece for a long time now. Even before I knew my own journey. I thought this title was just going to be an honor to have written on my gravestone someday.

Now, it is written in invisible etching across my heart, drowning in my tears and ripped across my soul. I knew I needed to write, particularly in this state. However, each new month would come, and I would have hope that it would be the month when I would get to carry again. So I didn’t write. But today is the day.

Someday I hope that my house will be filled with laughter and coos and dirty from little fingerprints and baby food. So I have to write, now, to capture the pain and the loneliness that has been unmatched in my life.

I don’t know who around me is walking through unbearable loss. I do not know if a sister, friend or stranger will be gasping for air and just looking to read something that meets them in their pain. I am learning our stories don’t have to be identical, but the commonality of loss is enough.

This is so unbelievably personal to me. Carrying my unborn children was the greatest gift, my deepest longing, and the fulfillment of who I believe I was meant to be. But something much more sinister and difficult to share is the raw, ugly reality of losing those things.

The hideous darkness that crept into our beautiful home, and that lingered far past any guest ever should. It was my raw pain, my depression and anger. My seething hurt and my lack of self-identity, when what you believed to be true was stripped from you.

Along my journey, I have approached my faith and God in lots of different ways. I do not know where you are, if anywhere, on that path. But this is my reality and my fight to hold on to this one precious life.

God had always been a friend to me. Life was not easy, but I found God to be a soft breeze and a calming physical feeling in my chest. The comfort in the storm and the sure footing when I didn’t know where to step.

So after growing up in the church and learning that God’s dearest blessing was children, and the greatest of callings was to be a mother, I was left a reeling Christian excluded from these gifts and callings. I was finding it hard to see the kindness I once knew so well. I have clung to God to hold me fast, but I have also screamed to Him, “How could you?”

How could you do this to the girl who played imaginary family while she was young? She started babysitting at 12 years old. She volunteered on the postpartum floor at the hospital every summer through high school. She dedicated her education to children and became a teacher. All of this in preparation to be a mother. How could you take this girl who tried to do what is right her whole life and smash something she held so dear? Her children.

I will never forget telling my husband I was pregnant the very first time, in England, on a Friday night. He cried tears of joy. I was pregnant with Cam. Even sharing their names is extremely personal and difficult. Because to many, they didn’t even exist. But to me, they were my world.

I remember being alone when I found out things were not growing as they should. I remember my husband running into the ultrasound room. I remember getting dropped off at work and sobbing in my office right after. I remember the encouragement of so many, that “this happens.” That “it’s natures way.” That we “will have a baby, and I am sure so soon.”

That horrific day when I found out Cam wouldn’t make it was years ago now. That excruciating miscarriage, that I can never fully utter the words of the gruesomeness and the trauma, has had multiple anniversaries.

With my second pregnancy, with Tulip, I told my husband over the phone on my way home from work. We hugged when I got home. We were terrified. Terrified to love this little bean. Struggling to move on from our last baby.

While he was out of the country and while I cradled my belly holding my second child, I began to have a sharp pain. Instantly there was no denying this pain was far too severe for a tiny life to withstand. I began bleeding at home in the middle of the night, alone. In and out of consciousness from pain and blood loss and being physically sick, my friend arrived and got me to the emergency room. I waited for three hours to see a doctor.

Those eternal three hours weeping in a public room in unimaginable pain and cradling my belly...
just saying “I'm so sorry” to little Tulip. After seeing the doctor and laying in a hospital bed for hours, I completely lost my little child alone in that room. I saw them, tiny and fragile, and wept at the precious life my body had rejected.

I will never be able to explain the next days and months. Nothing was enjoyable. I lied to people when I said anything was fun or that I wanted to join any social event. I lied continuously. The truth: I did not want to see a soul. No, not even a kind one.

I was traumatized, tired and angry. I had no room to be a good wife at his work events, no desire for friendship, and no motivation to do well at work. I was a shell, a body, a girl who had loved and lost two little babies. I will never forget them and yet I never even got to know what they were like. The most confusing and lonesome pain. No one else held them. No one else was their mother. Just me alone in a world that doesn't know how to handle this situation.

An international move, a new house, new friends, same story. I did not belong. My children were dead, so going to family-friendly events sliced open my deepest wound and left me feeling exposed. Non-children events left me angry that I have been frozen in this stage I never even really wanted to be in, in the first place. Again a shell.

Questions from people completely unaware of my pain began to roll in. “Have you made many friends in your new town?” No, I can't breathe when I attend social events. “What do you do for work?” I declined a full-time position to focus on my doctor’s appointments with fertility, my deep depression, and passion projects that might be able to penetrate the rock that is now my heart.

Then it happened. I can't even remember taking the test, even though I still have it in my bathroom drawer. I was pregnant with my third baby, Ansel. I will never forget my husband grabbing my leg and catching his breath when he saw his little heartbeat. I will never forget dedicating our second bedroom to be his. I will never forget the tears my mom shed when I told her the news. This was it. This was the third time. I had better medical care, I had a renewed faith and hope, and I had this baby.

But Ansel didn't live. I wish I was able to finish up this writing with him cooing next to me, or even crying, or just existing. But he isn’t here. And my belly is empty. I wasn’t a safe place for my three children. They all died. A part of me is dead too. I do not want to have fun or move on – I want my children.

I cared for them for months, now who am I supposed to care for? I was their mother; I am their mother. The mother who does not get wished a Happy Mother’s Day. The mother that friends and family

slowly distance themselves from when they want to be free to openly enjoy their new babies. The mother that is clenching her fists at children’s birthday parties. The mother who is stuck between the pain of new baby announcements and the anguish of being left out from them. The mother who feels alone in every room. Alone because her reality has been shattered, her dreams completely disregarded, and her purpose in shambles. If life is God's greatest gift, then where does that leave her?

Loss comes in lots of different forms. I am just here to share my experience and offer a hand to the girls like me. It's ugly and hard. It's lonely and excruciating. Some may forget about your pain. Some may never know. But I do. I see you. I am you. And somehow we will make it. Somehow we will continue on. And some of us will one day have what our hearts long for: the fulfillment of our life’s work, children.

But I cannot promise that you will. It is not guaranteed. So, I am here writing because it’s what I can do. I can look for my talents, my passions, and my blessings. I can carry my hurt as I photograph in honor of Ansel. I can smile as I place fresh flowers in my home in honor of Tulip. And I can travel and dream of my home in England in honor of Cam.

My babies have been laid to rest in different parts of the world, but their mother is still living. And I am working to be the mother they can all be proud of. And there is no shame in crying while I do it.

I am not here to spread misery. I am writing somehow to give hope. It doesn’t feel like that right now. Is writing just to say you are not alone purpose enough? Is remembering at the end of this that I am blessed with lots of things and telling you I am thankful for my life enough to leave this on a happy note?

In my faith it is written that God knew children in the womb – He knew them (Psalm 139:13-16). I was not the only one to carry and care for them. God did too, and He loved them very much. They did exist; and they had little lives and that’s why it matters. That’s why I miss them.

But in anger I remember that even Jesus cried out, “God why have you forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46). So even when I yell at God and ask “Why?” or “How could you?”, those questions have been asked by Jesus Himself. He knows the anguish of loss and the feeling that God's back had been turned.

Thankfully, His spirit also comforts (2 Corinthians 1:3-4), holding me alone in the hospital, or numb in a crowded room. He comforts my innermost part. And He can because He knew Cam, Tulip, and Ansel, too.
"Hope" continued from page 9

And He comforts because this is not the way life is supposed to be.

It’s hard to remember these truths in pain, but they are true. I wish God would have reached down and saved even one of my babies. I wish He would have broken the fabric of life and existence to stop the world and give me a living child.

But I continue to learn he isn’t withholding those great blessings from me and sending me curses. He is knowing, angry, and comforting alongside me all at the same time as I experience this broken life. It is not that His power is limited, but that He limits Himself so we can be free to have our own life, an abundant life, but a life that also comes with loss.

I hope this served someone well. It is just my experience. And it is lacking so many of the gory and painful details. But it’s what I could write. It’s what came out when I gasped for air. It’s my heart and my pain, it’s my story.

To those empty-handed mothers, I love you and I am so very sorry. May you find comfort in the words of another letting you know, you are not alone.

From,
A Loving Wife and Mother


Growing the Garden with Grief

Written by Stacey Newton
Mommy to Amos
M.E.N.D. - SW Missouri

On April 9, 2019, my husband and I heard the words no one ever wants to hear, “I’m sorry, but the baby is gone.” In the months following, I fell into the depths of depression and thought I would never again be able to experience peace or joy of any kind. During this time, I had many people assure me that one day I would look back on this time and find the good in it.

They were wrong.

I have yet to find anything remotely good about losing Amos and still grieve what might have been. Some might say that I should find the beauty in my grief, but, no, I’m not here to tell you that my loss has somehow become beautiful over time. My loss has not bloomed into some beautiful garden, rather my grief has become fertilizer.

True gardeners will tell you that fertilizer is necessary to grow a garden into something beautiful and productive. Fertilizers work by providing necessary nutrients to developing plants, and organic fertilizers are made up of all the yuck you can imagine: manure, blood and bone meal, ash and compost. When thinking of life without my baby, the grief is also made up of all the emotional yuck: all my anger, longing, doubt and selfishness. Grief is messy - it’s not pretty, but, by God’s grace, it has proved to be useful.

Fertilizers are composed of three main elements: nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium - each has a role to play. Nitrogen works by increasing the plant’s ability to produce new stems, flowers and fruit. Grief has increased my ability to produce many new things - new friendships as I joined a group of women who have shared a similar path. It’s grown the fruit of compassion as I now walk with others during their time of loss. It’s grown a new appreciation and delight for my children who are still here with me.

Phosphorus helps plants produce the oils and starches that form strong root systems. I was amazed to find that my grief had grown deep roots of faith. I wrestled with God as I questioned why He allowed this to happen, where He was in the darkness of grief, or even why He had allowed me to get pregnant in the first place if I couldn’t bring my baby home? I still don’t have the answers to the questions, but I’ve found that, like Jacob in Genesis 32, we are often never closer to God than when we are wrestling with Him. This faith has become my anchor, and my roots of faith are deeper and stronger, not because I found answers, but because I found peace in God’s presence that didn’t require answers.

Potassium helps build protein in the plant to fight diseases and is essential in photosynthesis. Maybe the most remarkable thing about the fertilizer of grief is what heart diseases have been demolished. Before my loss, I was unaware of how entitled and prideful I had become. Grief helped kill those things as I was humbled by the reality of how little control I actually hold and by the realization that I had to accept and embrace a life that didn’t look the way I wanted or had dreamed.

Yes, grief has been a fertilizer. As I look at all the ways that fertilizer has enriched my life, I am in awe of how the mess of grief has, in fact, made something beautiful, something that is still growing and reaping a harvest. My prayer is that, by God’s grace, your grief may “produce a harvest of righteousness and peace.”
"Recé donde estás plantado" fue el tema de nuestra reciente Conferencia de Liderazgo de M.E.N.D. Durante el fin de semana nos animamos a pensar en nuestros capítulos de M.E.N.D. como jardines, y la mayor parte de la capacitación incorporó este símil en las sesiones a las que asistimos. Con los jardines aún frescos en nuestras mentes, esta edición de la revista se centrará en la idea de nuestras familias como nuestros pequeños jardines.

Cuando era niña, imaginé que en mi “jardín” crecerían tres niños pequeños. Planeé que a mi primer hijo le pusiera el nombre de mi “compañero jardinero” (mi esposo), el segundo niño se llamaría Jonathan, y el tercer niño … bueno, nunca se me ocurrió un nombre para él, así que decidí averiguarlo más tarde.

Tres años después de que Byron y yo nos casamos, nació nuestro primer hijo, Byron, Jr. Hasta ahora, mi jardín Mitchell estaba creciendo y prosperando según lo planeado. Cuando quedamos embarazados de nuestro segundo bebé, estaba eufórica de que fuera otro niño. Una vez más, ¡hasta ahora todo bien! ¡Pero Jonathan nació sin vida! ¡Nunca, nunca se consideró una muerte en mi jardín! Años más tarde, el vínculo entre nosotros, las familias de M.E.N.D., son preciosos, las amistades son apreciadas y la comprensión que tenemos unos con otros es sagrada.

Mientras vuelves a planificar y a labrar tu pequeño jardín familiar, te animo a que le preguntas al Señor: "¿Cómo quieres que crezca a través de esto?" Considera qué regalos inesperados pueden surgir de tu dolor. Piensa si tu sufrimiento te ha hecho crecer, ha cambiado tu actitud, ha ablandado tu corazón, te ha humillado o te ha permitido tener empatía y compasión por los demás. Puede que ahora no lo parezca, pero espero que con el tiempo veas estos atributos como bendiciones de tu desgarradora experiencia. Como reiteramos a menudo en nuestros grupos de apoyo en M.E.N.D., nunca queremos insinuar que nuestros bebés murieron para que surjan cosas buenas dentro de nosotros, sino pensar en ello como el legado de nuestros bebés: lo que ha crecido de nosotros de la semilla preciosa que nos espera en el cielo. Permita que Dios continúe haciéndolo crecer en el jardín donde ahora ha sido plantado, y observe qué belleza florecerá.
**M.E.N.D. CHAPTER UPDATES**

**NW Washington**
Thank you to all who have registered to participate in M.E.N.D.ing Miles Virtual 5k! We look forward to seeing your pictures. Feel free to tag M.E.N.D. with #MENDingMiles5K.

As Mother’s Day and Father’s Day quickly approach, we hope it is a gentle day for you. Please know whether you are able to hold your baby today or must wait until heaven, you ARE a mom or a dad right now.

Please email katherines@mend.org for questions about our NW Washington chapter.

*Katherine*

**Greater Houston Area**
We were able to donate bears to five local hospitals. Thank you to all who donated. We couldn’t do it without your support.

M.E.N.D.—Greater Houston Area is excited about our upcoming events for families and would love your support!

October 14: 18th Annual Walk to Remember
December 2: Christmas Candlelight Ceremony

How can you help? We are in need of volunteers for the committee! Reach out to me if you are interested in serving. We also need donation items for our Annual Walk to Remember. If you have a business, we’d love to include a donated item. To volunteer for one of the committees or donate an item for the raffle, please contact me at nikisha@mend.org

*Nikisha*

**Columbus, Ohio**
"Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you." 1 Peter 5:7 NLT

Thank you to everyone who participated in the annual M.E.N.D.ing Miles Virtual 5k for our babies. We are looking forward to partnering with NILMDDTS for their Remembrance Walk on Saturday, June 24, at Genoa Park. Come and join us. As always, you are welcome to join our monthly support group and private Facebook group to receive comfort and encouragement...You’re NOT alone!

If you need M.E.N.D.—Columbus services or information, contact at latrina@mend.org.

*LaTrina*

**MidMichigan**
M.E.N.D.—MidMichigan is changing venues! We are finalizing details for a new, BIGGER location where we can meet with more grieving families comfortably. Be on the lookout for a postcard with details as well as our private Facebook group. Here we grow!

*Karen*

**National Online Support**
M.E.N.D.—National Online Support Group can’t wait to see your photos of the M.E.N.D.ing Miles Virtual 5k! We hope it was a sweet way to honor your babies.

The M.E.N.D. online chapter meets the 3rd Thursday of the month. Please reach out through Facebook or email if you have any questions or need the Zoom link to the support group.

*Mallory*

**Chicagoland**
M.E.N.D.—Chicagoland has been settling into a few recent changes. I am now serving as the new Chapter Director and Brittany Lowen is a new Chapter Assistant. We met once in our new location and look forward to settling into our new space.

M.E.N.D.—Chicagoland now meets at St. Paul Lutheran Church, 545 S. Ardmore Ave in Villa Park, IL.

We are thankful for all who walked with us for the M.E.N.D.ing Miles Virtual 5k. Please visit the M.E.N.D.—Chicagoland Facebook group for more details or email me at beckyl@mend.org with any questions. We are incredibly grateful for everyone who joined the Virtual 5K to allow us to continue to provide support and comfort during the grief journey of losing a baby.

*Becky*

**Men of M.E.N.D.**
These next few months are going to be challenging with Mother’s Day and Father’s Day, so let us come together to talk about our babies at the Men of M.E.N.D. support group, held via Zoom at 8:00 PM CST on the 3rd Monday of each month. I pray you have some comfort and peace during these holidays.

*Matt*
East Valley, Arizona

Thank you so much for those who participated in the March fundraisers for M.E.N.D. – East Valley Arizona; they were very successful! We look forward to our next one, so please watch our Facebook group for details!

Danielle

Southwest Missouri

M.E.N.D. – SW Missouri is excited to participate once again in our M.E.N.D.ing Miles Virtual 5k! Watch our Facebook group and your email for more details!

We are praying for all the mamas and daddies with these upcoming holidays. We know they can be difficult, so we pray for peace and comfort to get us through them.

Jennifer

Tulsa, Oklahoma

M.E.N.D. – Tulsa wishes you a gentle Mother’s Day and upcoming Father’s day.

We would like to thank Lorri Sizemore and Jenni Wolek with the Wolek Group for partnering with M.E.N.D. – Tulsa for their Mother’s Day event by spreading the word about our ministry as well as donating financially. We are always grateful for any support we receive from our community. We also want to thank everyone for participating in our annual M.E.N.D.ing Miles Virtual 5k. It is a privilege to partner with you in helping to honor the lives of your babies. As always our support group meets the 3rd Tuesday of each month at 7:00 pm.

Cat

In Loving Memory

Madeline Rose Clarkson
April 6, 2020
Given by 
Parents Christine and William Clarkson

Abigail Grace Crump
July 1, 2003
Trisomy 18
Given by 
Parents Gerald and Jaimie Crump and little sisters Cami and Karli

Riley and Parker Davis
November 14, 2006
Premature
Given by 
Parents Rob and Cheryl Davis and siblings Annalise and Owen

Ashley Renee Dedear
October 29 – November 1, 1999
Premature
Parents Cindy and Tim Dedear
Siblings Laura (Ashley’s twin) and Katherine
Given by grandmother Melene Dedear

Paislee Ann Frette
April 4–5, 2012
Wolf-Hirschhorn Syndrome
Parents: Brent and Courtney Frette
Little sister: Colbie
Given by 
Grandparents James and LuAnn Junkin

Mateo David Gurrola
Stillbirth June 6, 2022
Parents: Jamaika Mercer and Jorge Gurrola
Siblings: Quincy, Malik, Romeo
Given by Grandmother Amber Cook

Jackson Glen and Tyler Ray Light
February 23, 2009
Placental abruption
Given by parents Kirk and Diana Light and siblings Brayden and Alexis

Bay William Miltenberger, Jr
December 9, 1998
Premature
Given by parents Paula and Bay Miltenberger

Margo Lily Perry
Stillborn June 10, 2013
Parents Marisa and Brandon Perry
Siblings Adeline, Bennett and Noelle
Gifts given by Grammie Marie Perry
Grandparents Mary and Norman Lorentz

Peabody Stockdale
Given by Amelia Stout

Baby Boy Tulachka
Given by Melissa Winland

Carter Emerson Wells
Given by Amy Lied

Gifts of Support:
Second Baptist Church, Springfield, MO
The Wolek Group, Tulsa, OK
Joseph Leahy
OneHope, Santa Ana, CA
Groundswell Charitable Foundation
Neiman Marcus Group Associate Giving Program
Tammie Ates
Gwen George
Tiffani Turner
David Davis
Laticia Smith
April Jenkins

Subsequent Births

Celebrating our Rainbow Babies

Parents Lyndon and LuAnn Hostetler
of Miller, Missouri, along with siblings
Kaitlyn, Karen and Kristen, joyfully announce the arrivals of
Lincoln Gene, born February 27, 2021, measuring 3 lbs., and 14.75 inches long, and joining the family on March 12, 2021, and
Skyann Lynelle, born April 3, 2023, measuring 7 lbs., 6.5 oz., and 20.5 inches long.
The family lovingly remembers
Karlene Jewel Hostetler, August 15, 2004, Multiple birth defects,
Angel Rosebud Hostetler, Miscarried June 12, 2010,
Precious Whisper Hostetler, Miscarried August 14, 2011,
Miracle Sunshine Hostetler, Miscarried October 10, 2011,
Serenity Hope Hostetler, Miscarried February 3, 2013,
Roseleen Grace Hostetler, Miscarried March 20, 2014,
Starleen Faith Hostetler (Roseleen’s twin), Preterm labor
July 4, 2014,
Tiny Twinkle Hostetler, Miscarried January 10, 2016,
Cherub Rainbow Hostetler, Miscarried February 9, 2017.
**M.E.N.D. Support Groups in the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex**

Mommies AND Daddies are welcome at all M.E.N.D. support groups.

**Irving Archives Museum**, 801 W Irving Blvd, Irving, TX 75060.

For more information, call (972) 506-9000.

M.E.N.D. chapter support groups meet the 2nd Thursday of each month at 7:30 PM.

Daddies group meets the 2nd Thursday of March, June, Sept. and Dec., at 7:30 PM.

Moms and dads meet together for introductions before dividing into two groups.

**Rowlett Satellite Chapter**

A satellite chapter in Rowlett holds support groups to serve families in the eastern area of the Dallas/Fort Worth metroplex.

Support groups are held the 1st Wednesday at 7:00 PM at the Veterans Resource and Outreach Center,

4210 Industrial St, Rowlett, TX 75088.

Visit our Facebook group or email terri@mend.org.

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**About M.E.N.D.**

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 support groups, this magazine, and our website at www.mend.org. For inquiries, subscription requests, deletions, and submissions to the magazine, contact us at:

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jennifer@mend.org
www.mend.org

Donations make the printing and distribution of this magazine possible. Your tax-deductible contributions are greatly appreciated and should be sent to the address listed above. 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).

M.E.N.D. is a member of
First Candle/SIDS Alliance
Pregnancy Loss and Infant Death Alliance

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**M.E.N.D. Leadership**

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Terri Nymeyer

**Magazine**

Editor: Jennifer Harrison
Co-Editors: Byron and Rebekah Mitchell

**Magazine Volunteers**

Rachel Dell, Sara Elliott
and Becky Johnston
M.E.N.D. Chapter Information

Due to COVID gathering guidelines, please follow your chapter on Facebook or connect with your local Director for updates if your chapter will meet in person or virtually.

M.E.N.D.—NW Washington
Meets the 2nd Monday at 6:30 PM
The Oak Table Cafe’
3290 NW Mt. Vintage Way
Silverdale, Washington 98383
Interim Chapter Director:
Katherine Sandoval
katherines@mend.org, (360) 662-6161

M.E.N.D.—SW Missouri
Meets the 1st Thursday at 7:00 PM
Project H.O.P.E.
1419 S. Enterprise Ave
Springfield, Missouri 65804
Chapter Director: Jennifer Harrison
jennifer@mend.org, (417) 770-0600

M.E.N.D.—Columbus, Ohio
Meets on the 2nd Monday, at 6:30 PM
Paul Mitchell-The School of Columbus
3000 Morse Road
(Upstairs Conference Room)
Columbus, Ohio 43231
Chapter Director: LaTrina Bray
latrina@mend.org (614) 530-5128

M.E.N.D.—Tulsa, Oklahoma
Meets the 3rd Tuesday at 7:00 PM
5401 S Harvard Ave
Tulsa, OK 74135
Chapter Director: Cat Markham
cat@mend.org, (918) 694-4325 (HEAL)

M.E.N.D.—Greater Houston Area
Kingwood Area, Texas:
Meets the 2nd Thursday at 6:00 PM
Lone Star College Kingwood
Classroom Building A (CLA) Rm 113
20000 Kingwood Dr.
Kingwood, TX 77339.
Chapter Director: Nikisha Perry
nikisha@mend.org, (346) 235-4714

M.E.N.D.—MidMichigan
Meets the 1st Tuesday, at 7:00 PM
Ashman Plaza
713 Ashman Street
Midland, Michigan 48640
Chapter Director: Karen Kilbourn
karen@mend.org, (989) 577-5755

M.E.N.D.—East Valley, Arizona
Meets the 3rd Tuesday at 7:00 PM
Queen Creek Library
Edward Abbey room
21802 S Ellsworth Rd
Queen Creek, Arizona 85142
Chapter Director: Danielle Radler
danielle@mend.org, (602) 699-6228

M.E.N.D.—Chicagoland, Illinois
Meets the 1st Tuesday at 7:00 PM
St Paul Lutheran Church
545 S. Ardmore Ave
Villa Park, Illinois 60181
Chapter Director: Becky Luedtke
becky@mend.org, (630) 267-9134

Coming Soon!

M.E.N.D.—Greater Houston Area satellite in the Richmond area
Contact Emily Diamond at emily@mend.org for more information

Subsequent pregnancy group
meets the 4th Tuesday
from 7:30 - 8:30 PM via Zoom.
Please visit www.mend.org to join.
Led by Marisa Perry:
marisa@mend.org
For families who are considering becoming pregnant or are currently pregnant after a loss.

Online Support

M.E.N.D.—
Nationwide Online Support Group
Held the 3rd Thursday at 8:00 PM (CST)
Please visit https://www.mend.orgvirtualsupport-group-links
Chapter Director: Mallory Gallagher
mallory@mend.org

Men of M.E.N.D.
Held the 3rd Monday at 8:00 PM (CST)
to join, contact,
Chapter Director: Matt McGhee
Matt@mend.org
Facebook Group:
www.facebook.com/groups/MENofMEND

The Garden of Hope is a place of peace and solace where families can come for a quiet time of reflection, prayer, or even to celebrate the life of their loved one.

The Garden of Hope was established by M.E.N.D. in 2016, and is located on property of Calvary Church in Irving, Texas.

You can remember your loved one by purchasing a brick in the Garden of Hope. Brick purchases can be made at https://www.mend.org/garden-of-hope.
Bricks purchased by August 1, 2023, will be installed prior to the Walk to Remember in October 2023.
“Little footprints, how softly you tiptoed into my world. Almost silently, only a moment you stayed, but what an imprint your footsteps have left upon my heart.”

By Dorothy Ferguson

To all our Moms and Dads of babies in heaven, we pray a gentle Mother’s Day & Father’s Day