

2018 Small Group Descriptions

KEYNOTE ADDRESS:

Dianne Collard

“Life Goes On, Even After Life Goes Off.” Learning to live again after tragedy.

Dianne Collard is an international speaker, author, and missionary leader. She currently serves as the Europe Ministries Director for A.C.T. International and is the Founder/Director of Arts Charlotte. She and her husband live in Charlotte, NC. Dianne is the author of: [I Choose to Forgive.](#)

Art to Heal the Heart

Jane King

Hello, my name is Jane King and I am a self-taught artist and Heartstrings Mom. This class is fun and easy, so please bring your Inner child with you. At the end of the day you will have a lovely little treasure to take home to remember your day. We are going to paint and laugh and share. I look forward to meeting each and every one of you.

Unbreakable Bonds-Reflections of Living with the Loss of a Child.

Linda Findlay

How do we “hold on” to our children when the world is telling us to move on? This workshop will include stories, information, and practical tips on how to get through each day while maintaining meaningful connections to our lost children.

Linda became a bereaved parent with the loss of her infant daughter, Aubrie Marie. Linda founded Mourning Discoveries, Grief Support Services in 1991. Since that time she has filled the role of Aftercare Coordinator for funeral homes currently representing over 300 of them in 25 states and Canada. Linda has also continually facilitated several bereavement support groups as a hospice volunteer and is an AARP Widowed Person Service volunteer trainer and outreach provider. In a style reflecting compassion, personal loss, experience working with bereaved families, and special training, she effectively communicates with bereaved families. Through the sharing of personal stories and professional experiences with both integrity and credibility, Linda provides valuable tools, understanding, and solid practical ways to help the bereaved.

How to Love Through Loss

Mari and Frank Venezia

How does a marriage survive after the loss of your child? How can you keep the love between you fresh when your hearts are torn apart? How can you be an example of the goodness of God through heartbreak? These are some of the questions Frank and Mari Venezia will try to address and answer. They have been living apart from their son, Frankie Jr., for 23 years and they have been on an adventure they never imagined but through the grace of God and a firm foundation.

Frank and Mari Venezia are the parents of three children and have been married 43 years. They attend West End Baptist Church and serve as outreach Directors.. Mari served her family as a stay at home mother, home schooling her children, and made a transition into a highly successful insurance executive. Today they are both enjoying retirement. Over the last 36 years Frank has served as a Deacon in the three churches they attended. Both Frank and Mari have taught Sunday school, led bible studies and have been involved in extensive counseling as well as discipling young married couples. After the tragic death of their son, Mari began writing poetry, children’s music and written magazine articles. She has coached children choirs, speech performance, and drama. Mari is most known for her ministry of encouragement and exhortation to ladies around the country. Frank and Mari most important ministry is evangelism, successfully sharing the wonderful Grace of Jesus. Together, they continue to share God’s goodness through their own life tragedies.

The Anchor of Peace in a Turbulent Sea

Cindy Motycka

Do we not all seek the Lord's Peace, that Peace that passes all understanding? So often our lack of Peace is a result of our expectations of ourselves and our inability to live up to an image we have of whom we believe the Lord wants us to be. Our anger, grief or our preconceived notions of our grief journey complicates this struggle even more!! His glorious Peace is attainable, yet we struggle to accept that fact. Please join me as we explore this journey together!

Cindy Motycka, MS, LPCS, is a Christian counselor at Aiken Counseling Group in Aiken, SC. Her primary focus is women's issues from a Biblical Worldview to include anxiety, depression and stage of life changes. Cindy is the birthmom of Robert Holman, Alice Ann Holman's son. She, too, has walked the journey of loss, both by placing her son with the perfect parents and then into the arms of our Lord.

Where Is God in My Grief??

Bev Leckie

We all know the facts -- God is ever present, meeting me in my every need, helping me to be the woman He wants me to be. Those are the facts, but so too are the facts of our reality when we are faced with our journey of grief. What do I do? How do I face the darkness and heaviness of grief when God seems silent, distant, absent, or even uncaring? How do I find my answers? Bev's prayer is that together we can begin to answer some of those questions.

Bev Leckie is a South Carolina return-ee, having attended school here, marrying, giving birth to 4 children, and assisting her husband in pastoral ministries in the Lexington/Columbia area until God called them to Southern California where they pastored a local church for 30 years until their retirement this past summer, and a return to South Carolina. While living and serving in California, Bev also became part of Umbrella Ministries, a growing outreach with a biblical foundation, giving hope and support to moms who have suffered the loss of a child. Connecting with Umbrella Ministries gave Bev an understanding of her own loss many years before. Her daughter Tonia had died at birth after a full term pregnancy during a time that grief support was non-existent. Her first exposure to Umbrella was to encourage another mom whose son had recently died. Yes, Marcy was encouraged, but so too was Bev, and her growing involvement with the ministry has given her years of leading, supporting, writing, and talking and sharing – giving to others what God has given her. Today, in a new place, her desire is to continue giving as God unfolds her tomorrows.

Anchored in Hope

Lori Worley

As we are anchored in our hope in Christ through the truth of God's Word, we will truly see that by His mercies we are not consumed. Even in the midst of our deepest grief, His mercies are new every morning. His compassions fail not. Great is His faithfulness!!! The words from Lamentations 3:22-23, which many of you will also recognize from the hymn, Great Is Thy Faithfulness, became so real to me early in my grief journey after our Matthew unexpectedly left us for Heaven. This continues to be an "anchor passage" that keeps me focused on the tender mercies of our Heavenly Father as I continue to press on through my grief journey and share my hope in Christ with others who are hurting.

Lori Worley is a grateful daughter of the One True King who has been married to Steve, her dear husband, for 34 years. She is the blessed mother of four children (three on earth and one in Heaven). She is also a blessed grandmother of three (two on earth and one in Heaven). Lori is a home maker and home educator, and assists her husband as a secretary for his commercial roofing business. In addition, she works with children in a variety of capacities at her church (Mount Moriah Baptist Church in Piedmont). God called Lori into grief ministry following the unexpected passing of her firstborn son in 2009. She has worked with Grief Share and is a co-founder of the Grace Girls, a grief support group for bereaved moms.

Stretches to Soothe Away Stress and Make You Stronger

Leiat Aloia

Come and spend a little time focusing on creating a Mind and Body Connection, drawing strength through minor muscle movement. Learn how to use stretching to soothe during stressful times, as well as build a healthy core and good posture. Another benefit will be a sense of accomplishment that you have learned these things to help yourself. Participants will need to wear capris or pants to this class. Come comfy!

Working out is Leiat's "Mental Floss." She says she can leave everything at the door and enjoy the time spent in attaining physical strength and mental rest as well. Leiat is originally from California and worked in the beauty industry for 15 years. She is now a fitness instructor at the Y after undergoing major neck surgery that inspired her to get healthy. She is married and a proud mom to 10 year-old identical twin boys. The event is something close to her heart since she has suffered the death of her brother at the hands of someone yet to be found. Her mom is part of a support group like Heartstrings and Leiat actively wants to help pay it forward for her family.

Kindness Rocks Art Project

Jane King

Jane King has found art as a healing release after the loss of her son. She is a self-taught artist and mom/grandmom who enjoys art and people. She is looking forward to offering a Heartstrings' Moms rock art class. There will be three different styles to paint as a meaningful reminder of the Day-Retreat or for you to place somewhere with an encouraging message of love, faith, and hope for someone else. Jane is excited to offer this class together and encourages everyone to join her. Together we are strong♥.

Looking Up, Reaching Out , Moving On.

Melanie Pritchard

Unlike God, grief can be a cold hard anchor that holds you down and keeps you from moving forward. Finding a new purpose for your life is one of the secrets to healing and release. God uses our pain to give us empathy for other grieving souls. Reaching out to others is a definite avenue of healing and joy for those who will risk going there. We will talk about ways to help others and in helping others, find our own healing.

Melanie Prichard is a retired reading teacher who currently resides in Clemson, SC. In January 2002, her daughter Chrissy died suddenly from a brain aneurysm. In 2004, Melanie and her husband Paul were asked by Duckett- Robinson Funeral Home to begin a group for grieving parents who had experienced the death of a child. Melanie has continued to help grieving parents for the past 13 years.

Straight Talk!

Heartstrings

Join a panel of moms who have journeyed this road of grief and healing for a number of years for authentic conversation about how to navigate a world without your precious child. Come with questions. This will be a safe and confidential environment to find out how others have handled sensitive situations.

Finding an Anchor in the Tidal Wave of Grief

Heidi Goodwin

Have you started your journey of healing in the past year or two? If so, this class is for you...the newly bereaved. That is a time when our grief is like pounding waves and oh, so painful. Join Heidi to talk about how Christ can be our anchor in the midst of the most turbulent time of our lives. Know that what you are going through is normal. Learn how to handle people who offer a heartfelt "God needed another angel" because they don't know what else to say. Learn that it is OK if you want to scream and cry...or be angry at God. (He knows...and will bring you comfort.) There will be discussion about these topics and other sensitive issues facing all who are just beginning to heal.

Heidi is married to Jimmy and is Mom to 2 beautiful daughters, Lauren (24) and Meghan (34). Her son, Ryan, passed away in 2009 in an accident. She has two beloved Yorkies, Bella and Brody. She loves to cook, watch movies, volunteer at her church, and make Stampin' Up projects. She is the current Chapter Leader for Compassionate Friends of Greenville, SC.

How Personality Affects the Way We Grieve

Kathryn Helt

Did you know your personality type will likely impact how you experience grief? And how your loved ones also experience grief? Using one of the most widely used personality assessments, identifying 16 different types, we will discuss how best to approach healing based on your unique characteristics.

Kathryn is the Community Outreach Director for Dignity Memorial locations in the Upstate. She is also a Grief Recovery Specialist. She has joined hands with Heartstrings since the first year of our day retreats and has been a huge blessing. She has a loving heart and true compassion for those of us who walk this journey of healing.

Sibling Grief

Ann Bennett

Siblings often have nowhere to turn for extra support during their loss. Ann will provide helpful information for understanding the grief of siblings and some practical suggestions to help them during the loss of a brother or sister.

Grief Recovery Toolkit:

Ann Bennett

Helpful suggestions of things that may help you when you are traveling through grief, especially if you have experienced the loss in the past few months or years. Come and learn some solid strategies to give you strength and encouragement.

Ann is a retired teacher who is a leader in Umbrella Ministries, a national association for the support of bereaved moms, and also leads GriefShare in her hometown of Gastonia, NC.

A Journey of Forgiveness

Dianne Collard

Join Dianne for a small group session to further explore how forgiveness, though hard, makes a huge difference in our healing. Learn, in part, from a documentary video about her experience: "Abstraction."

Navigating the Ocean

Kathy Elrod

None of us would ever choose to weather a terrible storm out on the ocean, especially the one that comes with losing a child. I surely never dreamed it would happen to me. Yet, I've learned that God is still at work, in the midst of our tragedies. Come, and let's look at how to navigate these storms together. I don't have all the answers, but I've learned a lot already on this 4-year journey, since losing my son, Brent.

Kathy is a teacher by profession and co-leader of Grace Girls, a faith-based grief support group for moms in the Easley area by heart. She is active in her church and in her community.

Information for those coming from out-of-town:

Friday Night Supper: Please join us at the church- in the formal dining room on the first floor of North Building (the new 3 story building) at 3 Hedge Street for an informal dinner and a time of fellowship with other moms coming from out of town. Mari Venezia will lead us in a few low-key activities to help us get to know each other a little better. We'll eat at 6:30 but come on over at 6:00 if you get into town early.

Please RSVP for dinner so we'll be sure to have plenty for everyone. jan@pdtm.us or call or text to: 864-963-3543.

Accommodations: There are several hotels in Simpsonville. After doing some on-site research, we recommend:

Comfort Inn Suites 3971 Grandview Drive Simpsonville 29681 864-757-1552

When you register, tell them you are part of the Heartstrings group from First Baptist Church in Simpsonville and ask for the church rate: Rooms with a king-sized bed are \$94 plus tax; Double queen rooms are \$99 plus tax. If you will ask to be on the same floor with the group, the manager said they would put everyone near each other. (You can also ask about a AAA rate, if you are a member.)

All rooms come with a sitting area, couch, flat screen TV, closet, refrigerator, desk, and coffee maker.

There is a salt-water indoor pool and fitness room. A hot breakfast is served from 6-10 am. Coffee is always available.