

- c. Thousands of messages from families around the world are posted throughout the day of the Worldwide Candle Lighting on TCF's national website at [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org). Consider reading some of these, especially some from other countries, to show the unity this event creates throughout the world.
- d. Light a single larger pillar candle, or several smaller candles, at approximately 7:00 p.m. (if the event is held at that time) to represent the uniting of your service with candle lightings around the world. Individual candles with safety holders may be lit by those attending at anytime deemed appropriate. After the lighting of audience candles, the names of all children being remembered by those present are usually read. Or you may go around the room and have a parent or family member speak the name of each child the family is remembering. Mention in general terms that the Worldwide Candle Lighting is held to remember all children, siblings, and grandchildren who have died.
- e. Plan a time for socializing after the program, as people often need to calm their emotions and share their thoughts. Have plans in place to provide light refreshments, including coffee, punch, and/or soft drinks, as well as cookies and snack-type items. At some candle lightings, small remembrance gifts which may include the year and name of the event are given to all who attend.
9. Emphasize in all publicity that anyone not able to attend may participate by simply lighting a candle at home alone, or with friends and family.

Check TCF's national website at [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org) for updated information about the **Worldwide Candle Lighting**. All are encouraged to post a memorial message of remembrance on the website during the **Worldwide Candle Lighting**.



THE  
COMPASSIONATE  
FRIENDS

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# THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

## Suggestions to Help Plan Memorial Services in Conjunction with The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting®

The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting® is held the second Sunday of December at 7:00 p.m. for one hour local time around the globe. It commemorates and honors children, siblings, and grandchildren of all ages who have died from any cause and transcends all ethnic, cultural, religious, and political boundaries.

The Worldwide Candle Lighting is TCF's gift to the bereavement community. By holding an organized candle lighting service, allied organizations and all caring groups show unity by joining with TCF and its many chapters in remembering the lives of the precious children of this world who are no longer with us.

This brochure is designed to help you plan an organized memorial service with the knowledge that it can be as simple or as involved as you wish. It can last fifteen minutes or an hour and accommodate twenty people or two thousand. We do this to honor our children, *"that their light may always shine®."*



## GENERAL GUIDELINES

1. Choose a **Worldwide Candle Lighting**<sup>®</sup> (WCL) memorial service chairperson who will organize the candle lighting program. First on the list will be to seek as many volunteers as possible to help carry out the details of the event. Planning should start as early in the fall as possible.

2. Make a simple planning timeline (for example):

*September*—Assemble a committee, finalize location, order candles and safety holders, create detailed checklist.

*October*—Plan program with committee and select readings, poems, and presenters; arrange for music (whether recorded, live, or both); determine and arrange sound system needs; prepare flyer for communication with the public including a map to the program location.

*November*—Write and deliver, e-mail, or fax press releases to local media; send invitations to all persons who may be interested in attending.

*December*—Reconfirm location, sound system, music, and presenters and print program.

3. Determine a location. For organizations and formal groups, a Worldwide Candle Lighting service can be held at the normal meeting location (if large enough), a church, or another location with public meeting facilities. In areas where climate allows, an appropriate outside public area such as a park, commons, or town square often draws more people than an inside venue. Permission to use a park or other location should be requested and reservation made early in the year to ensure availability. Consider event liability insurance, which is relatively inexpensive.

4. Publicize the time (Worldwide Candle Lighting formal events can be held anytime during the day) and location widely, stressing that all families that have experienced the death of a child, sibling, or grandchild are welcome, as are friends. Because the terms **Worldwide Candle Lighting**<sup>®</sup> and **The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting**<sup>®</sup> are registered trademarks, all organizations and groups holding a candle lighting that are not TCF chapters, are asked to publicize that the service is held in conjunction with **The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle**

**Lighting**<sup>®</sup>. Whether or not affiliated with TCF, those holding a formal candle lighting are asked to fill out an online submission form at The Compassionate Friends national website, [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org), to provide information so that it can be posted prominently with all other known candle lightings. This allows those who visit TCF's national website and wish to attend a candle lighting in your area to know of your event. Contact interested local groups, churches, and funeral homes and ask those that publish a newsletter to include information. Contact a variety of media including newspapers, television, and local talk show radio. Some stations may broadcast a public service announcement about your service at no charge. Call the station to ask for details and format requirements. Include information on your website if you have one.

5. Stress in your publicity that this is a remembrance program rather than a Christmas or holiday program.

6. Should an emergency arise during the evening, have a cell phone handy to call 911, as well as a fire extinguisher. Ask all those who are involved in planning to meet at the program location one to two hours ahead of time, so all preparations will be completed before the first guests arrive. A calm and quiet atmosphere will enhance the focus of the service on the children.

7. Invite the media to attend, but establish ground rules. Do not permit the media to move about and attempt to interview participants during the vigil itself, or be otherwise disruptive. Designate a volunteer to greet and work with media who arrive. You may wish to have a simple press packet available. Respect the wishes of any participants who may ask not to be photographed.

8. Consider including the following in your program:

- a. Music, whether live or recorded, played softly as people gather and wait for the program to begin. Distribute candles with safety holders, and a program that may be kept as a memento, as people arrive. If the service is held inside, tables may be set up where pictures or mementos of each child can be displayed.
- b. Plan a program of readings and poetry combined with appropriate music. A tape, CD, or sheet music of the popular song "Precious Child" can be ordered from TCF's National Office online or by telephone. Consider including in the printed program words of the readings or songs, as well as a responsive reading, should one be used.