



# Mommies Enduring Neonatal Death

*Miscarriage, Stillbirth and Infant Loss Support*

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## Unexpected Gardens



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.

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#### Hope in the Midst of Miscarriage

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

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#### Growing the Garden with Grief

Sometimes grief impacts the garden we are already planting, as Stacy shares through her experiences.

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**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](mailto: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](mailto: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to be published in future issues, both in the print version and online, unless a letter's author expressly requests it not be published.

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**Birthday Tributes:** M.E.N.D. publishes heavenly birthday tributes in the corresponding magazine. Tributes must be submitted via the online form at [www.mend.org](http://www.mend.org).

<u>Heavenly Birthday</u>	<u>Deadline</u>
January/February	November 30
March/April	January 31
May/June	March 31
July/August	May 31
September/October	July 31
November/December	September 30



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## Feature Article

*Feature from our M.E.N.D. President and Founder, Rebekah Mitchell, Mommy to Jonathan and Baby Mitchell*

# Unexpected Gardens

“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 become 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.

# Birthday Tributes



## Happy 14<sup>th</sup> 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 Abruption  
Parents: Kirk and Diana Light  
Siblings: Brayden and Lexi*



## Happy 1<sup>st</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> birthday to my 3<sup>rd</sup> grandson and 3<sup>rd</sup> 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  
Sadie Nale  
June 30, 2018  
Bilateral Renal Agenesis  
Baby Nale  
Miscarried March 17, 2021  
Parents: Gary and Tiffany Nale  
Sibling: Brie and Laurel*



## Happy 2<sup>nd</sup> Birthday, Arlo!

Happy 2<sup>nd</sup> 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

*Arlo Molina  
May 17, 2021  
Cervical insufficiency  
Parents: Diana and Mauricio Molina  
Little brother: Renzo*



## Happy 5<sup>th</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 9<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Paul!

Happy 9<sup>th</sup> 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 to 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 6<sup>th</sup> 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 2<sup>nd</sup> Birthday, Nova Tikvah!

Happy 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 4<sup>th</sup> 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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 2<sup>nd</sup> Birthday, Adilynn!

Happy 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 4<sup>th</sup> 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 4<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Baby Joel!

Happy 4<sup>th</sup> 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 unfulfilled 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.

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## Evelyn's Eastern Redbud Tree

*Written by Becky Luedtke*

*Mommy to Evelyn Faith Luedtke*

M.E.N.D. — Chicagoland Chapter Director



My husband and I were going to hear the heartbeat of our Evelyn Faith Luedtke. I had been carrying her for 18 weeks, and I heard her heartbeat on a previous doctor's visit, but my husband and I were going to hear it together for the first time. We were so excited, never considering we would hear "I'm sorry, there is no heartbeat" instead. She was born straight into the arms of Jesus on April 17, 2015. It was the most difficult thing ever endured; our hearts and our whole world shattered.

In the early days after I delivered our too-tiny one, my husband and I drove around and watched the colors of spring unfurl all around us. I never realized that spring is just as colorful as fall. How had I never noticed the deeper hues of reds, oranges and yellows in spring that were just like in fall? We decided then to plant a tree, and we took our time choosing the perfect one.

Two years later, we bought Evelyn's Eastern Redbud tree on her "Heaven Day," and it arrived on May 15, 2017. I wrote: "Today is Evelyn's tree day. We chose the Redbud when we watched spring unfurl after her loss. We saw God's beauty more profoundly that spring. The Redbud has long-lasting pinkish/purple blossoms in the spring that change into a heart-shaped leaf. Eventually, the tree develops seed pods that grow new Redbud trees. Our love lives and grows!"

We will always love and deeply miss our baby girl. We now have a place to remember her. I love our front porch. I can smell the lilacs, hear our wind chime, watch the birds and see her tree. Watching her tree grow through the seasons is breathtaking. We love watching all the blossoms unfurl in spring, the green heart-shaped leaves grow bigger, the bright yellow fall leaves, bright white when covered in snow during winter and back to the promise of spring blossoms. Losing our baby girl is not quite the path we envisioned, but we are grateful for the beauty in our journey and the peace in our hearts.



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

Written By Anna Broderick on [Wallflowerjournal.com](http://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 nature's 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

**Because to many,  
they didn't even exist.  
But to me,  
they were my world.**

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

Retrieved from <https://www.wallflowerjournal.com/opinions-stories/hope-in-the-midst-of-miscarriage-thoughts-from-a-loving-wife-amp-mother> on September 9, 2022

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## Growing the Garden with Grief

*Written by Stacy Heaton*

*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."



## Jardines Inesperados

Artículo de Presidente y Fundadora,  
Rebekah Mitchell,  
Mamá de Jonathan Daniel y bebé Mitchell

II **C**rece 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 pusiéramos 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 estábamos esperando nuestro tercer hijo, quien pensé iluminara nuestro pequeño jardín incompleto, pero él o ella fue abortó involuntario a las 10 semanas. Otra pérdida en nuestro pequeño campo. El Jardín Mitchell finalmente volvió a brotar años más tarde cuando se agregó nuestra hermosa nuera, luego realmente volvió a la vida cuando nació nuestro nieto, Elias Jonathan, hace casi cuatro años.

Mientras tanto, un brote inesperado más grande de lo que podría haber imaginado apareció un año después de la muerte fetal de Jonathan, cuando Dios plantó M.E.N.D. en mi corazón. El Maestro Jardinero plantó esta

semilla en el momento en que nuestro Jonathan partió para estar con Él en 1995. Esta inesperada belleza púrpura se ha convertido en algo más hermoso, magnífico y sorprendente de lo que jamás podría haber imaginado. Durante 26 años me he asombrado ante la obra que Dios creó a partir de las temporadas difíciles de mi vida. De ninguna manera mi jardín se parece al boceto que dibujé en mi cabeza cuando era joven, ni es el jardín que realmente quería. Pero, ¡oh, qué grandioso es realmente! Cuando era niña, me imaginaba creciendo para ser esposa y madre de tres niños ocupados. Crecí y me convertí en esposa y madre, pero de un solo hijo. Y crear un enorme jardín de M.E.N.D. familias no era el plan. Pasar horas y horas durante años en mi oficina todos los días administrando, dirigiendo y cultivando una organización nacional de embarazo y pérdida de bebés que nació de la muerte de mi bebé nunca fue parte de mi jardín de ensueño. Pero el exuberante fruto de este hermoso jardín es raro y como ningún otro. 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 preguntes 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](mailto: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: 18<sup>th</sup> 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](mailto: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 NILMDTS 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](mailto: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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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](mailto: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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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  
Latricia 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.

## 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](http://www.mend.org). For inquiries, subscription requests, deletions, and submissions to the magazine, contact us at:

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[www.mend.org](http://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



## M.E.N.D. Leadership

### Board of Directors

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

### Magazine Volunteers

Rachel Dell, Sara Elliott  
and Becky Johnston

## 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 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of each month at 7:30 PM

Daddies group meets the 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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](mailto:terri@mend.org).

# 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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday at 6:30 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday, at 6:30 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday  
from 7:30 - 8:30 PM via Zoom.  
Please visit [www.mend.org](http://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 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday at 8:00 PM (CST)  
Please visit <https://www.mend.org/virtual-support-group-links>  
Chapter Director: Mallory Gallagher  
mallory@mend.org

### Men of M.E.N.D.

Held the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday at 8:00 PM (CST)  
to join, contact,  
Chapter Director: Matt McGhee  
Matt@mend.org  
Facebook Group:  
[www.facebook.com/groups/MENofMEND](http://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.



M.E.N.D. Mommies Enduring Neonatal Death  
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