



Comfort & Hope For the Journey of Grief Retreat at Mo-Ranch 2019



# FOUNDER'S MESSAGE

Dear Partners in Ministry,

A friend recently shared that he has noticed that his spouse drops from heaven "love notes" in his lap. Some of these notes land when he is particularly blue, feeling sentimental and in need of encouragement. Other notes catch him by surprise and fill him with delight. "All the love notes," he said spreading his arms out, "have given me a wider understanding of love and grace."

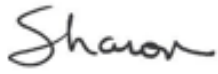
After watching him wipe away a few tears with the back of his hand and listening to his soft, sweet laughter of gratitude, I recognized that Faith & Grief Ministries has received so many "love notes" from you. These love notes have come in a variety of forms - volunteer hours, tangible gifts, hand-written notes telling us ways a Faith & Grief program helped them, introductions to persons who share in our mission: to provide opportunities for comfort and hope to those who have experienced the death of a loved one. If we were able to tie all your love notes together that you have sent, you would see that you have created a banner year for Faith & Grief Ministries.

Enjoy taking the time to read this 2019 Annual Report. And take comfort and hope in the number of people who have been served by your compassion and generosity for those who are grieving.

Love and grace,



Fran Shelton



Sharon Balch



Wendy Fenn

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Marcia Howard, 2019 Board Chair	Rebecca Lones
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# HIGHLIGHTS

Thank you for sharing your gifts, time, and talents with those who are grieving. Your continued generous spirit helped us serve over 5,000 people this year. With your support, we conducted a program evaluation, launched a Facilitator Train-the-Trainer program, and hosted the 4th Annual Faith & Grief Memorial Arch. We accomplished all these highlights because of your generosity.



A Safe Place For Bereaved Parents Retreat



Memorial Arch Guest Speaker

## 1646

Total Number of Participants in Gatherings, Workshops & Retreats in 2019

## 4547

Total Number of Volunteer Hours in 2019  
Time Equivalent of 2.2 Full Time Employees



North Texas Giving Day Party with Purpose  
hosted by Paper Affair



Facilitator Training Kansas City



## 1832

Total Number of Loved Ones Remembered at the Faith & Grief Memorial Arch in 2019



## ELAINE'S STORY

I lost my beloved and brilliant oldest son, Elliot Everett Wright, in a tragic and unexplained motorcycle accident on August 5, 2018. It was an ordinary Sunday afternoon in Dallas when my Elliot was ejected off his gleaming white Honda bike over the side of a soaring 40-foot entrance ramp into the translucent azure sky. Following extraordinary measures taken by surgeons to save his precarious life, my precious child left this earth on the operating table — just moments after I arrived at the same Presbyterian Hospital where he took his first breath 26 years prior.

Though he shrouded his cycling obsession in secrecy most of the time, he always assured me he took every precaution — training classes, high-tech helmet, armored jacket, and thick leather boots. Except, there was always the inherent risk of riding that wretched motorcycle. It terrified me. I still don't know how the accident happened exactly - Elliot is the only one who does. But I am still obsessed with finding out.



*In our sleep, pain that we cannot forget falls drop by drop upon the heart, and in our own despair, against our will, comes wisdom through the awful grace of God.*  
— Aeschylus

My anguish deepens with each passing day. Complicating my journey is a series of accumulated losses and traumas - my father's death in 2014, after years of dementia, hidden disease, and discord; my mother's death in 2012, after a debilitating two-year post-stroke illness, my only sister's choice not to be present in my life at all; the aftermath of a prolonged abusive relationship, and the death this year of my cherished mentor of 30 years.

I am a single mother of two remarkable young men. I still speak of Elliot in the present tense. His 23-year-old younger brother, Ian, graduated from Purdue in May of 2019 — as difficult as it was wonderful. I am lost and exhausted — and I lack the stamina to carry this heaviest of all losses. I think of the words of the late Toni Morrison, *"There is really nothing more to say — except why. But since why is difficult to handle, one must take refuge in how."* With every new breath, I seek "the how."



By God’s grace, I found the Safe Place Retreat for Bereaved Parents at Mo-Ranch, a cherished Presbyterian conference enclave in the heart of the lush Texas Hill Country. It was a welcome respite that provided a glimmer of peace in the murky messiness of grief — helping me see a way forward, if only through the next moment in time. We shared stories of our lives and our struggles steeped in the sorrow of untimely death. For almost three days, eleven shattered hearts huddled together in a rustic, windowed conference room – alternately drenched in sunlight and illuminated in stardust.



Elliot & Ian

Mo-Ranch is a deeply spiritual place. Many say it is a thin place — where the unseen veil that separates us from Heaven feels more permeable somehow. It’s a place where emotional epiphanies are as significant as intellectual insights — where relationships with acquaintances deepen in the cozy lap of breathtaking natural beauty. And thanks to the persnickety phone service, it’s a place where you just might hear God ask, “Can you hear me now?”



Elliot, Ian, & Elaine at Mo-Ranch

Alas, this was not my first “MOdeo,” and that ramped up the psychic intensity. Having attended First Presbyterian Church of Dallas’ summer family camp on and off for nearly a decade, Mo is part of my tiny family’s spiritual DNA. From antics on the river, to worship beneath the cross, to Gary Minton with an ice cream scoop, the flood of memories and images flickered across my mind’s eye like a Ken Burns documentary. With each nostalgic whiff, the tears welled - life’s evolving normal — the bitter and the sweet. Together, we all grappled with untenable realities. Grief takes center stage, and there is no exit.

But, Mike Shaw, one of our dedicated and insightful facilitators, reminded us, “We do have a choice. In the journey of grief, we can choose to embrace faith and community. It’s really all we have. We cannot do this alone.” How accurate and true. This is what we discovered in this gorgeous, poignant place — together. The impact of sharing devastating loss through words or prayerful silence is profound. I was grateful for this sacred space, this caring community, and this glimpse of the “awful grace of God.”

*Elaine Gantz Wright is a writer, ghostwriter, and artist living in Dallas, Texas. She is the single mother of two extraordinary and brilliant young men — Ian, a gifted visual artist and recent graduate of Purdue University, and Elliot, an insatiable iconoclast and musician, who died suddenly and tragically in a motorcycle accident on August 5, 2018. As Elaine navigates her grief journey, she is passionate about supporting other healing hearts on this most agonizing of paths. She studied theater arts at Northwestern University and received an MBA/MA in arts administration from Southern Methodist University.*



# MEMORIAL ARCH 2019

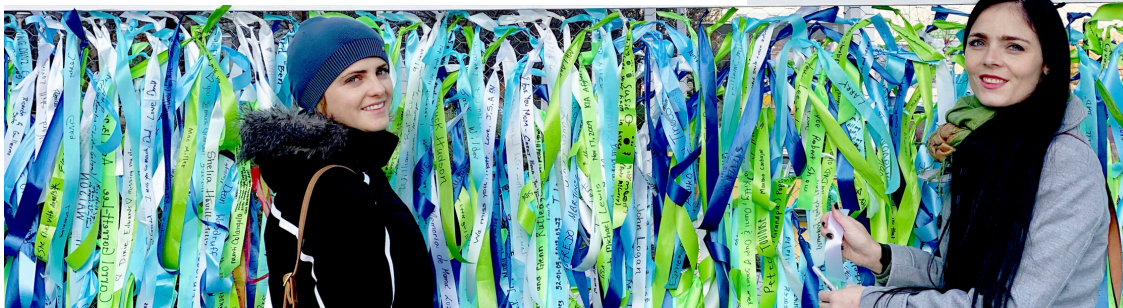
Thanks to your support again this year, the 4th Annual Faith & Grief Memorial Arch was a place to remember loved ones during the holiday season. It was our donors, sponsors, social partners and volunteers who made this community event, possible.



December 2019  
Kylde Warren Park  
Dallas, TX



Over 1800 people were remembered this year by a loved one who wrote a "love note" & their name on a ribbon. Thank you to the Arch visitors who shared their memories & stories of love.



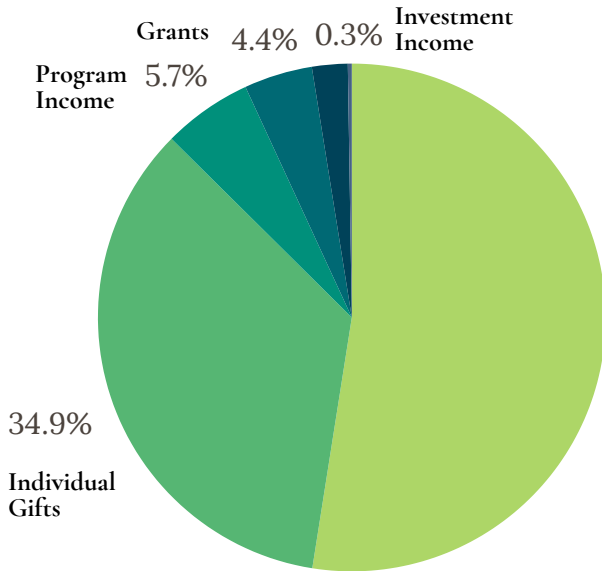
*Thank you to Brent Wood for creating our new Faith & Grief Memorial Arch logo.*



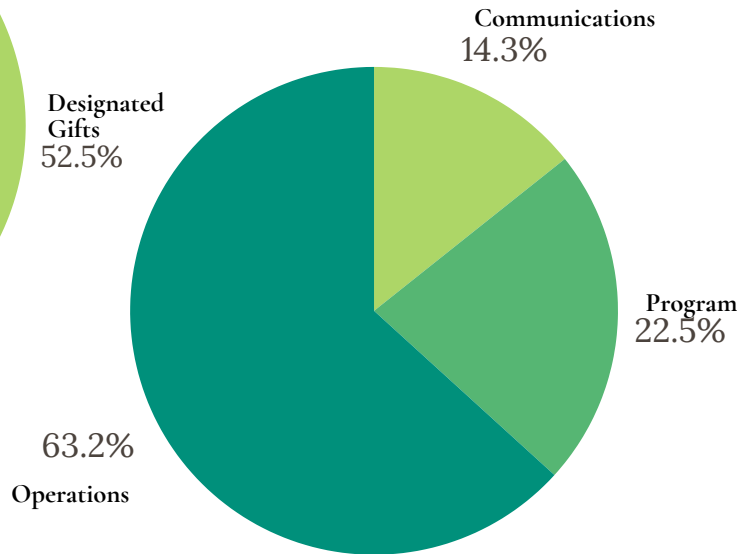
# FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

Your generous gifts in 2019 provided staff the ability to conduct a program evaluation, create a multi-faith program, and launch a program awareness campaign which resulted in a 17% increase in the number of participants in the programs that your gifts fund.

## GIFTS & INCOME



## EXPENSES



51%

Increase in contributions on North Texas Giving Day 2019  
Thank You!



Through your gifts, we accomplished our 2019 goal of offering a multi-faith support gathering program at The Retreat House in Richardson, TX and our existing program sites. And through a grant from St. Philip Presbyterian Church, we produced and distributed our first multi-faith devotional, *30 Days of Comfort*.





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A Ministry of Compassion and Connection

# Annual Report 2019

## Finding Comfort & Connection





# THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

When you choose to remember your loved ones by making a gift to Faith & Grief, it enables others to find comfort by sharing their grief journey in community with others.

Your continued support is needed to ensure we continue to provide programs to those who are grieving. Your donation can be made online at [faithandgrief.org](http://faithandgrief.org) or by mailing the self-addressed envelope provided. Thank you again for your generosity and support.

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## F-G

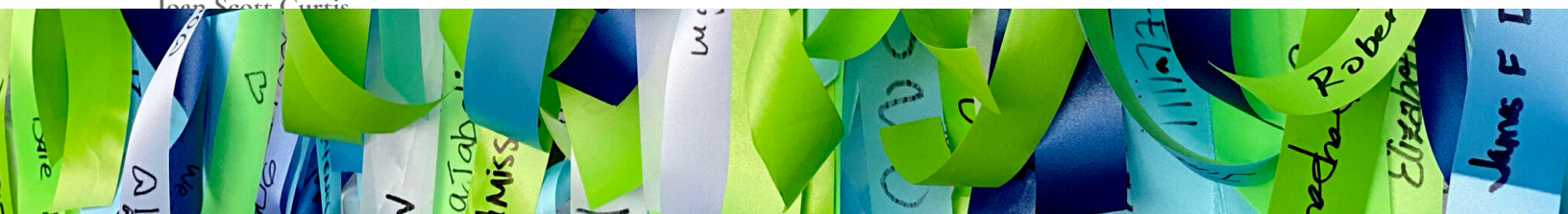
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# THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

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Thanks to these organizations and supporters for their support of Faith & Grief programs in their local communities.

Arapaho United Methodist Church, Richardson  
Atonement Lutheran Church, Kansas City  
Amazon Smile  
Benevity Community Impact Fund  
Canyon Creek Presbyterian Church, Richardson  
CC Young Senior Living  
Christian Health Care Center  
Communities Foundation of Texas  
First Presbyterian Church, Dallas  
First Presbyterian Church, El Paso  
First Presbyterian Church, Richardson  
Hauman Homies  
Janice Crawford Homes  
Northridge Presbyterian Church, Dallas  
Our Lady of Angels Catholic Church, Allen  
Paper Affair

Preston Hollow Presbyterian Church, Dallas  
Second Presbyterian Church, Kansas City  
Second Presbyterian Church, Little Rock  
St. Andrews Episcopal Church, Kansas City  
St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church, Frisco  
St. Michael & All Angels, Dallas  
St. Michael & All Angels, Mission  
St. Mark the Evangelist Catholic Church, Plano  
St. Philip Presbyterian Church, Houston  
The Crescent  
The Retreat House  
The Village Church, Flower Mound  
TI Foundation  
Village Presbyterian Church, Prairie Village  
Woodhaven Presbyterian Church, Irving  
*and many anonymous donors*

