



**4250**  
Ribbons added to the Memorial Arch

**2k+**  
Hours volunteered by facilitators & at the Arch

## We are here when you need ...

*"...something more in this bottom-just-totally-fell-out-of-my-world-with-no-warning experience ...."*  
-Kimberley M.  
*Read her story on page 5*



*"... help to make it through the rough time ...."*  
-Alison K.  
*Read her story on page 3*

Scan to Read the Full Report



*"... a better understanding how our continued journey of grief and well-being requires safe places and relationships..."*  
-Mike & Sue B.  
*Read their story on page 4*



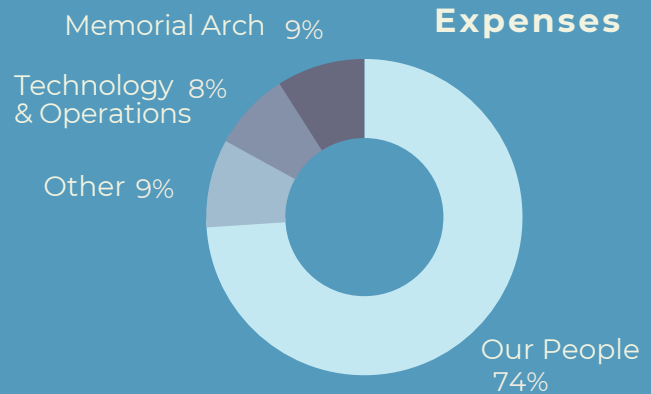
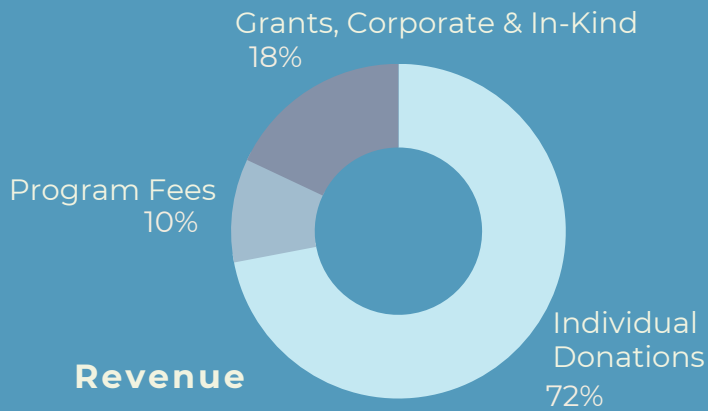
**1278**  
Grievers attended our programs - up 39%

**FIVE**  
New program locations



## 2022 Fundraising

This was an exceptional year of giving thanks to supporters like you. We received a record amount of donations during our annual North Texas Giving Day event. And our amazing inaugural Memorial Arch effort raised almost \$45,000 in its first year. Your generosity and support of our programs again humble us.



Considering giving a special gift?  
Contact Liz Harling at [executivedirector@faithandgrief.org](mailto:executivedirector@faithandgrief.org)

### Projects

### Details

### Outcomes

New Support Gathering Locations

Three new sites

- First Presbyterian, Dallas
- South Dallas Fair Park Faith Coalition
- Holy Trinity Episcopal, Greensboro, NC

New Workshop & Retreat Locations

Two new sites

- First Presbyterian, Pittsford, NY - workshop
- Weekend Retreat, Montreat, NC

Expand Online Programming

Offered new online programs & podcast episodes

- Now over 60 episodes of the podcast
- Hosted two writing-in-grief workshops
- Offered three online workshops
- Continued monthly support gatherings

Inaugural Memorial Arch Committee

First fundraising campaign focused on the Memorial Arch

- **Raised over \$ 45, 000**
- Thanks to Memorial Arch Co-Chairs David & Meredith McBee

## Thank you to our 2022 Memorial Arch Sponsors

### Platinum Sponsors

Kathy & Michael Crow  
The Saphier Foundation  
Cheryl S. Smith

### Gold Sponsors

Jeremy Saylor

### Silver Sponsors

Barbara & Kent Anderson  
Karen & Tom McCracken  
Louisa & Jim Meyer  
Cheryl Wiewiorowski

### Friend of the Arch

Neptune Society



## Alison's Story

When my mom passed away, I thought, 'But what about me.' I was in the depths of grief and thought dear Lord; please show me what plans you have for me. Struggling. I couldn't imagine what they were. I was very alone, but I knew my God had me.

My mom was my person, and I was hers at least for the past 17 years, if not longer. My dad passed away when I was 17; my mom was 47. Both of us were so young. And up until then, Dad was Mom's person. Then, she became my person when she moved to KC to be near me. We were close before, and no idea how close we'd become.

I talked to my mom every day at 5:00 pm. Sometimes during the day. On Saturday mornings, I can hear her voice. We laughed and joked. We cried. We quarreled. She didn't let the heaviness of life get to her.

As soon as my mom passed away, I knew I needed to find some help. I turned to the resources that had many years earlier helped me as I struggled through a divorce, resources at Village Presbyterian in the Kansas City area. However, the pandemic significantly impacted our lives, leading me to seek online help. I found Faith & Grief via the Village Presbyterian website. I started making the most of virtual weekly support gatherings and multi-week workshops, anything really, and all with kind, caring leaders. I couldn't have been more blessed by my experiences. And I still am.

I didn't know God's plan for me for a long while. I felt left behind. And sometimes, I can't remember when I started thanking God for this day. But not only for this day, I also thank him for yesterday. And I tell him, as a way of hopeful prayer, that I am looking forward to tomorrow. And I've felt less lost since.

I still miss my mom every single day. And I still pray every single day. And I still, years later, leverage the Faith & Grief resources to help me make it through the rough times.



Alison & Her Mom, June

There when  
you need to  
tell your

*story.*

## Mike & Sue's Story

Singing and music have always been core expressions of faith, life, and love for us. This has become even more true in our journey of grief. Surviving the loss of a beloved son who died by suicide has been unlike anything we've ever known. Our beloved Ben left us in January 2020, just before the pandemic. The Faith & Grief online group provided us with a meaningful and safe virtual community amid the daunting restrictions of COVID. Faith & Grief helped us better understand how our continued journey of grief and well-being requires safe places and relationships to share and process our grief with others learning their paths of loss.

Singing allows us to voice lament, gratitude, wonder, absence, presence, and deep longing. We are now beginning to work on a recording project to get the songs written since Ben's death in a digital format that can be more easily shared. As we share our music and journey in different venues and circles, we are discovering new ways that sharing our grief can offer consolation, community, and connection with many others who navigate their own stories of grief and loss.

Our song "The Universe is Kind to Me" voices the paradoxical truth that there is also deep joy and blessing during profound loss.

**The Universe is Kind to Me** By Mike Blair January 29, 2023  
*In memory of Benjamin Matthew Blair*

Trails and woodlands holding hidden glories,  
Moonlight sings of ancient sacred stories.  
In the desert's open view, where the stars reach out to you,  
Yes, the Universe is kind to me.

Shoreline pondering as the waves roll homeward,  
Distant summons draws your whole self forward,  
Remedy of healing dreams, borne in waters, springs, and streams,  
Yes, the Universe is kind to me.

*Where the rivers turn and wind in wild spaces unconfined,  
the Universe is kind to me.  
Brings deep healing to my mind, heart, and soul are realigned,  
Yes, the Universe is kind to me.*

Storyed hikers trekking alpine meadows,  
dwarfed beneath the mighty mountain shadows,  
stirring awe & peace of mind—your abiding storyline,  
Yes, The Universe is kind to me.

Paddling 'cross open water borders, calm that stills all chaos and disorder.  
In the wilderness, we're found, by the grace of God, unbound,  
Yes, the universe is kind to me.

*Where the rivers turn and wind in wild spaces unconfined,  
The Universe is kind to me.  
Brings deep healing to my mind, heart, and soul are realigned,  
Yes, the Universe is kind to me.*

Coneflowers, aster, milkweed bless the prairie,  
Monarchs summon weary hearts to tarry.  
Simple wonders yet abound, rising up from sacred ground,  
Yes, the Universe is kind to me.

Hills and valleys so pristine with abundant shades of green,  
The Universe is kind to me.  
Stream and birdsong bring to mind all the gifts you left behind,  
Yes, the Universe is kind to me.



# Kimberley's Story

Mike had no children of his own but had always wanted a family. I had two children of my own, a son and a daughter. Yet Mike chose every day to love them even when they were not always lovable. One consistent thing he had always assured them was “they would always have a place to live.” My daughter was hit by a car in 2013, and she suffered a traumatic brain injury and moved back home with us. And my son was on disability because of a seizure disorder. Mike then decided to build a duplex on our property.

Fast forward to the pandemic. I'd had my vaccinations in Spring of 2021. Mike had postponed his because he was “so close” to completing the last stage of the duplex project and didn't want to be delayed due to any possible side effects. When he was about three weeks away from completing the bulk of the work, he contracted COVID. He was hospitalized on July 11, 2021, and July 29th was the last time we'd see each other and talk. As I left the hospital for the hour-and-a-half drive home that day, I was filled with deep sorrow I had never experienced before. Around 5 AM the following day, I got the call that he was being rushed to the ICU because he had a cardiac event and was now on a ventilator. On the morning of August 1, 2021, I felt a numbness or a sense of peace, I wasn't 100% sure, and I made the humane but difficult decision to let this wonderful man return home to our Creator.

With my world shattered, I had nothing but my faith to cling to. I cried out and asked God, “Why?!?” “Why did you bring Mike into our lives only to take him away?” “Why didn't you heal him? I KNOW you CAN?!” And after a while of lamenting and crying out this way, I realized I should probably think of this differently because I was feeling my loss and pain so selfishly, thinking of the impact on *myself*, and maybe I should be saying, “Why NOT me?”

However, I still struggled with my faith or even how to pray now for others after my husband died and others lived, or whether my prayers make a difference, and I was second-guessing even *how* I had prayed, wondering if maybe I had somehow not prayed “correctly” ...there were just so many thoughts and questions running through my mind.

I sought help and found a local grief support program early in my grief journey. It was not quite at the spiritual depth I felt I needed in this **bottom-just-totally-fell-out-of-my-world-with-no-warning experience** as we watched videos and listened to the leaders speak. When I ran across Faith & Grief, I was encouraged. This sounded more like what I was seeking.

I began attending the monthly Faith & Grief online meetings first. I felt very comfortable and welcomed. Not everyone in the Faith & Grief meetings had lost a spouse, yet the pain of loss and their need to process it was real. That need was always acknowledged with kindness, gentleness, and love. Then I joined the Faith & Grief workshop. It was the most impactful and healing experience I've had as a widow. The workbook that accompanied the workshop is a fabulous resource. Even the title, “Comfort and Hope for the Journey of Grief, ” brought hope to my broken heart. Comfort and hope were the most significant missing pieces in my first year's pain and “grief fog,” I hadn't yet recognized as being what I most needed.



Mike & Kimberley

Each session had a discussion we could participate in, which was meaningful. I didn't need to be lectured to; I needed to belong, to be part of the circle, the tribe, the set of squares on the Zoom screen. I honored, respected, and appreciated our workshop leader's training, wisdom, and experience and her prayers and guidance. Each week, we learned a different spiritual practice, which I found very helpful; there are many that I still go back to today.

Thank you, Faith & Grief, for helping me integrate my faith with my grief. You helped me see that they belong together and that God wants to walk with me and help me on this grief journey. Through this ministry, I now have the comfort and hope of knowing that healing is possible.


We couldn't be there  
when they need us  
without your *support.*


Thank you.


To all our donors,  
volunteers, and our  
Board of Directors.




Listen on Apple & Spotify

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 [faithandgrief.org](http://faithandgrief.org)

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Photos Page 1

Top: 2022 Memorial Arch, Dallas, TX

Top right: Workshop cohort from St. Michael & All Angels, Dallas, TX

Center Left: Greensboro, NC Support Gathering Leadership Team

Bottom Right: Kansas City Support Gathering, Prairie Village, KS

Bottom Center: Support Gathering Team, Salem Institutional Baptist Church, Dallas, TX

This page: 2022 Board of Directors

