

Expressions

Welcome to our Spring edition of Expressions.

If you are a bereaved parent reading this newsletter for the first time, please be assured that you are not alone and we are here to provide support at any time.

As we welcome the arrival of spring, we are reminded that even after the months of winter, new beginnings are possible. Spring brings with it signs of renewal — longer days, gentle warmth, blossoms and new growth — and can be a beautiful symbol of hope.

For those living with the loss of a baby, the changing seasons can bring many emotions. Spring does not take away grief, but it can gently remind us that light can exist alongside sadness, and that hope can find its way into our lives, even when we carry loss in our hearts.

In this edition of the Sands Auckland newsletter, we share stories, reflections and information to support you through the season ahead.

We would like to thank Victoria ten Dam and acknowledge her sharing of Stone's beautiful life with our readers, and for her precious photographs and own artwork.

Wherever you are on your journey, we hope you find moments of connection, comfort and hope.

With warm wishes from all of us at Sands Auckland

Your Sands Auckland Committee
Tania, Sara, Linda & Andy



YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS

We welcome your poems, reflections and personal stories for inclusion in our newsletter.

Some parents find it helpful and cathartic to write about their babies, their grief or their experiences. If you would like to share these with our readers we would be honoured to publish them in our newsletter. Many parents find comfort in reading other peoples' stories and to know they are not alone, so your submissions would be greatly appreciated.

The deadline for our next edition is 20th November 2026.

Please forward your submissions to: info@sandsauckland.org.nz

Note to our readers:

Many of the writings featured in our newsletter are the personal narrative of our readers. These, in their entirety or part, may not be printed elsewhere without permission. The nature of these 'stories' is very personal and has not been edited, therefore the views expressed may not necessarily be those of Sands Auckland. Where possible we have acknowledged the original source of all material/information used in Expressions.



DATES TO NOTE

Support Group Meetings

1st Thursday of each month

3rd September/1st October,

5th November/3rd December

No January Group

7.15pm – 8.45pm

Mount Albert Community
& Leisure Centre

773 New North Rd, Mt Albert

(Garlick Room, to the left of
reception desk)

Parents & Whānau (adults only)

Baby Loss Awareness Week:

9th-15th October

Remembrance Service:

Bishop Selwyn Chapel

Holy Trinity Cathedral, Parnell

Sunday 11th October 2026, 1.30pm

Followed by refreshments

Global Wave of Light:

Thursday 15th October, 7pm

Sands NZ Online Service

Wave of Light Service:

Thursday 15th October, 6.30pm

Settlers Cottage, Auckland

Memorial Park & Cemetery

Further details are contained
in this newsletter regarding
Baby Loss Awareness Week and
events/fundraisers happening.

CONTACT US:

www.sandsauckland.org.nz

info@sandsauckland.org.nz

Find us on Facebook



0508 SANDSA (72 63 72)

On a recent visit to North Shore Hospital, we were asked for assistance in seeking new clothing for babies. Please see the information below.

Your Kindness Brings Comfort

Many people ask us, "How can I help?" After speaking with hospital staff, we now have a simple, meaningful way for you to support newly bereaved parents.

Hospitals have specifically requested new clothing - onesies with the following features:

- Size 0000 or 00000 — suitable for very small babies
- Soft fabric — gentle and comforting
- Onesies with feet
- Full-length zip — must run all the way to the foot
- Calm colours or prints — hearts, flora, fauna, birds, clouds, animals, rainbows, ladybugs, or simple plain colours with subtle stripes
- Matching wrap (if possible) — in the same colour or print as the onesie

These small gifts provide comfort, dignity, and care at an incredibly vulnerable moment.

Where You Can Donate

TORBAY
Contact us directly for the drop-off address.

MT ALBERT COMMUNITY CENTRE
First Thursday of each month where we hold our support group, from 7.00pm.

Baby Loss Awareness Week is a beautiful time to give, especially if you're attending our Remembrance Service. You may also choose to donate in honour of your own baby's anniversary — a gentle act of love that helps another woman in their time of need.

Keep an eye out for the sales, and there are plenty of designs to choose from. These are just a few examples we found from Cotton On and Kmart. Please keep in mind that they require nice gentle colours and a really soft fabric. This is a great way to give a gift direct to a bereaved family, and we look forward to delivering some to the hospitals soon.



Sands Auckland is a charitable entity - Registration Number CC30352.

Thank you to all who support our group...

COGS Auckland City, Go Digital, Good Bitches Baking and the kind individuals who have made donations & held fundraisers.

We survive on grants and donations and greatly appreciate any gesture of support. If you would like to make a donation you can visit our website for internet banking details or alternatively donate via our Give a Little page <https://givealittle.co.nz/org/sandsaucklandcentral>

Expressions is designed and printed by Paul Gerrard at Go Digital, supporter of Sands Auckland.

If you or your business have a need for design and print, Go Digital will donate 10% of that business to Sands.

Paul can be contacted on 0274 926681, or on email at: paul@godigitalprint.co.nz



Baby Loss Awareness Week & October 11th Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Day

Every year we recognise International Baby Loss Awareness Week. This provides the opportunity for parents and families around New Zealand to come together and remember the lives of their babies who have died. We acknowledge the lives and deaths of all babies, no matter what their gestation, length of life or how they died. It is also a chance to highlight the work done by Sands around New Zealand. The aims for the week are:

- To promote 11th October as National Baby Loss Awareness Day
- To promote the annual Global Wave of Light and other events or services where parents can publicly acknowledge their babies
- To raise awareness and increase understanding of the impact of baby loss amongst the wider community



REMEMBRANCE DAY

**Bishop Selwyn Chapel (in Holy Trinity Cathedral), Parnell
Sunday 11th October • 1.30-2.30pm**

Following the success of previous years, we are currently planning our Remembrance Service with our friends at Holy Trinity Cathedral. Holy Trinity Cathedral have been great supporters of Sands and the support we provide, and have lit up the cathedral for the past five years for the Global Wave of Light.

This is a great opportunity to meet with other bereaved parents and family members, honour our babies, tie a ribbon on our remembrance heart and be together.

There will be light refreshments after the service. Children and families of all belief systems welcome.

If you would like to come along then please complete the RSVP form below to assist us with catering. More information and the link can be found on the Sands Auckland Facebook page, or the Sands Auckland Website.

<https://www.cognitofrms.com/SandsAucklandCentral/RemembranceService2026RSVP>

GLOBAL WAVE OF LIGHT Thursday 15th October

International Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Day is recognised across the world and you are invited to join with other families and take part in the Global Wave of Light. This involves lighting a candle at 7pm to burn for 1 hour in memory of all the babies who lit up our lives for such a short time.

As in previous years Sands NZ are hoping to provide an online service. Once details become available, we will share them on our social media page.

You are welcome to join in from home and we would love to see your photos on our Facebook page with the names of your precious baby (babies). If however you would prefer to join a Wave of Light in person then we have included details of an event being held from our friends at Auckland Memorial Park.

Baby Loss Awareness Week

Light Up Aotearoa

It's happening again for the 6th year! Sands NZ have contacted many councils and organisations in an effort to light up as many landmarks as possible.

This is a great way to raise awareness of pregnancy and infant loss and it's lovely to see that this happens in other countries too.

Thank you to all the places that took part, let's get those lights shining again for 2026.

A map of the landmarks/buildings taking part is being compiled and will be published on the Sands NZ Facebook Page in time for Baby Loss Awareness Week. If you see any of the places lit up on your travels, please share a photo.



Please join us as we honour our babies together at our

CANDLE LIGHTING CEREMONY FOR THE PREGNANCY & BABY LOSS GLOBAL WAVE OF LIGHT



Cottage image credit: Jeff Butler

Thursday 15th October 2026 : 6:30pm
at Settler's Cottage, Auckland Memorial Park & Cemetery
2163 East Coast Road, Silverdale, Auckland

"Connection and Reflection"

Ceremony will start at 6:30pm with candle lighting at 7pm, followed by refreshments.

This is a free event. It is fine to just turn up, but an RSVP would be appreciated for catering purposes.

Kelly: 021 331 137

If you are unable to attend, but would like a candle lit for your baby or loss, please let us know.



AUCKLAND MEMORIAL PARK & CEMETERY



40 years of Sands: Help Us Capture Our Story

This year marks a significant milestone for Sands in Aotearoa – 40 years of supporting bereaved parents and whānau following the death of a baby.

Since 1986, Sands has been shaped by bereaved parents, whānau and volunteers who understood the importance of connection – of having someone there who understands when the world has changed in a way few others can comprehend.

Over those four decades, Sands has touched many lives. Support groups have been formed, friendships have grown, memories have been honoured, resources have been created and countless conversations have taken place over cups of tea, on the phone, online and in hospital rooms. Behind all of this are thousands of individual stories.

As we reflect on 40 years, we would love to begin capturing some of those stories and better understand what Sands has meant to bereaved whānau across Aotearoa.

We invite you to share a memory, reflection, photograph or a few words with us. Perhaps Sands supported you after the death of your baby. You may remember a volunteer who made a difference, a support meeting you attended, an event or remembrance service, or a friendship that began through Sands.

You may simply want to tell us what having Sands there meant to you.

Your contribution can be as short or as detailed as you wish, and memories from any time over the past 40 years are welcome.

By bringing these stories together, we hope to recognise the extraordinary impact of four decades of bereaved whānau supporting one another – and preserve some of the history that has made Sands what it is today.

If you have something you would like to share, we would love to hear from you.

Please email info@sandsauckland.org.nz

There Was a Baby

by Victoria ten Dam



Stone. It was a normal day, on my own when two lines appeared on the test. I called my husband - he knew it before I had to say anything and then he called me back.

This pregnancy was so planned, but the shock of the near reality always takes us by surprise. We were so happy. Matt my husband's heart was on a boy for Bobo, a little brother - a mate like Ruby and Pearl.

We were on our way to expanding our family one more time. It was perfect, I felt complete - almost "cocky" with how much better life can get. A local midwife was found, murmurs of it not being the right fit I recognise now in hindsight but was trumped by my excitement at the time.

I told people right away but didn't make it public. I was quietly excited and planning. The day came when the 20 week scan was approaching - all prior tests and checkups clear - bump growing. The girls came with us during the school holidays, what's it gonna be?? A brother or a sister. Matt - a boy! We completely lucked out, a boy! A baby boy arriving in our home.

In hindsight the sonographer was quiet at that scan, something I mentioned to Matt but forgotten about just as quickly. Until the next day.

Home alone, shifting rooms, my phone rang - my midwife. Dismissive in tone and reassuring me it's nothing to worry about - that she has to tell me - which in fact was not reassuring at all. I left the phone call and felt uneasy and rang my husband, to which he then assertively told me to phone the midwife back and insist on further actions to investigate the 20 week scan findings.

What was known at this point was that our son had an opacity in one of his eyes during the scan - what should have been translucent was dense and perhaps an infancy cataract. I had to remind myself what a cataract was, an opacity of the eye commonly that comes with age - so it was all extremely confusing. What does that look like in a baby? How were we going to fix it?

Within two days I was at Maternal fetal medicine at Auckland hospital for my continued care

alongside my midwife. My local midwife I will note remained dismissive, unsupportive and has played a significant part in my trauma around my pregnancy with Stone.

Thankfully the team at Fetal medicine and North Shore hospital were amazing and kept me feeling safe during the proceeding weeks and months ahead. Additional scans showed Stone had opacities in both eyes, it was devastating - is he going to be blind?

At this point if it was in fact cataracts, there were some solutions once he was born so we



remained hopeful. My husband was worried and less optimistic, researching what this could mean for our new born son - I remained optimistic, until I couldn't anymore.

On the 14th August 2025 we met with fetal medicine for findings following an MRI (a procedure I agreed to as I denied any invasive tests - not wanting to take the risk of miscarriage). The drive down to the hospital was sombre, I remember crying and telling Matt my husband I hope I drive home happy, still hopeful but almost like Stone was there breaking the news before we even got to the clinic.

Waiting at reception was brutal, when we were collected for the meeting I just blurted out - is it okay?? I didn't get an answer, so my stomach sank. Cruelly, I was scanned first, so Stone was kicking around, growing amazing with a strong heartbeat (apparently that was done - when I later asked, so as to gather all possible information before our verbal meeting moments later.).

Sitting in a small room, scan images came up, as if I knew what I was looking for. "His eyes are very small" - SO? WHAT? AND? BIG DEAL! Panic, anger, fear all blurred into one as our Fetal medicine doctor proceeded to tell us it was more serious than bilateral cataracts - stone had bilateral Microalaphamia and also a reduced sulcation of the brain (smoothness of the folds).



What does this mean - life long care potentially and likely neurodevelopmental issues and certain blindness. I'm so gutted as I type even today, how can this be? I just saw a healthy growing baby on the screen a moment earlier....I blanked out.

Went home. It's over. Numb. Disappointed. Crushed by the news. Faced with a pretty quick decision making period to continue or terminate - Matt and

I decided for whatever reasons - reasons I still find myself questioning today - to terminate. I will never be okay with that, and I still don't know how to justify it a year on. The decision to let Stone go will always be raw.

I refer back to reasons such as his quality of life, his apparent suffering he would face, his siblings, our life as a family... Nothing still ever feels enough reason tho. I wanted to have a life with Stone, and that will never be. The next few days were numb, kids activities continued at school and over the weekend - blocking out what the next week had for us.

Our final day with Stone, a planned maternity shoot later in the year, was now Matt and I on the beach with Stone in my belly, the wind and water at our feet. We shared it together, our son alive and with us here earthside.

On the 20th of August Stone passed with a prayer read as he transitioned over and my dads song playing in my ears - we are sailing - I hoped my dad would have been there to meet Stone as I passed him over. That's what I held onto.

On the 22nd of August at 5pm Stone's body was birthed, it was a beautiful birth, he came out in his gestational sac that burst as he landed on the bed. I imagine he birthed in his sac to protect his limp body from labour and birth - I love that he did that and was physically perfect and unharmed.

I don't know how to explain in words what it feels like to birth a dead baby, but he was our beautiful boy. I remember him being just a tiny newborn - but the silence was deafening. The saddest time in my life to face the reality and mortality of my son's life and all the plans we had that wouldn't be.

We honoured Stone, the children came and met their brother, along with my mother.

Stone came home and lay next to me in bed, in his bed we had for him. For at least one night, we had that experience, that he came home - to his family home.

Cremated later that week and a candle lit each day in memory - followed by the scattering of his ashes a few months later on a wonderful weekend trip Matt & I took dedicated to him.

Stone Zen ten Dam is our fourth child, forever he will be - we are navigating to love and experience him without the physical form.



Remembering the Dads Who Grieve Too

For many families, Father's Day is a time to celebrate dads, share a meal, give a gift, or simply spend time together. But for a bereaved dad, Father's Day can carry a very different weight.

It can be a day filled with love, longing and memories. A day that reminds you of the child you dreamed of holding, watching grow, and sharing your life with. A day that may leave you wondering how you can be a dad when your baby is no longer here in your arms.

You are still a dad.

The death of a baby does not take away the hopes, dreams and love that made you a father. Your relationship with your baby matters, regardless of how long you had together, whether you heard their cry, held them in your arms, or only had the opportunity to dream about the life you would share.

For some dads, grief can be difficult to express. There can be an expectation to be strong, to support their partner, organise practical things and keep going. Sometimes there simply isn't the space to stop and acknowledge their own pain. Sands recognise that fathers and partners grieve too, and that each person's grief is unique.

Father's Day can bring those feelings to the surface. Seeing other fathers celebrating with their children, hearing Father's Day conversations, or watching social media fill with happy family photographs can make the absence of your baby feel particularly painful. You may feel sadness, anger, loneliness, love, pride, guilt or even nothing at all. You may want to talk about your baby, or you may want to keep the day quiet. For dads who have

other children, Father's Day can be especially complicated. There may be joy in celebrating the children who are here alongside the ache of missing the child who isn't. Both can exist together. Loving and enjoying the children in your life does not mean you love or miss the baby you lost any less.

There is no right or wrong way to spend Father's Day.

Perhaps you might choose to acknowledge your baby in your own way. You could light

a candle, visit a special place, look through photographs, write your baby a letter, or simply say their name. You might spend some quiet time alone or surround yourself with people who understand. And if you don't want to do anything at all, that is okay too.

And for those

supporting a bereaved dad, sometimes the simplest words can mean the most:

"I'm thinking of you and your baby today."

"I remember that you are a dad."

"You don't have to be strong with me."

"Would you like to talk about your baby?"

Don't be afraid to say a baby's name.

Remembering a baby and acknowledging their place in a family can be a profound gift to a bereaved parent.

This Father's Day, Sands Auckland remembers all the dads whose babies are carried in their hearts.

**To the dads who have lost a baby, we see you.
We acknowledge your grief.**

We honour your love.

And we remember your babies with you.

You are, and always will be, a dad.

