Meet Gathering Keynote Speaker LAURA DIEHL. She will be our Friday lunch speaker. Her presentation is entitled "OUR G.R.I.E.F. JOURNEY: Five Important Things to Know About Grief". After the death of their oldest daughter, Becca, Laura and her husband, Dave founded Grieving Parents Sharing Hope (GPS Hope) www.gpshope.org They travel full-time in their Hope Mobile (a 38-foot motor home) providing support and resources to grieving parents on their difficult journey, including local weekend retreats. Laura hosts the weekly Grieving Parents Sharing Hope podcast and is also a singer and national speaker. She has written several books, including the multiple award-winning "When Tragedy Strikes: Rebuilding Your Life with Hope and Healing After the Death of Your Child" (Morgan James Publishing, New York). Dave and Laura’s home base is in Southern Wisconsin and they are the parents of 5 adult children (including Becca who has already received her promotion to heaven) and are blessed with seven grandchildren.

We're looking forward to meeting and hearing bereaved sibling, JUDY LIPSON's Saturday morning breakfast talk entitled "It Is Never Too Late To Grieve." She will help us understand that no matter when you suffered a loss, there is no recipe or timeline for grief. She will urge us to give ourselves permission and compassion to take the journey no matter how long it takes. Judy is the sole survivor of three sisters, losing her sister Jane in 1981 at age twenty-two in an automobile accident, and nine years later her sister Margie at age thirty-five after a twenty-year battle with anorexia and bulimia. For thirty years Judy suppressed her grief but in 2011, she founded "Celebration of Sisters", an annual ice-skating fundraiser to commemorate the lives and memories of her beloved sisters to benefit Massachusetts General Hospital. Skating is a sport the Lipson sisters shared and her endeavors have brought Judy full circle back to her sisters. Read Judy's memoir, "Celebration of Sisters: It Is Never Too Late To Grieve", released in November 2021 by Writelife Publishing. Visit: www.judylipson.org

Meet SADIJA A. SMILEY, a Keynote Speaker at the 2023 Gathering. Her Saturday Lunch presentation is entitled "What Grief Has Taught Me" and she will talk about the lessons, both big and small, that she has learned from her grief. Sadija is the Founder and CEO of Stillborn And Infant Loss Support (SAILS), a nonprofit organization based in Maryland, dedicated to raising awareness and creating a supportive environment for families who have experienced a stillbirth, pregnancy or infant loss. SAILS was created to honor the life of her daughter, Ivanna Salene, who was stillborn at 36 weeks pregnant. Since the death of her daughter, Sadija has dedicated her life to helping hearts heal. She is a Certified Grief Recovery Specialist and a contributing author to "Your Wings Were Ready But My Heart Was Not" and "Finding Joy in the Journey". She currently resides in Maryland with her family. You can learn more by visiting www.bornintosilence.org

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