

Marketing and Promotion for “The Grief Letter” (TGL)

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Part One: TGL Marketing Overview

1. “The Grief Letter” Overview

In 1993 on the staff of a flagship church in Florida’s capital city, Fran Buhler started sending an annual letter to members with a death in their family during that year. Recipients began calling it “the grief letter”. In the 21 years Buhler served as Associate Pastor and Director of Ministry, he received more comments and notes of appreciation for “the grief letter” than any single thing he has done in ministry.

In 2014 and 15, Buhler led “Connections Conference” sessions at his church on “The Ten Commandments of Grief”. These optional, well-attended sessions, when he first tried out ideas for “The Grief Letter” (TGL) on a live audience with grieving individuals, sparked his commitment to make this book happen. Having conducted or assisted in 776 funerals and memorial services over two decades of ministry, the “grief letter” has reached a remarkable universe of grievers. Anecdotal evidence indicates a high pass-it-on circulation factor, ranging from six to eight extended family members and friends. The result is a notable grief ministry platform. TGL is a thoughtful grief gift for hurting hearts, an encouraging word for sorrow-torn spirits, a field guide for the adventure of grief and a practical tool box for helping others in their grief and sorrow---including grief professionals in their role as pastors, seminary professors, social workers, long term care and Hospice personnel.

2. Key Selling Points

TGL Market Scope: TGL addresses an annual US market of 8 million grieving hearts, based on the current reported industry average of 2.5 million US deaths per year. This is an underserved, “evergreen” market of 8 million per year---8 million last year, 8 million this year, another 8 million next year---a compound market with no gender barriers. It hurts to say it, but: Grief is a growth industry.

TGL Fills a Market Void: With its letter style format, there is currently not another book like it on bookstore Grief shelves. Buhler’s approach to this grief-themed book is the key. He knows the market need and crafted TGL to meet this unspoken market “hunger”, instead of writing the book and then trying to figure out how to sell it. In either of his successful careers, Buhler has never waited passively for a market response. His approach is to craft products meeting strong market needs.

TGL Connects with People in Sorrow: TGL uses a grief-sensitive 33-chapter 90,000-word framework to comfort, encourage and challenge grieving readers with sorrow-torn attention spans. **Chapters are grief-length, five to ten pages, not academic or nonfiction length.**

- TGL’s 15-chapter Part 1: “The Grief Letter”, deals with the immediate cascading emotions of grief and sorrow.
- The 5-chapter Part 2: “Grief Adventure is a Life Choice,” guides us beyond “the waddle-waddle” stage into the “adventure of faith”.

- The 8-chapter Part 3: “The Ten Commandments of Grief”, addresses personal grief challenges from a grief-faith perspective.
- The 5-chapter Part 4: “What To Say and Do When Someone Dies” equips the grieving reader to become more confident and effective with the challenge of comforting others who mourn. TGL is a life-tested, sorrow-shaped grief book, excellent for reading or gifting.

TGL is a Personal Letter to each Reader: Each chapter opens with a letter-style salutation, containing four parts. A thematic hook: “Why This Matters”, defines each chapter focus. “A Verse for the Valley” appears in each chapter midsection, providing inspiration and comfort, a soft reminder of the Psalm 23 phrase, “the valley of the shadow of death.” Near each chapter end, “The Chapter ‘Take-Away’” offers summary benefits. Each chapter concludes with a letter-style closing from the author, and a thoughtful PS with three questions or comment, providing both comfort and challenge for the grieving reader.

TGL Beckons Three Buyer-Reader Markets: (1) the “hurting”/ “searching” griever, (2) the “grief book giver”, and (3) the grief professional. Individuals in this trio of prime markets will not find on current bookstore shelves a volume with focus, structure and content like TGL. Though written primarily for the “griever” / “grief book giver” audience, TGL packs plenty of value for grief professionals from college and university psychologists to counselors in private practice, from Hospice staff and social work professionals to clergy and even funeral home reps searching for a grief sensitive, faith-acceptable and thoughtful customer remembrance.

“Grief Adventure” Language Connects: When we grieve, we are not sure what comes next. We are not sure where we are going or how we will make it. We may think we know what life will be like in six months, a year, five years---but we don’t. With mixed impressions and expectations about what’s ahead, what could be more accurate than “grief adventure” language? The adventure of grief is ultimately a matter of faith. Grief involves personal life choices, can lead to personal growth, and grief can even find joy again! Such a possibility is hard to believe, of course, until we experience it ourselves.

TGL Reflects a Strong Research Base and “Reader” Review Process: The TGL narrative benefits from a comprehensive 55-book research base and a strong collection of prepublication readers. 170 TGL Endnotes feature the library of grief-related sources giving TGL added scope and depth.

Buhler distributed the manuscript to a dozen prepublication readers representing a variety of “grief experience” and “grief professional” categories, noted in the Afterward section of the TGL Appendices.

3. Author Bio

Fran Buhler grew up in Lebanon, Tennessee, a preacher’s kid. He is a 1962 graduate of Carson Newman University, where he was elected student government president, voted football captain and selected all conference quarterback, winning the “Frosty” Holt Outstanding Athlete Award and named to the Knoxville News Sentinel Small College All Star Team. As a student, Buhler helped teammates and classmates deal with team member and class member deaths in high school, college and divinity school.

Seminary Preparation: Fran Buhler has two decades of pastoral leadership and grief ministry experience. His education includes biblical theology, psychology of religion and pastoral care. TGL draws on the author’s graduate education from both the Union Presbyterian Seminary in Richmond, Virginia,

and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, completing his divinity degree in 1966, including Clinical Pastoral Care Certification.

Church Leadership and Pastoral Experience: Buhler's Tallahassee church averaged two to three dozen deaths a year. He conducted or assisted in 776 funerals and graveside services in his 20 plus years of pastoral and personal grief experience. Fran served in a flagship church in its prime, 160 plus years old, a congregation blessed with several member demographics: large children's and youth ministries; multi-campus college ministry (FAMU, FSU, TCC); young adult ministries (both singles and young marrieds); the hearing impaired; international ministry with large corps of international students and families; adult ministry and senior adults in their 80s and 90s. Every demographic experiences death and grief, reflected in TGL's chapter sequence, and Fran Buhler's grief ministry experience includes all categories.

Fran Buhler's pastoral duties: Interim Pastor/Ministry Coordinator, 1993-94; Associate Pastor/ Director of Ministry, 1995-2012; Interim Pastor, 2012-13; Associate Pastor/Director of Ministry, 2013-14.

4. Ministry Platform

Fran Buhler's grief ministry experience includes 30 plus years of deacon grief ministry in Kentucky, South Carolina, Maryland/Washington, D C, and Tallahassee churches---a span of deacon grief ministry not detailed in the Pastoral staff examples described below.

Fran Buhler's 21-year ministry platform highlights, FBC/Tallahassee, 1993 - 2014

- As Interim Ministry Coordinator, led his church in 1993 to begin a downtown "open house" hospitality "connecting" ministry supporting two signature community events, "Springtime Tallahassee" and "The Tallahassee Winter Festival," offering restrooms, baby comfort station, hospitality coffee, cider and snacks. These events have become an annual FBC/T community service and connecting ministry tradition for 24 years.
- As Associate Pastor / Director of Ministry, organized a 7-church inter-faith partnership to staff the FBC Christian Life Center to serve as the Tallahassee Cold Night Shelter host for the 75 to 150 overflow at the city homeless shelter when temperatures dipped below 39*. This 15-year collaborative ministry bridged to construction of a new Tallahassee Homeless facility.
- As Associate Pastor / Director of Ministry, frequent host and panel member of a five-member clergy panel for a monthly city-wide "Faith, Food, Friday" discussion of faith and community issues, sponsored by "The Village Square," with an interfaith luncheon audience of 150 citizens.
- Requested for Invocations at sessions of the Florida Governor and Cabinet, and session-opening invocations for the Florida Senate and the Florida House of Representatives.
- Invited by the Florida State University College of Social Work to participate with a local Rabbi, a Catholic priest and an African-American Pastor in conference panel discussions and local TV social justice promos, raising community awareness of domestic violence.
- Coordinated FBC staff and member support for "First Love," an annual October "community service" Saturday, addressing 40 member-generated, ministry and service projects, completed in a single day or week, from 1995 to the present.
- Buhler authored seven in-home worship-discussion guides for his church, including: "Exercises for the Soul," "Rivers of Grace and Gladness," and "Life in the Key of Joy". He also authored a

Sunday Morning Bible Study “Leader Guide” to support an 8-week sermon series on the “gospel” of Nehemiah: “Love Tallahassee: Neighboring Our Community with the Love of Christ.”

- Invited by “The Tallahassee Democrat” daily newspaper to serve for 21 years as Steering Committee member and annual Invocation-giver for the Volunteer of the Year Awards luncheon, honoring community volunteers in a city-wide event drawing 450 paying guests.
- During his 21 years of service, Buhler has spoken at numerous conferences sponsored by denominational, faith-based and other organizations seeking to impact church growth, best ministry practices and professional development in Atlanta, Orlando, Jacksonville, Miami, Tampa, Ft. Lauderdale, Charlotte, Nashville, New Orleans, Los Angeles and Dallas.
- 2014 recipient of the Dr. Findley Edge Award for Leadership in Christian Education, a state-wide Florida denominational award for outstanding ministry and innovation.
- Recipient of City of Tallahassee Mayor and City Commission 2014 recognition and proclamation for outstanding leadership and community service.

Fran Buhler’s resume highlights from his prior 27-year consulting career, 1966 – 1993

Why Two Careers? “I came out of seminary in 1966, at the peak of the heated civil rights controversy, believing churches should be open to everyone. I submitted applications from Virginia throughout the South to Texas, I could not get interviews because of my views on racial integration. So I started a consulting career. I continued to serve in local churches where we lived, teaching adult Bible study classes and serving as deacon. In 1993 I received a pastoral “call” from our present church to lead during an interim, a church with an “open door” membership policy.”

In addition to Fran’s 21-year platform in ministry, his prior 27-year project management, consulting and business development career give him national and regional marketing experience for a “fast start” TGL marketing and sales plan.

- Profiled by Bill Moyers in his best-selling book, “Listening to America”, also featured in “Harper’s Magazine”, Fran Buhler directed a rural community development project in a South Carolina community with a per capita income among the lowest ten percent of counties in the US in the heated civil rights era of the late 1960s. Buhler led in the appointment of an inter-racial Community Planning Committee, secured \$1.34 million in funding for a regional wastewater treatment facility, stimulating \$6 million in industrial expansion, creating much-needed new jobs. Buhler also secured state and federal funding for low-income, integrated, single family housing as a viable alternative to urban housing projects that become ghettos.
- Mentored returning Peace Corps Volunteers in San Francisco and Washington, DC Transition Centers, a program profiled nationally in “Harper’s Magazine”.
- Managed a national municipal task force of mayors and city officials for the National League of Cities and the US Conference of Mayors, funded by the US Department of Environmental Protection, focused on the nation’s waste disposal crisis in the 1970s, including recommendations for changes in “best practices” and running regional conferences across the US to promote what is now accepted as “best practice” for state-regulated municipal solid waste collection and disposal, marking the end of “open dumping of waste” in the US.
- Drafted and managed in 1990 the successful proposal of a Florida firm to the Republic of Poland Ministry of Environment for the first US environmental engineering firm selected under the World Bank-funded US Trade and Development Program to assist Eastern Europe with

hazardous waste clean-up after the Soviet Union Communist withdrawal. (My favorite CONSULTING CAREER Achievement.)

- **Buhler's public/private sector marketing and consulting experience includes:** Director of Special Projects, managing Washington, DC / Tallahassee offices for a Boston firm, 1980-88; and Vice President for Business Development, managing southeast US marketing for a Florida firm from offices in Tallahassee / Orlando, 1989-92. He authored an in-house "Power Marketing Newsletter", teaching engineers marketing skills for environmental engineering projects.

Fran Buhler has given speeches in 50 cities across the US, spoken in over 20 churches and published two dozen articles. He has served on several national panels, including the Columbia University Study Group; National Governor's Association Task Force; National Academy of Science Committee; and the Municipal Innovative Technologies Evaluation Program.

5. Publishing History

- Authored profile of Congressman William R. Anderson of Tennessee, published in Ralph Nader's Congress Project, 1972.
- As Senior Associate of a national consulting firm, authored special contractor reports for the Peace Corps, including an article for Harper's Magazine: "After the Peace Corps, What Then?"
- As Executive Director of a National League of Cities and US Conference of Mayors Municipal Task Force, authored "Cities and the Nation's Disposal Crisis", a USEPA contractor report of recommendations for best practices, including recycling and waste-to-energy alternatives, and articles for "Nation's Cities Magazine".
- Authored the Mayor's Action Report on Waste Management for the US Conference of Mayors, including a 7-volume series for municipal officials, and similar articles for the "Florida Municipal Record" and the "Journal of the Florida Engineering Society". Authored "New Directions in Waste Management in Florida" and "What's Happening in Resource Recovery in Florida?" for the Florida Governor and Legislature.
- Published two dozen articles, including "Rural Community Development in Johnsonville, South Carolina", for "Arete", the "Journal of the University of South Carolina, Graduate School of Social Work"; pieces for "Harper's Magazine", "The Nashville Tennessean Magazine", and "The Washington Post". Published "opinion pieces" in: "Mademoiselle" ("On Protest and Future-Shaping"), 1969; "Glamour Magazine" ("The New Feminism: A Positive Male Reaction") 1970; "Nations Cities Magazine"; and "The Student Magazine".
- Nominated by the Dartmouth University "Media Awards for Economic Understanding" for his article on resource conservation in Delta Airlines "SKY Magazine".

Buhler was the founder of Enterprise Communications, Inc. and senior editor of "1st Place Marketing Letter", a subscription newsletter: "The Marketing SOURCE for Engineering, Environmental and Technical Services". Fran was selected by the Small Business Institute of the Florida State University Business School as a small business assessment study project in 1992. Buhler closed his business in 1993, (to fulfill his 1958 "calling") and accepted the 1993 offer to become interim ministry coordinator and later, associate pastor and director of ministry, at his church in Tallahassee.

6. Personal Commitment: Fran Buhler will put his marketing experience to work for TGL, implementing the TGL marketing plan launch from his clergy platform. He will be a "platform plus" author, using his

project development, “lead marketer”, publishing and ministry experience to focus and energize an 18-month TGL sales and promotion marketing launch. Buhler also has a “fast start” marketing plan, featuring his “personal touch” lift-off objectives along with his power marketing “gift book strategy”.

Fran Buhler’s website includes his Grief Blog, platform summary and several thoughtful grief “helps”, such as: 1. Ten Truths to Help with Heavy Grief; 2. A rotation of Select TGL Bible Texts; 3. A revolving TGL “grief quote” list; 4. A TGL Promotion Event Descriptor–Schedule w/ Dates, Times and Locations. He will employ the multiple contacts of his professional consulting and ministry careers to energize the TGL launch. **Due to church employment policies, Buhler was prohibited from operating a personal website while on church staff. His retirement now allows the TGL publication time required to manage marketing plans and tasks described.**

Knowing first hand the grief sorrow and hurt distributed across our country, Fran Buhler wanted to do something about it. That is why he is devoted to focus his marketing ability and effort to sell TGL as part of his larger personal commitment to “comfort all who mourn.”

Part Two addresses TGL Marketing and Promotion Strategy with TGL Promotional Events---13 events in 18 months; Promotional Event Tripod Structure; TGL Event Location Opportunities; TGL Event Location Choices; and marketing plan to enlist and engage an army of high school, college, seminary and church friends in the TGL “gift book” marketing strategy.

Part Three offers a TGL Market Metrics Summary, ranging from the five factors shaping the target TGL market, to a planned TGL gift card series plus TGL Marketing Launch and Sales Campaign.

TGL Quick Links

The Grief Letter (TGL) – By Fran Buhler

- TGL Highlight (PDF): <https://tinyurl.com/TheGriefLetter-Info>
- TGL Front Cover Hi-Res (JPG) - <https://tinyurl.com/TheGriefLetter-Front>
- TGL Back Cover Hi-Res (JPG) - <https://tinyurl.com/TheGriefLetter-Back>
- TGL Web: <https://www.thegriefletter.com>
- TGL Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/TheGriefLetter>

Part Two: TGL Marketing and Promotion Strategy

Instead of fame, author name recognition, books published or net worth, TGL uses a different yardstick to measure author relevance. In today's grief book market, writing about a grief theme is not enough. The key is speaking personally to readers in their grief, sharing their sorrow and knowing how to comfort those who mourn. A dozen pre-publication readers agree: TGL connects with grieving readers!

Buhler's strength is his platform of pastoral experience, including 776 funerals and memorial services he has conducted over the past two decades. In each instance, Fran Buhler's participation was at the request of a grieving spouse, parent or family. With a "pass it on" ratio for TGL of six to eight family members and friends, the TGL "start-up" reader audience ranges from 4,500 to 6,000 people.

While those numbers are compelling and important---because individuals and families who have called Buhler to do a loved one's funeral or graveside service are more likely to become potential TGL book buyers and unpaid promoters---Fran Buhler's TGL Marketing Focus and Strategy goes far beyond those people potentially touched by one of Fran's eulogies, funerals, memorial services, or "follow up" grief ministry. This "built-in" grief audience is significant as a TGL "starter market" but it is not the only TGL market, nor even the largest market. Many close friends in that number have died. Families have relocated, contact information is not current. Buhler will engage this market as a "starter market" only.

1. Buhler's Prime Marketing Objective and Promotion Strategy: Connect with individuals, denominational leaders at the state and local level, pastors, churches and groups who know him or are led and served by someone who knows him. These are the kind of leaders, pastors and professionals who will be tapped and utilized in Buhler's promotional strategy, especially in his selection of 10 locations to host TGL Promotional Events in the first 12 months. Buhler projects an energized TGL post-publication marketing strategy, outlined as follows:

2. TGL Promotional Events---13 events in 18 months: (Ten events in twelve months; three additional events in months 13 to 18.) Each event will be planned for local-regional market impact, using personal contacts in host locations, featuring the event scheduling sequence listed below.

- One event per month for 3 months = 3 events
- Two events per month for 2 months = 4 events
- One event every two months for 6 months = 3 events

The distribution of events per month is intentionally uneven for planning purposes to allow adjustments and to spread the cost impact. After the first 7 events, Buhler will schedule the final three location options to get the most impact out of events 8, 9 and 10, meeting the goal of 10 Promotional Events in 12 months.

During Fran's 12-month Promotional Event Schedule, he will be identifying and evaluating three additional Promotional Event location possibilities to be scheduled in months 13 through 18.

3. Promotional Event Tripod Structure (with 60 minute timeline)

- **"Reader's Choice":** Participants read selected TGL texts that speak to them. **20 minutes**
- **"By Request":** Fran and Nancy Buhler discuss favorite TGL texts. **20 minutes**

- **“Q & A” with Fran and Nancy Buhler: 20 minutes** (Additional 30 minutes for book signing and sales)

Event timelines are a judgment call. In an audience with young adults, Gen Xers, Millennials and seniors, a slightly longer Q & A time frame may be appropriate, preferable. In a predominantly senior adult audience or an openly grieving audience, a tighter timeline will be more sensitive and appropriate.

4. TGL Promotional Events Managed with Sensitivity and Responsiveness: Because of the very nature of grief, in the course of managing event sessions, Fran will be flexible and responsive to participant “needs”. Where grief is involved, the unexpected is often the rule. All sessions will be designed and planned to allow Fran an opportunity to comfort those in attendance who mourn. As he succeeds in his grief-help mission, TGL sales will also happen, resulting from the right priority and the right message. Grieving attendees will be comforted and TGL, discussed.

5. TGL Event Location Possibilities: All TGL promotional event locations will be selected from 31 city options. The final list will be confirmed after local contacts have an opportunity to preview TGL and host responsibilities and arrangements are completed.

Fran Buhler has personal or professional relationships with persons in the areas listed below. Buhler has initiated conversations with potential sponsor / hosts in several areas. Possible host locations under evaluation include the following states and cities:

- Florida (Tallahassee, Jacksonville, Orlando, Tampa, Fort Lauderdale);
- Alabama (Birmingham, Decatur, Huntsville);
- Georgia (Atlanta, Columbus, Thomasville);
- South Carolina (Columbia, Charleston, Savannah);
- North Carolina (Asheville, Charlotte, Raleigh-Durham);
- Virginia (Richmond, Virginia Beach);
- Maryland/Washington, DC (Silver Spring, Maryland);
- Tennessee (Lebanon, Nashville, Loudon, Chattanooga, Knoxville, Jefferson City);
- Illinois (Chicago);
- Louisiana (New Orleans);
- Texas (Houston, Dallas, Austin).

TGL Event Host Location Choices: A variety of Host location choices are under consideration, including churches, community venues, hotel conference facilities, funeral homes and Hospice locations plus possible college, university and seminary campuses.

The TGL Event Location List will be built upon personal and pastoral friendships with clergy and/or professional, institutional reps in each location. Host location decisions will be based on the strength of “built in” support. Local and regional book exposure and sales will help trigger a multiplier-factor area wide, statewide and maybe even a national bump here and there.

Although only 13 of the 31 scouted locations will be scheduled to host a TGL Promotional Event pow-wow, the 18 locations not selected will still have been marketed to some extent for evaluation and will also result in additional sales numbers.

6. Carson Newman University / Lebanon High School / Seminary / FBCT / Church Marketing:

Fran will send a TGL publication release to his college Alumni quarterly magazine which runs notices of graduate publication achievements. From Fran's college alumni directory, he has selected 30 names for a "contact" mail list with a TGL publication "release" communication asking each recipient to buy TGL and contact one other class mate or friend about purchasing a copy of TGL.

About 30 high school senior classmates of Fran's have a monthly Class of '58 Saturday breakfast in Lebanon, Tennessee. Fran will send a "release" communication to Class Coordinator, Linda Moser Baines, (whose father was a deacon in his Dad's church) when TGL hits the Tennessee book market.

In addition to TGL publication releases to both seminaries Fran attended, he is researching and collecting classmate names and current addresses from each Seminary for another 30 TGL publication alerts and contacts among his seminary friends, graduates of the Presbyterian Seminary in Richmond, Virginia, and the Baptist Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.

Church marketing for churches making volume purchases - Buhler will ask pastors, churches, funeral homes and other entities (such as Hospice units in certain markets) to support and participate in volume TGL purchases as a gift of encouragement to grieving member/client/customer families. This can spur book sales, distribution and product visibility.

Fran's home church, The First Baptist Church of Tallahassee, a 3,600 member church, will run a TGL publication announcement in the weekly church newsletter, posted on the church website, for display sales copies of TGL to members and guests. Fran is checking similar contacts for similar arrangements via clergy and business friends. These would be larger churches with a church library or welcome center or some regular mode of book display/sales with a possible volume purchases and distribution.

The Lebanon, Tennessee, church in which Fran grew up and his Father pastored will be included in the same way. An aunt and uncle are active, deacon members there, and the current Pastor was a college classmate of one of Fran's former staff colleagues who served as Youth Minister at FBC/T.

For seven summers, during divinity school and during his tenure as Director of Campus Ministries with a small college in Louisville, Kentucky, Fran served as senior camp director for Hy-Lake Camps in Quebec, Tennessee on the beautiful Caney Fork River. He and Nancy are collecting and updating contact information for selected campers and counselors plus friends from his campus ministry years who will receive TGL publication notices. In the latter "camper" category, for example, are two gentlemen: One who served in the second Bush administration and one who now owns an auto dealership in Nashville, perfect for "word of mouth" TGL promotion.

7. The Bottom Line: Fran Buhler will not rely on author name recognition or title to sell TGL. Fran Buhler will sell TGL himself via the "opportunity marketing" initiatives described in this TGL Plan, enlisting the help of life-long friends plus current and former professional colleagues to engage and support the process.

Grief is a strong connector. Sorrow is a heart to heart language. Wrap the grief approach in warm, personal words or personal contact---avoiding any trace of pressure tactics---and through a combination of grief-pain and the Grace of God the TGL read can bring help and healing plus a "pass it on" desire to help others in their grief.

Part Three: TGL Market Metrics Summary

1. “The Grief Letter” Market is shaped by five factors:

Death and grief are universal human experiences.

The target grief-book market is a compound market with no male-female cross-over barriers.

The eight million people who grieve a death this year, according to industry data, and at this point in time, form an annual market of 8 million last year, 8 million this year and another 8 million next year.

Another significant TGL book-buying niche includes clergy, Hospice staff, social workers, assisted living and long term care staff, counselors, psychologists and other grief professionals.

Fran Buhler has proven marketing know-how and grief ministry experience to enhance the TGL positioning and marketing effort.

2. TGL addresses an unmet market “need” in every brand name bookstore where today’s grief bookshelf typically displays eight or ten titles. The grief shelf may expand to 15 or 20 titles depending on store size, urban/geographic location and bookstore marketing practice. Still, TGL’s market trio of the searching “griever,” the “grief book giver” and the grief professional will not find a volume with structure, focus and content like TGL.

The “book buyer” market for TGL will reflect the author’s Christian point of view within the broad scope of religious views and faith preferences across the US Buhler has conducted his ministry career with progressive views on theological, biblical, church, moral and social issues. Buhler writes TGL with an inclusive, non-judgmental tone that welcomes readers of other faith persuasions while remaining true to his Christian convictions. Fran Buhler is an ecumenical Baptist who believes heaven’s “by faith” inclusiveness will be a shock for some of us.

3. The Key Market Metric: Fran Buhler believes it is his job to market and promote TGL using affirmative “book promotion” strategies. The experience he has gained in a series of consulting careers will enable him to utilize successful marketing practices he honed as a Director of Special Projects and as a Marketing VP for Environmental Consulting Services.

In every example presented in this document, Fran Buhler’s style is “personal touch” market engagement. Fran will engage target grief markets to achieve his mission: Helping grieving hearts by selling a grief-sensitive, sorrow-tested book. Some of his TGL marketing campaigns include: “You can’t spell grief without an ‘I’.” “Grief is difficult---yet potentially transformative!”

4. TGL Grief Card Series: Fran will enlist a small, creative team to develop a TGL Grief Card series. Several lines of grief-themed cards are under design and development for sale alongside copies of *The Grief Letter* at TGL Promotional Events, on Buhler’s TGL website, at speaking engagements, and seminars. Every card offers a sensitive, thoughtful grief condolence with a personal touch, another soft sell contact leading to a future sale for TGL.

5. Built-in Marketing Experience: Fran Buhler has experience creating demand for products for which there was previously no demand, such as environmentally acceptable waste disposal or low-income housing.

Fran Buhler's Premise: If I can sell environmentally positive waste disposal practices to elected officials in cities across the US and in cities and counties across the State of Florida, if I can identify a market for low-income single-family "open" housing in a rural South Carolina community with 1,100 population in the strife-torn Civil Rights era of the late 1960s, then I can surely sell TGL. The premise is a promise.

6. Personal Grief is the Magnet and the Trigger. If you have lost a loved one or special friend in death and you hear about "The Grief Letter", you will want to read it, and gift it to someone in sorrow!

Your grief pain will drive you to it and your natural curiosity will encourage you to buy and read it. Then you will want to gift it to someone you know who also grieves a death. For Fran Buhler, personally and professionally, it's another opportunity to "comfort those who mourn."

7. Marketing Launch and Sales Campaign:

Buhler's marketing strategies will include three actions to achieve market readiness. In the months prior to or immediately following publication, Buhler will stimulate via local office managers the impetus for book industry publication exposure, such as:

(1) TGL review in the Books-A-Million (BAM) monthly promotional review, "Book Page, America's Book Review,"

(2) Barnes & Noble marketing contacts and coordination, and

(3) Contact and/or visits with Independent Book Sellers across the southeast such as the Book Den in Franklin, (Nashville) Tennessee; Writer's Block Bookstore, Winter Park, Florida, the Midtown Reader, Tallahassee, and others.

The Independent Bookstore market is somewhat different from brand name bookstores, both in book display priorities and strategies in "book ordering" and "shelf stocking". Buhler plans an aggressive "contact" initiative with the Independents throughout the southeast US, making them more aware of how they can tap into the local grief market in their geographical book market area.

Using an initial 200 copies of TGL, Fran Buhler will drive early TGL sales (in brand name bookstores plus the independents) with a "personal pitch" strategy, as follows.

The First 125 Copies of TGL: The following "personal pitch" strategy requires 125 copies of TGL.

Buhler asks 25 clergy, professional, academic and business friends distributed over ten states to give TGL to two friends each: $25 \text{ books} + 25 \times 2 = 50 + 25 = 75$ gift copies.

Each of the 50 recipient's gives, ships or mails a gift copy of TGL to one person in a market or community other than their own location: $50 \text{ copies to distribute} + 75 = 125$ total copies.

The Remaining 75 Copies of TGL: Buhler will gift the final 75 TGL copies to a combination of:

(1) Independent Book Store owner/managers. This underserved network will be valuable for TGL visibility in urban markets where the “independents” have a loyal market base. (15 copies)

(2) Grieving church member and other out-of-state families Fran has assisted who have histories of being “connectors” with other grieving individuals and families. (15 copies)

(3) Funeral home executives in selected southern state localities, especially where funeral home owners might become interested in bulk purchases of TGL. (A young man Buhler taught in 12th grade Sunday School now “flips” funeral homes in four states and has offered his industry contacts.). (15 copies)

(4) Selected clergy in states whose personal ministry contacts and/or denominational reputation will extend and expand the TGL “buzz”. The right buzz leads to more TGL purchases both in the immediate area and other areas as well. (15 copies)

(5) Distribution from the 75 will also include selected Hospice and other grief professional contacts with the objective of spreading the geographic multi-state coverage. (15 copies)

Remember, these two gift book marketing strategies go beyond a “feel good” objective, moving the TGL promotion from an author enterprise to a widespread personal grief connection process, as TGL “word of mouth” moves the TGL “soft sell” along from one grieving individual or one grief professional to another grieving individual or grief professional! When this happens in several localities, you have an emergent sales spike. Not # 1 on the sales chart, but a steady, ever widening, upward sales trend!

The key to the above TGL distribution strategies is more than the number of gift book recipients. The strategy “pay-off” will come from the conversational “word-of-mouth” impact that will happen in each urban geographical location, creating sales in each urban area exposed to the TGL conversations.

In this innovative, aggressive, “down home” marketing plan, each contact is a personal contact supported by a gift book strategy, resulting in several good behaviors. TGL is distributed and discussed. TGL becomes part of day-to-day conversation. Then a multiplier effect kicks in. What happens as a result of these interactions will spike TGL sales in localities across the “fertilized” states. TGL sales will benefit from local recognition and verbal support created in every regional Promotional Event location simply because of friendships and personal/professional relationships.

Word of mouth promotion and the impact of local appearances will power TGL sales at local events and stimulate TGL sales within the region. Combined sales from the TGL Event Locations, plus the cumulative “snow ball” effect in the southeastern states will spur spotty sales in other parts of the US because of possible family or friendship connections. 75 % of the funerals I have done involved family from other states. This is the dispersed nature of family life and grief these days.

In general, TGL possesses a built in “pass it on,” “share a copy,” “gift it to someone you know in grief,” personal connection power that will trigger “word of mouth” recommendations and be reflected in TGL sales driven by TGL Event Locations.

In the book-selling business, every grief connection leading to a TGL purchase, counts. That’s why Fran Buhler will focus his marketing ability and effort to sell TGL as part of his larger personal commitment to “comfort all who mourn.”