

Families pay tribute to loved babies in annual memorial service

'The worst thing in the world is losing a child'

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THE names of dozens of beloved babies were read aloud during a poignant Christmas service for those parents and families who had suffered the loss of their children.

The special memorial, held at Methodist Church, Welford Road, Northampton, saw hundreds of families pay tribute to their baby sons, daughters, siblings and grandchildren.

During an emotional service, organised by the Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Charity (Sands), the names of all the dead babies were read aloud.

Families then hung symbolic Christmas decorations on a Christmas tree in memory of their children.

Craig Hoare, aged 30, was there in memory of his baby son Charlie, who died just 15 hours after he was born in May.

Mr Hoare, from Rectory Farm, Northampton, said: "My wife and I were expecting our son in June. On May 22, we thought she was going into labour. We were rushed into hospital because he had a faint heartbeat and she had an emergency Caesarean."

Mr Hoare's wife suffered a placental abruption which denied baby Charlie oxygen and he died just 15 hours into his life.

Mr Hoare, who has already run the Cardiff half-marathon for Sands, said: "The worst thing in the world is losing a child.

"You expect to lose parents and grandparents, but you never expect to lose your child.

"It is nice to have a specific time to remember Charlie - we do all the time anyway - but things like this do help."

Another parent at the service was



■ Harvey Gaskill places a Christmas decoration on the tree at Kingsthorpe Methodist Church in memory of his niece and nephew *CE picture by KELLY COOPER*

Tina Matty, aged 38, from Kingsthorpe.

Six years ago, on her due date, Tina was told her baby daughter, Keira Leigh, had died in the womb.

She said: "I then had to give birth to her and she was just the most beautiful little girl I have ever seen."

Tina lost her daughter on November 22 and says she treats the annual service

as a birthday memorial to her.

She said: "We dress up, we bring our other girls and it is just a celebration.

"We then go to the cemetery and light a candle and put Christmas decorations up. It just brings us closer to her."

She added: "Sands is just a fantastic charity. They just show you are not alone. They are absolutely wonderful."

Garden tribute idea for hospital



■ One of the dozens of Christmas decorations placed on the tree during the service. . . it is now hoped a memorial garden will also be set up

BEREAVEMENT experts say they hope to create a memorial garden and redecorate a special room at Northampton General Hospital to help parents cope with losing babies.

Until this year, the group was run on a voluntary basis at the hospital. However, a local branch of the charity Sands has now been formally set-up in Northamptonshire.

Viv Jameson, who runs Sands with Jane Percival and Maggie Berrow, said: "We started off as just a support group and then this year we decided to become Northamptonshire Sands and to do constructive things rather than simply off support.

"Some people have lost a baby 15 or 16 years ago and they will still come back and see us."

She said the group is organising a charity ball in February to raise money to improve service and has appealed for help raising the cash.

Viv, who helped organise Sunday's memorial service, said: "We have been doing the Christmas service for about 10 years now. At Christmas you are so busy buying presents but you can't get anything for the baby who died. It is just time out amidst all the rushing around at Christmas to remember the baby."

To provide raffle gifts for the ball in February ring Viv on 07801 811025.