



Caring Connections: Funeral Service Options

Dedicated To Those We Serve

With today's changing and fast paced society, many traditions are changing. Funeral service is one of those traditions. While many people understand or have some knowledge of what is involved in a traditional funeral service, often people are not aware of the choices that are involved should they choose a more non-traditional type of service.

A traditional service consists of the deceased's body being present at the funeral in a casket, with earth burial as the final means of disposition. Although there are several ways in which a traditional funeral may be personalized or changed somewhat, the funeral service itself will be similar to other traditional services.

Funeral services involving cremation tend to be on the rise, however, most people do not know the many options that are available to them. Cremation was first developed to take the place of earth burial as a means of final disposition. It was never intended to replace the funeral service. Whether your family chooses earth burial or cremation, it is very important to have some form of funeral service.

Although some people see cremation as a simple way to do things, often it is more complex because a family has more choices to make. The first choice to make is whether to have the deceased person's body present at the funeral service. A family may choose to have the body present at the services but instead of going to the cemetery for burial after the service, the deceased will be taken to the crematorium for cremation. A second option would be to have a family and/or public viewing or a prayer service with the body present, but have the cremation take place before the funeral service.

With either choice, the family and friends of the deceased have received the value of a viewing and are able to say their goodbyes. When a family chooses either of these types of service, they will have to make a choice whether to purchase a casket or to rent a casket (many funeral homes are able to offer this service). The options will be offered and explained to the family by a funeral director, at the arrangement conference. Although a viewing is considered to be a good way to begin the healing process, some families, for whatever reason, choose not to have one.

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In this case the cremation often takes place shortly after death, with the funeral service taking place after the cremation is complete. Most families choose to have the cremated remains of their loved one, in an urn, and present at the funeral service, although some people have a service without the cremated remains present. Once cremation has taken place, a family will have to consider what will be done with the cremated remains of their loved one. Burial of the urn in a cemetery plot is one option. An urn may be buried on a single plot much the same as a casket would be or it may be interred on the plot of someone else, usually a family member. A family may also choose to keep the urn in their home or if undecided about what they wish to do with the urn, they may request that the funeral home keep it, until a decision has been made. Some people choose to scatter the cremated remains in a spot that was special to themselves and/or the person who died. However, when cremated remains are scattered, they are gone forever, there is no place to mark that the deceased person either lived or died or for future generations to visit. Should a family wish to scatter some cremated remains, the funeral director will encourage them to scatter only a portion of the remains and to find a permanent place for the remainder of them.

Personalizing funeral service is becoming increasingly more common with families wishing to honor their loved ones. This will often make the funeral service more comforting to the family. Families are encouraged to create a memorial table with items that represent different aspects of the deceased person's life. They may also wish to display photographs or create collages, with a number of photographs depicting the person's life, in a sense, telling the story of that person through pictures. Children and adults alike are encouraged to draw pictures or write letters to the deceased and place them in the casket with the deceased person. Some families choose to place special little mementos in the casket as well. These items may also be placed in the urn with the cremated remains of the person. A eulogy may be prepared and offered by a family member or close friend as well, family members may wish to take part in the service with readings, special music tributes or assisting with the service in any other way possible. Anything a family can do that will personalize the funeral service and make it more meaningful to them is encouraged. In some churches these items are allowed to be set up in the sanctuary, however other churches would prefer these items to be set up in the foyer or entrance of the church. They can also be set up wherever the memorial lunch will be taking place, as often people have more of a chance to look at everything then. Please check with your funeral director or your church to find out where the best place would be to place your memorial tribute to your loved one.

Because there are so many choices today when planning a funeral service, the best way to make the decisions that will best serve your family is to be well informed and to explore all options that are available to you. Do not let someone tell you that you shouldn't do something that you want to do because it's not "proper". As long as it will not hurt anyone or be disrespectful in any way, it is okay. Often people find it most helpful, to preplan part or all of the funeral service or to talk to their funeral director and families about their wishes ahead of time. This takes some of the emotional stress of the death out of the decision making.

Decisions made in haste or under duress are often regretted later. If you would like more information about the options and services available to you, contact your local funeral director. He or she would be more than willing to discuss them with you and your family, thereby helping you to create a funeral service that meets all your needs.