



A new tradition in funeral service

Cremation is becoming a popular part of the American funeral. While so many people are seeking more options

for meaningful funeral services, they've realized what cremation can offer, especially within the context of a ceremony. Cremation serves as a dignified and powerful method of commemorating a life worth celebrating, an important first step in the healing process.

What you should know about cremation

Memorialization options and cremation

Families are realizing there are many options and much flexibility surrounding planning for cremation. Some families choose to have a viewing or a funeral service before the cremation. Others choose a memorial service at the time of cremation or afterwards with the urn present, or even a committal service at the final disposition of cremated remains. Often, funeral or memorial services can be held in a place of worship, a funeral home, a crematory chapel or even at a place of special significance to your loved one. Likewise, cremated remains can be interred in a cemetery plot or in a cremation niche in a columbarium. They can also be retained by a family member or scattered at a meaningful location that can be appreciated by future generations. (It is always advisable to check for local regulations regarding scattering in a public place.) Cremation is just one step in the commemorative process – an important step in preparing the remains for memorialization. How you continue with the memorialization process is limited only by your imagination.

The more you know, the better the choices you'll make

Will you have a service or a gathering of family and friends prior to cremation? Will there be a viewing? What kind of urn will you select? Will the cremated remains be interred? Like so many other events in your life, being an educated consumer is important. An excellent resource for learning all about your options is your funeral director. He or she can discuss many of the specifics relating to cremation and the ways in which cremation can fit into a meaningful funeral or memorialization service.

Cremation is only part of the healing process

Some may feel that by cremating a body, they're somehow eliminating the pain associated with their loss. Nothing could be further from the truth. Cremation is not a way of eliminating your grief, but a process of preparing your loved one for his or her final resting place. Like burial, it is only one element of the funeral process and should be approached that way. When made part of a meaningful funeral service, cremation can play a vital role in the healing process.

Different religions view cremation differently

Most religions accept cremation with the exception of the Islamic, Orthodox Jewish, Eastern Orthodox and some fundamentalist Christian faiths. Though the Roman Catholic Church expresses a preference for burial, it now allows cremation for reasons compatible with church teachings. It does not sanction the scattering of remains, however, and prefers the presence of the body during the liturgy, prior to cremation.

Options for creating a meaningful experience

When made part of a tribute to a loved one, cremation like burial, can give you the flexibility to create a funeral service that is as individual as the life being honored.

One choice you'll face is whether or not to have a viewing prior to cremation. Many people, grief

experts included, feel the ability to view the body gives friends and loved ones a necessary opportunity to say goodbye. If you choose this option, it's important to note that some funeral homes offer a ceremonial casket specifically for viewing prior to cremation, saving you the expense of a casket purchase. If you choose not to have a viewing, you'll need to select a container that the cremated remains will be stored or buried in. Your funeral director will show you what's available.

As part of your personal and memorialized funeral service, you'll also want to have a plan for the cremated remains. A range of alternatives exists from entombment or burial in a cremation garden, to a ceremony at which you scatter the cremated remains. Some families keep the cremated remains in a decorative urn as a keepsake. Your funeral director can discuss all of these options with you.

Other cremation issues

Cost of cremation services

The cost of cremation varies depending on the services and products selected by the family. Funeral homes should provide an itemized list including the costs of these services and products they offer. Making funeral plans in advance is helpful because, in addition to easing the planning process and allowing family members to know your wishes, planning ahead gives you a sense of the actual costs associated with a specific type of service.

Another form of remembrance

Cremation does not – and should not – take the place of a funeral service. Like burial, it is merely another form of disposition. However, by considering all your funeral options, you'll find that cremation can be an important part of the commemoration process. It helps loved ones to share grief, celebrate the life of the person who died and find healing in remembrance.

Focusing on personalization

The death of a loved one can be overwhelming. For that reason, it's even more important to slow down, take a deep breath and focus on their life and the impact he or she had on family and friends. Relaxation and focus can help provide direction and allow you to concentrate on organizing a service that honors your loved one's life. Use this checklist to help collect your thoughts and direct your effort to create a funeral or memorial service that truly reflects a life worth celebrating.

- Some of my loved one's most important accomplishments include...
- Some of my fondest memories of him or her are...
- People who had the greatest effect on my loved one's life are...
- My loved one's favorite music is...
- My loved one's hobbies and interests include...
- Other things that gave him or her enjoyment are...
- The causes and beliefs my loved one was passionate about are...
- If my loved one was planning this service, he or she would include...

Understanding Cremation

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