



# SOXMAN

FUNERAL HOMES LTD



## Pre-Planning & Bereavement Guide

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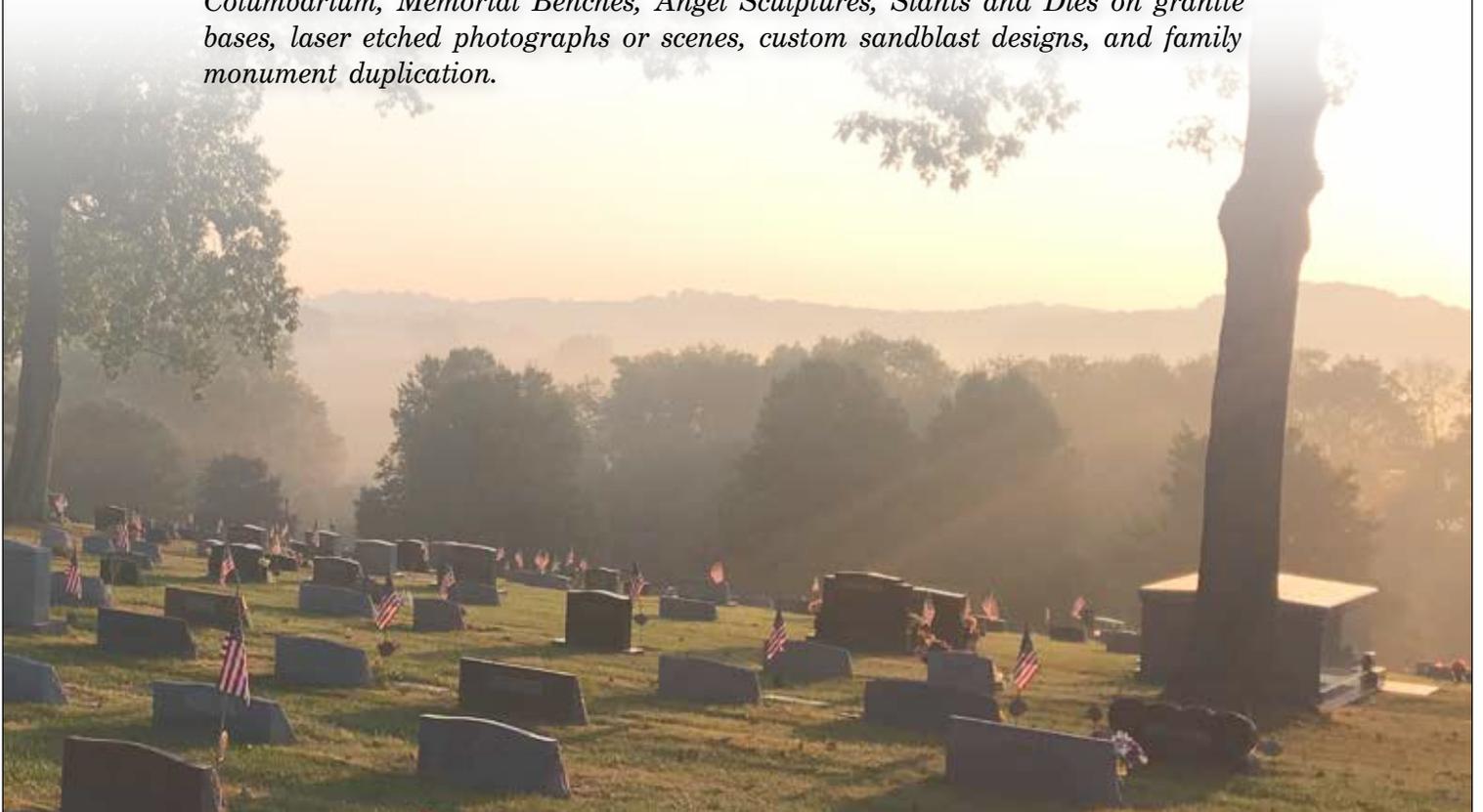
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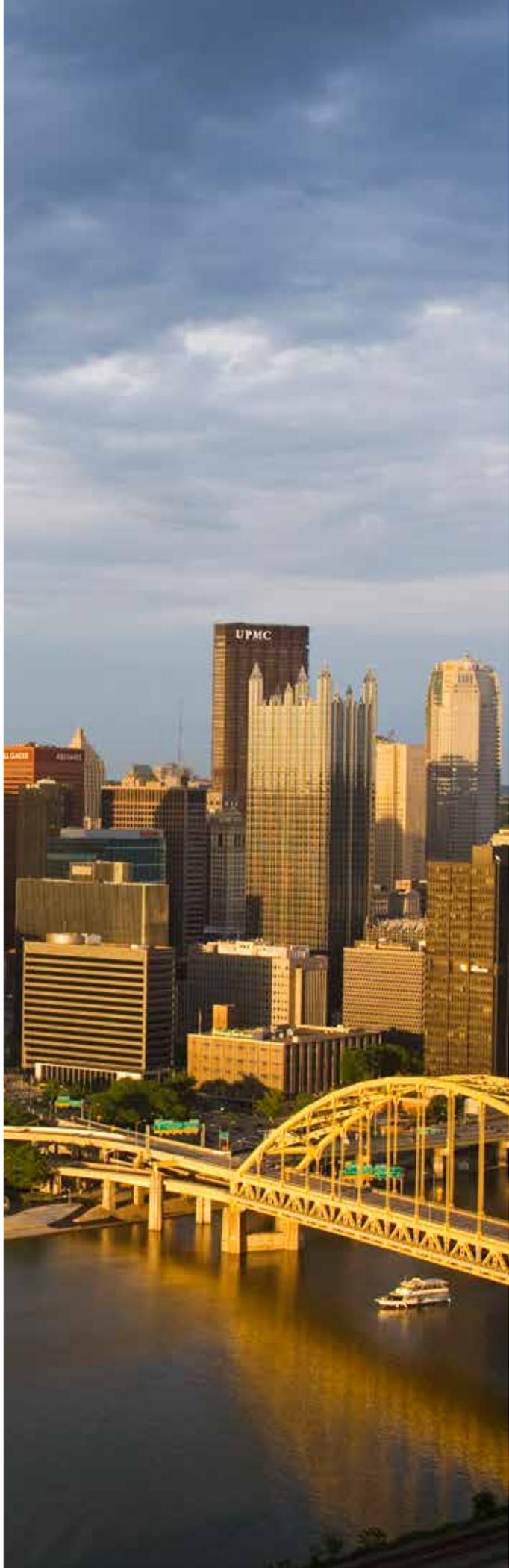
## *Plum Creek Cemetery*

*Plum Creek Cemetery is a non-denominational, non-profit Cemetery chartered in 1907. We still offer family plots as well as plots for individuals and couples. We also offer private Mausoleum and Columbarium sites throughout the Cemetery. Plum Creek still honors the age old tradition of grave side funerals from April 1 to November 1, and can accommodate funerals outside of these months with our lovely Chapel.*

### *Services provided*

- For those desiring to prearrange their burial plot needs, interest free financing options are available, and we do take most major credit cards.*
- Plum Creek Cemetery is an exclusive distributor of Gaydos Monument Co., one of the largest wholesale providers of Cemetery Memorials in the Mid-Atlantic Region.*
- When working with Plum Creek Cemetery for a monument you will have access to Gaydos Monuments Co.'s talented design team that can create a unique, custom monument befitting the way you want your loved one memorialized.*
- We offer over 30 of the highest quality granites from around the world and the United States. Our clients are constantly amazed by the nearly unlimited scope of what we can accomplish with granite.*
- Products available through Plum Creek Cemetery include Mausoleums, Personal Estate Columbarium, Memorial Benches, Angel Sculptures, Slants and Dies on granite bases, laser etched photographs or scenes, custom sandblast designs, and family monument duplication.*





# Welcome to the Soxman Funeral Home Pre-Planning & Bereavement Guide

Having proudly served the Penn Hills, Plum Boro and surrounding communities for over 25 years, Soxman Funeral Homes, Ltd. is privileged to carry on the compassionate legacy of Thomas J. Soxman.

We have established ourselves as the distinguished death care provider committed to standards of performance and excellence which continue to serve as the hallmark of the industry in our community.

We are dedicated to providing the highest quality in funerals, memorialization and bereavement care. Our service extends before, during and after the time of need. This is accomplished by ensuring that all families receive the highest level of professionalism, dignity, care and support.

Additionally, if you are unable to visit us in person for a service, or if you wish to post a message for the family and other online visitors to read, please visit the “Online Condolences.” This way you can still be with the family in thought by signing the online guestbook, expressing your condolences or sharing memories about the deceased. You can also place a memorial donation, read the obituary notice or watch the video tribute.

We welcome you to take some time to look over the information provided on our website. If ever there is a time that you need to call on us for guidance and support, please know that it will be our honor to take care of you and your family.

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**Thomas J. Soxman**  
**1944-2001**

## Our Heritage

Founder Thomas J. Soxman began his career in funeral service following his time serving in the US Navy during the Vietnam War. He worked as an intern and licensed funeral director at Waples Funeral Home before joining Toots and Sam Morasco at Morasco Funeral Home on Frankstown Road. He worked alongside the brothers for many years, during which time he became a partner and together they acquired the Roth Funeral Home on Saltsburg Road. Tom became the sole owner of Soxman Funeral Homes, Ltd. in 1992. Tom's eye for the industry led him to offer cutting edge options in personalized care for the families he served. His mission was to offer premier services to families in their time of loss.

His son, Brian T. Soxman, began assisting his dad with maintenance at the funeral home at the young age of fifteen. In the eleventh grade, after watching his father's dedication to funeral service, Brian decided to follow in Tom's footsteps and become a funeral director. Brian, once licensed, had the privilege of working alongside his father until his untimely death in 2001 at the age of fifty-seven.

Anna F. Zvirman-Nesbit joined the funeral home family after discovering her passion for people and the desire to care for others. Like Brian, she also chose the path into funeral service during high school and has been working at the funeral home since 2003.

Brian and Anna have committed themselves to continue on the time-honored practices of care and compassion as well as involvement in the community as set forth by Tom. Each year, they carry on Tom's tradition of hosting the "Light of Love Memorial Program" during the holiday season to honor families they have served and members of the community who are dealing with a recent loss. This unique program, as well as efforts to remain at the forefront of the funeral industry are just a few ways that the name and legacy of Thomas J. Soxman is preserved.

The Soxman Funeral Home staff hope that you feel a sense of comfort and family when you enter the funeral home. The Soxman name is a heritage of respect, service, and empathy and the directors strive to make difficult times easier in your time of need.

Both of the funeral directors, Brian Soxman and Anna Nesbit, reside in Plum Boro with their families and are active within the community





## What Makes Us Unique?

Ours is not just any funeral home. Our years of experience combined with our highly professional, friendly and compassionate staff, makes Soxman Funeral Home the first choice for many area families each year.

We are proud to embrace traditional values, diversity and innovation in honoring the spirit and life of each person we serve. Soxman Funeral Home offers a full selection of:

- Funeral and memorial services, ranging from traditional to uniquely personalized
- Burial or Cremation Service options
- Celebrant or Humanistic Services
- Veterans' honors

Letting go of a loved one is a very difficult process. In order to provide your family peace-of-mind, Soxman Funeral Home offers complete care, so you can focus on comforting each other as you prepare to say goodbye to someone dear.

Although there are many decisions you may have to make, we assure you that we will guide you through the entire process every step of the way. We promise to help you:

- Design the most fitting memorial or funeral service to honor your loved one's memory and pay tribute to their life achievements and experiences.
- Select the most appropriate products, including a casket, burial vault, cremation urn, cemetery or mausoleum, to fit your budget and suit your needs and desires.
- Write a fitting obituary to honor your loved one's life experiences and social connections.
- Assist in the publication of the obituary in the newspapers of your choice.
- Create a Book of Memories™, a beautiful, permanent online memorial, where you and your friends can build a legacy of memories by archiving treasured photos and memories.
- Welcome your family and friends to our funeral home for your planned services, including a viewing, visitation, funeral or memorial service.
- Make all arrangements with regard to the services whether they are held at your place of worship, our funeral home, cemetery, or alternate gathering place.





- Provide you with beautiful funeral print materials, including memorial folders, prayer cards, acknowledgement cards and book marks, to name a few.
- Provide an elegant hearse and funeral vehicles, as well as arrange for escorts.
- Help in the selection and ordering of family floral arrangements.
- Provide access to grief education and support materials, and referrals to counseling services.
- Prepare all paperwork, including vital record statistics, permits, filing and obtaining death certificates, and assistance with life insurance, veteran's benefits and Social Security claims.

We hope you will turn to us for compassionate care and impeccable service. Our pledge is to honor your loved one and family with dignity, respect and personal attention to every detail. Contact Brian and Anna today to explore the wide variety of choices available to you and your family.

## Our Facilities

We take pride in the fact that we have made our facilities a comfortable place, while providing a respectful and dignified space to commemorate the life of a loved one. If you wish to take a tour of our facility, please contact us and we will be happy to invite you in for a visit.

### Visitation and Sitting Rooms

At Soxman Funeral Home, we are pleased to offer several rooms to hold visitations. Our funeral home, built in 1872, has historic charm and spacious rooms to accommodate families as they receive in friends and visitors. We have 3 visitation rooms to choose from, as well as several sitting rooms and a family lounge. Our goal is to make you feel as comfortable as possible in our home-like setting.

## Our Chapel

Although our chapel is not intended to compete against the reverence and respect of the church, it has been tastefully designed as an option for those who do not wish a formal church setting.



# Residence Inn<sup>®</sup> Marriott.

412-816-1300

The Residence Inn by Marriott Wilkins Township features contemporary rooms, ranging from studios to 2-bedroom suites, come with fully equipped kitchens, as well as pull-out sofas, desks, free WiFi, and 37-inch flat-screen TVs. Suites provide additional TVs and separate living areas. Complimentary amenities include hot breakfast, a grocery delivery service, and parking. There's also an indoor pool, fitness center, and outdoor space with BBQs, in addition to a business center and coin-op laundry.



The Courtyard Pittsburgh Monroeville hotel features newly renovated sleeping rooms. The lobby provides an inviting, flexible spaces to work or relax, free Wi-Fi throughout and easy access to the latest news, weather and airport conditions via our GoBoard. The highlight of our lobby experience is 'The Bistro - Eat. Drink. Connect.', providing guests with healthy food and beverage offerings in the morning as well as evening dinner service with cocktails.

## COURTYARD<sup>®</sup> Marriott.

412-856-8680

The property is conveniently located off of Interstate 376 and the Pennsylvania Turnpike, offers stylish studio suites with 25 percent more space than a standard hotel room. Each suite is equipped with a mini-refrigerator, microwave, coffee maker and 37-inch LCD television. For business travelers, a work desk and ergonomic chair provide the perfect work atmosphere, along with free high-speed Internet connections to enable you to work in the privacy of your own suite. You can start your day off right with our new breakfast buffet. A short drive can take you to many destinations, whether you are here on business or leisure.



## SPRINGHILL SUITES<sup>®</sup> Marriott.

412-380-9100



Only the Marriott family of hotel lodging solutions offers the versatility and reliability to meet your unique business travel needs. From smart spaces to practical amenities to world-class service, each of our flagship hotel brands delivers the quality experience you expect, backed by the Marriott name you trust.

**CONTACT THE SALES TEAM TODAY FOR AVAILABILITY AND MORE INFORMATION.**

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**Attorney at Law**

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[www.familylegalcenter.com](http://www.familylegalcenter.com)



Crescent Gardens Floral Shoppe has a wide selection of funeral, casket and sympathy flowers. Our expert florists can help you order the right funeral flowers and send them to Penn Hills, PA or nationwide.

Express your heartfelt condolences with a tasteful sympathy flower arrangement from Crescent Gardens Floral Shoppe.

## **Crescent Gardens Floral Shoppe**

6515 Saltsburg Rd.

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## Pre-Planning / Planning Ahead

"*Is this what they would have wanted?*" is an all too common question when families come to plan a funeral. Making your wishes clear ahead of time can prove to be a great comfort to loved ones.

### What Is Pre-Planning?

Pre-planning is simply the process of drawing up plans for a funeral before they are needed. It involves gathering a variety of family information and making decisions about the type of service you want (e.g. where the funeral itself should take place, and who might participate). Working together with a funeral director, you can plan, organize and record all of your requests.

Our staff can lead you through the process, providing advice and guidance along the way. They will ensure that you have all the information you need about our products and services, allowing you to make informed decisions.

You may choose to pay for the arrangements in advance, or your plans can simply be held on file at the funeral home to be carried out when they are needed and invoiced to the estate or family at that time. Our staff will explain your options when you meet them.

### Why Pre-Plan?

While everyone who makes the decision to pre-plan has their own reasons for doing so, we are often told the greatest motivator is the desire to protect their family by ensuring that they won't face the difficult task of making arrangements at a time of loss.

We advocate pre-planning because our experience has shown us that not only is planning ahead virtually stress-free, but people have the time and information they need to make carefully considered, pressure-free decisions that are the right choices for themselves and their families.

### What About Pre-Payment?

For many people funeral pre-planning has become an extension of the estate planning process. It is simply one more thing they choose to take care of as they plan for retirement and the next stage in their lives.

Choosing to pre-fund funeral arrangements is another way in which people can protect their families, and it can give financial peace of mind.

### Should I Pre-Pay?

Each person's individual circumstances along with other factors will influence this decision, but there are a number of advantages to pre-payment that you should consider:

**Guaranteed Services:** Once you have fully funded your pre-planned arrangements, we guarantee to deliver the selected services and merchandise regardless of price increases; this can help protect you and your family from the effects of inflation on funeral costs over time.

There are however, related services such as newspaper notices, for which we cannot guarantee because they are not provided by us directly. Our skilled staff can help you estimate these expenditures and to make allowances for them in your funding arrangements.

**Estate Planning:** People often choose to pre-plan and pre-pay in the years leading up to their retirement. Typically, it is at this point in our lives that we are in our prime earning years and have the most expendable income. For many this is the easiest time to potentially remove an unpredictable future expense from their financial planning.

**Budgeting:** Our pre-planning program offers a payment plan option that allows you to pay the cost of selected services and merchandise over a period of time.

## Advanced Funeral Planning

*More families turn to us for advanced funeral planning, or “pre-arrangement.”*

When a friend or family member dies, the sense of loss, disbelief, and helplessness can be simply overwhelming. Especially if you are responsible for planning the funeral and memorial service.

If you have ever made funeral arrangements, you’re probably familiar with the countless decisions that need to be made to ensure everything is just right. The vast majority of the time we meet with people who have never planned a funeral and the amount of detail necessary is always surprising to them.

We feel obligated to educate the community about advanced funeral planning because people who have prearranged tell us the experience was important to their peace of mind. And when the need for a funeral arises, those left behind are very relieved to know that many or all of the decisions were made ahead of time.

*Eight out of ten Americans agree it’s a wise thing to do.*

... And yet so many people still put it off. We plan for all of the things that “might” happen to us: auto accidents, theft, fire, floods. Many people have life insurance, but somehow it is more difficult to think about details of one’s death.

We make the advanced funeral planning process a little easier. It certainly is a great deal easier than planning at the time of need.

You can choose the type of funeral services and merchandise that reflects your personal wishes, and even fund your funeral plan in advance. Your family will know exactly what you want because you will have specified the details yourself.

Each year more families discover the benefits of pre-arrangement. In fact, recent research suggests that nearly half the funerals performed in America will have been planned and funded in advance.

*It just makes good sense, and we can make it easier. Why plan my funeral in advance?*

There are three main benefits to advanced funeral planning...

### 1. *Relieve the emotional burden from surviving family*

By making funeral and burial decisions in advance, you free your loved ones from this responsibility. This gives them the time to build a foundation for healing and support one another. The funeral service will be a time of reflection and a celebration of your life.

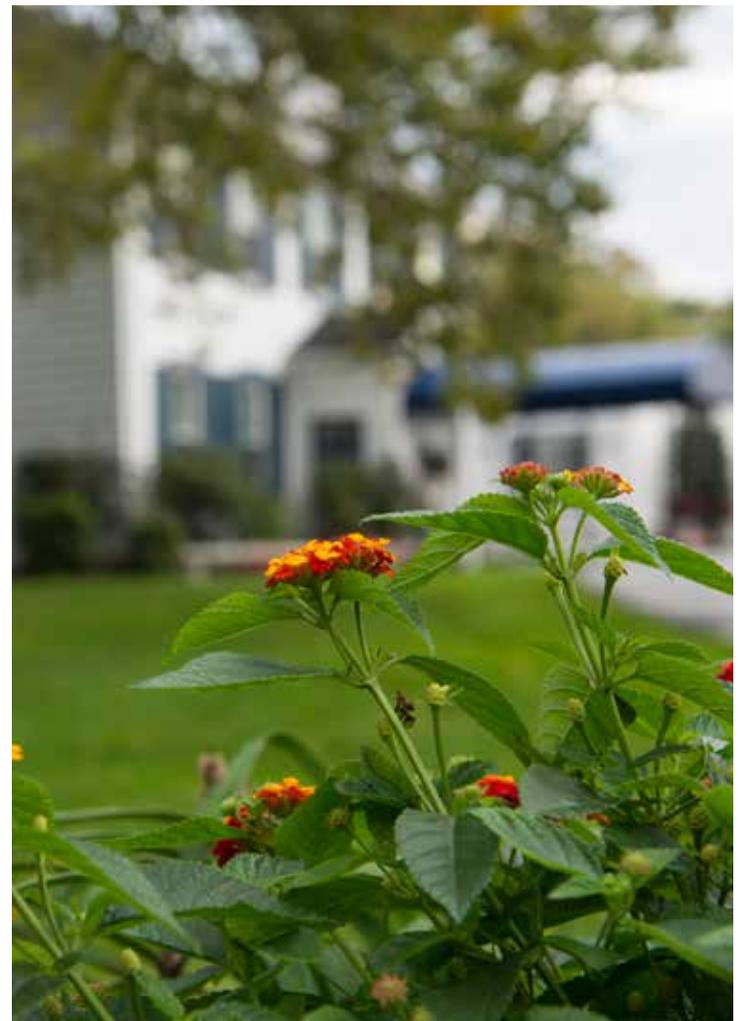
### 2. *Express your own wishes*

Often a family agonizes over what the deceased would have wanted: “Did I do the right thing? “Did I forget anything?” “Did I include everyone?” “How will I pay for the funeral?”

These are all questions that can be answered in a documented and funded advanced funeral plan. It is also our experience that many people don’t realize all of the options available in funeral and memorial care. Now is the best time to discover what’s available for you and your family.

### 3. *Relieve the financial responsibility from surviving family*

Choosing a funding option completes your advanced funeral plan. We offer a variety of payment options that will meet your needs.



# *There has never been a better time to plan ahead!*

A recent nationwide consumer survey conducted by the Wirthlin Group found that 80 percent of Americans "believe funeral prearrangement is a good idea." What about YOU?

## **Benefits of Planning Ahead**

Relieves stress, anxiety and confusion because surviving family members don't need to make funeral arrangement decisions at an already highly emotional time.

Frees family from risk, bickering, uncertainty, unnecessary worry and additional grief.

Allows you to record your own unique wishes so your family will not have to guess what you would have wanted. You can design your own special services!

Helps you make informed, thoughtful decisions instead of quick, hasty ones.

Allows you to make these important decisions together... not alone.

Removes possible conflict and misunderstanding about your wishes among immediate family members or "blended" family members at an emotional time.

Reduces the chance your family will "emotionally overspend" on final arrangements.

Lets you determine how much you can afford to spend on your funeral. Making the over 125 end-of-life decisions in a calm setting leaves no financial surprises for your family. No one is turned down, and there is no waiting for return documents.

Eliminates financial strain on family members by giving you the opportunity to prepay your funeral expenses. *Saves you hundreds of dollars on funeral expenses.*

Allows you to make prepaid funds Medicaid/SSI exempt. Prepaying your funeral expenses protects your assets from confiscation due to long-term care expenses.

Safe-guards your savings and life insurance assets for your family.

Protects you against the effects of inflation by transferring the risk of inflation of funeral costs to the funeral home when you prepay your expenses. Once you fund your prearrangement, your funeral will never increase in cost regardless of what prices are at the time of need.\*

Permits you to fully transfer your funeral prearrangement plan to any funeral home in the United States or Canada if you relocate.

Gives you true "**Peace of Mind**", knowing you have taken care of your final arrangements as your last gift to your loved ones.

***Be sure to ask how you can receive all these benefits of planning ahead.***

**Don't Wait! Inquire Today!**

*\*Rules vary by state, exceptions may apply. Please contact your funeral home professional for additional information.*

## Homesteaders Life Company has provided secure funeral funding since 1906.

Tens of thousands of families each year face their "worst days" with a lighter burden because the funeral is planned and funded in advance. Three out of four people agree that advance funeral planning (or "prearrangement") is a good idea, and your funeral director or an associate of the funeral home is the perfect place to begin.

Homesteaders provides an insurance funding product that grows to help offset inflation. A Homesteaders-funded funeral plan helps your funeral director keep his or her promise to provide the services and merchandise you choose, while relieving your surviving family of the financial responsibility.

Located in West Des Moines, Iowa, Homesteaders is a national leader among funeral insurance funding companies and rated A- (Excellent) by A.M. Best. Funeral home owners and agents across America choose Homesteaders as their exclusive pre-need funeral funding provider.

### **"Why do funeral homes choose Homesteaders?"**

Funeral homes look for a partner that offers secure funding products, affordable payment options, and superior customer service. Today nearly 4,000 funeral homes across America depend on the experience and dedication of our more than 170 employees.

### **"Why fund with an insurance product?"**

There are many reasons why a funeral home chooses insurance to fund advance funeral plans. Homesteaders provides a product that can grow over time, offering protection against inflation.

Unlike other funding plans such as a bank trust, growth on Homesteaders policies is not taxable. Furthermore, the product offers payment options that are flexible to meet your financial needs.

### **"But I already have insurance!"**

Homesteaders' product is specifically designed to cover the cost of a prearranged funeral. It can grow in death benefit for the rest of your life. The growth paid on your policy offers protection against inflation and, in most cases, means that surviving family members will not have to pay additional money for your funeral.

Typical life insurance is excellent protection to cover your family's living expenses after you die. An advance funeral plan funded with Homesteaders leaves your life insurance proceeds intact, to be used as intended.

### **"What if I move?"**

Your Homesteaders policy is fully transferable. Although prices for funeral services and merchandise may vary between funeral homes, your coverage can continue to grow to offset inflation regardless of where you live.

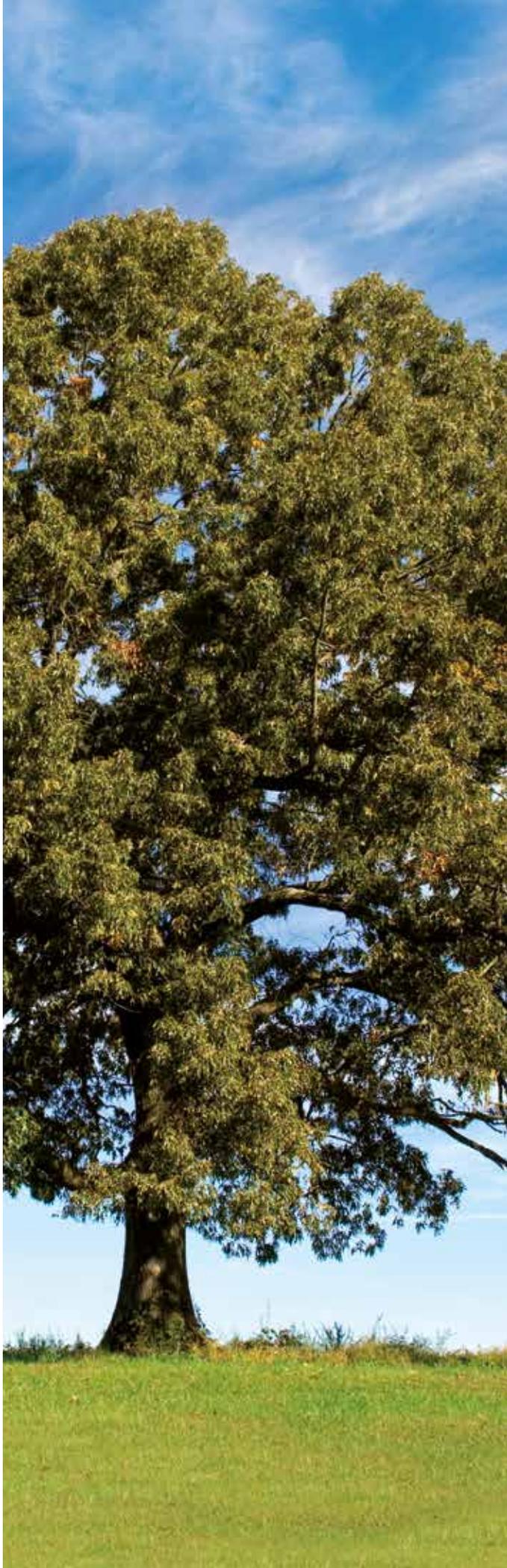
We want you to feel confident about the steps you have taken to prearrange and prefund your funeral. Should you have any questions, contact your funeral director or Homesteaders Customer Service at any time.

### **"How secure is my plan?"**

Homesteaders invests the money from your premiums to fund policy growth. Because we are a mutual company, we take a more conservative approach to investing.

Our portfolio includes investments such as U.S. government securities, investment grade corporate bonds, mortgages backed by government agencies, treasury bonds, and commercial mortgage loans on real estate. Furthermore, we manage our company and investments in such a way to merit an A- (Excellent) rating from A.M. Best Company.

Homesteaders' leadership remains firm in its commitment to the long-term security of our policyowners, the funeral homes that place their trust in us, and our employees. It is the way we have done business for over a century.



# Funeral Arrangements

Whether you're planning for yourself or for a loved one, the funeral service is one of the most important elements of a person's final arrangements. With the opportunity for great personalization, the funeral service can truly reflect the uniqueness of the life it honors.

Regardless of whether you or your loved one have opted for burial or cremation, the funeral or memorial service fills an important role. It can:

- Honor, recognize and celebrate the life of the deceased
- Allow friends and family to say their last goodbyes
- Provide closure after the loss of a loved one
- Allow friends to console the family of the loved one

**So what is a funeral?** In general terms, a funeral is a gathering of family and friends after the death of a loved one that allows them the opportunity to mourn, support each other and pay tribute to the life of the deceased. A formal or informal ceremony or ritual prior to burial, a funeral service often provides a sense of closure to family and friends. Although your faith or culture may dictate some elements of a funeral service, you may want to personalize other details of the service. At a funeral service, the casket or urn is usually present, and you may choose to have the casket open or closed.

## It often consists of one or more of the following components:

### Visitation or Viewings

Typically held the night before, or immediately prior to the funeral service, the visitation - also called a viewing - provides a way for friends and acquaintances to pay their respects and offer condolences to your family.

As with the funeral service, you may want to decide if you want an open or closed casket, should one be present.

### Funeral and Memorial Services

At a memorial service, a casket or urn is usually not present. Otherwise similar to a funeral or visitation, a memorial service gives family and friends a time to come together in your memory and celebrate your life.

There's no one, right way to plan a funeral service. We believe that each funeral should be as unique and memorable as the life it honors.

When planning your own funeral service in advance, think about the way you want to be remembered. Perhaps you'd like a traditional funeral aligned with certain religious or ethnic customs. Or, a celebration focusing on great memories made with family and friends may be your preference. Maybe it's a combination of both. You can have one service, or several, to honor your life.

Regardless of the service or services you choose to include in your funeral plan, you can personalize them in almost any way imaginable.

For example, consider the following questions:

- Where should the funeral or celebration be held? At your place of worship? At the funeral home?
- Who should officiate the service?
- Will your service adhere to traditions of a faith or culture?
- Do you want a eulogy, and who should deliver it?
- Would you like an open or closed casket?
- What music should be played?
- What readings would you like to have read?
- Is there a special poem you'd like shared with the guests?
- Are there any special photographs or other memorabilia you would like displayed?
- Should the decor reflect a particular hobby or interest of yours, such as fishing, gardening or music?
- Should there be a luncheon or reception held after the service?

## Graveside and Committal Services

As its name implies, a graveside service may be held at the grave site just prior to burial of a casket or urn, and usually consists of final remarks, prayers or memories. A graveside service may occur before, after, or in place of a traditional indoor service.

## Burial

Most people are familiar with the concept of burial, or "interment," but may not be aware of the variety of options that are often available. Many cemeteries offer:

- **Ground Burial:** burial of the casket below ground.
- **Mausoleum:** a large building that provides above-ground burial spaces, known as crypts, for entombment.
- **Private Family Mausoleum:** a small structure that provides above-ground entombment of, on average, two to twelve family members.
- **Private Family Estate:** a small section of a cemetery, usually bordered by gates, shrubbery or other dividers, that allows for ground burial of several members of the same family.

## Cremation

Many people overlook the importance of a cemetery property for those who choose cremation, but permanent placement of the ashes or "cremated remains" is an important part of the final arrangements. Just consider:

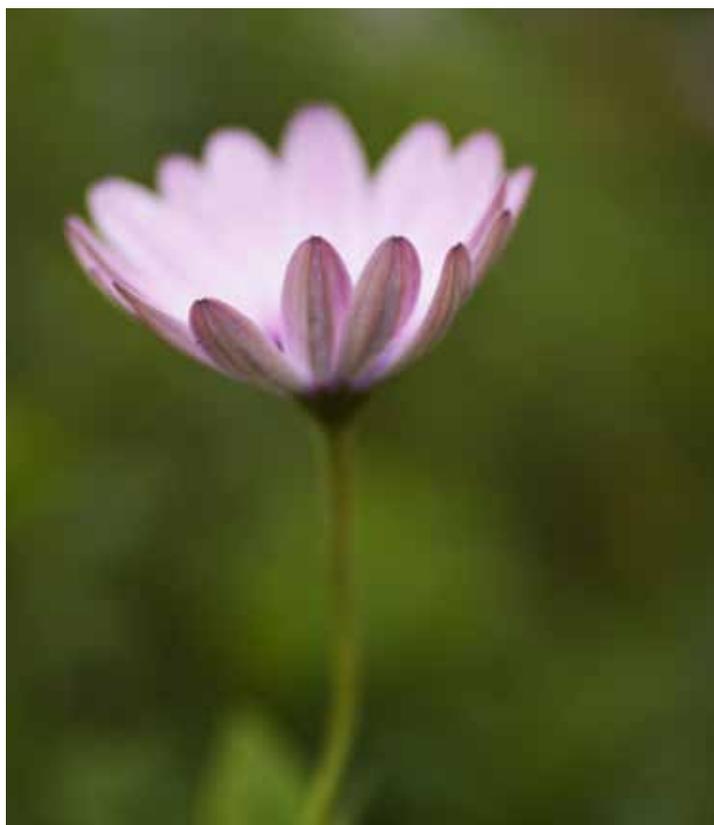
- A permanent site gives loved ones a physical place for visitation and reflection.

- The ceremony accompanying the placement of an urn in a cremation niche or a cremation garden in a cemetery provides family and friends with closure after their loss.
- When cremated remains of a loved one are kept with relatives, they can easily become misplaced or discarded through the years. A permanent placement provides future generations with a location to visit.
- Some common cemetery placement options for cremated remains are:
  - **Columbarium:** located within a mausoleum or chapel constructed of numerous niches designed to hold urns.
  - **Cremation Garden:** a dedicated section of a cemetery designed for the burial, scattering or other permanent placement of cremated remains.
  - **Memorial Benches:** benches that either simply memorialize a loved one scattered or buried in a cremation garden, or actually contain the remains within.

## Headstones

Cemeteries can offer many options for memorialization. In order to preserve the natural appearance of the landscape, some cemeteries feature headstones that lie flat against the ground called 'markers.'

Upright headstones, called 'monuments', offer another choice for memorialization. Both options come in a variety of sizes, shapes, and even colors.



Designed for year round beauty that changes with each season is

## *Mt. Hope Cemetery Association*

Mt. Hope Cemetery is fully equipped to offer complete pre-need services. As there are many advantages in choosing the family memorial estate before the time of need, the personnel at Mt Hope Cemetery can assist you in making your selection.

Mt Hope Cemetery reflects the well-planned efforts for a cemetery of permanent beauty, one that will endure throughout the ages. To insure this care, a special fund is set aside. A cemetery should reverently and beautifully portray the fact that a loved one lived, not that he or she died.



Mt Hope Cemetery, located in Penn Hills at 12707 Frankstown Road  
Phone is 412-793-1753 we are here to serve your needs!





## What To Do First: A Checklist

When a death occurs, there are so many things to consider and decisions to make. These lists can help you navigate through them.

### When a Death Occurs:

**At Home:** If the deceased was under hospice care, notify the hospice nurse. The nurse will contact the funeral home on your behalf. If the deceased was not under hospice or another at-home medical care provider, call 911.

**At a Hospital:** Notify the hospital which funeral home you have selected. The hospital will contact the funeral home on your behalf once they have completed their necessary documents.

**At a Hospice Facility:** Notify the hospice facility which funeral home you have selected. The hospice staff will notify the funeral home on your behalf.

**At a Nursing/Long Term Care Facility:** Notify the staff as to which funeral home you have selected; they will notify the funeral home on your behalf.

**Out of State/Out of the Country:** Even if a death occurs away from home you should notify your local funeral home. If you plan to have the deceased casketed and brought home, or if you plan to have services in your home town, your local funeral home can help facilitate transportation and coordination with a funeral home where the death occurred.

### Contact These People As Soon As Possible

- The funeral home to set an appointment to make further arrangements
- Relatives and friends
- Personal Representative
- Cemetery where you want or own property
- Employers (the employer of the deceased and of relatives who will need time off)
- Insurance agencies (life, health and accident)
- Religious, fraternal, civic and veteran's organizations and unions (if applicable)
- Lawyer and accountant

### Secure Vital Statistics of the Deceased

- Full legal name - other names must be identified by "Also Known As" (AKA)
- Date and place of birth
- Social Security Number
- Home address
- Father's name

- Mother's name, including maiden name
- Occupation and Industry
- Level of education reached

## Documents To Collect

Though not needed for funeral arrangements, some of these may be required to establish rights for insurance, pensions, survivor benefits, ownership, etc.

- Will
- Military discharge papers (discharge certificate or DD214)
- Legal proof of age or birth certificate
- Marriage license
- Citizenship papers (if not a US Citizen)
- Insurance policies
- Bank books
- Deeds
- Car ownership papers
- Income tax returns, receipts or canceled checks

## Discuss With Soxman Funeral Home

- Whether your loved one is to be buried or cremated
- Service details (e.g. would you like a visitation period, a formal service, a reception?)
- Clothing the deceased will be buried or cremated in
- If a member of the clergy will be engaged for the service
- Pallbearers, music, pictures, flowers, scripture or readings
- If you would like a charity to receive donations in memory of your loved one
- The funeral director will ask if you have made any arrangements with a cemetery. If you have not done this, Soxman Funeral Home can help you.

## If Casket Burial

- Would you like other members of the family to be with your loved one in the future? This determines the size and type of cemetery property needed.
- What type of memorial would you prefer (a marker set flush with the ground, or an upright monument)?
- Will the Committal Service be conducted graveside or chapel?

## If Cremation

- Would you like to schedule a viewing or visitation prior to the cremation?
- Would you like a service prior to the cremation?
- Would you like your family to be present at the time of cremation?
- What type of urn would you prefer (metal, wood, marble, ceramic, biodegradable, etc.)?
- What type of engraving would you like on the urn?
- What type of final resting place would you prefer for your loved one (ground burial, above ground niches, or scattering or placement of cremated remains in a cremation garden)?
- Would you like other members of your family to be with your loved one in the future? This determines the size and type of the final resting place.

## Burial of an Urn

- A burial urn or urn vault may be required for ground burial in our cemeteries.
- What type of memorial do you prefer (e.g. a bronze or granite marker set flush with the ground, an upright monument, or a cremation bench)?

## Above Ground Niches

- Would you like the niche to be inside a building or outside?
- Would you like the niche to be glass-fronted so that you can display personal mementos?

## Scattering

- Would you like to be present for the scattering?
- Would you like a permanent memorial to be placed in or around the area where scattering took place?

## What Expenses Will There Be

- Funeral Home Services
- Funeral Home Merchandise, most commonly, casket, vault, cremation urn
- Third party expenses: Such as clergy, florist, newspapers, death certificates, honor guard, bagpiper, dove release, etc.
- Cemetery charges (e.g. lot, opening/closing of the lot, selected headstone or other memorial)



## **Tips For Writing An Obituary With The Guidance Of Your Funeral Director**

You may choose to have an obituary printed in the newspaper and/or on the funeral home's website.

When you make arrangements at the funeral home, your funeral director will be glad to assist you in composing the obituary and will make arrangements with the newspaper for you.

The following information is customarily included in an obituary:

- Full name of the deceased (nickname is often included)
- City or town of residence
- Birth and passing dates
- List of immediate family members of the deceased, specifying if they are alive or deceased
- Locations and times for the visitation, funeral or memorial service.
- Any memorable way of honoring the deceased, as by mentioning personal achievements, hobbies and interests, military service, etc.
- A favorite or special charitable organization for people to donate to in memory of the deceased

## **Transporting The Deceased to Another State or Country For Burial**

If you require interstate or international transportation, please advise the funeral home as soon as possible so that they can begin making arrangements with the proper authorities.

Be advised that complying with requirements of other jurisdictions takes time - in some cases a number of days, or even weeks.

## **About Cremation**

Cremation is an alternative to burial or entombment; however, it does not limit the funeral or memorialization options in any way. Should you choose cremation, you will still have the same memorial options as someone who has chosen casket burial.

## **What Is Cremation?**

Cremation is the process of reducing the body to bone fragments by applying intense heat for a period of two to three hours, after which the cremated remains, which are commonly referred to as "ashes," are removed from the cremation chamber. They are then processed into finer fragments and placed into an urn or temporary container. The cremated remains typically weigh between three and six pounds.

## Where And When Does Cremation Take Place?

Cremations occur in a special furnace called a cremation chamber or retort, commonly referred to as a crematory.

Cremation can take place only after the cremation authorization has been signed by the individual(s) legally authorized to sign the document, and once the cremation permit has been issued by the county Coroner or Medical Examiner.

## Do We Need To Buy A Casket If We Select Cremation?

The deceased must be placed into a rigid, combustible container prior to cremation. There are many options of cremation caskets and alternative containers available to choose from, and the most appropriate choice will be determined based on personal preference and what type of service you select.

## Can We Place Personal Mementos In The Casket Prior To Cremation?

Absolutely. Personal items may be placed in the casket and cremated with your loved one. Keep in mind that some items that are not easily combustible (batteries, electronics, heavy plastics, etc.) must be removed prior to cremation. In most cases, non-combustible items can be placed in the urn after cremation is complete.

All items left in the casket will be destroyed during the cremation. The staff at Soxman Funeral Home can advise you on what items may stay and what items must be removed.

## Do We Need To Have A Funeral If We Select Cremation?

Many people are surprised to hear that selecting cremation does not eliminate the possibility of having a funeral service. The choice is entirely up to you and your family.

While some families opt to have a service following the completion of the cremation process, other families choose to have a traditional viewing (with casket) and funeral service before cremation takes place. Either option is available to you and is completely up to your personal preference.

## Is Embalming Required for Cremation?

Embalming is not required by law, except under certain circumstances. If you prefer an open casket with visitation prior to the service and cremation, embalming may be required. In the instance of a direct cremation or Memorial Service following cremation, embalming is not likely to be required.

## What Is An Urn?

An urn is a container designed to hold cremated remains. An urn may be constructed from a variety of materials such as wood, bronze, porcelain, or even glass.

We have a large selection of urns available designed to reflect the lifestyle and personality of an individual.

Urn may be personalized by engraving and also come in a variety of sizes, which allows for more than one member of the family to have a portion of the cremated remains.

## Options for Cremated Remains:

**Burial:** An urn containing the cremated remains may be buried in an existing cemetery plot, or a new plot may be purchased.

**Inurnment:** An urn containing the cremated remains may be placed in a niche in an above ground structure called a columbarium. This could be located outside or inside.

**Shipping:** You may wish for the cremated remains to be shipped to another state or country. The funeral home may be able to assist you in obtaining any additional documentation that may be required for shipment, and, in some cases, the funeral home can facilitate the shipment of the urn.

**Scattering and Cremation Gardens:** Many of our cemeteries have areas on the grounds designed for scattering cremated remains called 'cremation gardens'.

If you elect to scatter elsewhere, it is important to remember that once scattering has taken place, the cremated remains are irretrievable. Properties that are not dedicated for scattering may be bought and sold over time, which could make it impossible to visit the scattering site in the future.

Keep in mind that scattering on public property may offend some people and that there may be laws prohibiting scattering in certain areas; be sure to obtain authority before scattering cremated remains in a non-designated scattering area.

**Retaining the Remains:** Some families prefer to retain the urn at home.

## Acknowledging Kindness

In the month after a funeral, it is customary to send thank you notes to friends and family who served as pallbearers, made memorial donations, or sent flowers, food or other condolence gifts.

For your convenience, Soxman Funeral Home will provide acknowledgement cards. We have many verses to select from to ensure that your sincere gratitude is expressed.

## Practical Information For Your Family

In addition to pre-planning your funeral, completing a Personal Information Form and giving a copy to your personal representative, spouse, and children will give you peace of mind knowing that they will have all the information they need to properly handle your wishes and the details of your estate.

**TIP:** Don't put this form in your safety deposit box as these are often difficult to access immediately following a death; rather, mail them in to Soxman Funeral Home so that we may keep your wishes on file. You may also designate on your paperwork whether you wish for us to contact you to review any questions you may have regarding your services.



## Veteran Services

Soxman Funeral Home believes the story of every veteran's life deserves to be shared. We are deeply committed to providing families with exceptional veterans' services and can assist you in securing military burial benefits and honors. When it comes time for you to make arrangements for the veteran in your life, know that our staff is both qualified and committed to providing them with the military honors they deserve.

When arranging for veterans' burial services, you can rely on us to complete all the necessary paperwork involved in obtaining the military death and burial benefits that are available. With the appropriate paperwork, (typically DD214, General Discharge or Report of Separation from the Armed Services), Soxman Funeral Home is able to apply for military benefits. These can include:

### ***Burial Flag***

Each Veteran is entitled to one flag which will drape the casket or rest folded with the urn, to be presented to the next of kin by the military representatives.

### ***Representatives from the branch of service to fold and present flag***

At least 2 members of the branch of service will fold and present the flag to the next of kin. Taps will be played by these representatives or a local Veteran Service Organization.

### ***Headstone or Marker***

Honorably discharged Veterans are entitled to a marker (either granite or bronze) delivered to the cemetery of choice at no cost. The cemetery may charge an installation fee but in some cases, there are additional county benefits to offset that expense.

### ***Burial in a National or State Veterans Administration Cemetery***

Honorably discharged Veterans are eligible for burial in a National Cemetery. Once approved, the grace, outer burial container, marker, and opening fees re provided for the Veteran, spouse, and dependent children (subject to approval). Cremated remains can also be buried or entombed.

### ***Presidential Memorial Certificate***

A Presidential Memorial Certificate is available to honorably discharged Veterans. The certificate is signed by the sitting president at the time of application.

### ***Free death certificates (State of PA)***

The PA Department of Vital Records will issue free death certificates to the honorably discharged Veteran and spouse.

### ***Local American Legion, VFW, or other veterans' groups***

These groups will coordinate with the branch representatives and post a color guard and offer a rifle volley over the Veteran. A small donation is suggested by not required.

### ***Financial benefits as available through the county of death and Federal VA***

Some Veterans are entitled to monetary benefits through the county of death and federal VA. We can prepare the necessary paperwork and request those benefits for applicable Veterans.

# To My Family and Loved Ones

I wished to spare you as much anxiety, doubt and confusion as possible at the time of my death, so in this booklet I have suggested some arrangements in advance.

This booklet includes vital statistics, funeral service guidelines and cemetery requests, which are all important to share with the funeral director while assisting you to plan my service.

I've sent a copy of this to Soxman Funeral Homes, Ltd. so that my wishes are recorded with them as well.

The booklet also includes more personal material for eulogies, obituaries and other remembrances as well as advice and guidance on other important issues you may come across.

Please accept these arrangements in the spirit they are given: with love, hoping to give you comfort and help you to remember the times we shared.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Person to be notified first upon my death:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

## Information for a Newspaper Announcement

Place of Death: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Death: \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse: \_\_\_\_\_ Married for number of years: \_\_\_\_\_

Children, their spouses and their places of residence: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Grandchildren, their spouses and their places of residence: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Siblings, their spouses and their places of residence: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Education: \_\_\_\_\_

Clubs and Lodges: \_\_\_\_\_

Military Service: \_\_\_\_\_

Special interests, hobbies and pets, etc: \_\_\_\_\_

Memorial donations: \_\_\_\_\_

# Vital Information About Me

Full Name (First, Middle, Last): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

County: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Length of Time at Current Residence: \_\_\_\_\_

Social Security Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

Place of Birth (City, State): \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Employer: \_\_\_\_\_

Business/Industry: \_\_\_\_\_

Military Service: \_\_\_\_\_

Marital Status: \_\_\_\_\_

Maiden Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Spouse (incl. Maiden Name): \_\_\_\_\_

Father's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's Name (incl. Maiden Name): \_\_\_\_\_

Highest Level of Education: \_\_\_\_\_

My preference for the location of the Service or Celebration of Life:

Funeral Home     Outside Venue     Place of Worship     Other

Address of venue, place of worship or other location: \_\_\_\_\_

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# Preferences for my Service & Personal Life Review

Name of Clergy or Officiant: \_\_\_\_\_ or  Funeral Home to recommend

Contact Information: \_\_\_\_\_

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

Pallbearers (Six are recommended)

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 5. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_ 6. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_ 7. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_ 8. \_\_\_\_\_

Personal Items: \_\_\_\_\_

Eyeglasses:  Remove  Leave on

Jewelry:  Remove  Leave on

Clothing:  Selected clothing supplied

Music: \_\_\_\_\_

Favorite Genre or Artist: \_\_\_\_\_

Soloist: \_\_\_\_\_

Organist/Pianist: \_\_\_\_\_

Congregational Hymns: \_\_\_\_\_

Community Organizations or Clubs that may participate: \_\_\_\_\_

I would like the following religious beliefs expressed: \_\_\_\_\_

Favorite poem, verse or scripture: \_\_\_\_\_

Some significant accomplishments in my life: \_\_\_\_\_

One of my fondest memories: \_\_\_\_\_

One of the greatest inspirations in my life: \_\_\_\_\_

If I could live my life over again, I would change: \_\_\_\_\_

Favorite places: \_\_\_\_\_

Favorite color, flower, food, etc: \_\_\_\_\_

I want my family to remember me for: \_\_\_\_\_

A message to my family and friends: \_\_\_\_\_

## Cemetery Instructions

The following are my wishes regarding my final resting place.

Name of Cemetery: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ County/State: \_\_\_\_\_

Property, Crypt or Niche Owned?  Yes  No

If yes, specify location written on cemetery purchase agreement: \_\_\_\_\_

Final Resting Place:  Earth burial  Mausoleum  Interment following cremation  Niche

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Marker or Monument: \_\_\_\_\_ Purchased:  Yes  No

Monument company name: \_\_\_\_\_

Inscription Instructions: \_\_\_\_\_

Reception Location\*\*\*:  Funeral Home  Outside Venue  Place of Worship  Other

Details: \_\_\_\_\_

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

Once completed, mail these forms to the funeral home at the address below so that we may keep them on record. You can also list your phone number if you would like Brian or Anna to give you a call to review your selections and/or discuss pre-funding options.

Soxman Funeral Home  
7450 Saltsburg Road  
Pittsburgh, PA 15235  
Phone: (412) 793-3000

Your phone # \_\_\_\_\_



## Legal Issues

Wills, probate, joint property, estate taxes, selecting estate trustees/attorneys for property and personal care and other issues may appear somewhat intimidating at first.

Fortunately, with a little guidance and preparation, dealing with such matters does not have to be so overwhelming. Planning ahead and revising your plan often will help avoid unnecessary grief and confusion in the end. 'Estate Planning' includes all of the following issues and documents.

### Administration of a Will

A will is an instrument by which a person (the "testator") makes a disposition of his/her property, to be performed or take effect after his or her death.

A well-drafted Will may provide for the welfare of the testator's family, distribute the testator's assets in accordance with his/her wishes and secure the efficient management of the testator's property.

Handwritten Wills ("holographic Wills") can be made by a testator without the services of a lawyer, but problems can arise if not done properly and/or in accordance with applicable legislation.

A properly drafted Will can be a simple, inexpensive way to address many estate-related matters and can make matters run much smoother upon death.

While there are many benefits to having a Will in place, there are some things that may not be accomplished in a Will. It is important to keep in mind that some items may not flow through your estate and thus may not be distributed in accordance with your Will.

During the estate planning process, it is important to speak with a lawyer experienced in such matters and knowledgeable of your unique situation.

A well designed estate can help minimize probate costs and estate taxes and can alert you to any potential statutory claims that may impact your ability to deal with your assets as intended.

A lawyer can discuss any potential claims that a "dependant" may have under Law, and/or with respect to any potential claims or entitlements. An awareness of such responsibilities and rights can help prevent unintended consequences or surprises upon death.

In addition to certain statutory claims, there are other legal limitations that must be considered when drafting a Will.

Documents such as a marriage or cohabitation agreement, a separation agreement, or a shareholder's agreement (with buy/sell provisions, or option agreements) may also affect your Will plan, and thus it is important that such information be shared with your representative(s) when designing an estate plan.

In addition to determining how your estate will be distributed, a lawyer can speak to you about choosing a Personal Representative (Executor), and the considerations involved in selecting an appropriate person (or professional) to administer your estate.

The potential responsibility and work involved in being a Personal Representative (Executor) can be significant, and thus appointing someone with the financial acumen and willingness to take on this responsibility is a must.

Often times, people assume they must appoint a relative or child to act as a Personal Representative (Executor) because it would be "an honor." While it may be considered "an honor" for some, the primary considerations should be choosing someone with the patience, ability and willingness to carry out this responsibility.

## Powers of Attorney

A power of attorney is an instrument by which a person (principal) authorizes another person (the "Agent") to act on his or her behalf. It is quite common for people to execute a power of attorney for healthcare and a power of attorney for property and finance at the same time of drafting a Will.

In a power of attorney for property and finance the authority granted to an Agent may be general in nature and thus may authorize the Agent to act on the grantor's behalf in conducting his or her financial affairs. Alternatively, the power of attorney may be quite narrow, authorizing the attorney to perform specific acts, such as the sale of specific assets (house, car etc.), the conduct of banking, or the transfer of securities.

Similarly, in a power of attorney for healthcare, the authority granted to an Agent is the authority to make, on his or her

behalf, decisions concerning the grantor's personal care, such as healthcare, shelter, nutrition, clothing, hygiene and safety.

While you can appoint more than one attorney, it is important to decide whether they are to act "jointly" or "jointly and severally." Depending upon where your Agent resides, such a distinction may have significant practical considerations.

## Information Gathering

Upon death, one of the first things to do is to gather as much information as possible. It is important to look for and gather any Wills, deeds, financial documents, notes and insurance policies, etc., that the deceased may have.

As a starting point, the testator should consult the testator's lawyer as sometimes original Wills have been kept at the lawyer's office.

Upon death, you may want to ask the lawyer to provide notarized copies of the deceased's Will.

Before estate matters can be pursued (i.e. transferring a house or automobile, other legal matters), a copy of the death certificate is also required.

Please speak to the funeral home about obtaining certified copies of the death certificate (as some agencies will not accept photocopies).





# Probate

Common questions from a newly entrusted/appointed Personal Representative are “What is probate and why do we need it?” and “Do we have to probate?”

Probate is a rather formal procedure, establishing the validity of the Will, and is the official “proving” of the Will.

Fortunately, not all Wills need to go through probate; such a determination will be dependent upon a testator’s unique situation. Probate asks for the court's involvement and can have a large range of both cost and time required to complete, depending on the complexity of assets, debts, and disputes.

Whether to spend your time and effort planning to avoid probate may or may not be an appropriate goal; depending on the size and complexity of your estate. Even if avoiding probate isn't necessary, putting a plan in place for the care of children and distribution of assets is important to prevent disputes among family and to provide for loved ones. Regardless, the more information you share with your attorney and your personal representative, the more likely you are to have an estate plan that best fits your needs.

This guide is not intended to be a substitute for specific individual tax, legal, or estate settlement advice, as certain of the described considerations will not be the same for every estate. Accordingly, where specific advice is necessary or appropriate, consultation with a competent professional is strongly recommended.

## Question #1 What Is Probate?

Probate is a legal process where your named Personal Representative goes before a court and does several things:

- Identifies all property owned by the deceased Appraises the property and pays all debts and taxes
- Proves that the Will is valid and legal and distributes the property to the heirs as the Will instructs
- Typically, probate involves paperwork and court appearances by lawyers. The lawyers and court fees are paid from estate property, which would otherwise go to the people who inherit the deceased person's property.
- Probate usually works like this: After your death, the person you named in your Will as Personal Representative or, if you die without a Will, the person appointed by a judge files papers in the local probate court.
- The executor proves the validity of your Will and presents the court with lists of your property, your debts, and who is to inherit what you've left. Then relatives and creditors are officially notified of your death.

## Question #2 Why Is Probate Necessary?

The primary function of probate is transferring title of the descendant's property to their heirs and/or beneficiaries. If there is no property to transfer, there is usually no need for probate. Another function of probate is to provide for the collection of any taxes due by reason of the deceased's death or on the transfer of their property.

The probate process also provides a mechanism for payment of outstanding debts and taxes of the estate, for setting a deadline for creditors to file claims (thus foreclosing any old or unpaid creditors from haunting heirs or beneficiaries) and for the distribution of the remainder of the estate's property to ones' rightful heirs.

## Question #3 How Long Does Probate Take?

The duration varies with the size and complexity of the estate, the difficulty in locating any beneficiaries of the Will, if there is one, and under law.

If there is a Will contest, or anyone objects to any actions of the Personal Representative, the process can take a long time. Some matters have taken decades to resolve.

## Question #4 What Is The Probate Process Of An Uncontested Will?

Typically, the person named as the deceased's Personal Representative (a more formal term is "Executor" or "Executrix") goes to an attorney experienced in probate matters who then prepares a "Petition" for the court and takes it, along with the Will, and files it with the probate court.

The lawyer for the person seeking to have the Will admitted to probate typically must notify all those who would have legally been entitled to receive property from the deceased if the deceased died without a Will, plus all those named in the Will, and give them an opportunity to file an objection to admitting the Will to probate.

A hearing on the probate petition is typically scheduled several weeks to months after the matter is filed.

Depending on who the named beneficiaries are, how long before the death the Will was signed, whether the Will was prepared by an attorney, who supervised the "execution" of the Will, and/or whether the Will was executed with certain affidavits, it may be necessary to bring in the persons who witnessed the deceased's signature on the Will.

If no objections are received, and everything seems in order, the court approves the petition, appoints the Personal Representative, orders that taxes and creditors be paid, and requires the Personal Representative to file reports with the court to assure all the deceased's property is accounted for and distributed in accordance with the terms and conditions of the Will.

## Question #5 Who Is Responsible For Handling Probate?

In most circumstances, the executor named in the Will takes this job. If there isn't any Will, or the Will fails to name an executor, the probate court names someone (called an administrator) to handle the process - most often the closest capable relative, or the person who inherits the bulk of the deceased person's assets.

If no formal probate proceeding is necessary, the court does not appoint an estate administrator. Instead, a close relative or friend serves as an informal estate representative. Normally, families and friends choose this person, and it is not uncommon for several people to share the responsibilities of paying debts, filing a final income tax return and distributing property to the people who are supposed to get it.

## Question #6 Should I Plan To Avoid Probate?

Probate can be costly and time consuming, but sometimes strategies to avoid probate can be even more costly or have other downsides. Sometimes probate is the most efficient option. The answer varies depending on which state you live in, what assets you have, and where you would like those assets to go upon your death.

One option to avoid probate is to transfer all of your assets into a revocable living trust, of which you are the trustee, which contains many of the same directions and guidelines as a Will. There are many benefits and drawbacks to doing so, so seek guidance from an experienced estate planning attorney regarding your specific situation.

One instance where the benefits often outweigh the drawbacks is if you own real estate in more than one state. Typically, an estate will need to go through probate in each state in which you own real property, so expenses can add up quickly.

Another instance where a trust may be of help is if you are elderly or disabled and want a better mechanism than power of attorney for someone to manage your assets for yourself or your family.





## What Is Grief?

*"Grief is reaching out for someone who's always been there, only to find when you need them the most, one last time, they're gone."*

The death of a loved one is life's most painful event. People's reactions to death remain one of society's least understood and most off-limits topics for discussion. Often griever are left totally alone in dealing with their pain, loneliness, and isolation.

Grief is a natural emotion that follows death. It hurts. Sadness, denial, guilt, physical discomfort, and sleeplessness are some of the symptoms of grief. It is like an open wound that must heal. At times it seems as if this healing will never happen. While some of life's spontaneity begins to return, it never seems to get back to the way it was. It is still incomplete. We know, however, that these feelings of being incomplete can disappear.

Healing is a process of allowing ourselves to feel, experience, and accept the pain. In other words, we give ourselves permission to heal. Allowing ourselves to accept these feelings is the beginning of that process. The healing process can take much less time than we have been led to believe. There are two missing parts. One is a safe, loving, professionally guided atmosphere in which to express our feelings; the other is knowing how and what to communicate.

## The Grieving Process

When we experience a major loss, grief is the normal and natural way our mind and body react. Everyone grieves differently, but at the same time there are common patterns people tend to share.

For example, someone experiencing grief usually moves through a series of emotional stages, such as shock, numbness, guilt, anger, and denial. And physical responses are typical also. They can include: sleeplessness, inability to eat or concentrate, lack of energy, and lack of interest in activities previously enjoyed.

Time always plays an important role in the grieving process. As the days, weeks and months go by, the person who is experiencing loss moves through emotional and physical reactions that lead toward acceptance, healing and getting on with life as fully as possible.

Sometimes a person can become overwhelmed or bogged down in the grieving process. Serious losses are never easy to deal with, but someone who is having trouble beginning to actively re-engage in life after a few months should consider getting professional help.

For example, if continual depression or physical symptoms such as loss of appetite, inability to sleep, or chronic lack of energy persists, it is probably time to see a doctor.

## Allow Yourself to Mourn

Someone you love has died. You are now faced with the difficult, but important, need to mourn. Mourning is the open expression of your thoughts and feelings regarding the death and the person who has died. It is an essential part of healing.

You are beginning a journey that is often frightening, painful, overwhelming and sometimes lonely. This section provides practical suggestions to help you move toward healing in your personal grief experience.

## **Realize Your Grief is Unique**

Your grief is unique. No one will grieve in exactly the same way. Your experience will be influenced by a variety of factors: the relationship you had with the person who died, the circumstances surrounding the death, your emotional support system, and your cultural and religious background.

As a result of these factors, you will grieve in your own special way. Don't try to compare your experience with that of other people or to adopt assumptions about just how long your grief should last. Consider taking a "one-day-at-a-time" approach that allows you to grieve at your own pace.

## **Talk About Your Grief**

Express your grief openly. By sharing your grief outside yourself, healing occurs. Ignoring your grief won't make it go away; talking often makes you feel better. Allow yourself to speak from your heart, not just your head.

Doing so doesn't mean you are losing control or going "crazy." It is a normal part of your grief journey. Find caring friends and relatives who will listen without judging. Seek out those persons who will walk "with" not "in front of" or "behind" you in your journey through grief.

Avoid people who are critical or try to steal your grief from you. They may tell you, "keep your chin up" or "carry on" or "be happy." While these comments may be well intended, you do not have to accept them. You have a right to express your grief; no one has the right to take it away.

## **Expect to Feel a Multitude of Emotions**

Experiencing a loss affects your head, heart, and spirit. So you may experience a variety of emotions as part of your grief.

Confusion, disorganization, fear, guilt, relief, or explosive emotions are just a few of the emotions you may feel. Sometimes these emotions will follow each other within a short period of time, or they may occur simultaneously.

As strange as some of these emotions may seem, they are normal and healthy. Allow yourself to learn from these feelings. And don't be surprised if out of nowhere you suddenly experience surges of grief, even at the most unexpected times.

These grief attacks can be frightening and leave you feeling overwhelmed. They are, however, a natural response to the death of someone loved. Find someone who understands your feelings and will allow you to talk about them.

## **Allow for Numbness**

Feeling dazed or numb when someone loved dies is often part of your early grief experience. This numbness serves a valuable purpose: it gives your emotions time to catch up with what your mind has told you. This feeling helps create insulation from the reality of the death until you are more able to tolerate what you don't want to believe.

## **Be Tolerant of Your Physical and Emotional Limits**

Your feelings of loss and sadness will probably leave you fatigued. Your ability to think clearly and make decisions may be impaired and your low energy levels may naturally slow you down. Respect what your body is telling you. Nurture yourself. Get daily rest. Eat balanced meals. Lighten your schedule as much as you can. Caring for yourself doesn't mean feeling sorry for yourself; it means using your survival skills.

## **Develop a Support System**

Reaching out to others and accepting support is often difficult, particularly when you hurt so much. But the most compassionate self-action you can do during this difficult time is to find a support system of caring friends and relatives who will provide the understanding you need. Find those people who encourage you to be yourself and acknowledge your feelings - both happy and sad.

## **Make Use of Ritual**

The funeral ritual does more than acknowledge the death of someone loved. It helps provide the support of caring people.

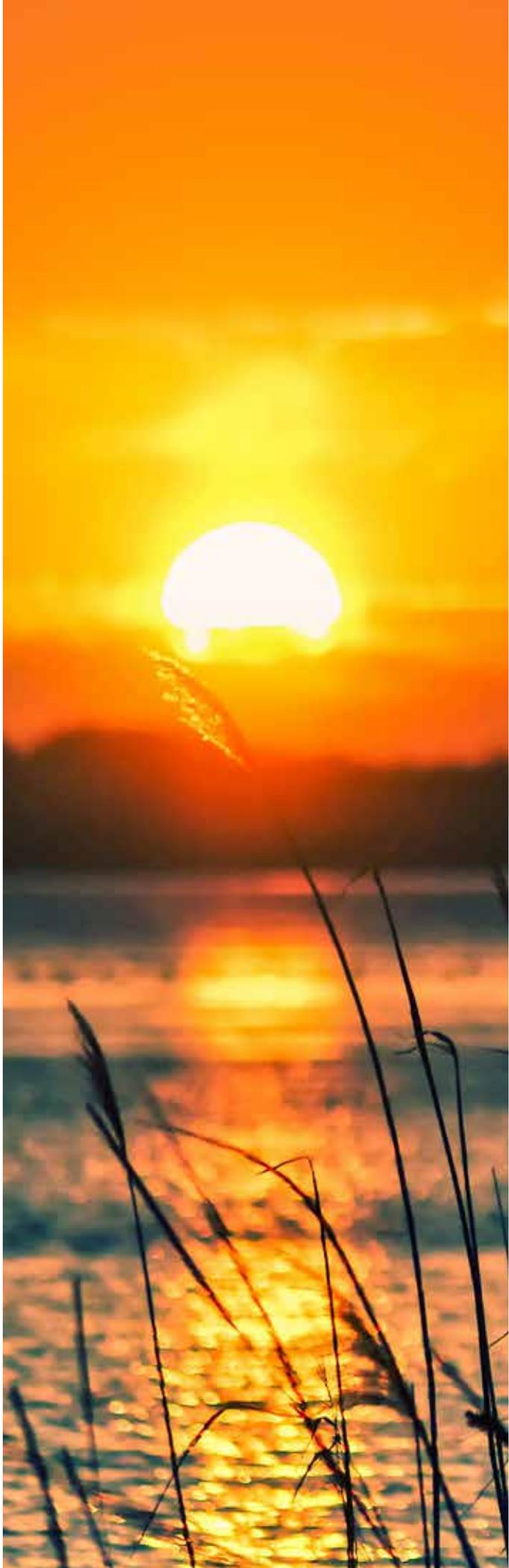
Most importantly, the funeral is a way to express your grief outside yourself. If you eliminate this ritual, you often set yourself up to repress your feelings, and cheat everyone who cares a chance to pay tribute to someone who was, and always will be, loved.

## **Embrace Your Spirituality**

If faith is part of your life, express it in ways that seem appropriate to you. Allow yourself to be around people who understand and support your religious beliefs.

If you are angry with God because of the death of someone you loved, recognize this feeling as a normal part of your grieving process. Find someone to talk with who won't be critical of whatever thoughts and feelings you need to explore.

You may hear someone say, "With faith, you don't need to grieve." Don't believe it. Having your personal faith does not insulate you from needing to talk out and explore your thoughts and feelings. To deny your grief is to invite problems that build up inside you. Express your faith, but express your grief as well.



## **Allow a Search for Meaning**

You may find yourself asking, "Why did he die?" "Why this way?" "Why now?" This search for meaning is another normal part of the healing process. Some questions have answers, some do not. Actually, the healing occurs in the opportunity to pose the questions, not necessarily in answering them. Find a supportive friend who will listen responsively as you search for meaning.

## **Treasure Your Memories**

Memories are one of the best legacies that exist after someone dies. Treasure them. Share them with your family and friends. Recognize that your memories may make you laugh or cry. In either case, they are a lasting part of the relationship that you had with a very special person in your life.

## **Move Toward Your Grief and Heal**

The capacity to love requires the necessity to grieve when someone you love dies. You can't heal unless you openly express your grief. Denying your grief will only make it become more confusing and overwhelming. Reconciling your grief will not happen quickly. Remember that grief is a process, not an event.

Be patient and tolerant with yourself. Never forget that the death of a loved one changes your life forever. It's not that you won't be happy again, it's simply that you will never be exactly the same as you were before the death.

## **Accepting a Loss**

For each of us - rich or poor, young or old - there are times in our lives when we must face and deal with personal losses and the pain and sorrow they cause. Examples that come easily to mind are the death of a parent, spouse, child, or other close family member or friend. Many other events and transitions also bring with them sadness and a need to grieve:

- Being told you have a serious, possibly terminal illness
- Having to give up interests and activities that have been a major part of your life
- Seeing serious decline in the mental or physical health of someone you love
- Retiring from a career or voluntary activity that has helped shape who you are and what you stand for
- Losing a significant part of your independence and mobility; even giving up driving can be a significant loss for many people
- Moving out of your home
- Saying goodbye to a favorite pet

Losses such as these are simply part of life. Like their counterparts among the joyful occasions in our lifetime - the birth of a child or grandchild, a celebration of marriage, an enduring friendship - they are part of what it means to share in the human experience. And the emotions they create in us are part of living, as well.



# Helping a Friend or Neighbor Cope With Loss

## Before the Funeral

1. Offer to notify his/her family and friends about funeral arrangements
2. House-sit to prevent burglaries during the funeral and visitations
3. Help answer phones and greet visitors
4. Keep a record of everyone who calls, visits or has been contacted
5. Help coordinate the food and drink supply
6. Offer to pick up friends and family at the airport and to arrange accommodations
7. Offer to provide transportation for out-of-town visitors
8. Help keep the house clean and the dishes washed

## After the Funeral

1. Prepare or provide dinner on a day that is mutually acceptable
2. Do Step 1 every week for two to three months
3. Offer to help with the garden such as watering, mowing or pruning
4. Feed and exercise the pets, if any
5. Write notes offering encouragement and support
6. Offer to drive or accompany him/her to the cemetery regularly
7. Offer to house-sit so he/she can get away or visit family out of town
8. Make a weekly run to the supermarket, laundry, or cleaners
9. Help with the Thank You notes and/or other correspondence
10. Anticipate difficult periods such as anniversaries, birthdays, holidays, and the day of death
11. Always mention the deceased by name and encourage reminiscing
12. Above all, just listening and your concern and presence will help.

# Bereavement & Support Services

## General Information On Grief

[www.HorizonHospice.com/emotional/grief](http://www.HorizonHospice.com/emotional/grief)

Information on grief provided by a local hospice provider.

[www.centerforloss.com/grief](http://www.centerforloss.com/grief)

A thorough and comprehensive look at grief and grieving offered by Dr. Alan Wolfelt.

[www.comfort-for-bereavement.com](http://www.comfort-for-bereavement.com)

Helpful comforting information on bereavement.

[www.psycom.net/depression.central.grief.html](http://www.psycom.net/depression.central.grief.html)

A series of links pertaining to grief and bereavement.

[www.grief.net](http://www.grief.net)

Excellent grief handbook and other resources.

[www.willowgreen.com](http://www.willowgreen.com)

Provides resources in the areas of illness, dying, grief and loss.

### The Empty Room

3 Lakes Golf Course, 6700 Saltsburg Rd Pittsburgh, PA 15235

Marilyn Babuscio | 412-407-2551

Child Loss- 1st and 3rd Tuesday

Loss of Loved one- 1st and 3rd Thursday

### Integrity Psychological Services, LLC -

[www.integritypsych.com](http://www.integritypsych.com)

4232 Northern Pike Suite 201 Monroeville, PA 15146

Dr. Jill Fischer | 412-663-0062

### Forbes Regional Hospital Grief and Loss Support

[www.integritypsych.com](http://www.integritypsych.com)

2570 Haymaker Rd, Monroeville, PA 15146 | 412-847-5007

2nd Tuesday each month 6-7:30 pm

### Adult Survivors of Suicide (SOS/bereavement group)

Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic (8 week Session)

3811 O'Hara St. Pgh, PA 15213 | Jamey Covaleski

412-864-3346

### Our Lady of Joy Church- Bereavement Ministry

2000 O'Block Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15239 | 412-795-3388

## Death Of A Child

### Grief Support

[www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

Grief support after the death of a child.

### Parents Grieving Loss

[www.erichad.com](http://www.erichad.com)

Support and care for parents grieving the loss of a child.

### Compassionate Friends (Loss of a child)

[www.tcfpittsburgh.org](http://www.tcfpittsburgh.org)

Meet Last Sunday of each month Bower Hill Community Church |  
70 Moffett St. Pgh PA 15243 | 412-835-1105

## Children And Loss

### The Caring Place

[www.highmarkcaringplace.com](http://www.highmarkcaringplace.com)

620 Stanwix St. Pgh. PA 15222 | 888-224-4673

### Aching Arms Children's Home of Pgh

Lemieux Family Center | 5324 Penn Ave. Pittsburgh, PA 15224

3rd Tuesday of Every month 7 -9pm

### Dougy Center

[www.dougy.org](http://www.dougy.org)

This site is run by The Dougy Center for Grieving Children.

### Fernside

[www.fernside.org](http://www.fernside.org)

A club for kids and teens dealing with death.

### Growth House

[www.growthhouse.org](http://www.growthhouse.org)

Children can use this site to get some of their questions answered and to do some activities.

### Raindrop

[www.iul.com/raindrop](http://www.iul.com/raindrop)

This explains death to children in cartoon form.

### The Caring Place

[www.highmarkcaringplace.com](http://www.highmarkcaringplace.com)

620 Stanwix St. Pgh. PA 15222 | 888-224-4673

### Aching Arms Children's Home of Pgh

Lemieux Family Center | 5324 Penn Ave. Pittsburgh, PA 15224

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## Loss Of A Loved One

### Loss of an Adult Sibling

[www.adultsiblinggrief.com](http://www.adultsiblinggrief.com)

This site is dedicated to the formation of a support community for those who have suffered the devastating loss of an adult sibling.

### Suicide Signs

[www.sfsuicide.org](http://www.sfsuicide.org)

What to look for when assessing potential risk.

### Suicide: FAQ

[www.faqs.org/faqs/suicide/info](http://www.faqs.org/faqs/suicide/info)

This is an excellent place for information.

### Suicide Information and Education Center

[www.siec.ca](http://www.siec.ca)

### Teen Suicide Page

[www.cln.org/themes/suicide.html](http://www.cln.org/themes/suicide.html)





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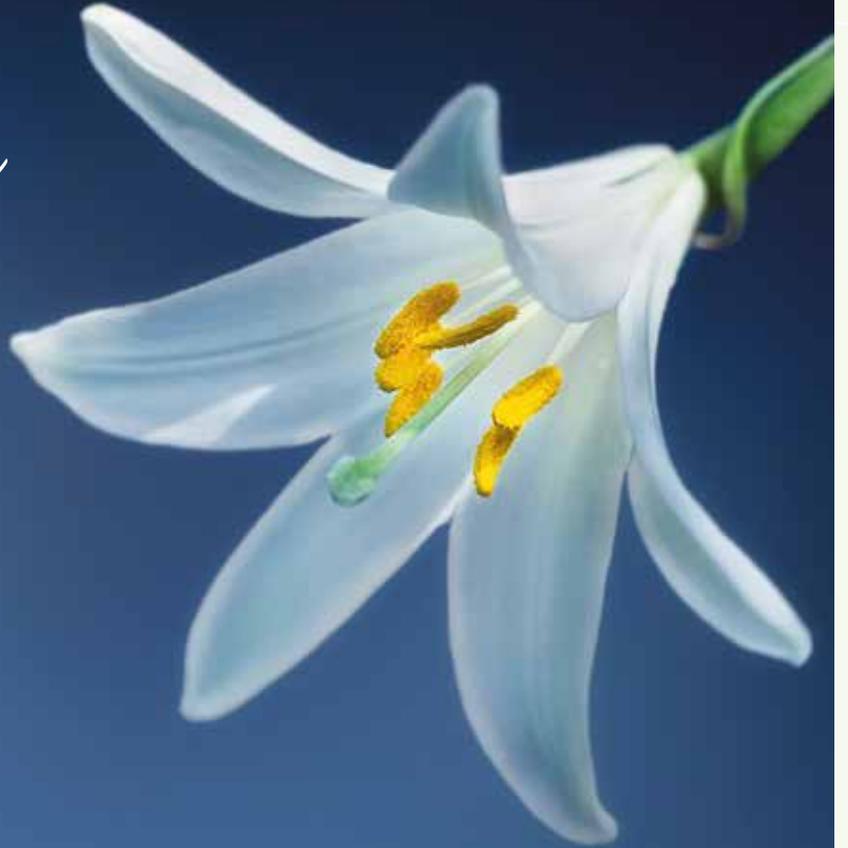
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**Anna F. Zvirman-Nesbit, F. D., Celebrant**

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