



Considering Cremation?

Understand your options.

Modern funeral and burial practices have been evolving for decades and today there are more options available to us for commemorating those who have died than at any time in history. Cremation services are rising in popularity for reasons that range from the increased mobility of families and interest in disposition methods that are friendlier to the environment, to consideration of financial costs that may be less burdensome than traditional funerals. The National Funeral Directors Association and Cremation Society of North America is projecting that by 2040, four out of five Americans will choose cremation over casket burial. And this shift is only expected to accelerate, particularly with the relaxation of some religious strictures about cremation.

Whether pre-planning for yourself or making an at-need decision for a loved one, it's wise to do your homework. Here are several key considerations.

Choosing the Cremation Method That Best Fits Your Needs

Many people are surprised to find that cremation services offer more than one option. All cremation choices offer flexibility for the families involved, including the choice to witness the cremation.

Direct Cremation. This process typically includes basic services of the funeral director and staff, necessary legal paperwork, transportation of the body and physical cremation. It is relatively simple; much of the planning can be accomplished digitally and can be arranged through a funeral home or with the crematorium itself. Cremated remains are returned to the family in a simple cardboard container.



Laurel Hill offers various, customized, cremation options.

Visitation Followed by Cremation. For some families, having a viewing or prayer service with the body present is an important mourning ritual and may provide needed closure. The body is typically embalmed and placed in a casket with a liner that serves as a cremation container for the body. This approach can provide a dignified alternative before the cremation takes place. Family members may choose to witness the cremation. Burial or return of the remains follows at a later date.

Cremation and Memorial Service with the Remains Present. This option is very common and provides the most practicality when arranging travel plans for distant relatives. It also facilitates planning an appropriate life celebration to commemorate the deceased. It may include a religious service with final commitment of the remains at a cemetery or their return to the family for disposition at a later time.

Aquamation. With increased interest in green initiatives, more choices are expected to become available as new sustainable methods of handling the body such as water cremation, known as aquamation, become legally approved in more states (as of February 2023, aquamation is legal in 28 states, although not yet in Pennsylvania). Laurel Hill has been an innovator of green burial and eco-friendly options for cremated remains and supports legalization of aquamation.

Each of these primary choices can be customized with additional services such as death notice placement, consultation with clergy, supervision of body preparation for religious purposes, among others. Costs vary with the degree of involvement of professional funeral personnel.

Choosing a Personalized Container

When it comes to deciding how the family wishes to receive their loved one's cremated remains, funeral homes offer choices that can be as varied as the individuals themselves.

- > Traditional urns in bronze, steel or carved wood that can be engraved or inscribed.
- > Elegant works of art created in glass, pottery or ceramic to match any aesthetic, even with choices to incorporate ashes in the art piece.
- > Biodegradable urns of natural materials such as carved rock salt or gourds or in formats designed to support new plant life.
- > Innovative 3-D printed designs that capture special interests of the deceased.
- > Miniature urn or keepsake jewelry sets that are beautiful memorials for multiple family members.



Available cast bronze metal urn, with satin-brush.

Choosing How to Care for Cremated Remains

After you have selected a container, you must still decide what to do with the cremated remains. There are many options to consider.

- > Traditional services may be followed by interment in a cemetery lot or placement in a columbarium niche. Cemeteries with dedicated gardens or walking trails may also offer benches, walls or memorial rocks for placement with suitable memorialization.
- > Scattering sleeves or vessel tubes can be used for dispersal in special cemetery memorial gardens or in meaningful locations. With the rise in the number of cremations, families are reminded to be mindful of local restrictions and regulations about scattering ashes. Most theme parks and sporting arenas, for example, strictly prohibit this on their grounds.

> Some families choose to keep the urn at home either because they are not ready to say farewell, or they may need time to make the decision as to when and where to place the remains of their loved one. In a recent survey, 20% of respondents report that they have one or more sets of remains at home, usually parents or a spouse. However, death-care professionals strongly recommend that you discuss and document who will take charge of these cremated remains in the long term. Make sure that those to whom custody is entrusted understand their responsibility. It is also wise to think ahead and secure a final resting place in advance so final disposition can take place when the time is appropriate.

> Funeral homes also offer concierge services that can connect you with unique options such as scattering at sea or incorporation into a reef. They can also help with practical matters such as international shipping if remains are to be interred elsewhere.

Choosing cremation for yourself or a loved one is a highly personal choice – but it's a decision that becomes easier when you've done your research and know what is involved. Cremation does not limit a family's choices but provides many alternatives for celebrating loved ones in ways that are meaningful.

Laurel Hill is a premier Philadelphia institution that combines a funeral home, crematory, two historic cemeteries and a nationally certified arboretum into a unified place of beauty where all can remember and reflect. No matter what end-of-life choices that you embrace, our compassionate staff are here to serve families with the highest of standards, and are prepared to accommodate our communities' diverse cultural, religious and traditional needs through an array of services.

For more information, please contact us at 610.668.9900, info@laurelhillphl.com, or visit laurelhillphl.com.



Laurel Hill
FUNERAL HOME

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