

FUNERAL CONSUMERS ALLIANCE OF WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA

P. O. Box 81011, Pittsburgh, PA 15217 412.241.0705

info@funeralconsumerswpa.org

Fall 2026

PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

We are happy to include with the newsletter our Funeral Consumers Alliance of Western Pa 2026-27 Price List. We have added several additional pieces of information about each funeral home. There have also been changes in the number of funeral homes participating. See the article in this newsletter for more information.

News on the Alkaline Hydrolysis Cremation legislation: The Pa House did approve HB 722 authorizing Alkaline Hydrolysis Cremation in Pennsylvania in May of 2025. However, the Senate companion bill, SB 551 has not been brought up or approved by the Environmental Resources and Energy Committee. The Fall session is a very short session, and December is the end of this two-year session. A bill needs to be passed in both houses to become law. If the Senate does not pass this bill, both bills will have to be reintroduced, and the process starts over again. Emails, letters, phone calls and visits to your legislator would help bring this new service to Pennsylvania. You will find the names of the Senate Environmental Resources and Energy Committee members at the bottom of this article.

The board has continued to improve the efficiency of our operations by further reducing the costs. We now are using Google Voice, cutting the cost of a traditional cell phone carrier. We also shifted our email service to Google for Non-Profits, eliminating that cost. Our printing service can use their not-for-profit bulk postal permit eliminating the need for FCAWP to purchase a bulk permit.

It is that time of year when we reach out to you, the members of FCAWP, to ask for your generous contribution to sustain the cost of our operations. You and only you, our members, keep this resource available to Western Pennsylvanians. Without your input and help, FCAWP will not survive. We have enclosed an envelope for you to return your tax-deductible contribution, keeping us solvent.

This year we will be holding our annual meeting both in person and over the internet via Google Meet. I will be making a presentation on "The 12 Myths of the Funeral Industry" following the meeting. Instructions for attending the meeting online can be found on page 4.

Stephen Christian-Michaels

Write to PA Senators about Water Based Cremation

Write to these Senators requesting that they bring PA 551 to a vote and vote in the affirmative. Go to the **PA Senate Environmental and Energy Committee** website and click on an individual member. This will take you to their page and you will see this on the right side.

Click on the envelope and it will bring up their contact form.

Gene Yaw, Dist 23, R	John Kane, Dist 9, D	Scott Hutchinson, Dist 21, R
Kim Ward, Dist 30, R	Camera Bartolotto, Dist 46, R	Nikil Saval, Dist 1, D
Scott Martin, Dist 13, R	Elder Vogel, Dist 47, R	Carolyn Comitta, Dist 19, D
Katie Muth, Dist 44, D	Daniel Laughlin, Dist 49, R	

Donate and Designate

By designating how you want your donation to be used, you keep your entire gift local. All undesignated gifts require FCAWP to pay 15% of the amount as dues to the national Funeral Consumers Alliance. To designate a gift, write "communications," "office supplies," or "postage" in the memo line of your check. Choose the category you want to support. Mail your check, payable to FCAWP, to the address above, and know that you have the thanks of FCAWP members. FCAWP acknowledges all gifts in writing.

What To Expect When a Loved One Passes

Losing a loved one is emotionally overwhelming, and having a clear, structured roadmap can help ease the stress of navigating the administrative and practical details.

Here is a summary and general structural guide:

1. Immediate Actions (First Few Hours to Days)

Before diving into practical tasks, take time to pause, sit with your loved one, reflect, and gather with family. Once ready:

- **Get a Pronouncement of Death:**
 - If unexpected at home: Call 911 immediately.
 - If in a hospital or hospice facility: Staff will handle the formal time of death pronouncement.
- **Immediate Responsibilities:**
 - Arrange care for dependent children and pets.
 - Secure their home and personal items; ask a trusted neighbor to watch the property.
 - Locate Instructions: Look for any pre-written end-of-life wishes, funeral directives, or important papers.

2. Arranging the Burial & Services

Partnering with a licensed funeral director simplifies the logistics:

- **Contact a Funeral Home:**
 - Use a pre-chosen funeral home if your loved one made pre-arrangements.
 - If none was selected, choose a funeral home with a licensed director to manage transportation and logistics.
- **Make Key Decisions:**
 - Disposition type: Traditional burial, green burial, cremation, etc.

- Products & Locations: Select a casket, burial vault, cemetery plot, and headstone (or follow pre-purchased arrangements).

- **Order Death Certificates:**
Request 10 to 15 certified copies through the funeral director. These are required to settle financial and legal affairs.

3. Paperwork & Estate Settlement

The designated Executor or Executrix named in the Will handles the legal and financial affairs:

- **Locate Key Legal Documents:**
 - Find the Will, trusts, and power of attorney documents.
- **Notify Key Organizations:**
 - Social Security Administration
 - Banks and financial institutions
 - Life insurance providers
 - Credit card companies
 - Manage or close online accounts and digital assets.
- **Consider Professional Legal Help:**

Hiring an estate lawyer can streamline probate, court requirements, and complex paperwork. Note: Legal fees can usually be paid directly out of the estate.

End-of-life arrangements are deeply complex. Having your own will, power of attorney, trust, and funeral preferences clearly documented and easily accessible is one of the greatest gifts you can leave your family. FCAWP recommends having these open conversations with loved ones early. Our website provides many resources for planning and executing end-of-life decision-making: www.funeralconsumerswpa.org.

New Options for Remembering Our Loved Ones

Since becoming an active member of FCAWP, I have learned a lot about the burial process and options we have today. My mother died many years ago and my sister five years ago, both were cremated, and I wished I knew about these options. I just scattered their ashes in their backyard woods. It was fine at the time, but recently I learned that cremains are very acidic and change the nature of the soil which is not good. Likewise, they change the water if we scatter them into a stream or lake or ocean. I didn't know.

I recently came across an Instagram post from a death doula, #deathdoulakacie. The post was about new ways to remember our deceased loved ones. Now for some folks a few of these ideas may seem 'out there' but remember, your survivors are from younger generations and may find them a great way to carry your memory with them. The first one is converting your ashes into stones which you can keep as a remembrance. There are several companies that do this just search online. I love this idea since I am forever bringing home stones from my travels. Another idea is making jewelry or glass art with the ashes. There are several companies that do this. Google cremation jewelry and you will find many resources. You can also have the ashes placed into ink and have a tattoo made. I did not find specific tattoo artists but would recommend looking at local reputable studios to inquire. I also loved this idea since many of our children have tattoos. For those of you who have a connection with the sea, your ashes can be incorporated into a reef ball, which becomes a permanent part of a coral reef, through Eternal Reefs. They can even include a military remembrance, and you can participate in the placement of the ball. Finally, there is human composting, an alternative to cremation. Starting in Washington State, there are several companies offering this service. Earth Funeral has recently opened a facility in Maryland. After the process is finished, the family can opt to receive all or some of the composted remains to use or it can be donated to land restoration sites.

All of these are wonderful, personalized ways of remembering our loved ones.

Andrea Christian-Michaels



About the 2026-27 Funeral Home Price List

The 2026-27 Price List of Participating Funeral Homes of the Funeral Consumers Alliance of Western Pennsylvania has been enclosed with this newsletter. We have made several changes to the format:

- Funeral homes grouped by regional areas
- Denoted those funeral homes who provide discounted prices for members
- Marking a G next to those burial prices that include a green burial option

Continues page 4

URGENT

Elections, New Board Member & Volunteers

We will be holding elections for new trustees and officers at our annual meeting.

Three years ago, FCAWP faced a crisis and considered dissolving 64 years after being formed. There were no members willing to volunteer to join the Board. Fortunately, five members accepted the call. With a few changes, those are the same board members that stood up three years ago. Currently there are six members; one board member recently had to leave due to illness. We absolutely need to have new board members and volunteers to stand up to support this organization, or we will be back in the same place, considering dissolution, as we were three years ago.

We need 2-3 board members/trustees willing to attend five 2-hour meetings a year and the annual membership meeting. We also need general volunteers; see page 4 for descriptions of the types of tasks.

Please don't let us return to the same point where we need to call another emergency meeting. Consider stepping forward to be a volunteer or a board member. All you need do is call Stephen Christian-Michaels, 412 965-3016, if you are interested or have questions about these roles.

You may just save FCAWP if you do.

FCAWP Board,

Stephen Christian-Michaels, Susan Jones, Tom Stackrow, Andrea Christian-Michaels, Beverly Bronder, Terra Treasure

Join Us for Our Annual Board Meeting—Now with Virtual Access!

We are excited to invite you to our Annual Board Meeting on

Saturday, October 24, from 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM.

To ensure every member can participate, we are offering a **Google Meet attendance option, similar to Zoom**, alongside our in-person gathering. Whether you join us in the room or from the comfort of your home, your voice and presence are vital to our success. The presentation will give the history of our present-day funeral practices along with myths of the funeral business. We will meet at Calvary Episcopal Church, 312 Shady Ave., Pittsburgh.

We will be using Google Meet for remote access. To join type this link: <https://meet.google.com/qrf-rzcv-jyn> into your browser. If you have Google Meet, follow their instructions.

Members using Apple devices can join easily using one of the following methods: On a Mac, click the meeting link to join directly from any supported web browser, such as Safari or Google Chrome. No software installation is required. On an iPhone or iPad (via Safari): Tap the meeting link in the Safari tab that opens, tap Join. On an iPhone or iPad (via the Google Meet App): For the best experience, download the free Google Meet app from the App Store. Once installed, tapping the meeting link will automatically open the app to join the meeting. Note: For mobile devices, Google Meet supports iOS 17 and up.

CALLING ALL MEMBERS

Helping people navigate end-of-life planning with clarity, confidence, and peace of mind is vital work, and we can't do it without you! You don't need a massive time commitment to make a real difference; even a one-time task or a couple of hours a month. Want to help continue our association's vital work?

Our priority is for speakers to:

- **present already developed seminars**

These are 1-1 ½ hour prepared and tested presentations talking about our organization at libraries, churches and senior centers.

In addition, we need volunteers for:

- making phone calls to local funeral homes
- delivering brochures to community groups
- organizing old files; tracking relevant legislation
- writing short articles for our newsletter or webpage

Contact Steve today, and we can find a spot for you that works with your schedule.

Contact: Stephen Christian-Michaels at
stephen@funeralconsuerswpa.org

Price List continued

- Listing those funeral homes that provide on-site crematory service
- If an off-site crematory is used, any additional cost is listed
- Website for each funeral home

We had two funeral homes that chose to discontinue their participation with the FCWAP.

- Robinson Funeral Home
- James K. Kutch Funeral Home and Crematory

Two funeral homes did not respond to the FCAWP's price survey after repeated attempts.

- Guinta-Bertucci Funeral Home
- Devlin Funeral Home (Both Perry Highway and Cranberry/Rochester)

We sent letters to all members who had selected these funeral homes giving them the opportunity to select another funeral home. If you want to change your funeral home selection, please contact us.

Please consider contributing to Funeral Consumers Alliance of Western Pennsylvania to support our activities for Western Pennsylvania.

Print and return this page to: FCAWP, P.O.Box 81011, Pittsburgh, PA 15217

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I want to support the work of FCAWP. Enclosed is my check in the amount of:	
\$_____ payable to Funeral Consumers Alliance of Western PA	
This contribution is	☐ In honor of _____
	☐ In Memory of _____
Your gift will be acknowledged in the Spring Newsletter unless you request anonymity.	
☐ List my name	☐ List my gift as "anonymous"

Designate your donation.

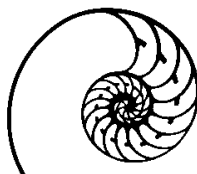
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☐ **I would like to make a bequest to FCAWP.** Please contact me.

☐ I am enclosing names and addresses of others to whom you may want to send a brochure about membership in FCAWP.

Thank you for supporting the Funeral Consumers Alliance of Western PA

Further information phone: 421 241-0705 Email: info@funeralconsumerswpa.org



FCAWP is designated by the Internal Revenue Service under section 501(c)(3) as a charitable organization, and all contributions are tax deductible.