



CREATIVE CHOICES

In this issue:

- About 2022 Cemetery Survey 1
- LLI Class Announcement..... 1
- Talking about Eco-Friendly Burials 2
- Growing Interest in Natural Burial 3
- Purchasing a Cemetery Plot 4
- Importance of Cemeteries..... 5
- Mt. Calvary Cemetery in the news 5
- Evergreen Cemetery in the news..... 6
- Insert: 2022 FCACTX Cemetery Survey
- Plots for sale at discounted prices..... 7
- When and why for tombstones..... 8

2022 Issue 2

The Newsletter of the Funeral Consumers Alliance of Central Texas

FOCUS ON CEMETERIES

2022 CEMETERY SURVEY

We are pleased to announce that you will find our 2022 Cemetery Survey in the center of this newsletter. With thanks to our Board President, Mary Scudder, we have gathered figures from a sampling of city and commercial cemeteries in our five-county service area. The second page of the survey includes contact information for the two national veterans cemeteries in San Antonio and the State veterans cemetery in Killeen.

For each cemetery listed in the survey, you'll find the following information:

- Name, address, phone, and website link
- Least expensive plot for an adult casket
- Least expensive plot for a cremation urn
- Cost to open/close a plot, Monday - Friday
- Whether the cemetery requires a grave liner
- Whether the cemetery property includes urn niches
- Least expensive urn niche

As in previous years, the survey is a **sampling** of cemeteries because our service area includes cemeteries of all sizes, many of which are so small that you'll miss them if you blink while driving by. Small cemeteries and/or columbarium niches can also be found on the property of some congregations in our area.

NATURAL BURIAL OPTIONS

This issue of **Creative Choices** puts a spotlight on natural "green" burial because you and other members of our larger community have expressed a growing interest in this option.

CEMETERY PLOTS AVAILABLE AT DISCOUNTED PRICES

Thanks to the generosity of several FCACTX members, we have eight donated plots that you may purchase from us at significantly lower prices than those same plots would cost at Austin Memorial Park and Cook-Walden Cemetery in Pflugerville. See page 7 for details.



Our FCA class through Lifetime Learning Institute (LLI) kicks off September 13

We're Back . . . In Person!

What to Do and Know before You Go

Details on back page

Americans are bad at talking about death, and it's hurting the environment

The path to more eco-friendly burials starts with uncomfortable conversations about death

By Rachel Ashcroft

How often do you think about your own death? The answer is probably along the lines of “rarely, if ever.” Death denial is commonplace in the United States; indeed, in Western countries, people tend not to die at all, but “pass on” or “slip away” instead. Our own death, in particular, is something we try to avoid thinking about until we really have no choice in the matter.

This is perfectly understandable behavior. Thinking about death can be scary for many reasons, from fears about dying in pain to contemplating what happens after death. Longer lifespans and medical advances have made it easier to delay thinking about mortality. But death denial has many disadvantages, too. Avoidance can actually increase — not lessen — anxiety. We also risk leaving behind grieving loved ones who aren't clear on our final wishes. Death denial is not just bad for individuals, either: There's plenty of evidence to show that it is harmful to the environment, too.

Traditional funeral options are less than eco-friendly. In the U.S., some estimates suggest that cremation emits approximately 360,000 metric tons of CO₂ each year. According to the Green Burial Council, heating a furnace at 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit for two hours produces roughly the same emissions as driving 500 miles in a car. Burials pose their own set of problems: Caskets and vaults use a large amount of natural resources. Casket wood alone requires the felling of 30 million board feet of wood in the U.S. each year, and thousands of tons of steel and concrete are used to construct vaults. Embalming fluid (which [usually] contains carcinogenic chemicals) can contaminate groundwater around cemeteries.

At a time when large corporations are regularly held to account for their green principles, the funeral industry is one of the few players to escape the scrutiny of its practices. A culture of death denial facilitates this situation. In a society where death is considered “morbid,” who wants to build their activism around something that most of us avoid discussing? Prominent figures like Greta Thunberg rarely venture into the murky world of deathcare. On Instagram, eco influencers are far more comfortable snapping pictures of avocado toast than discussing the perils of embalming fluid.

Things weren't always this way. In the early 1900s, Americans lived in close proximity to the dead and dying. Bedside vigils, in which the entire family gathered around a dying relative, were extremely common. Most people died in their home, leaving family members to prepare the body. Historians argue that this changed when end-of-life care moved to hospitals and funeral parlors began looking after dead bodies. Death became far less visible. When people today view an open casket, the corpse is altered so as to hide the physical effects of death. This evolution from death in close proximity to death being hidden and painted over has fueled a tendency toward death avoidance which, when compared to many other world cultures, is a complete anomaly.

Fortunately for our planet, change is on the horizon. Several environmentally-friendly deathcare options are springing up across the United States. From water burials to natural organic reduction or “human composting,” the green deathcare industry is taking root. But in order to fast forward the process of offering people legalized, eco-friendly deathcare choices, we have to talk more openly about death and dying to begin with.

In practical terms, avoiding death talk allows myths and assumptions about funeral care to flourish. Just over half of Americans choose cremation each year, partly due to a (false) perception that it's good for the environment. Caitlin Doughty, a prominent mortician and “death positive” advocate, has

also reported instances of bereaved families being informed that embalming is a legal requirement — it isn't. No state requires embalming or even burial inside a vault. If you've lived your whole life trying to reduce your carbon footprint, understanding what is and isn't legal can help make your death greener, too.

People often say they “want to be a tree” after they die. But when we don't examine traditional deathcare closely enough, it's easy to overlook the fact that ash from cremated remains doesn't enrich soil, while traditional burial prevents bodies from mingling with the earth. Setting aside time to explore other funeral options reveals the different ways that our remains can help plants grow. “Green burial” generally describes an unembalmed body placed in a shroud or biodegradable coffin, which is lowered directly into the ground. This allows the body to decompose into the surrounding earth. No state laws forbid green burial, and a growing number of cemeteries are offering this service. Human composting uses a combination of microbes, oxygen, and organic matter to convert corpses directly into soil. It's legal in Colorado, Oregon, and Washington, and bills are being considered in several other states.

There are some disadvantages to green deathcare. At the moment, price can be an issue. For society's poorest, direct cremation (no viewing or visitation) costs as little as \$1,000. Human composting, on the other hand, is priced between \$7,000 to \$10,000. There may also be religious issues pertaining to human remains; Washington's legalization of human composting was opposed by Catholic groups who argued that composting didn't show enough respect for the deceased body.

However, green deathcare will only become more affordable and widespread (for those who want it) if we learn how to talk about death in the first place. Of course, it can initially be uncomfortable to think about ourselves turning into ash or soil. But having as much information as possible about a topic is always empowering — even when it comes to your own death.

<https://theamateursguide.com/americans-are-bad-at-talking-about-death-and-its-hurting-the-environment/>

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Growing Local Interest in Natural Burial / Green Cemeteries

Currently, three cemeteries within driving distance of Austin provide natural burial for human remains and cremated remains. Eloise Woods and Countryside Memorial Park both offer pet burial as well.

	Adult Plot	Opening/Closing
Eloise Woods Natural Burial Park Cedar Creek (512) 796-5240 https://www.eloisewoods.com	\$2,800	\$1,200
Our Lady of the Rosary (St. Francis Natural Burial section) Georgetown (512) 863-8411 https://www.olotr.com	\$4,485	Determined by funeral home
Countryside Memorial Park (not within our 5-county service area but within driving distance) La Vernia (west of San Antonio) (512) 203-9739 https://www.countrysidememorialpark.com	\$1,599 Two side-by-side plots: \$2,899	\$650

Natural burial is possible at any cemetery that does not require a grave liner. Typically, these cemeteries are small and usually rural. Just make sure **all** items placed in the ground are totally biodegradable.

What to Know When You Purchase a Cemetery Plot

By Mary Scudder, FCACTX Board President

When you purchase the right to inter in a cemetery plot, your purchase often includes a perpetual care fee. However, not all cemeteries in Texas are perpetual care cemeteries (PCCs); specifically:

- Community cemeteries not larger than 10 acres
- Cemeteries not operated for profit that are owned by an unincorporated association of plot owners
- Cemeteries owned and operated by municipalities, cities, and churches

In our state, the Texas Department of Banking regulates PCCs. Accordingly, a PCC must collect a perpetual care fee for each burial right sold in the cemetery and must deposit the funds into an established perpetual care trust account.¹

Further, any funeral home or cemetery that sells prepaid funeral merchandise or services in Texas must either have a trust-funded or insurance-funded permit issued by the Department or sell through a licensed third-party insurance-funded permit holder.

“Prepaid funeral merchandise and services” is defined as goods sold on a prepaid basis directly to the public for use in connection with funeral services. Prepaid funeral services and merchandise may include **opening and closing of the grave** and **outer-burial containers**.

The PCC fee you will pay at a perpetual care cemetery is usually a one-time expense. Some cemeteries include the fee in the price of each grave site, and some show it as a separate expense. Either way, the cemetery must include this statement in each sales contract or certificate/deed:

This cemetery is operated as a perpetual care cemetery, which means that a perpetual care fund for its maintenance has been established in conformity with the laws of the State of Texas. Perpetual care means to maintain, repair, and care for the cemetery, including the roads on cemetery property.²

What is perpetual care?

Generally, perpetual or endowed care means the cemetery will be maintained and cared for: roads, green spaces, decorative monuments (not associated with a specific grave), signage, etc The cemetery will not be responsible for individual memorials. (This is the responsibility of the family.)³

Note: Often there is no wording specifying how often mowing or road repairs will take place.

Typically, maintenance of non-perpetual care cemeteries is the responsibility of the entity that owns the property, a cemetery association, and/or volunteers.

In Austin, volunteers with **Save Austin Cemeteries** (SAC) work tirelessly to preserve historic cemeteries in Austin through documentation, preservation, and education. For more information about this volunteer-run 501(c)(3) nonprofit, visit <https://www.sachome.org/>.

¹ Texas Department of Banking: “Cemetery & Prepaid Funeral Businesses” <https://tinyurl.com/3jxkvb9x>

² Texas Constitution and Statutes: Health And Safety Code, Title 8. Death and Disposition of The Body, Subtitle C. Cemeteries and Crematories and Chapter 712. Perpetual Care Cemeteries” <https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/Docs/HS/htm/HS.712.htm>

³ Law Insider: “Perpetual Care Definition” <https://www.lawinsider.com/dictionary/perpetual-care>

Importance of Cemeteries

By Texas Historical Commission

Cemeteries are among the most valuable of historic resources. They are reminders of various settlement patterns, such as villages, rural communities, urban centers, and ghost towns. Cemeteries can reveal information about historic events, religions, lifestyles, and genealogy.

Names on gravemarkers [sic] serve as a directory of early residents and reflect the ethnic diversity and unique population of an area. Cultural influence in gravemarker design, cemetery decoration, and landscaping contribute to the complete narrative of Texas history. Established in large part for the benefit of the living, cemeteries perpetuate the memories of the deceased, giving a place character and definition.

Unfortunately, historic cemeteries do not necessarily remain permanent reminders of our heritage. Across Texas, they are threatened by development and expanding urban areas, natural forces such as weathering and uncontrolled vegetation, lack of fences to keep cattle from toppling headstones, and vandalism and theft, including removal of headstones and objects. Neglect accelerates and compounds the process.

<https://www.thc.texas.gov/preserve/projects-and-programs/cemetery-preservation/importance-cemeteries>

Topics you can explore at the link above:

- [Importance of Cemeteries](#)
- [Cemetery Laws](#)
- [Historic Texas Cemetery Designation](#)
- [Discovery and Notice of Existence](#)
- [Maintenance, Conservation, and Repair](#)
- [What Can I Do?](#)
- [History of the Cemetery Program](#)
- [CHCs & Cemetery Preservation](#)
- [Cemetery Disaster Training](#)

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Construction on I-35 North Will Not Disturb Austin's Oldest Catholic Cemetery

Facebook post by Ted Lee Eubanks, August 16, 2002:

This afternoon I learned that both TxDOT and the Texas Historical Commission (THC) archeologists will be ensuring that there are no unmarked graves outside the boundaries of Mount Calvary Cemetery (i.e., between the fence line and the frontage road) before construction begins.

As I am sure most of you know, the expansion of I-35 through Austin will be a massive project, and I am most grateful to know that the cemetery will be protected throughout this project.

Thanks to TxDOT, THC, and you (!) for caring for the oldest Catholic cemetery in Austin.

<https://www.facebook.com/tedleeeubanksjr>



Entrance to Mt. Calvary Cemetery on North IH-35 frontage road between Manor Rd. and E. Dean Keeton

CITY OF AUSTIN
CEMETERIES
EST. 1839



Project to Improve Roads at Evergreen Cemetery

- Phase I - Surveying
- Phase II - Resurfacing
- Phase III - Curb Construction
- Phase IV - Vegetation

Information provided by Tonja Walls-Davis, Division Manager, City of Austin

Cemetery will begin road improvements. The project intent will be to resurface the road system within Evergreen Cemetery, construct a curbing system to delineate between road and grounds surface, and install a kiosk near the flag pole that will include information about the cemetery and a map of the sections.

The project began with surveying (**Phase I**) earlier this year.

The resurfacing and curb construction (**Phase II & III**) began **August 18th, 2022**. Traffic within Evergreen is being rerouted as necessary to avoid any disruptions to interments, visitations, or day-to-day operations. And at least one of the gates into the cemetery will be opened during regular operating hours (7am-7pm).

Estimated project completion date: Fall 2022.
All inquiries can be directed to (512)978-2320.



2022 SURVEY OF AUSTIN AREA PRICES OF SELECTED CEMETERIES

Produced and Published by the Funeral Consumers Alliance of Central Texas

In using this survey, keep in mind:

- Central Texas has hundreds of cemeteries. This sampling is intended to illustrate a wide variety of choices. Your own research will expand your options.
- The footnotes contain additional information to help you make informed choices.
- Data were collected in August, 2022. As with all goods and services, prices are subject to change.

For one-click access to cemetery websites listed in the survey, go to
<https://www.fcactx.org/cost-comparisons.html>

Name / Ownership Location	Phone # / Website	Least Expensive Plot for an Adult Casket (see note 1)	Least Expensive Plot for a Cremation Urn (see note 1)	Cost to Open/Close a Plot (Mon. – Fri.) (see note 2)	Grave Liner Required	Urn Niches	Least Expensive Urn Niche (see note 3)
TRAVIS COUNTY							
Assumption / Catholic Cemetery Association of Austin 3650 S. IH-35 Austin	512-442-4252 Website: Yes	\$2,800	\$700	Casket: \$850 Urn: \$400	Casket: Yes; Urn: No	Yes, in mausoleum	\$1,050 (includes O/C)
Austin Memorial Park / City of Austin 2800 Hancock Drive Austin	512-978-2320 Website: Yes	\$2,775; \$1,380 if City selects plot	\$900	Casket: \$1,700 Urn: \$725	Casket: Yes Urn: No	No	N/A
Cook-Walden Capital Parks / Service Corp. International (SCI) 14501 IH-35 North Pflugerville	512-251-4118 Website: Yes	\$9,995	\$9,995	Casket: \$2,145 Urn: \$995	Casket: Yes Urn: Yes	Yes	\$4,995
Cook-Walden Forest Oaks / Service Corp. International (SCI) 6300 W. William Cannon Austin	512-892-1172 Website: Yes	\$4,995; \$1,995 if Cook-Walden selects plot	\$4,995	Casket: \$1,995 Urn: \$995	Casket: Yes Urn: Yes	Yes	\$1,995
Cook-Walden Memorial Hill / Service Corp. International (SCI) ½ mi. south of Capital Parks Cemetery Pflugerville	512-251-4118 Website: Yes	\$3,495	\$3,495	Casket: \$2,145 Urn: \$995	Casket: Yes Urn: Yes	No	N/A
Evergreen Cemetery / City of Austin 3304 E. 12 th St. Austin	512-978-2320 Website: Yes	\$1,850	\$850	Casket: \$1,700 Urn: \$725	Casket: Yes Urn: No	No	N/A
Onion Creek Memorial Park / Park Lawn Corp. 11610 Chapel Lane Austin	512-282-3893 Website: Yes	\$2,900	\$805 (in Urn Garden)	Casket: \$1,220 Urn: \$895	Casket: Yes Urn: Yes	Urn niches in mausoleum	\$2,856 (includes plaque)
Remembrance Gardens / Riverbend Church / open to all / Only for cremated remains 4214 Capital of Texas Highway N Austin	512-329-6007 Website: Yes	N/A	\$7,140 (includes O/C & marker) (see note 4)	Included in plot cost	Casket: N/A Urn: No	Yes	\$10,200
Resurrection Garden / Triumphant Love Lutheran Church / open to all / Only for cremated remains 9508 Great Hills Trail Austin	512-346-5683 Website: Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes	\$2,000 (includes O/C and plaque)

- Notes:**
- (1) Plot cost may or may not include charges for perpetual care or grounds maintenance and care; deed registration, administrative, and/or permit fees. **Be sure to inquire.**
 - (2) Opening/closing costs shown are to open & close plots Monday – Friday. Cost to open/close a plot is typically higher on weekends and holidays.
 - (3) Niche cost may or may not include charges for a plaque and for opening & closing the niche. **Be sure to inquire.**
 - (4) Remembrance Gardens has assigned a Fair Market Value of \$1,000 to most urn plots. The rest of the purchase price is a tax-deductible charitable contribution to Riverbend Church.

General Provisions regarding Texas cemeteries: see Texas Health and Safety Code, Chapter 711 at <https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/Docs/HS/htm/HS.711.htm>.

Veterans and Spouses of Veterans: Information about **Veteran Cemeteries** on the other side of this page

Name / Ownership Location	Phone # / Website	Least Expensive Plot for an Adult <u>Casket</u> (see note 1)	Least Expensive Plot for a Cremation <u>Urn</u> (see note 1)	Cost to Open/Close a Plot (Mon. – Fri.) (see note 2)	Grave Liner Required	Urn Niches	Least Expensive Urn Niche (see note 3)
BASTROP COUNTY							
Eloise Woods Community Natural Burial Park "Green" burial only / privately owned 115 Northside Lane (off Pearce Lane) Cedar Creek	512-796-5240 Website: Yes	\$2,800 biodegradable materials only; shroud acceptable	\$800 biodegradable materials only	Casket/shroud: \$1,200 Urn: \$200	Not permitted	No	N/A
Fairview Cemetery / City of Bastrop 1409 HWY 95 North Bastrop	512-332-8820 Website: Yes	Bastrop resident \$1,500 Non-resident \$3,500		Arranged by funeral home	Casket: No Urn: No	No	N/A
CALDWELL COUNTY							
Lockhart Municipal Burial Park / City of Lockhart 600 N. Colorado St. Lockhart	512-398-6452 Website: Yes	Present & prior Lockhart resident \$800..... \$100 Present & prior Caldwell Cty. resident \$900..... \$200 Non-resident of Caldwell Cty. \$1,500..... \$600			Casket: Yes Urn: No	No	N/A
Luling City Cemetery / City of Luling 1500 E. Pierce St. Luling	830-875-2481 Website: No	\$300	\$300	Arranged by funeral home	Casket: No Urn: No	No	N/A
Memory Lawn Memorial Park / Pennington Funeral Home 19106 San Marcos Hwy (80) at FM 1984 Martindale	512-357-6643 Website: Yes	\$2,195	\$1,895	Casket: \$1,088 Urn: \$600	Casket: Yes Urn: Yes	Yes	\$3,500 (includes plaque)
HAYS COUNTY							
San Marcos City Cemetery / City of San Marcos 1001 RR 12 San Marcos	512-748-9671 Website: Yes	San Marcos resident: \$2,000 Non-resident \$2,500		Arranged by funeral home	Casket: Yes Urn: No	Under construction	To be determined
WILLIAMSON COUNTY							
Our Lady of the Rosary Cemetery & Prayer Gardens / privately owned / Catholic / open to all 330 Berry Lane Georgetown	512-863-8411 Website: Yes	\$3,220; "Green" Plot: \$4,485	\$2,000 (includes flat marker)	Casket: arranged by funeral home; Urn: \$250	Casket: No Urn: No	No	N/A
Taylor City Cemetery / City of Taylor 1101 E. 4 th St. Taylor	512-352-3531 Website: Yes	\$1,300	"\$650 "Half Plot"	Casket: \$1,500 Urn: \$760	Casket: No, but recommended Urn: No	No	N/A

A sampling of other cemeteries in WILLIAMSON COUNTY:

- Cedar Park: **Cedar Park Cemetery**, 101 S. Bell Blvd.; contact Beck Funeral Home, 512-259-1610
- Georgetown: **IOOF Cemetery**, 701 Smith Creek Rd.; contact Georgetown Parks & Recreation Dept., 512-930-3595
- Leander: **Bagdad Cemetery**, 400 N. Bagdad Rd.; contact Bagdad Cemetery Association, 512-259-4855
- Round Rock: **Palm Valley Cemetery** (open to all), 2500 E. Palm Valley Blvd.; contact Palm Valley Lutheran Church, 512-255-3322

For one-click access to cemetery websites listed in the survey, go to <https://www.fcactx.org/cost-comparisons.html>

- Notes:** (1) Plot cost includes fee for Perpetual Care or grounds maintenance and care. Deed registration, administrative, interment, and/or permit fees are included, where applicable.
(2) Opening/closing costs shown are to open & close plots Monday – Friday. Cost to open/close a plot is typically higher on weekends and holidays and significantly higher on weekends and holidays.
(3) Niche cost may or may not include charges for a plaque and for opening & closing the niche. **Be sure to inquire.**

Veterans and Spouses of Veterans:

Complete information about burial benefits for veterans, scheduling, and more at <https://www.va.gov/burials-memorials/schedule-a-burial/> or call 800-827-1000.
List of **National Veterans Cemeteries** in Texas at www.cem.va.gov/ceM/ceMS/state.asp?State=TX&dnum=ALL
National Cemeteries nearest to Austin: (1) Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery in San Antonio, and (2) San Antonio National Cemetery (spaces for cremated remains only). For information about these two cemeteries, call 210-820-3891.
List of **State Veterans Cemeteries** at <https://vib.texas.gov/cemeteries/locations/>, or call 1-800-252-8387.
For information about the Central Texas State Veterans Cemetery in **Killeen**, call 254-616-1770.

Burial on private property in an incorporated city, town, or village is subject to that entity's zoning regulations or other related ordinances. Burial outside a municipality is generally unregulated. Burial on private property creates an encumbrance on the land if it is ever sold. More information at www.tiltingthescales.com/2019/10/25/dying-to-get-in-cemeteries-on-private-property/.

To see photos in color, open the online version of this newsletter at <https://tinyurl.com/4eydmkdd>.

Cemetery Plots for Sale

Plots donated to our FCA are available at discounted prices!

Austin Memorial Park
2800 Hancock Drive
Austin (78731)
512-978-2320

One Plot Available
Block: 9
Lot 335
Plot 4



Look for Section 9/10 marker.



Plot is to the left of the marker for Docia Perry George.

Austin Memorial is currently selling adult plots for **\$3,191.25** (\$2,775 + 15% maintenance fee) FCACTX is offering the donated plot for **\$2,000**. (Interest-free monthly payments can be arranged.) After the deed is transferred, buyer will pay a \$34 deed registration fee at the Travis County Tax Office.

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Photos courtesy of FCACTX board officer, Sanford Wyatt

Cook-Walden Capital Parks
14501 North IH-35
Pflugerville (78660)
512-251-4118

1 Plot Available in Section H
Block 90-D, Grave 1

4 Plots Available in Section H
Block 90-C, Graves 1,2, 3, 4

2 Plots Available in Section H:
Block 192-D, Graves 3, 4

Ask cemetery staff to show you exact plot locations.



Plots in Section 90-C, 90-D, and 192-D all have views of Garden of Gethsemane statuary.



Look for Toungate Bench, which has Block 192-D plots behind it.

Cook-Walden is currently selling adult plots in Section H for **\$9,995** each. FCA is offering each donated plot for **\$5,000**. (Interest-free monthly payments can be arranged.) During the deed transfer process at the Cook-Walden Cemetery Office, buyer will pay Cook-Walden's \$395 transfer fee for each **transaction**. (One transaction may include a single plot or multiple plots.)

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If interested in purchasing one or more plots:

1. Visit the cemetery to make sure you like the plot location. While there, check with the cemetery staff about any additional costs, as well as any restrictions about how you use the plot.
2. If you decide to purchase the plot(s) from FCACTX, contact Nancy Walker, Executive Director, at execdir@fcontext.org, or call 512-480-0555.
3. Upon completion of payment to FCACTX, meet with Nancy at the cemetery office to **complete the necessary paperwork** to transfer the deed from FCACTX to you and – if purchasing a Cook-Walden plot -- to pay the Cook-Walden deed transfer fee.

When and why did humans start using tombstones?



By [CORDIS](#) (Community Research and Development Information Service)

As grave markers, tombstones offer a focus for mourning and commemoration. Typically made of stone and usually engraved with the deceased's name [and] dates of birth and death, they also often carry inscribed tributes. They've been around a long time, across a wide variety of cultures.

"Numerous Neolithic stone statues called stelae, associated with Kurgan culture burials about 5,000 years old, were found in Ukraine and Moldova," reveals Čaval. "We also have Bronze Age stone and wooden markers on mounds. The Greeks buried commoners and elites in marked graves. There's the pre-Roman Vulci in Italy, followed by the abundant Roman tombstones, with statues, reliefs, and inscriptions telling stories," she adds.

Why deaths are written in stone

As Čaval explains, the first epitaphs as we now know them, especially the formula "Here lies..." comes from the Greek tradition. Adopted by the Romans, thanks to the spread and influence of their empire, this became the standard in the West.

More than just words, the aesthetics of tombstones also tell us about the beliefs of their creators. "The specifics tell us something unique about the times in which they are made — about communities, their identity, values and beliefs, about both life and the afterlife," says Čaval.

Most obviously, a tomb's location can reflect the deceased's personal attachment to a specific location, while craftsmanship and materials can reflect social status, especially if rare. Inscriptions are indications of literacy, while decorative motifs can suggest religious affiliations.

"Even without decoration or inscription, the tombstone's shape, position within a cemetery, type of cemetery, all help build a picture of what a society values and how individuals fit into these values," adds Čaval.

The stećci enigma

Čaval's expertise and interest in understanding the past through burial practices and their material culture, were sparked by the Western Balkans' little known stećci, gigantic stone monuments found at gravesites.

Decreed a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2016, the stećci are medieval tombstones, preserved across the landscapes of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, and Serbia.

"Remarkably, these are not attributed to any ethnic or religious group and so have always been considered enigmatic. But their numbers, with over 70,000 preserved, alongside their monolithic character, reflect their importance, many centuries ago," says Čaval.

Some tombstones have inscriptions written in Glagolitic and Bosnian Cyrillic scripts, both extinct today. This speaks to local ethnic and religious diversity, substantiated by prehistory decorations mingling with Roman Christian or Islamic elements.

"We're using modern digital techniques like [satellite imagery](#) to explore this phenomenon and I'm proud to help publicize them," reflects Čaval.

Are the cracks showing in tombstones?

The simplest reason for tombstones' success is that they are fit for purpose. Suitable [stone](#) has been relatively easy to find and transport to gravesites. It can be decorated. Stone is hard-wearing, enduring extreme weather and the passage of time—ensuring a lasting tribute. Which also explains why other grave markers, whatever they might have been, are lost to time.

With the rise of humanist funerals and with cemeteries facing overcrowding, accompanied with increasing sustainability concerns—are tombstones falling out of favor? "There is definitely a trend for alternatives but I think there will always be a place for tombstones. Their reassuring solidity literally represents a life, keeping it present and so relevant," concludes Čaval.

<https://theamateursguide.com/when-and-why-did-humans-start-using-tombstones/>

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For information about **Texas State Cemetery**, visit <https://cemetery.tspb.texas.gov/>

See also: **Creative Choices** newsletter, 2018, Issue 2 <https://www.fcactx.org/newsletters-2017-2022.html>

For information about **Arlington National Cemetery**, visit <https://www.arlingtoncemetery.mil/#/>

See also: **Creative Choices** newsletter, 2018, Issue 2 <https://www.fcactx.org/newsletters-2017-2022.html>



Once a Year, We Ask for Your Financial Support . . . Now is the Time



As we all continue wending our way through a mass of viral concerns, our FCA volunteers have had few opportunities to meet face to face with you and other members of our community. Nonetheless, we are still responding to an ever-growing number of emails and phone calls. Thanks to our able web administrator, our high internet visibility brings us requests for information, support, and assistance from all over the country and all across Texas.

We are able to continue doing what we do because we have your support. Hardly a day goes by that our board officers don't receive an email inviting us to attend a fundraising webinar that explains ways to ask donors to make one or more additional contributions. We don't feel a need to do that because we don't want to fill your mailbox and inbox with repeated appeals. Besides supporting our mission, asking for your contributions only once a year may be another reason that you never let us down.

As we consider current and future expenses, we think it's important for you to know that we want to keep our membership fee at \$35, even though paper, printing, and postage continue to rise each year. Yes, we could do everything electronically but we know that many of our members are already experiencing inbox overflow. Plus, many of you have told us that you do not have easy access to a printer.

Please know that we appreciate your support and will continue doing our best to fulfill our mission, which is to help people make educated, practical choices that will meet their needs at the end of life. In doing so, we never turn away or fail to respond when someone asks us for information or support.

A note regarding this year's donation coupon on page 11: As we plan our next annual meeting, we'd like to know what end-of-life topic is of particular interest to you. Even if you are not able to send us a contribution at this time, please let us know by filling out that line on the donation coupon and mailing it in. Or, if you prefer, call us at 512-480-0555, or email us at office@fcactx.org. We always enjoy hearing from you!

* * * * *

Felt uncomfortable driving to the cemetery when the GPS blurted out, "You have reached your final destination."



* * * * *



Have you completed your advance directives?

If so, are they up to date?

If changes need to be made, medical and disposition directives, along with other helpful forms, are available under the Directives tab at <https://www.fcactx.org/>. Just print out and complete the forms you need.

Or, if you prefer, we can mail them to you. Just send us an email or give us a call.

We're here for you!

To help us keep your membership record up to date and to process your donation as efficiently as possible, please fill out this form and return it in the enclosed envelope.

Name _____ Year-of-Birth _____

Name _____ Year-of-Birth _____

Mailing address _____ City _____ Zip _____
(If different from mailing label on reverse side of this page)

Preferred phone number _____ mobile home office

Email address (please print) _____

An end-of-life topic about which I'd like to know more _____

Please contact me about setting up recurring donations monthly quarterly

Payment Options

- To donate with a **check**, please mail your donation to FCA of Central Texas, 3710 Cedar St., Box 13, Austin, TX 78705-1449. A remittance envelope is enclosed for your convenience.
- To donate using a **credit card or PayPal** account, use the DONATE button on our website at www.fcactx.org; or call us at 512-480-0555 to arrange our taking your credit card information by phone.

FCA of Central Texas is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.
Our Taxpayer Identification number is 74-6065131.

We do not keep credit card information on file.



WE'RE HERE FOR YOU!

Call us at **512-480-0555**

Email us at office@fcactx.org



Send mail to

FCA of Central Texas
3710 Cedar Street, Box 13
Austin, TX 78705-1449

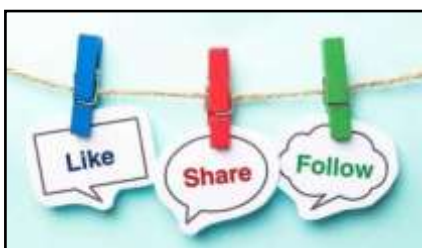


Visit us online at www.fcactx.org

- * To join or donate to FCACTX
- * To download advance-planning forms, newsletters, price surveys, and other items of interest



Follow us on **Facebook** at
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to read a variety of interesting articles.



OUR DEDICATED VOLUNTEERS

2021 Board of Directors:

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- Treasurer: Sanford Wyatt
- Secretary: Barbara Wand James
- Director: Nancy Walker

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Newsletter: Lamar Hankins
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Notary Services: Clint Henderson

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2022 Issue 2



**Funeral Consumers Alliance
of Central Texas**
3710 Cedar Street, Mailbox 13
Austin, TX 78705-1449

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Email us at office@fcactx.org, call us at 512-480-0555, or complete and mail this form to our office.

Please update my contact info:

Name

Street or P. O. Box

City, State, Zip

Phone

Email address

Help me transfer my membership to an FCA affiliate outside the Central Texas area.

What to Do and Know before You Go
Our FCA's class through Lifetime Learning Institute (LLI)
kicks off September 13

If you feel a bit squirmy about final arrangements for yourself or anyone else, this class will help you think about and discuss a wide variety of options with more comfort and ease. You'll learn from subject matter experts who welcome questions and have nothing to sell. We'll discuss prices at local funeral homes and cemeteries; prepaid funeral contracts; hospice care; organ, tissue, and whole body donation; green burial; and more. You'll be invited to participate in relaxed, small group discussions to help you incorporate your end-of-life values and priorities into healthcare directives specifying what interventions you would or would not want should you be unable to speak for yourself. Completion of advance directives requires some reading and thoughtful consideration between several class sessions.

Dates: 8 Tuesdays, 10 am to noon, September 13 through November 1

Cost: \$30 to LLI, plus \$10 to FCACTX at first class session for extensive handouts

Location: Genesis Presbyterian Church, 1507 Wilshire Blvd. (ample parking)

Questions: Contact class coordinator, Nancy Walker, execdir@fcactx.org / 512-480-0251