

Ashes to ashes, dust to dust... Natural burials

As an Earth Care congregation TPC is always looking for ways that we can become better stewards of God's creation, and as the owner of a cemetery at the beautiful BeeTree Preserve, this topic is of particular relevance for our congregation.

Earth Corps has been exploring the possibility of offering natural or green Burials at the BeeTree Cemetery with the BeeTree, Cemetery and Property Committees, and with Session. Through the Cemetery Committee's upcoming survey Earth Corps is looking to gauge the congregation's interest in this possible additional burial option.

Many people may not be aware of the significant environmental impact of our "last act" under traditional burial practices. Traditional burials in the US put over 800 thousand gallons of toxic embalming fluid, 90 thousand tons of steel, over 30 million board feet of hardwoods, 1.6 million tons of concrete and 14 thousand tons of steel in the ground each year! Precious resources that aren't ever again available for use above ground. Many people think of cremation as a "greener" alternative, yet cremation uses the fossil fuel equivalent of a 4,800 mile car trip and releases mercury and greenhouse gases into the air.

Natural or green burials provide an alternative. These are done without embalming chemicals, and using only a simple bio-degradable coffin or shroud. All burials were green until the Civil War, so this is really a return to a long tradition. There are also a growing number of conservation cemeteries being developed, where the land retains much of its original character and can be used in perpetuity for walking trails and other outdoor activities.

If you're interested in more information on Green Burials check out these websites: <http://www.gravematters.us/faqs.html>

<http://greenburialcouncil.org/home/what-is-green-burial/>

Earth Corps will also be sponsoring a workshop on Saturday 11/4 where you can find out more about natural/green burials as well as home funeral options.