



#### PRESIDENT'S NOTE

### Navigating Economic Uncertainty

Between threats of an economic downturn and emergence from the pandemic, the deathcare industry is facing its own unique set of challenges over the next few months. While we may not know exactly what to expect, we're in this together.



Following the pandemic, the number of memorial services has been trending downward. Our industry was aware this would happen, especially after mortality rates spiked to the highest level in 100 years during the pandemic. Add to that the increasing probability of an economic recession and you can see why funeral directors and cemeterians are concerned - and for good reason. It means sales and possibly jobs are at risk.

Oftentimes, many company leaders cut back on investing in their businesses during a recession. The more successful approach, according to researchers at [Harvard](#) and [McKinsey](#), is to make smart, disciplined investments, especially in technology.

Updating your company's digital tools can improve the ability to engage more with families in your communities. It can increase the productivity of your staff, so they are freed to help in other areas of your business. The right investments in technology can make your business more resilient, and significantly improve your competitive position and elevate it when the economy recovers.

Now is the time to reach out to our team of technology experts. They are ready to help ensure that your recordkeeping/administrative operations and preneed trust programs are operating at peak performance.

Navigating today's business climate will be tricky. There's no doubt about that. But I remain confident our industry will emerge stronger and better able to meet the changing needs of families in our communities

Sincerely,

Bill Williams  
President and CEO, Funeral Services, Inc.

## Unlock the Secret to Boosting Preneed Sales

*Join FSI at the Kates-Boylston 2023 Technology Think Tank Conference*

Deathcare firms are leaving money on the table in two ways: by not offering preneed contracts online and by not offering modern end-of-life celebrations through vision setting.

Learn how to prevent that from happening by joining FSI as we host an expert session at the Kates-Boylston 2023 Technology Think Tank Conference on April 19-20 in Celebration, Florida. During the session, FSI CEO Bill Williams and General Counsel Wendy Russell Wiener will demonstrate why it is essential to introduce vision setting into your business and how to do it through online preneed sales - all while increasing your revenue.

Register now for the conference today to learn from our experts and take your business to the next level.

We look forward to seeing you there!



In today's connected world, deathcare professionals need secure, remote 24/7 access to preneed trust information. FSI's robust online platform makes it easy for funeral directors and cemeterians to review, update or download essential records and data - and to do it from any location with internet access using a laptop, smartphone or tablet.

With just a few clicks, FSI clients have complete access to their entire trust program and client details, including, for example, the status of every pre-need contract, trust transaction history, and regulatory reporting deadlines.

Here are a few more examples of the benefits of FSI's technology:

- Review trust transactions and make adjustments or corrections
- Set up and process one-time and recurring consumer credit card payments
- Edit preneed contracts to reflect changes requested by families
- Analyze key performance indicators for your preneed trust program
- Check on the market value of the assets in your entire trust accounts

FSI's technology provides deathcare professionals with an unprecedented level of access to client records. Our real-time digital tools ensure you can meet your families' expectations as more consumers begin their end-of-life planning online.

For more information about our eServices, please contact our Client Services team at 1-800-749-1340 or [clientservices@fsitrust.com](mailto:clientservices@fsitrust.com).

## PLLC, FSI's General Counsel

Deathcare licensees are required to maintain certain records and documents in order to stay compliant with regulations surrounding the deathcare industry and licensure.

Licensees have to keep each of the following records available for inspection indefinitely: licensure documents, advertising file, financial and accounting records including financial statements, preneed contracts, at-need contracts, burial records, records of cancellation requests and refunds given, procedure manuals, and examination work papers. In addition, all licensees must maintain a log of all written complaints regarding operations which includes the complainants name and contact information, the date the complaint is received, and the written complaint - also indefinitely.

Records pertaining to cremation such as a signed declaration of intent, records relating to the disposition of cremated remains, the contract for cremation arrangements, and the date of cremation must be maintained for two years. After two years, the documents may be destroyed. However, we do not recommend destroying those records in such a short time period as cremation related litigation is the most prevalent type of case against a deathcare licensee and the statute of limitations on such cases is likely much longer than 2 years.

Preneed licensees must indefinitely maintain documentation that is associated with fulfillment of any preneed contract. This documentation must include the date and time that preneed licensees receive requests to deliver merchandise. Additionally, preneed licensees must indefinitely maintain the remittance form for the Preneed Funeral Contract Consumer Protection Trust fund.

NO paper records need to be maintained at the location. Records may be kept electronically provided that those records are able to be accessed by inspectors upon request. Don't forget that FSI offers an electronic "filing cabinet" for your preneed contract related records.



FSI executives regularly contribute to our profession's leading publications with thought leadership articles. The articles are written with you in mind - to provide advice, new ideas and in-depth insights on issues our profession faces.

**Here are brief summaries of several recent stories featuring FSI:**

### **Bill Williams Shares How Funeral Directors Can Better Serve Families and Protect Profits**



New technology can help funeral directors meet the changing needs of families who want unique end-of-life celebrations, but it can also help protect funeral home and cemetery profits. In the November issue of *The Director*, FSI CEO Bill Williams discusses how funeral directors and cemeterians can have the best of both worlds. [Read more here.](#)

### **FSI, Argent Financial Pros Discuss Strategies to Build a Modern, Family-Friendly Preneed Trust Program**

An efficient, well-run preneed trust program is integral to serving the unique needs of families in your community. In the January issue of American Funeral Director, FSI and Argent Financial experts discuss three areas funeral directors should focus on to make sure your preneed program is operating at peak performance. [Learn more here.](#)

## Why Your Funeral Homes Must Have a Strong Online Presence

In today's digital world, making a great first impression when families visit your website is essential. In the February issue of Memento Mori, FSI CEO Bill Williams highlights practical, actionable steps that funeral directors can implement to make sure you have a strong online presence. [Read more here.](#)

FSI DEPARTMENT SPOTLIGHT:

## CELEBRATING BUDDY BEVIS' RETIREMENT AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO FSI!

**FSI is made up of a dedicated team of experienced professionals who work each day to provide you with excellent service. Each individual brings an important skill set that assists us in powering your trust.**

In this issue of our quarterly e-newsletter, we shine a spotlight on William H. "Buddy" Bevis, our former Executive Vice President/Chief Operating Officer who recently retired after 15 years with FSI. We will truly miss him, his sense of humor and his passion for our industry!



### How long did you work with FSI and what drew you to the company?

I met Bill in 1986 and started working at FSI in 2008. For several years, Bill heard me talk about the first paperless licensing system in Florida that my division in the state budget office had created in my previous role - it was the first fingerprint system for non-law enforcement purposes, the same one used for funeral licensing by the state today.

I wanted to translate the model to FSI, so that is when I began my journey at FSI with a goal to create a paperless and efficient funeral and cemetery trusting application. With great cooperation between Meiko Whitfield in Client Services and Prakash Mohan in Information Technology, the PRISM system was introduced, and FSI finally had its system.

### Which accomplishments during your time at FSI are you most proud of?

Thanks to Bill and the FSI Board of Directors, they welcomed me into the company, provided resources to develop SOC Reports, Business Continuity plans and funded the creation of backup and redundancy for our computer systems.

Most of all, I would like to thank the staff at FSI. The Client Services staff have a fantastic knowledge of preneed and care and maintenance trusts and the accompanying rules. And the Information Technology department is full of master's level coders who are unbelievably talented.

FSI was the first recordkeeper to develop a desktop, electronic contract production system, the first to develop laptop contract production, the first to develop access to reports and other functions and features for smartphones. And FSI pushed hard for the passage of Unitrust laws in several states.

### Looking back on your own career, what piece of advice would you give to

**professionals about getting the most out of their professional life?**

My advice would be to make yourself valuable at work. Look for things that need to be fixed and fix them. One of my best career moves ever was to develop a budget projection system in Excel. Florida had a robust appropriations, budgeting and accounting system, but nothing could project for the future. This new budget projection program could tell you if you keep spending this much the rest of the year, this is what it will cost. It got the attention of top senior management and promotions followed.

**IMPORTANT FSI DATES TO REMEMBER**



**International Cemetery,  
Cremation & Funeral  
Association (ICCF) Convention  
& Exposition**

*Loews Kansas City Hotel &  
Kansas City Convention Center  
Kansas City, MO Visit Us at  
Booth #1207!*

**Memorial Day**

*FSI offices will be closed in  
observance of Memorial Day*

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