

A Brief History of Veterans Day

World War I officially ended on June 28, 1919 with the signing of the Treaty of Versailles. However the fighting ceased seven months earlier when a temporary cessation of hostilities went into effect between the Allied nations and Germany on the 11th hour of the 11th month on the 11th day. For that reason November 11, 1918 is regarded as Armistice Day. President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed November 11 as Armistice Day in November of 1919.

Armistice Day was set aside as a day to honor those who served in World War I, a day dedicated to the cause of world peace and a national legal holiday on May 13, 1938. In 1954, after World War II had required national mobilization of the military and resources, and after the American forces had fought aggression in Korea, the 83rd Congress amended the act of 1938 striking out the word "Armistice" and replacing that word with "Veterans."

Veteran's Day Service

Congregations are encouraged to use a liturgy of awareness and reflection for those who have served in the uniformed services of the nation. Because men and women serve to protect and defend our people, the people need to be involved in the "welcome home." In warrior cultures the civilians, People of Strong Heart, have a responsibility to provide a protective, healing and welcoming perimeter. Once home the warriors participated in rituals and spiritual ceremonies of purification, confession, and reconciliation. There was no separation between the community they had protected and the spirituality of the people. Here is a suggested liturgical service for use in a service of worship.

Leader – Many have answered the call to serve. Some served willingly, some served unwillingly. Some served honorably and some served less than honorably. All served. May we seek forgiveness, purification and bring healing. May those who are the beneficiaries of the sacrifice recognize and accept their

responsibility and truly welcome our veterans home. May we truly honor all who have died in warfare by following the path of peace.

I invite our veterans, regardless of time or place of service, to come forward. (There may be 'traveling music' and I recommend that it NOT be a patriotic or nationalistic in theme.) The emphasis is on service and sacrifice, thankfulness and gratitude, healing and forgiveness - spiritual. As the veterans come forward by the center aisle they will receive from a Person of Strong Heart a token of our appreciation. (This has been a lapel pin or a smooth river stone, etc.) As the veterans receive this token gift they are spoken to by the gift giver: ***"Please accept this token in recognition of your service to the people."***

Upon returning to their place in the sanctuary a family member or someone sitting next to them stands and pins the lapel pin or holds the stone in hand and looking the veteran in the eye the veteran states:

Veteran: I served to protect you, I want to come home.

Person of Strong Heart: (Family member or seat neighbor) I welcome you home and I am here to protect you.

Unison Prayer

Almighty and loving God, Creator of all, Father and Mother of all people, we bow before You on this first day of the new week. The week in which we set aside the day, November 11, to reflect and offer prayers for peace and healing. We come before You as your children, as brothers and sisters, weak and small and in need of Your strength and wisdom. May we walk in beauty from this day forward and behold the blessings of life. May our hearts become aware of all creation. May we learn from those who have become our nation's warriors who served to protect and bring an end to war. Make us strong, not to fight others, but to face the biggest challenges within our self. May we welcome our brothers and sisters home. Amen.