



Memorial Day Liturgical Resources From the Heartland Conference Veteran Ministry Network

An Introductory Word from the Heartland Conference Veteran Ministry Network

Memorial Day is the date set aside to **remember** those who have died as members of the military. Those killed in action, KIA; and those who died after action from wounds, illness, and injuries as a result of military service. There are those who have died from the invisible wounds, or the Moral Injury, that occurs when ethics and values are compromised in service. The **responsibility** for war is a burden that cannot be carried alone by the service member, but is a community/national burden. These men and women are our sons and daughters, our mothers and fathers, our friends and neighbors. The faith community is an important **resource** as we are companions providing the necessary spiritual connection. This Memorial Day we are urging you to **remember** in your service of worship, accept the burden of **responsibility**, and be the **resource** of companionship; be the Christ presence. The following resources are offered to aid in your prayerful remembrance.

Children's Moment: "The Empty Chair" — read this or use it as a guide:

[Bring kids to the front. Point to the empty chair on the stage.]

"Do you see this chair? It's empty. Can someone sit in a chair that's empty? [Kids: Yes!] Right — of course. But what if the reason it's empty is because the person who used to sit there went away to keep you safe? And what if they never came back?

That's what Memorial Day is about. Empty chairs. At kitchen tables. At birthday parties. At holiday dinners. These are chairs that belong to men and women who went to protect other people — people they'd never even met — and they didn't come home.

Jesus once said the greatest thing a person can ever do is give up their life for someone they love. [John 15:13] These soldiers did that. They loved this country so much they gave everything they had for it.

Today we remember the empty chairs. We say thank you for the people who used to fill them. And we ask God to be especially close to the families who miss them most right now.

[To the kids] Would you say a prayer with me for those families?"

A Real Moment

A children's pastor I know used the "Empty Chair" lesson for the first time on a Memorial Day Sunday. Halfway through, a six-year-old girl raised her hand and said quietly, "My uncle's chair is empty." The room went still. The pastor knelt down, asked if she wanted to say his name, and she did. The whole congregation heard the name of a fallen soldier from a little girl who loved him. That's what the right Memorial Day children's moment can do.

Family Responsive Prayer

Memorial Day Family Prayer (Read Together)

Leader: "Thank you, God, for the people who were brave."

All: "Thank you, God, for the people who were brave."

Leader: "Be close to the families with empty chairs today."

All: "Be close to the families with empty chairs today."

Leader: "Help us live in a way that honors the price they paid."

All: "Help us live in a way that honors the price they paid."

All: "Amen."

Memorial Day Responsive Prayers

A Weave of Sacred Re-membling - A Memorial Day Prayer (Responsive)

Loving God, weave in us a memory of lives laid down in service
And raise in us Your vision where death is no longer needed
to settle the score perpetuated by scarcity's lie.

**By this memory, commit us anew to the use of words instead of war's wounds
as the way to settle disputes too often shrinking our souls
and draining our memory of Your deepest desire.**

Instead, form in us your resurrection renewal revealed in Christ Jesus
and empowered by Your Spirit. Evoke in us Your imagination
for love's full flourishing to rise in Your whole human family
and revealed in the grand cosmos of Your continual creation.

**Yes, empower our consent to Your holy call of sacred remembrance
that the dead we honor may inspire a renewal of sacred commitment
that form us as living signs, weaving Your healing love into the life of the world.**

Yes, pause us for nothing less than this high calling revealed by You in Christ
of holy re-membling, healing the human family at every turn of today.

If There Be Memory - A Memorial Day Prayer (Responsive)

Loving God, if there be memory, let it be of Your vision where no grave calls,
except for natural ends, succumbing to You in eternal embrace of something more.

**Let the precious pause of life needlessly lost in human struggle against Your will and way
awaken us again to Your larger vision of enough for all and scarcity for none.**

Let this day of memory reverence not only loss but a rising call given by You, O Love,
before time turned hearts away from You and each other in endless rivalry and death.

**Yes, awaken us anew to Your promise of more than enough, pouring Yourself in abundance
everywhere in love on everyone and everything created by You.**

Yes, let our memory honor not only heroes past but also celebrate heroes present
who dare to say, “no” to every insanity of violence, denying Your will and way
of loving justice, hope, and peace.

By this, O Love, re-member us, and weave a healing wholeness in Your one human family.