



Worship Service Theme: Memorial Day

Welcome: Welcome! It's so good to be together to celebrate faith and community today. My name is ____ and I'll be leading our worship time today. Tomorrow [or this weekend] is Memorial Day, a very special day when we remember and honor the men and women who died while serving in the United States Armed Forces.

Who here served either stateside or overseas in any war? Which branch of the service were you in? We salute you today and give thanks for your service, as we remember those who fell in the line of duty. And we recall God's promise and fulfillment of triumph over death through his Son, Jesus Christ.

Please pray with me as we open our time together.

Opening Prayer: Great and loving God, we ask that your Holy Spirit bless our time together and to refresh us with your presence. In the midst of a world full of trouble and strife, we thank you for watching over us, guiding us, and as we confess our sins, for forgiving us. Enable us to enter your presence joyfully and reverently, and let us depart today with the assurance that our sins are forgiven. Fill us, O God, with the peace which passes understanding. Amen.

Opening Hymn: Doxology

Statement of Faith: Let us affirm our statement of faith by reciting Psalm 23 together:

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

²He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

³He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

⁴Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

⁵Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

⁶Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Suggested Hymns:

For the Beauty of the Earth

Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us

Amazing Grace

First reading: A History of Memorial Day¹

Originally known as Decoration Day, Memorial Day started in the years following the Civil War, which ended in the spring of 1865. The Civil War claimed more lives than any conflict in U.S. history and required the establishment of the country's first national cemeteries. By the late 1860s, Americans in various towns and cities began holding springtime tributes to these countless fallen soldiers, decorating their graves with flowers and reciting prayers.

On May 5, 1868, a Northern Civil War general called for a nationwide day of remembrance in late May "designated for the purpose of decorating the graves of comrades who died in defense of their country." He called it Decoration Day.

Decoration Day gradually came to be known as Memorial Day. The day originally honored only those lost in the Civil War. But during and after World War I, Memorial Day evolved to honor American military personnel who died in all wars. Memorial Day became an official federal holiday in 1971.

Memorial Day recognizes sacrifice for love, which is at the heart of the Christian faith. Hear Jesus' words to his disciples just before his death, from John 15: ¹²"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends."

Suggested Hymns:

Holy, Holy, Holy

Jesus Loves Me

Second reading: Job 19:25

¹ adapted from <http://www.history.com/topics/holidays/memorial-day-history>

For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

Suggested Hymns:
Softy and Tenderly
Leaning on the Everlasting Arms

Interactive Homily: Let's reflect a little more on the meaning of sacrifice.

- What does it mean to sacrifice?
 - Give up something; you consider something more valuable or worthy than something else, so you're willing to pay a price for it.
 - Who here loves baseball? In baseball, what's a sacrifice hit or bunt? "a bunted ball that puts the batter out but allows a base runner or runners to advance."
- With sacrifice, there's a tradeoff: something is willingly given up to gain something more valuable.
 - When we consider the sacrifice that men and women made as part of their service in the U.S. Armed Forces, what does that mean? What did those men and women sacrifice?
 - their lives, health, time with family, other careers
 - *Why* did these men and women sacrifice these good and valuable things? What did they consider more worthy or valuable than even their lives?
 - freedom, democracy, safeguarding our country
 - We often say the Pledge of Allegiance at patriotic events: (*recite with the group:*) "I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America. And to the republic for which it stands, one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."
 - "Liberty and justice for all" – is this yet a full reality?
 - No. Those who serve in our military are still sacrificing for this great goal of liberty and justice for all.
- Where do we see this notion of sacrifice in the Bible?

- John 3:16: “For God so loved the world, that God gave (that is, sacrificed) his only Son, that whoever believes in him might not perish but have eternal life.”
- What did God determine as so valuable that he was willing to sacrifice his son?
 - US! For God SO LOVED us.... to build a bridge between us, sinful people, and himself, holy and pure.
- “The message for Remembrance Day [Memorial Day] is the message that lies at the core of our faith: that death is not the end, because Jesus has defeated death.”²

... Let’s take a moment to silently pray and reflect on the meaning of sacrifice.

(Silent Prayer) ... Lord, hear our prayers. Now let us pray the Lord’s prayer together:

Lord’s Prayer: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever, Amen.

Suggested Hymns:

This is My Father’s World
It is Well with My Soul
Standing on the Promises

Third Reading: “In Flanders Fields”

This poem was written during WW1 in 1915 by Canadian doctor John McCrae to commemorate a fellow soldier’s death in Belgian Flanders.

Inspired by this poem, American professor Moina Michael thought up an idea to wear red poppies on Memorial Day. The wearing of poppies in the days leading up to Memorial Day remains popular in many areas.

² <http://www.faithandworship.com/Sermons/remembrance.htm>

In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.

Suggested Hymns:

**Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing
Shall We Gather at the River**

Fourth Reading: Prayer of St. Francis
Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,

and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.
Amen.

Suggested Hymns:

Blest Be the Tie that Binds

I Need Thee Every Hour

Closing Blessing: (Strike bell as you say the word “Lord”)

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and grant you peace. Amen.

Closing Hymn: Doxology (Reprise)