



Worship Service Theme: Memorial Day

Helpful Elements:

Green table covering (Ordinary Time)

Small U.S. (or appropriate country) flags for decorating the table or room

Red poppies in a vase or on your lapel (real or handmade; see instructions below)

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 our country's Armed Forces.

Other countries [recognize this day](#) with different names and on different dates, such as:

- Australia and New Zealand: Anzac Day, April 25
- Canada and the U.K.: Remembrance Day, second Sunday in November
- South Korea: June 6
- Turkey: Martyrs' Day, March 18
- Nigeria: Armed Forces Remembrance Day, January 15

In many countries, red poppies are the symbol of Remembrance Day. With a few simple craft supplies, you can make your own [lapel poppies](#) or [stemmed poppies](#).

Who here served in the U.S. armed forces, either stateside or overseas in any war? Which branch of the service were you in? *[Let people mention their branch.]* 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.

Please pray with me as we open our time together.

Opening Prayer: Great and loving God, we ask your Holy Spirit to 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 today joyfully and reverently, and let us depart with the assurance that our sins are forgiven. Fill us, O God, with the peace that passes all understanding. Amen.

Opening Hymn: Doxology, p. 1

Statement of Faith, p. 2: Let us affirm our statement of faith by reciting “The Lord is My Shepherd” 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 shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Hymns:

We Gather Together, p. 3

For the Beauty of the Earth, p. 4

Joyful, Joyful, p. 5

First reading: A History of U.S. Memorial Day¹ *[note: for other countries, research and insert the applicable history here]*

Originally known as Decoration Day, Memorial Day in the United States 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.

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

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 became known as Memorial Day and 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. As Jesus said just before his death (John 15): “Greater love has no one than this, that a person lays down his life for his friends.”

Hymns:

Jesus Loves Me, p. 6

Oh, How I love Jesus, p. 7

Holy, Holy, Holy, p. 8

Second reading: From the Old Testament book of Job (pronounced *Jobe*) (19:25): 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.

Hymns:

His Eye is on the Sparrow, p. 9

Leaning on the Everlasting Arms, p. 10

Interactive Homily: Let’s pause our singing for a moment and reflect a little more on the meaning of sacrifice.

- What does it mean to sacrifice?
 - Give up something
- What would make a person do that? Why would you give up something for something else?
 - You’re willing to pay a price for something *more valuable or worthy* than what you have to give.
 - Who here loves American baseball? In baseball, what’s a sacrifice hit or bunt?

- a bunted ball that puts the batter out but allows the batter's teammate on base to advance.
- With sacrifice, there's a tradeoff: something is willingly given up to purchase or gain something more valuable.
 - When we consider the sacrifice that men and women made as part of their service in the 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 one's country's values
- 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, faulty 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 with his sacrifice on the cross.

... 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.

Hymns:

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

He's Got the Whole World, p. 12

In the Garden, p. 13

Standing on the Promises, p. 14

Third Reading: "In Flanders Fields"

This poem was written during World War I in 1915 by Canadian doctor John McCrae to honor a fellow soldier's death in the Belgian area known as Flanders. Inspired by this poem, American professor Moina Michael came up with the idea to wear red poppies on Memorial Day.

Here's the original poem, "In Flanders Fields":

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.

Hymns:

It is Well with My Soul, p. 15

Amazing Grace, p. 16

Fourth Reading: This is the well-known and beautiful 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.

Hymns:

How Great Thou Art, p. 18

[sing more or fewer songs to fill out the time]

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

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his to face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and grant you peace. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Closing Hymn: Doxology, Reprise, p. 30