



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

Worship Resources: Veterans Day

ELCA Worship Resources for Veterans Day Sunday, November 11, 2018

In most years and at most times our churches make little or no mention of Veteran's Day. Historically and traditionally, Veterans' Day has been more a civic than a sacred observance. As with New Year's Day, Mother's Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, and others, Veterans' Day is not a part of the liturgical calendar — although sometimes local congregations will observe these days in some manner in the Sunday worship. This year, Veterans Day falls on a Sunday, which is also the 100th anniversary of Armistice Day. The following are options that can be used during the liturgy. For more resources, visit www.elcachaps.com (look under the tab, "Congregational Resources" for Veterans Day).

History

World War I ended on November 11, 1918, with the signing of the Armistice by the Allies and Germany. In the first Armistice Day proclamation in 1919, President Woodrow Wilson called for the nation to remember those who died in their country's service and to make the day an opportunity for America to "show her sympathy with peace and justice in the councils of the nations."

In 1927 Congress called for the display of the U.S. flag on government buildings, and in 1938 Congress called for observing Armistice Day in churches and schools — again dedicating the day to the cause of world peace.

Note the order here: the nation was telling the churches to celebrate this day. This was not an initiative arising from the churches, but from Congress. The timing was significant. The strong stirrings of World War II had already begun in earnest in Europe. The United States was still reeling from the effects of World War I and the Great Depression, and the political climate overall was against any sort of engagement in wars.

Of course, within just three years, the United States became involved in the War "over there" in Europe and "way out there" in the Pacific. Since the end of World War II, observances of Armistice Day have been held all over the nation, but especially in our national cemeteries and monuments and at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Washington, D.C. The president and many state governors have issued proclamations. Countless communities, veterans' groups, and civic clubs and organizations have held local observances.

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Armistice Day became Veterans' Day by an act of Congress in 1954, changing its purpose and scope. President Eisenhower called on the nation to remember the sacrifices of those who fought in all our nation's wars, to celebrate the contributions of all veterans of military service, and to rededicate ourselves to the task of promoting an enduring peace. It is Eisenhower's call that remains the three-fold purpose of Veterans' Day: remembering those who fought and died, celebrating all veterans, and promoting an enduring peace.¹

A Litany for Veterans

On this day, we remember those who have served in our armed forces

Pause for silent reflection

Prince of Peace, even as we pray for an end to war,
We give thanks for our soldiers' courage, for their love of country, and for their work to bring peace to our world.

Healer of All, bind up the wounds of all who have served
Show us how to comfort those who are hurting.

Merciful God, all suffer the cost of war.
We remember widows and widowers, orphans, and all those separated from those they love.

We pray, Gracious God,
that swords will be turned into plowshares and that peace will reign.
We give thanks for all who have served. Shield from danger those who bravely protect us. With them, may we glory not in war, but in your love and righteousness. Strengthen us to be your peacemakers in the world. Amen.²

Optional Prayers

The following prayers may be found in the *Evangelical Lutheran Worship: Prayer Book for the Armed Forces*.

Almighty and ever-living God, we give you thanks for the men and women who have served and defended our country and the values of freedom and justice we hold so dear. Help us be mindful of the sacrifices they made and the hardship endured by their families and friends, so that we never take for granted the privileges they have secured for us. Hear us, we pray, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (p. 66)

Almighty and everlasting God, whose providence guides your people in diligent service, bless the officers and enlisted women and men of the Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, and Coast Guard as they perform their duties of their calling. Give them not only true love of country but also love of you and an understanding of your love for all people; so that, relying upon your guidance, they may courageously defend our nation from every

¹ www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/suggestions-for-observing-veterans-day-november-11-in-worship

² Adapted from "A Litany for Veterans," The Rev. Tom Williams Whitefish Bay, Wis. Used with permission and reproducible for one-time congregational use with proper attribution.

foe, promote justice, honor, and unity among our people, and be a means of fostering mutual respect and understanding among all peoples of the world; through Jesus Christ, your Son and our Lord. Amen. (p. 63)

Almighty God, let your protection be upon all those who are in the service of our nation. Guard them from all danger and harm; sustain and comfort those at home, especially in hours of anxiety, loneliness, and sorrow. Prepare the dying for death and the living for your service. Uphold those who bear arms on land and sea and in the air; and grant unto us and all nations a speedy, just, and lasting peace, to the glory of your holy name. Amen. (p. 65)

Eternal God, we give thanks for all those who have shown the greatest love by laying down their lives for others. We especially thank you for those in our military throughout history who have sacrificed their lives for their fellow citizens and for us who came after. As we remember their service, keep us mindful of all those for whom this day is a burden, and send your spirit of comfort to them. Be present with all the women and men who are serving in the military today. [Though they are at war] let them live for the peace known only from you. Help us to be worthy of their legacy, and keep us mindful of their service, that in all things we may live our lives in praise and thanksgiving to you; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (p. 65)

Merciful God, you grieve amid the pain, fear, and suffering of your children. Look with compassion on all who endure the miseries of war. Be mindful, too, of those who day and night face peril in defense of our nation. Guide them in their duties as they seek justice for our nation. Guide them in their duties as they seek justice for those subjected to tyranny and liberty for those who are oppressed. Eternal Protector of the helpless, hear the cry of the distressed and grant speedy deliverance in a new day of peace and concord. Amen. (p. 65)

Other Ideas for Worship

- ❖ Following the Hymn of the Day, include the *Affirmation of Baptism for Returning Veterans*. This is found in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship Prayer Book for the Armed Forces*, p. 125ff.
- ❖ Following the Prayer after Communion, prior to the Blessing, include the *Affirmation of Christian Vocation*. This is found in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, p.84. Invite all veterans forward or to stand where they are.
- ❖ Set-up a world map somewhere in the worship space or fellowship hall, invite people to place the name of service man or women who is currently serving and pin their name to the location of their service. This could be done during the prayers of intercession and offering a prayer for each of those persons and places.
- ❖ Purchase in advance and dedicate in worship copies of the *Prayer Book for the Armed Services* to be shipped to those in the congregation serving in the military or to our ELCA military chaplains around the globe and afloat. (Copies may be ordered [online](#) or by calling Augsburg Fortress at 800/328-4648.)

- ❖ Consider coordinating with local congregations to do an “11 – 11 – 11 pealing of the bells in gratitude for the end of WW1. Or ring your congregation’s church bells or carillon at 11:11 a.m. If you have a carillon it would be appropriate to program it to play one of the hymns from the “National Hymn” section of the ELW.

Hymn Suggestions

<i>Before You, Lord, We Bow</i>	ELW #893
<i>Bring Peace to Earth Again</i>	ELW #700
<i>God of Grace and God of Glory</i>	ELW #705
<i>Dona nobis pacem</i>	ELW #753
<i>Let Justice Flow like Streams</i>	ELW #717
<i>Let Streams of Living Justice</i>	ELW #710
<i>Lord of All Hopefulness</i>	ELW #765
<i>Lord of All Nations, Grant Me Grace</i>	ELW #716
<i>O God of Every Nation</i>	ELW #713
<i>O Day of Peace</i>	ELW #711
<i>This Is My Song</i>	ELW #887
<i>When Our Song Says Peace</i>	ELW #709

RESOURCES

Resources Available from Augsburg Fortress:

-  *Evangelical Lutheran Worship: Pew Edition*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006.
-  *Evangelical Lutheran Worship, Leaders Desk Edition*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006.
-  *Evangelical Lutheran Worship: Prayer Book for the Armed Forces*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2013.
-  *Sundays and Seasons*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress. Print version published annually by church year.
 -  Also available as an online subscription at www.sundaysandseasons.com.

OTHER RESOURCES

-  www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources
-  www.elcachaps.com, Congregational Resources