

VFW Poppy Presentation Service

A Respectful Tribute Honoring a Deceased VFW or Auxiliary Member
(Traditionally conducted during the viewing or visitation)

Opening Words

Comrades, family, and friends, on behalf of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and its Auxiliary, we gather to honor and remember a life of service. Death is one of life's hardest realities—it separates the spirit from the body, a loved one from those who cherished them. We feel the deep ache of loss, yet we also come together to celebrate the courage and devotion of _____.

For a veteran: When the call of our country was heard, _____ answered. Self was set aside for the greater good. With steadfast commitment, this veteran served in the United States _____, upholding the ideals of freedom and justice. _____ was a true patriot—a model of honor and sacrifice for all of us.

For an auxiliary member: When the call to serve those who served was heard, _____ answered. With unwavering dedication, this VFW Auxiliary member championed the mission of honoring veterans and supporting the VFW, upholding the ideals of loyalty, service, and compassion. _____ was a true patriot—a model of devotion and sacrifice for all of us.

Presentation of Certificate of Remembrance

At this time a framed Certificate of Remembrance can be read and presented to the family or placed at the memorial table, urn, or casket, or laid beside the flag.

The Meaning of the Poppy

The red poppy stands as a symbol of remembrance for those who served and sacrificed. It speaks of fields where courage bloomed, of blood freely given, and of peace purchased at great cost. Though small, the poppy carries profound meaning. It reminds us that freedom is never free. Each poppy is a promise—that we will remember.

Presentation of the Poppies

On behalf of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, its Auxiliary, and a grateful nation, we present a poppy in honor of a life lived in service—a comrade, a loved one, a hero. As each poppy is laid, it stands as a tribute: this veteran's service mattered, their sacrifice is remembered, and their legacy endures.

(The poppy may be placed at the memorial table, urn, or casket, or laid beside the flag.)

Explanation of Procedure

(The explanation is for the participants and explained to them prior to the service)

After the chime sounds, two individuals will approach the casket or urn and gently lay their poppy. They will then render a slow hand salute before returning quietly to their seats.

The chime will sound again, and the next individuals will proceed. This continues until all have had the opportunity to lay a poppy. Please proceed promptly when the chime sounds so that all may participate without delay.

Between each poppy presentation there is a reading of a verse or two of In Flanders Fields. Do not try to recite the entire poem at once. It shouldn't be forced. Other poems and narrations can also be used for the ceremony. The objective is to keep the flow of people moving. Here is a picture of a chime that works well with this service.

Poems and Narrations

In Flanders Fields by John McCrea

In Flanders Fields the poppies grow
Between the crosses, row on row,



Woodstock Wind Chimes Zenergy
Solo Hand Chime, Silver (7")

That mark our place. While in the Sky
The larks still bravely singing, fly
Unheard, amid the guns below.
We are the dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawns, saw sunsets glow;
Loved and were loved – but now we lie
In Flanders Field

Take up our quarrel with the foe!
To you from falling hands we throw
The torch, Be yours to bear it high!
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep tho' poppies blow
In Flanders Field.

The Answer – is one of many poems written in response to *In Flanders Fields*

*In Flanders Field the cannon boom
And fitful flashes light the gloom.
While up above, like Eagles, fly
The fierce destroyers of the sky.
With stains the earth wherein, you lie
Is redder than the poppy bloom
In Flanders Field.*

*Sleep on ye brave! The shrieking shell,
The quaking trench, the startling yell,
The fury of the battle hell
Shall wake you not; for all is well.
Sleep peacefully, for all is well.
Your flaming torch aloft we bear,
With burning heart an oath we swear
To keep the faith to fight it through
To crush the foe, or sleep with you
In Flanders Field*

In New York in November 1918 an American woman called Moina Michael came across the poem *In Flanders Fields* by John McCrae. She was so moved that she made a personal pledge to “keep the faith”. She felt compelled to make a note of this pledge and hastily scribbled down a response entitled “We Shall Keep the Faith” on the back of a used envelope. From that day she vowed to wear a red poppy of Flanders Fields as a sign of remembrance.

We Shall Keep the Faith by Moina Michael, November 1918

Oh! you who sleep in Flanders Fields,
Sleep sweet - to rise anew!
We caught the torch you threw
And holding high, we keep the Faith
With All who died.
We cherish, too, the poppy red
That grows on fields where valor led;
It seems to signal to the skies
That blood of heroes never dies,
But lends a lustre to the red
Of the flower that blooms above the dead
In Flanders Fields.
And now the Torch and Poppy Red
We wear in honor of our dead.
Fear not that ye have died for naught;
We'll teach the lesson that ye wrought
In Flanders Fields.

She Is Gone (He Is Gone) by David Harkins, 1981

You can shed tears that she is gone
Or you can smile because she has lived
You can close your eyes and pray that she will come back
Or you can open your eyes and see all that she has left

Your heart can be empty because you can't see her
Or you can be full of the love that you shared
You can turn your back on tomorrow and live yesterday
Or you can be happy for tomorrow because of yesterday
You can remember her and only that she is gone
Or you can cherish her memory and let it live on
You can cry and close your mind, be empty and turn your back
Or you can do what she would want: smile, open your eyes, love and go on.

Legacy of a Veteran, Author Unknown

You marched with courage, heart, and pride,
Through distant lands, so far and wide.
You stood for peace, your duty true,
A silent hero, brave and true.

Through battles fought, through night and day,
You paved for us a safer way.
The flag you served now rests with grace,
In hearts you touched, you hold a place.

Now sleep dear soldier, rest in light,
Your spirit shines through stars so bright.
Forever honored, brave and strong,
In grateful hearts, you will live on.

Words of Commitment

As comrades, we do not forget.
As a nation, we remain grateful.

As stewards of memory, we carry forward the values for which this veteran served—duty, honor, and devotion to others.

- Consider making this a responsive reading or a unison affirmation for added engagement:
Leader: As comrades, we do not forget.
All: As a nation, we remain grateful.
Leader: As stewards of memory, we carry forward the values for which this veteran served.
All: Duty, honor, and devotion to others.

Benediction

Let us pray.

Almighty God, we give thanks for the life we honor today.

We are grateful for service rendered, for sacrifices made, and for love shared.

Grant comfort to those who mourn, strength to those who carry on, and peace to all who rest from their labors. May we live lives worthy of the freedom entrusted to us. Amen.

Military Honors

At this time, there will be a three-volley rifle salute followed by the playing of **Taps**. Please stand and prepare for the rifle salute.

Conclusion

This brings our Poppy Presentation Service to a close. On behalf of everyone here, I extend my heartfelt condolences to the family during this difficult time. Thank you for joining us as we honored and celebrated the life of _____.