

CEREMONY OF RESTORATION

Chaplain Bonita Barnes & Chaplain James Ryan
North Little Rock, AR

A. Who

- a. **Who conducts the ritual?** *A chaplain and a reader (usually a MH nurse)*
- b. **In addition to the leader, are there other participants?** *Reader and a Greeter*
- c. **For whose benefit is the ritual intended?** *Veterans*
- d. **Who is the audience and what is their role?** *Veterans. Participate in Responsive Reading and movement to table at front of room.*

B. Where

- a. **Where does the ritual take place?** *The VA Chapel.*

C. When

- a. **How often does the ritual occur?** *As needed or requested*
- b. **How long is the ritual?** *30-45 minutes*
- c. **Is there a specific occasion or a specific day or time of day for the ritual?**
Non-specific

D. What

- a. **Is there a specific text for the ritual?** *See below.*
- b. **Please discuss the procedure for conducting the ritual.** *See service notes.*

E. How

- a. **If relevant to the ritual, include comments on music, setting, lighting, clothing/costume, food, flowers, and decorations.** *See service notes.*

Ceremony of Restoration

Service Notes

Preparation Set-Up:

In the front of the group is a table covered with a blue, green or beige tablecloth.

On the table are two containers – one on each end of the table. On the left end of the table is a combat helmet, i.e., a vessel symbolizing military service. As an alternative, this could be a canteen cup, a bowl covered with cammo cloth, a fatigue cap, etc. On the right end of the table is a large vessel filled with river stones, in the center of which is placed an inner container (smaller bowl). During the service, water will be poured over the river stones to surround the inner container. This will represent healing and restoration with an image of still waters, cleansing, peace.

Military unit patches or service insignias (pins) belonging to each of the services to which the Veterans belonged should be available to each of the participants. Note: if Veterans bring their personal patches to the ceremony, be sure to return them after the service.

In the center of the table, between the two vessels, there may be placed a book or list of names of those who have laid down their lives in service to signify the sacrifice others have made for peace. We have compiled and been using a book of names listing all who have died in the Global War on Terror.

A large candle is centered behind the book and should be lighted during the appropriate part of the service.

Staff and Volunteers: Service is conducted by a chaplain and a reader. Musicians may be included for meditative music before and after the service. Additionally there may be a greeter at the door to hand out bulletins. Silence is encouraged until the service begins.

Printed programs with the responsive readings are provided to all attendees.

The combat helmet (steel pot) can be purchased on E-bay for about \$8. The river stones can be purchased at Hobby Lobby or Michaels for around \$3. The large and small bowls can be brought from home. Service patches can be ordered on-line for about \$3 each. Candle courtesy of our sacristy, along with a lighter. Book of remembrance: we compiled the book from lists from Iraq and Afghanistan on <http://icasualties.org/Iraq/index.aspx>.

E-mail copies of this file can be obtained by contacting the presenters:

Ceremony of Restoration

Please maintain silence until the service begins.

Order of Service

[Meditative pre-service music]

Words of Welcome

Chaplain

Gathering

We gather today to name our sorrows and share new visions.

We gather to heal our pain and rekindle our hope.

We gather because the journey is long.

We gather because we long for a new day.

May this gathering serve to strengthen, encourage, and renew us.

Purpose

Reader

[Military insignias represent more than simply a unit to which a service member is assigned. A service insignia symbolizes investment a warrior made in defense of this nation in time of war or peace. You hold in your hand an insignia representing your military service. As you think about that investment of your life, those experiences, situation, circumstances, are there any particular actions and/or events for which you feel regret? What memories are you carrying with you that keep you from living your life as you want to live? If you served in a combat zone, what from that experience do you want to let go? Maybe it is the memory of people who died. Maybe you were involved in actions that went against your beliefs and values. Choose whatever may be on your heart and let this military insignia represent it – whether one thing or many.]

Responsive Reading

from Psalms 69, 55, 61

Save me, O God! The water is up to my neck;

I am sinking in deep mud, and there is no solid ground;

I am out in deep water, and the waves are about to drown me.

I am worn out from calling for help, and my throat is aching.

I have strained my eyes, looking for your help.

I am like a stranger to my relatives, like a foreigner to my family.

Answer me, Lord, in the goodness of your constant love;

In your great compassion turn to me!

Don't hide yourself from your servant;

I am in great trouble – answer me now!

I wish I had wings like a dove.

I would fly away and find rest.

But I am in pain and despair;

Lift me up, O God, and save me!

TAKE ME TO A SAFE REFUGE, FOR YOU ARE MY

PROTECTOR.

Moments of Reflection

Releasing the Past

Chaplain

[When you are ready, you are invited to place the insignia representing your service in the combat helmet on the table to your left. As you do so, you are placing yourself, what or who your insignia represents, into the container. Once you have placed your insignia in the helmet, please return to your seat.]

A Prayer from India says, in part:

**All: Like an ant on a stick both ends of which are burning,
I go to and fro without knowing what to do,
Like the inescapable shadow that follows,
The weight of war can haunt me.**

Lighting the Memorial Candle

At the center of the table are a book and a candle. The book contains the names of all who have laid down their lives for our country in this Global War against Terror. Their sacrifice, like so many before them in many wars and conflicts, is commemorated as we light the Memorial Candle.

Meditative thoughts

Chaplain

Counting our Losses

(Responsively)

Remembrance is a sacred moment when we raise up and hold up to the light of Eternity, those who have given life itself.

In the rising of the sun and in its going down,

We remember them.

In the blowing of the wind and in the chill of winter,

We remember them.

In the opening of buds and in the rebirth of spring,

We remember them.

In the blueness of the sky and in the warmth of summer,

We remember them.

In the rustling of leaves and in the beauty of autumn,

We remember them.

When we are weary and in need of strength,

We remember them.

When we are lost and sick at heart,

We remember them.

When we have joys we yearn to share,

We remember them.
So long as we live, they too shall live,
**For they are now are part of us, as we remember
them.**

Mourners Kaddish (Jewish Tradition)

An Act of Restoration

[You have placed into the combat helmet an insignia representing the weight of war that shadows you. The container on the right end of the table symbolizes forgiveness, peace and restoration. Many Jewish people observe a custom on the first afternoon of Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, where they walk to flowing water, such as a creek or river [*pour water into bowl*], and empty their pockets into the river, symbolically casting off their sins. When you are ready, you are invited to come forward again and take your insignia from the combat helmet and, leaving the weight of war on that side, move your insignia to the bowl in the midst of the water on the right side of the table and return to your seat.]

Silence for Reflection

Prayer

God, you have delivered us from the scourge of war. May we who have been scarred by war be reconciled to each other, to our enemies, and to you. May we become peacemakers in all that we do. May we always be channels and instruments of your peace. Grant to those who are as yet untouched by war the great gift of continued freedom from the terrible agonies of armed conflict. We ask this in the peace which you alone can provide. Amen.

Words of Parting

As we close our gathering, let us read the following prayer together:

May what is wounded in my life be restored to good health.

May I be patient with the time it takes to heal.

May I find moments of beauty and joy to sustain me.

May I keep hope in my heart.

[All participants are invited to take a river stone with them if they so desire as a reminder of restoration.]