



United Methodist Endorsing Agency

General Board of Higher Education & Ministry | Division of Ordained Ministry

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AN ORDER FOR BLESSING SERVICE MEMBERS DEPLOYING FOR WAR

The pastor calls the service member forward together with his/her family.

Pastor to congregation:

Scripture calls all Christians to pray for those in authority, to honor them and to be subject to them as they support those who do what is good, reprimand those who do wrong and provide for a just ordering of society. Those who are called to military service act as instruments of these authorities. Today we recognize _____ (Job title/rank/name) as he/she departs to serve in _____. (Theater of Operation)

The pastor may briefly describe the assignment that the military service member is departing to fulfill.

The service member may kneel or stand as the pastor and the family members/loved ones lay hands on him/her.

Pastor to service member:

_____, (First name) on behalf of this congregation, I pray God's blessing be upon you as you journey into harm's way. While you are serving in _____ (Theater of Operation) we promise to remember you in prayer, uphold you with encouraging communications and surround your loved ones, who remain at home, with a community of care and support. As you deploy in service to our country, may the Lord be the stronghold of your life. May you rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation and be constant in prayer. May the Holy Spirit guide and sustain you through every experience and may the peace of God which passes all understanding keep your heart and mind in Christ Jesus, Our Lord.

Let us pray:

The pastor and the congregation pray together:

Almighty God, we commend to your love and care, _____ . (Full Name) Be with him/her now as he/she prepares to face the challenges of deployment and the uncertainties of war. Grant him/her wisdom and courage so that he/she may discharge his/her duties with integrity and faithfulness. Help him/her to endure hardship with grace and humor. Fill him/her with compassion for those who go the journey with him/her. Protect him/her from all danger, O God, and comfort him/her in moments of distress. During this time of separation, be for his/her loved ones a source of hope and strength and hasten the day when peace may finally come. Amen.

AN ORDER FOR WELCOMING SERVICE MEMBERS RETURNING FROM WAR

The pastor calls the service member forward together with his/her family.

Pastor to congregation:

In 1749, Charles Wesley wrote these words:

“And are we yet alive, and see each other’s face?

Glory and thanks to Jesus give for his almighty grace!”

It is with joy and thanksgiving that we this day welcome _____ (Job title/rank/name) as he/she returns from service in _____. (Theater of Operation)

The pastor may briefly describe the assignment that the military service member has just completed.

_____ (first name), on behalf of our congregation, I want to thank you for your service to our country and thank your family for their many sacrifices during your deployment.

The pastor may briefly describe any family events of significance that occurred during the family member’s absence (births, deaths, graduations, etc.)

Pastor to service member:

_____ (first name), you have been to war and you have survived. We recognize that there is a deeply personal cost for being a warrior that few of us will ever fully understand.

The gospels tell us about a man who had been living among the tombs, and who called himself Legion because he was haunted by so many disturbing spirits. When Jesus saw him, he had compassion on him and gave him release from his demons. As you return to us today, we want you to have the opportunity to leave behind what is past and accept for yourself the healing and comfort that God alone can provide.

The service member responds:

I have returned from war – help me continue my journey home.

The service member may kneel or stand.

Pastor to congregation:

Let us be in prayer:

The pastor and the congregation pray together:

Almighty and merciful God, we lift up to you this day our brother/sister _____ who through your great love has been returned to us. For your protection, guidance and sustaining presence while he/she was in harm’s way, we give you profound thanks.

With _____ (*first name*), we mourn the loss of all those who did not return home and pray for all those who have been wounded in body and spirit. We pray also for their loved ones, that in you they might find a source of hope and strength.

Silence may be kept for the remembrance of names or specific individuals may be named aloud.

Remembering that even your son Jesus still had scars after he was resurrected, we pray that you will continue to uphold _____ (first name) as he/she seeks healing for the wounds that inflict the spirit of all who endure a struggle. Help him/her to let go of painful memories. Help him/her to reconnect with those who love him/her. Help him/her to know that he/she no longer needs to be quite so vigilant, for you have the watch over his/her life. In Jesus name, we pray. Amen

Pastor to service member and congregation:

In the Epistle to the Romans, the apostle Paul asked, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?"

And then he answered the question with these words:

"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Pastor to service member:

_____ (first name), in service to your country, you may have been required to act in ways that are outside the parameters of civilized behavior. Reflecting on these memories may be painful and discomfoting. I ask you now, in the presence of this community of faith, to offer up a silent prayer for all that you have experienced that grieves your spirit and weighs heavily on your heart.

A moment for silent prayer will be observed.

Hear now these comforting words from the Scripture:

"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11: 28)

A moment for silent prayer will be observed.

The service member turns and faces the congregation.

The pastor and congregation proclaim:

_____ (*First name*), may the peace of God be with you.

The service member responds:

And also with you.

Pastor to congregation:

Members of the household of faith, I commend to your love and care our *brother/sister* _____
(*first name*). Do all in your power to continue to uphold him/her so that one day, by the renewing power
of the Holy Spirit, true peace may again dawn in his/her life.

Pastor to service member and congregation:

Now may the blessing of God be with all of us as we look toward that glorious day described by the
prophet Isaiah who said: "They shall beat their swords into plowshares, And their spears into pruning
hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, Neither shall they learn war anymore."

*Liturgies prepared by Laura Bender, U.S. Navy, endorsed member of the New York Annual Conference.
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