



American Legion  
Auxiliary

# Chaplains' Prayer Book



**A Community of Volunteers  
Serving Veterans, Military,  
and their Families**





**CHAPLAINS' PRAYER BOOK  
OF THE  
AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY**

AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY  
NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS  
3450 Founders Road  
Indianapolis, IN 46268  
(317) 569-4500  
[alahq@ALAforVeterans.org](mailto:alahq@ALAforVeterans.org)  
[www.ALAforVeterans.org](http://www.ALAforVeterans.org)

**Revised 2021**

## **INTRODUCTION**

At the 86th National Convention in Salt Lake City, Utah, a vote was taken to create an American Legion Auxiliary Chaplains' Prayer Book. This book is the result of that vote.

The prayers on the following pages are a compilation of those submitted by past chaplains of the American Legion Auxiliary. Wherever possible, credit has been given to the individual who contributed the prayer.

Although the material contained in this book may be changed or altered to suit the user, it should be noted that care has been taken to revise and edit the material to reflect the true non-denominational and non-sectarian views of the "Service to God and Country" programs of the American Legion Auxiliary.

Please use this book when and wherever possible. It has been written with love and prayer for all that these words touch.

*Dr. Ann Fournier, PhD, Past National Chaplain*

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Responsibilities of an American Legion Auxiliary Chaplain.....	5
Invocations .....	6
Benedictions .....	8
Table Graces for Meals .....	10
Prayers for Holidays .....	12
New Year .....	12
Easter .....	12
Memorial Day .....	12
Flag Day.....	13
Independence Day .....	13
Veterans Day .....	14
Thanksgiving.....	14
Christmas.....	15
Jewish Prayer for the Sabbath & Festival .....	16
Prayers for .....	16
American Legion Auxiliary .....	16
Auxiliary Special Events.....	17
America.....	21
Civil Authorities .....	21
Military.....	22
Miscellaneous Prayers & Poetry.....	26
Ceremonies .....	29
Funeral Service .....	29
At the Graveside .....	31
POW/MIA Ceremony .....	31
Four Chaplains Day Program .....	34



## **RESPONSIBILITIES OF AN AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY CHAPLAIN**

The chaplain should attend all meetings and have an opening and closing prayer at each meeting. These prayers may come from any source: Reflections in the quarterly *Auxiliary* magazine, [www.ALAforVeterans.org](http://www.ALAforVeterans.org), self-composed prayers, or those found elsewhere.

As a chaplain, the most important thing for you to remember is that the American Legion Auxiliary does not promote any one religion. We must not offend anyone by promoting our own religion.

Suggested activities:

- Reporting the names of members who are ill and sending them cards.
- Sending sympathy cards to family members. If possible, visiting the funeral and doing a memorial service for the deceased member.
- Being in charge of religious services for the unit.
- Visiting members and veterans in nursing homes or those who are shut-ins.
- Keeping in contact with Gold Star Families and remembering them on holidays.
- Volunteering at community projects.
- Making a prayer book or devotional book. In doing this, encourage member participation.

Ceremonies may be found in the *Manual of Ceremonies of American Legion Auxiliary* located at [www.ALAforVeterans.org](http://www.ALAforVeterans.org).

## INVOCATIONS

Almighty God, Father of all mankind and Judge over nations, we pray Thee to guide our work in this meeting and in all our days. Send Thy peace to our nation and to all nations. Hasten the fulfillment of Thy promise of peace that shall have no end.

We pray for all those who serve the people and guard the public welfare; that by Thy blessing they may be enabled to discharge their duties honestly and well. We pray for our members; that by Thy help they may observe the strictest justice; keep alight the fires of freedom, strive earnestly for the spirit of democracy, and preserve untarnished our loyalty to our country and to Thee.

We especially ask Thy blessing and comfort for all those who are suffering from the ravages of war. May our duty to them be ever alive in our minds. Finally, O God of Mercy, we remember lovingly before Thee our departed heroes who received from Thee the reward of life everlasting. May their splendid example guide us, now and forever. Amen.

\* \* \* \* \*

Dear Lord, as we gather for this meeting, give us the use of Your gift of peace and understanding that we may approach the matters we must handle with sincere and just hearts. May You watch over and guide our tongues that we may not hurt our friends with whom we work for the betterment of our communities and our country. Keep us always true to the principles on which The American Legion was founded. We ask this in Your name. Amen.

\* \* \* \* \*

Dear Lord, we thank You for our meeting and for the many chairmen who report the many works our members are doing in our local communities.

We thank You for Your guidance in our decision-making, and we ask that we receive it again today. We thank You for the leadership we have received.

Thank You, Lord, for America and the servicemen and women who defend and protect our freedoms. Please be with them and keep them and their families in Your care. Please help there to be peace so they may soon return home. All this we ask in Your precious name. Amen.

\* \* \* \* \*



Almighty God, creator of all that has been, that is, and is still to come, be with us as we pray, as we meet as members and friends of the American Legion Auxiliary. Be with us as we meet our commitments as members of this great organization. Guide our hearts and minds as we work together for You, our God and our country. Amen.

\* \* \* \* \*

Heavenly Father, we thank You for our veterans, our servicemen and women, and The American Legion Family. Thank You for those present at this meeting this evening. Be with us and guide us as we make many important decisions that will affect all the members of our organization.

Help us to remember that everyone's opinions are essential in making the correct decisions. Help us to always remember our true purpose as the American Legion Auxiliary.

Bless and guide our president as she conducts the meeting. Be with our servicemen and women, and keep them in Your care. May all our decisions praise Your name. Amen.

\* \* \* \* \*

Dear Lord, we thank You for those present here today and the freedom we have to gather together to serve God and country. Thank You for the members serving our veterans. We thank You and ask that You be with our many men and women serving in the military on foreign soil to protect our freedoms and the freedoms of others. Please be with their families, and give them strength as they wait at home for their loved ones to return. Help there to be peace soon. May all that we do glorify Your name. Amen.

\* \* \* \* \*

Dear Lord, we thank You for America, our government leaders, and our veterans who gave so much. Thank You for members of The American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary. Help us to always remember we are here to serve God and country. Thank You for our men and women serving in the military, and please keep them in Your care.

Lord, we ask Your blessings for this meeting. Guide us in all we do and let all we do praise Your name. In Your name, we pray. Amen.

\* \* \* \* \*

Lord, God Almighty, You have brought us safely to the beginning of this day. Defend us today by Your mighty power, that we may not fall into any sin, but that all our words may so proceed and all our thoughts and actions be so directed, as to be always just in Your sight.

Direct, we beg You, O Lord, our actions by Your holy inspirations, and carry them on by Your gracious assistance, that every prayer and work of ours may begin always with You, and through You be happily ended. Amen.

## BENEDICTIONS

O God from whom all holy desires, all right counsels and all just works do proceed, give to Thy servants that peace which the world cannot give; that our hearts may be disposed to obey Thy commandments, and the fear of enemies being moved, our times, by Thy protection, may be peaceful.

O God, who will not let the nations who believe in Thee to be overwhelmed by any peril: Permit them to receive the prayers and offerings of Thy servants, that in Thy mercy Thou molds. Grant peace to all people, and make them secure against all their enemies.

O God, the author and lover of peace, to know whom is to live, to serve whom is to reign; shield Thy people from all assaults, so that we who trust in Thy protection may fear no foe. We ask this through God's name. Amen.

\* \* \* \* \*

Heavenly Father, we thank You for Your guidance in the American Legion Auxiliary. We thank You for the officers and members who have made important decisions for our organization. Thank You for Madam President, our officers and chairmen, and our past presidents.

Thank You for our servicemen and women and ask that You protect them as they protect us. Please be with those present as they go out and enjoy fellowship together, and deliver them home safely. In Your name, we pray. Amen.

\* \* \* \* \*

Dear Lord, send us away tonight in harmony, peace, and goodwill to spread the spirit of our love for our country. Be with us, and guide us in our labor for our fellowman. Amen.

\* \* \* \* \*

God, we ask Your presence with each of us as we begin our journeys to our homes, that we may have a safe return. Be with us until we meet again. Amen.

\* \* \* \* \*

Accept our praise, O Lord, for the blessings of this day and hour. Give us, we pray, a willing attitude and grateful hearts. Amen.

\* \* \* \* \*

Grant, O Lord, that as Americans and Auxiliary members we may continue to help our veterans and those in need.

We thank You for the people assembled here, and we pray You will bless their many works. Be with us, we pray. Amen.

\* \* \* \* \*

Lord, thank You for the fine leadership we have in our unit, and thank You for the fellowship and new friends we have made.

Our business meeting is now ending, and You have guided us well. May we use what we have learned here to help with our work for our veterans, our children, and our nation.

Please be with our servicemen and women, and keep them safe and return them home to their loved ones soon. Please watch over us, and keep us safe as we return to our homes and loved ones. All this we ask in Your name. Amen.

\* \* \* \* \*

As we depart one from the other, may God bless us and keep us. Into His gracious protection we commit ourselves. May He be near us to defend us, with us to refresh us, around us to preserve us, before us to guide us, behind us to justify us and above us to bless us and keep us from all evil. Amen.

\* \* \* \* \*

Dear Heavenly Father, be with us as we leave this place. Grant us a peaceful night of rest as we prepare for our departure. Be with us, and keep us in thy grace as we go our separate ways that we return to our homes safely. As always, we pray for the servicemen and women who serve our nation and the families who wait for their return. Keep them safe. These things we ask in Thy Holy name. Amen.

\* \* \* \* \*

Dear Father, we give thanks that we again have had the opportunity to come together. We are grateful for this time of work and fellowship. We pray that what we have done has been only for the betterment of those we serve. As we prepare to leave, each to go our separate ways, we pray once again for those who serve our country—that they may return to their loved ones safely. Now, dear Father, keep us in Your grace and be with us until we meet once again. Amen.

\* \* \* \* \*

Dear Lord, thank You for the fellowship we have received here today. We ask that You be with our guest(s) and keep Him/Her/Them safe. Be with our members, and keep them in Your care. In Your name, we pray. Amen.

## **TABLE GRACES FOR MEALS (PLEASE REMAIN SEATED)**

We thank Thee, O Lord, for those who have prepared the food we are about to partake, and for those who serve it. May the food and fellowship strengthen us to serve You better. In Your name, we pray. Amen.

\* \* \* \* \*

We are thankful, Father, for all the blessings You have given to us and for the fellowship we have shared with those here. We ask that You heal those who could not be with us due to sickness. As always, we pray for our service personnel and their safe return to their families.

We thank You, Lord, for this meal, for those who prepared it, and for those with whom we share it. We ask that we be strengthened with Thy grace as we strive to keep America “One Nation Under God.” Amen.

\* \* \* \* \*

For the joy of life, we are grateful to Thee, Oh God, for the fun we have as we share with one another. We thank You. We pray that the food we are about to receive will be used to strengthen us to better serve You. Amen.

\* \* \* \* \*

Dear Lord, may this meal that we share be seasoned from above with Thy blessings and Thy grace – but most of all, Thy love. Amen.

\* \* \* \* \*

We thank Thee, O Lord, for the food given us this day, and we pray that it may strengthen and sustain us in body and mind to serve Thee by doing our daily tasks faithfully and well. Grant that we be ever grateful for all Thy blessing to us. Amen.

\* \* \* \* \*

Bless, O Lord, for this food to our use, and us to Your service; and keep us ever mindful of the needs of others. Amen.

\* \* \* \* \*

Our Father, how great Thou art! You have blessed us in so many ways and we thank You—for the opportunity to unite in this moment of prayer, this special privilege we have in America. We ask Your blessing as we strive to keep America “One Nation Under God.” Amen.

\* \* \* \* \*

Gracious God, we have sinned against Thee and are unworthy of Thy mercies. Pardon our sins and bless these mercies for our use. Help us to eat and drink to Thy glory for Christ’s sake. Amen.

\* \* \* \* \*

Accept our thanks, O Heavenly Father, for all the expressions of Thy goodness and mercy toward us. We thank Thee for this food received from Thy bounty. May Thy protecting care and watchfulness be over each of us as we carry on for God and country. Amen.

\* \* \* \* \*

Dear God, we are gathered here to give thanks for the food You have set before us. We also give thanks for this beautiful day, the circle of friends, and the opportunity to be together.

May God’s blessings, peace, and love rest upon our tables, forever in God’s light. Amen.

\* \* \* \* \*

Give us grace to be grateful for the blessings, which Thou hast so bountifully spread before use this day.

Amen.

\* \* \* \* \*

We thank Thee, O Lord, for this food and all the blessings so generously provided. Amen.

## **PRAYERS FOR HOLIDAYS**

### **NEW YEAR**

Lord, as we begin a new year, let us resolve to keep a promise, seek out a forgotten friend, listen, laugh, brighten the heart of a child, encourage the young, appreciate our elders, express our gratitude, take pleasure in the beauty and wonder of life, and speak Your love to others.

Dear Lord, guide us in the New Year to grow closer together in our families, in our units, in our world. Let us always strive to bring peace to the world. Let us live each day to the fullest. For all the blessings of the year, we give You thanks, O Lord. Amen.

### **EASTER**

We thank Thee, O God, for the day in which life and immortality were brought to light through the resurrection of our blessed Lord from the dead. Evermore in heart and mind, we shall sing praises of joy to Him and we shall show our love for Him by our thoughts, words, and deeds, our helpful service to others, and faithful performance of all our obligations.

We earnestly ask Thee to bless and preserve all whom we love, to comfort and aid all in trouble and distress. We offer our thanksgiving for all graces and favors we have received from You. Amen.

### **MEMORIAL DAY**

Dear God, as we approach Memorial Day, may we honor and remember those who died that we might live in freedom. We remember our departed loved ones. Those we honor will be a part of our lives forever.

O God, we are mindful of Your great love for us. We are thankful for that love. We praise You for the blessings of love and friendship, for our families, and our homes. Amen.

\* \* \* \* \*

Lord, be with us and be our guide in time of need. We ask Your support in all we do. Help us to reach out to one another, to communicate and show real care for others. Help us to be open to new experiences of personal growth and challenge. May we be alert to the opportunities before us each day.

Accept our thanks, Lord, for the leaders of our American Legion Auxiliary, for their work this year, and for their leadership. As they have worked for God and country, we give them our grateful thanks. Amen.

## **FLAG DAY**

O God, we thank thee for the flag of our country and for all that our flag represents. We thank Thee for giving the victory to the brave and valiant men and women who gave their last measure of strength in order that it may wave over the land of the free and the home of the brave. We thank Thee for giving us the ideals of faith and liberty, for preserving the sanctity of our homes, and freedom of worship. Conscious of our limitations and our deep unworthiness, we pray that our flag may bind together the many elements in our own dear country. Grant that this country may remain forever a free union flying the same flag. Amen.

## **INDEPENDENCE DAY**

God, we remember the courage and determination of our founding fathers. We remember the brave patriotic men and women who gave so much for us. We thank them that we are a free nation and a free people. It is through them that we carry forward the ideals of justice, freedom and democracy.

Lord, we pray for our elected officials, and for sound government and just laws. Lord, make us ever proud to be Americans.

We ask that You rekindle the flame of compassion within us so that we might show real care for our fellowman. Teach us to be sensitive to the needs of others. Grant that as Americans and as Legion

Family, we may continue to help our veterans and those in need. Be with us and guide us, we pray. Amen.

\* \* \* \* \*

A Freedom Blessing:

May you always have your life in God's hands.

May liberty surround you.

May your pursuit of happiness always come true.

May you have health and coins in your pocket.

May the sun shine in your life.

May the rainbow always follow the rain.

May you always know a friend is near.

May God fill your heart, our country and the world with peace.

May God bless America and place His love in your heart.

## **VETERANS DAY**

Dear Lord, as we come into this fall season, let us be ever mindful of others. Help our members as we get our programs underway for our veterans and communities. Help us always to keep them uppermost in our minds and never stray from that "want" to help others. Guide our hearts and minds as we work together for You and our country. We thank You for all things. In Thy holy name, we pray. Amen.

## **THANKSGIVING**

Lord, thank You for Your everyday gifts to us. We have so much to be thankful for, not just on Thanksgiving Day, but each new day that You give us. We give You our thanks, Lord.

Our prayers of Thanksgiving join those of our forefathers. God, You know the words we so often speak; but more than that, You know the secrets of our beam. We thank You for this day.

Lord, we pray for peace in the world. We thank You for people who stand for truth and that which is right. Give Your blessing, Lord, to our veterans who have given so much for our freedom. Remember those who have given the supreme sacrifice, for we pray they will never be forgotten. Be with us, we pray. Amen.

\* \* \* \* \*

Our Heavenly Father, we thank Thee for this day with its opportunities for service. We thank Thee for sustenance and Thy guiding hand—for friends, companions, and loved ones. Send Thy blessing upon our dear ones wherever they may be. To those in sorrow, reveal unto them the comfort and humaneness of Thy tender mercy. Help us all to be more constant in our praise and obedience to Thee. Amen.



## CHRISTMAS

Our Heavenly Father, on this holy Christmas day, our hearts are filled with solemn joy and gratitude for the gift of the Savior, Christ the Lord. For the fullness of His grace, and for His redeeming love, we humbly join in ceaseless praise and thanksgiving.

\* \* \* \* \*

In Thy infinite mercy, our Father, grant to us and to all others, the spirit of kindness, goodwill, and charity. Hasten the day when men shall again hear the angel chorus paying homage to Thee, the Prince of Peace, singing again the glad tidings "Glory to God in the highest and on Earth peace to men of goodwill." Amen.

\* \* \* \* \*

We beseech Thee, O Lord, that we, who rejoice in celebrating the nativity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, may never cease to be grateful to Thee for Thy divine gift. May our actions at all times be directed toward good works and helpful ministrations, which are pleasing to Thee.

Bless us all, we earnestly pray; gladden our hearts anew with the joyful tidings of this holy day. Let the day soon dawn when men shall permit Thy love to right every wrong, and when truth and justice and love shall overrule all the affairs of men, that here and everywhere there shall prevail the glorious message of the first Christmas morning "Peace on Earth to men of goodwill" through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

\* \* \* \* \*

Dear Lord: This Christmas, let us:

Mend a quarrel. Seek out a friend. Dismiss your doubt with trust.  
Write a letter. Share some treasure.

Answer softly. Encourage youth. Show mercy in word and deed.  
Keep a promise. Find the time. Forego a grudge. Forgive an enemy.  
Listen. Apologize. Try to understand. Flout envy.

Examine Your demands on others. Think first of someone else.  
Appreciate. Be kind and gentle. Laugh a little. Take up arms against malice. Go to church. Welcome a stranger. Gladden the heart of a child. Love. Amen.

## **JEWISH PRAYER FOR THE SABBATH & FESTIVALS**

Make us rejoice, O Lord our God, with Elijah the prophet, Thy servant, and with the kingdom of the house of David, Thine anointed. Soon may Elijah come and bring joy to our hearts. May no stranger occupy David's throne, and may no usurper inherit his glory. For by Thy holy name Thou hast promised unto him that his light will never be extinguished. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, the Shield of David. We give Thee thanks and bless Thee, O Lord our God, for the Torah, and for the worship of this day and for the prophets, as well as for this Sabbath day which Thou, O Lord our God, hast given us for holiness and for rest, for glory and delight. Evermore may Thy name be continually praised by every living being. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who hallowest the Sabbath.

## **PRAYERS FOR AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY**

Lord, as we work in our great organization, help us look beyond outward appearances to the person underneath. Teach us to love and accept them. Forgive our critical thoughts and harsh words; replace our impatience with Your love and forgiveness.

Open our eyes to the needs of the world and fill our hearts with love. Make us sensitive to the issues of poverty; racial, sexual, and age discrimination; war and peace; and pollution and environment. O God, help us to recognize and grasp the opportunities for service that each one of us might make a difference.

Let us reach out and touch someone with a helping hand. Help us to never lose sight of Your continual guidance in our lives as we work for our fellowman. Amen.

\* \* \* \* \*

Our Father, we are truly thankful for the good things You have given us, especially the gift of life. Father, let the peace of God flow into the hearts of every member of this unit and every unit in the American Legion Auxiliary throughout the world.

Make us believe in peace, its supreme necessity, its possibility, and its value for the hearts of the Auxiliary and the lives of the nations. Father, grant up the knowledge, wisdom, and patience to learn to live in peace with one another and with Thee in our everyday life, these things we ask in Your holy name. Amen.

\* \* \* \* \*

Dear Lord, we pray for peace among all people on our Earth. Help us to understand our neighbors and to be thoughtful of all beings. Give us the strength to be compassionate and caring for the people who need our care and understanding. Guide us in our service to God and country, as an organization and as individuals, that we may make a difference in the lives of our children and youth, our veterans—especially homeless veterans—and our members. We pray for Your understanding and guidance in all we do. Amen.

\* \* \* \* \*

Lord of us all, may You help us to strive to do the best job possible in our work with the American Legion Auxiliary. May we continue our work with the same love and dedication to You as borne by the members who came before us.

Help us to be mindful to pass the torch to future American Legion Auxiliary members with pride in hopes that they will carry on the tradition of our faith and loyalty to God and country. Amen.

## **PRAYERS FOR AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY SPECIAL EVENTS**

### **MEMORIAL SERVICE**

Almighty God, grant to us the grace to remember with love and reverence our dear departed members. Grant peace and eternal rest to those who have gone before us. We ask for consolation for those who sorrow, and that You bestow upon us Your everlasting blessing.

We are thankful for the lives we have remembered here today. May their memory serve as an inspiration to us. Be with us and bless us, we pray. Amen.

### **INSTALLATION**

God, this is the beginning of a new year of work in our beloved American Legion Auxiliary. Let us speak words of encouragement to our newly elected officers. Be with them, God, as they work to lead us in working on all the good programs we hold so important.

Remember each one of our members, for they are needed in their own units for the work in their communities. Let us all work for God and country together in harmony and love.

Dear God, teach us to think in wisdom and act in love and caring for others. Amen.

## **GIFT SHOP OPENING**

O God, we come with grateful thanks today for the unit members who are represented here in these lovely gifts for others. Our members have given their time and effort to provide this beautiful Gift Shop for our hospitalized veterans and their families. Love and care are exemplified by the members who serve so willingly to provide a happier Christmas for veterans and their loved ones. We thank You, Father, for the joy they bring.

Let us remember the lonesome and often forgotten individuals and give them the joy of packages, visitors, and carols.

O God, we wish we could all keep the same joy of this day overflowing all year. Keep our hearts joyful, Lord, we pray. Amen.

## **EVENTS HONORING GOLD STAR MOTHERS**

Dear Heavenly Father, we are gathered here this day to honor the Gold Star Mothers (or members) of this community—women who have given a loved one in our country’s defense. Their sacrifice has been great. Keep them always under Thy loving care and tender mercy. May their courageous spirit and unselfish patriotism inspire us, O Lord, to greater service for our beloved country and for Thee.

May the beauty and luster of the Gold Star which they so proudly wear ever remain a challenging symbol to us, and, as their loved ones gave their “last full measure of devotion” to preserve the ideals of free America, may we, in grateful remembrance, ever remain steadfast in our devotion to Thee, O Lord, and may the time be not far distant when, throughout the world, there may be righteousness and peace. Amen.

\* \* \* \* \*

Our Father who art in Heaven, we thank Thee for the opportunity of meeting here this day, and especially that we may pay reverent tribute to these Gold Star mothers (or members) whose loved ones died for us in war’s heavy toll. Let us always honor the memory of these brave men and women, and all of our heroic dead, for their supreme service and their incomparable sacrifice.

Our Father, may we work side by side, serving constructively for the security and progress of America, with these valiant women over whose hearts the Gold Star gleams as an evidence of their own faith, their courage and their high spirit of patriotic devotion.

Very earnestly do we pray for the hastening of the day when, among all peoples of the Earth, Thy kingdom will come, Thy will be done, and all the Earth shall seek refuge in Thee. Amen.

### **ALA JUNIOR MEMBER GRADUATION**

Our Heavenly Father, we ask Thy blessing on these Junior members who are now being received into our senior members group. May the high and lofty principles and ideals for which our organization stands inspire them and strengthen them to fulfill all their obligations and duties as loyal patriotic American citizens, obedient to Thy will at all times. May they be true leaders among their friends and associates and thus reflect the training and dignity which membership in our organization affords them. Receive them under Thy loving care and protection now and forevermore. Amen.

\* \* \* \* \*

Almighty God, as these ALA Junior girls assume the duties of senior membership, may they have more firmly implanted in their minds and hearts the unselfish and courageous service and sacrifice of a loved one in our country's defense which has earned for them this coveted privilege of membership in our organization. May they always remain loyal to God and country, and responsive to whatever obligations or duties may devolve upon them, at all times revealing by their thoughts, words, and actions a constant devotion to Thy teachings as expressed in the Golden Rule. Amen.

### **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING**

Our Heavenly Father, we ask that Thy blessing may rest upon us as we gather here for this meeting. May our deliberations have Thy divine guidance, and may we now and in the days to come rededicate our organization and ourselves to the advancement of our sacred ideals, ever remembering that the American Legion Auxiliary's principal service is for God and country. Direct us so that we may perform our duties faithfully and efficiently; and abundantly bless us all, forevermore. Amen.

\* \* \* \* \*

We thank thee, O God, that we are privileged to come together for this Executive Committee meeting. Direct our thoughts and our deliberations so that we may exhibit fair judgment and understanding of the matters submitted and trials of a world at war. Endow us with fortitude, courage, and faith. Bless those gone away from our homes

into the service of our country. Be their companion in danger, their solace in pain, and at death, grant them eternal rest in Thy heavenly Kingdom. Continue to surround us all with Thy loving care. Amen.

## **ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION OF THE AMERICAN LEGION/AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY**

Heavenly Father, bless us as we are gathered here to celebrate the anniversary of The American Legion/American Legion Auxiliary, that great organization which has continued to serve America for the past \_\_\_ years. We thank Thee for the opportunity which has been given to the American Legion Auxiliary to have a part in everything The American Legion has done and in sharing its endeavors.

Grant that the patriotic enthusiasm which inspired these Legionnaires to serve our country in time of war may continue to guide their activities at all times, and that the principles of justice, freedom, loyalty, and democracy be preserved for a happy and secure America. Bless all of our efforts for God and country, and may we continue to be mutually helpful to each other. Amen.

\* \* \* \* \*

Almighty God, we thank Thee for permitting us to gather here for the purpose of celebrating the anniversary of the founding of The American Legion. We thank Thee for granting to the mothers, spouses, sisters, daughters, granddaughters, great-granddaughters, and grandmothers of these men the opportunity to share their unselfish program of service consecrated to God and country.

Deepen our earnestness and devotion to the high ideals for which our two organizations stand. May our numbers be increased, and may we, as members of these two great patriotic organizations, with Thy help, rededicate ourselves anew to our work. Lead us fearlessly, courageously and nobly, increasing our usefulness and tempering our work with constant prayer for peace in our hearts. Amen.

## **DEDICATION OF HONOR ROLL (IF UNIT IS ASKED TO HAVE A PART IN THE CEREMONY)**

O God, bless those whose names appear upon this Honor Roll and all who have gone from our homes and hearts into the service of our country. Grant to them patience in the long wait, hope in the dark hours, steadiness in victory, and loyalty in defeat. We thank Thee for

the unselfish devotion of those who have sacrificed their lives that we might enjoy the liberties for which our forefathers fought.

Especially, Dear Lord, let Thy blessing abide this day upon those of us whose lot it is to be at home in time of war. Teach all the ancient wisdom that “They also serve who only stand and wait.” Amen.

## **PRAYERS FOR AMERICA**

Almighty God, who has given us this good land for our heritage, we humbly beseech Thee that we may always prove ourselves a people mindful of Thy favor and glad to do Thy will. Bless our land with honorable industry, sound learning, and pure manners.

Save us from violence, discord, and confusion; from pride and arrogance, and from every evil way. Defend our liberties, and fashion into one united people the multitude brought hither out of many kindreds and tongues.

Endow with the spirit of wisdom those to whom in Thy name we entrust the authority of government, that there may be justice and peace at home, and that through obedience to Thy law, we may show forth Thy praise among the nations of the earth.

In time of prosperity, fill our hearts with thankfulness, and, in the day of trouble, suffer not our trust in Thee to fail—all of which we ask through Christ our Lord. Amen.

\* \* \* \* \*

Strengthen our devotion to Thy teachings and make us worthy of the citizenship, which these young people are fighting to maintain. Bless those in authority in our city, state, and nation with wisdom to know and strength to do their duties honestly and well. Hear our prayer, Our Father; help us and bless us. Amen.

## **PRAYER FOR CIVIL AUTHORITIES**

Heavenly Father, we thank You for all You have done for us in years past. We thank You for Your guidance and for the trials You have given us to make us strong. We ask that You give us peace around the world, and strengthen our nation. Protect our servicemen and women and their families, and guide our world leaders. Be with The American Legion Family and our leaders that we will glorify Your name in all we do. In Your Holy name, we pray. Amen.

# PRAYERS FOR THE MILITARY

## A SOLDIER'S PRAYER

Lord, bless the wives who grieve alone and comfort the mothers who mourn their own.

Give solace to the fathers who lost their sons on foreign shores and in places unknown.

Lord, strengthen the resolve of we who remain to see that they did not die in vain. Amen.

\* \* \* \* \*

Dear Lord, there is a young man or woman far from home, called to serve their nation in a time of war, sent to defend our freedom on some distant foreign shore. We pray You keep them safe. We pray You keep them strong, we pray You send them safely home, for they've been away so long. Bless those who await their safe return and those who mourn the lost. Bless those who serve this country well, no matter what the cost. God, bless America and her heroes ... and thank You for the privilege to serve. Amen.

\* \* \* \* \*

We acknowledge our gratitude to Thee, Our Father, for all good gifts. May we prove by our use of them that Thy trust has been well bestowed. May we be ever constant and faithful in our service of mercy, comfort, and cheer to those veterans whose bodies and minds have been maimed in battle, to the needy families, the widows, and orphans, and all who in any way have suffered or are now suffering from the honors of war. May our ministrations to them and our activities in their behalf always be pleasing to Thee and be guided by Thy holy will. Amen.

\* \* \* \* \*

Heavenly Father, bless those who cry out for peace in times of war. Bless those who speak of love in times of hate. Bless those who move with courage in times of fear. Bless those who stand for justice in times of retribution. Bless those who keep the faith in times of uncertainty. Bless those who seek out good in times of evil. Bless those who believe in life in times of death. Amen.

\* \* \* \* \*

Heavenly Father, we thank You for Your love and forgiveness. Thank You for our young people, our families, our jobs, and our servicemen and women. We ask that You guide our young people, as they are



our future leaders. Please be with our servicemen and women, and keep them in Your care. We ask that You be with our servicemen and women who have returned home, and help them as they try to put their lives back to normal. In Your name, we pray. Amen.

\* \* \* \* \*

Dear Lord, we thank You for the many blessings You have given us. Thank You for our veterans and our servicemen and women. Thank You for America, where we may worship You as we choose. Please be with our government leaders and The American Legion Family as they try to keep those rights strong. Please protect our servicemen and women and their families at home. May there be peace soon. In Your name, we pray. Amen.

\* \* \* \* \*

Heavenly Father, we thank You for all You have done for us in years past. We thank You for Your guidance and for the trials You have given us to make us strong. We ask that You give us peace around the world and strengthen our nation. Protect our servicemen and women and their families and guide our world leaders. Be with The American Legion Family and our leaders that we will glorify Your name in all that we do. In Your Holy name, we pray. Amen.

## **OUR MILITARY**

Most gracious Heavenly Father, thank You for the men and women of our armed forces. Protect them as they protect us, and defend them as they defend us. Encourage and strengthen their spirit, soul, and body in the execution of their duties and responsibilities. May they be mentally and physically strong as they face the challenges of combat. Under grid them with Your spirit and might when they are called upon to endure the hardships of battle. Thank You, Lord, for providing America with the best trained, equipped, and led military force in the world today. Fill them with Your saving grace, and the gospel of peace that they may be shining examples of Your love. In Your precious name, we pray. Amen.

## **THE FAMILIES OF OUR MILITARY**

Heavenly Father, we thank You for our servicemen and women who are protecting us here at home and preserving our freedoms. Please protect them, and keep them in Your care. Please be with the families of these servicemen and women, and protect them as they

await the return of their loved one. Give them strength physically and emotionally as they too have hardships here at home. Help them financially, and keep their spirits up. Be with those who have lost their loved ones and now have but memories. Thank You, Lord, for our brave servicemen and women, and thank You, Lord, for their families who wait at home. Bless them all, and protect them so that they may once again be united as a family. In Your name, we pray. Amen.

\* \* \* \* \*

Lord, we thank You for this beautiful day, for our family and friends, and for our veterans who have given so much so that we may remain a free country. Please watch over our members, and keep them in Your care. Bless those who are ill and lonely. Thank You for our servicemen and women, and keep them safe until they return home. Be with their families as they wait for them at home. May there be peace soon. In Your name, we pray. Amen.

\* \* \* \* \*

Dear God, help us to trust You more and to listen for Your guidance. Help us to look beyond color, race, culture, and status and to love each other as You first loved us. We thank You for Your presence in our lives. Help us to be faithful disciples willing to help those in need around us. Thank You for the opportunities You have given us to serve. As we serve our veterans and our communities, we strive to do this very thing. May You bless the service personnel around the world giving so much of themselves to protect the rest of us. Keep Your loving arms around them, and keep them safe. We will give You all the praise. Amen.

\* \* \* \* \*

Almighty God, we pause to give You thanks for the many blessings You have bestowed upon us. We are deeply grateful for Your great wisdom that leads each of us where we ought to be, though often we are unaware of Your guidance. Thank You for those who have served in the military in the past and for those who are serving our country today. May we remember to express our gratitude to each of these people at every opportunity. We further pray that You will bless our leaders and give them direction as they serve the American Legion Auxiliary. We ask that You continue to keep us where we can be of service to You and to others. Once again, we thank You for all You have done for each of us and for our country. May You continue to bless America. Amen!

## **THE WAR BEREAVED**

Almighty God, sustain with Thy healing power all those whose loved ones have given their lives in the service of our country. Redeem, we pray Thee, the pain of their bereavement, that knowing their loss to be the price of our freedom, they may remember the gratitude of the nation for which they gave so costly a sacrifice. And grant, O Lord, that we may highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain, and that out of the agony of the present hour, there may arise a new and better world in which Thy will shall rule. Amen.

## **IN WARTIME**

O God, our refuge and our strength, we beseech Thee to guide and protect our nation in the fiery trial of war. Grant us true repentance, and take away the offenses of our people, that with clean hands and pure hearts we may go forward in Thy name. Save us from hatred, cruelty, and malice. Imbue our leaders with courage and wisdom. Strengthen and protect our defenders by land, by sea, and by air, and suffer no dishonor to stain our arms. Safeguard and multiply the ministries of mercy; heal the wounded, receive the dying, and comfort the bereaved. Bless those who labor in field and factory, in office and home, for our country's welfare. Make a speedy end of tyrannies in the earth, and deliver the desolate and oppressed of all nations. Hasten the advent of a righteous peace, and with great might establish Thy Kingdom. Amen.

## **PEACE**

Lord, make me an instrument of Thy 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; and 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.

## MISCELLANEOUS PRAYERS & POETRY

### OLD IRISH VERSE

May the road rise up to meet you—May the wind be always at your back, May the sun shine warm upon your face, And the rains fall soft upon the fields, And until we meet again, May God hold you in the palm of His hand. Amen.

### I SAID A PRAYER FOR YOU TODAY

I said a prayer for you today  
And know God must have heard;  
I felt the answer in my heart  
Although He spoke not a word.  
I didn't ask for wealth or fame,  
I knew you wouldn't mind,  
I asked Him to send treasures  
Of a far more lasting kind.  
I asked that He'd be near you  
At the start of each new day,  
To grant you health and blessings,  
And Friends to share your way.  
I asked for happiness for you  
In all things great and small -  
But it was for His loving care  
I prayed the most of all.

### A NEW YEAR

Another year is dawning  
With the chance to start anew.  
May I be kinder, wiser, Lord.  
In all I say and do.

Not so caught up in selfish gain  
That I would fail to see  
The things in that mean the most  
Cost not a fancy fee.

The warm, kind word that I can give,  
The outstretched hand to help,  
The prayers I pray for those in need—  
More precious these than wealth.

I know not what may lie ahead  
Of laughter or of tears;  
I only need to know each day  
That You are walking near.

I'm thankful for this brand new year  
As now I humbly pray,  
My hand secure in Yours, dear Lord.  
Each step along the way.  
Amen.

### **A DAY WORTHWHILE**

I count that day as wisely spent  
In which I do some good  
For someone who is far away  
Or shares my neighborhood.

A day devoted to the deed  
That lends a helping hand  
And demonstrates a willingness  
To care and understand.

I long to be of usefulness  
In little ways and large  
Without a selfish motive  
And without the slightest charge.

Because in my philosophy  
There never is a doubt  
That all of us here on earth  
Must help each other out.

I feel that day is fruitful  
And the time is worth the while  
When I promote the happiness  
Of one enduring smile.

## **PEACE**

Peace in my heart—this is my prayer  
Quiet contentment, to have and to share  
Each new tomorrow, blesses and real  
Each wondrous dawning, a daybreak ideal.

Peace in my home, this I would ask  
Sharing each burden, to lighten our task,  
Laughter abundant, so much that's worthwhile  
Faith, hope, and courage—bright, happy smile.

Peace in this country, this is my dream  
Peace we might cherish—joyous, supreme,  
No more of hatred, no more of crime  
Peacefulness only, in heart and mind.

Peace in our world, this is my prayer  
With one God to guide us, and one God to care,  
All of us neighbors, then surely we'll see  
That peace is the answer to eternity.

## CEREMONIES

**These are only simple ceremonies. A more complete choice may be found in the *Manual of Ceremonies of American Legion Auxiliary* located [www.ALAforVeterans.org](http://www.ALAforVeterans.org).**

### FUNERAL SERVICE

The American Legion Auxiliary service is non-sectarian. Therefore, it may be varied in accordance with the religious belief of the deceased. The wish of the family of the deceased, and of the officiating pastor, should be respected.

**President:** Death has entered our ranks and members of (name of unit) of the American Legion Auxiliary are here to pay tribute to one who has been called to the High Command.

**Chaplain:** Let us pray. God of infinite love and mercy, draw near to us in this hour of grief. Open our hearts to Thy comforting presence and our eyes to the realities or eternal life. May the darkness of death give place to the dawn of eternity, and the present pangs of separation to the joys of future reunion.

Grant us, O Father, that our present sorrow may bring us closer to Thee, and that our hearts may be cleansed and purified by Thy grace. We thank Thee for the understanding that death does not really separate us from the departed. Help us to look beyond the grave and see the glories of that new life. Help us to know that our loved ones who have passed on are not dead, but are living and enjoying Thy grace and love more than when here upon earth.

O Father, we earnestly pray for our departed member, that she may enter into all the joys of the life beyond. We pray that by cherishing her memory and by cultivating Thy presence, we, too, may grow up into that more perfect life in which death has no power and sin no part. Amen.

**President:** Eternal rest grant unto her, O Lord.

**Chaplain:** And let perpetual light shine upon her.

**President:** May she rest in peace.

**Chaplain:** Amen.

**President:** May her soul and the souls of all faithful departed through the mercy of God rest in peace.

**Chaplain:** Amen.

**Chaplain:** Let us pray. O God, our heavenly Father, who ushered Thy children into life and recalls the soul to Thyself in Thine own good time, we thank Thee for the sweet memory of those dear to us who have been gathered to their fathers. We praise Thee for all the hallowed influences of our lives and for the rest and peace, which they have found with Thee. May they still be a joy and an inspiration to us; may they quicken us to a more useful life, to higher hopes and greater contentment of spirit, so that in our departure we, too, may leave a memory and example that shall serve as a hope and inspiration to those who follow us.

Send Thy consolation, we pray Thee, to those who today recall the loss of loved ones. Speak peace to hearts that are wounded by recent bereavement. Comfort them with the thought of Thy wisdom and justice, which Thou in Thy fatherly love, grants to Thy trusting children.

In final submission to Thy will and in joyous hope of life everlasting, we praise Thee in whose hands are the souls of all creatures and the spirits of all flesh.

**President:** Extolled and hallowed by the name of God throughout the world which He has created, and which He governs according to His righteous will. Just is He in all His ways, and wise are all His decrees. May His kingdom come, and His will be done in all the earth.

**Chaplain:** Praised be the Lord of life, the righteous Judge forevermore. Amen.

*(Music if desired.) Scripture. Appropriate portion, such as Psalms 15th, 23rd.*

**Unit President:** This final moment of visible presence with the one who has left us is sacred. Let us not remember her in anguish, for she would not have it so. Tears or words of sympathy cannot bring back the comfort of those loving hands, or the music of the voice that is stilled. Only solemn pride in her service is theirs who live to remember.

To those who are left behind, we realize how futile are mere words to express our deep and abiding sympathy in their loss. May they feel that she is at rest and in endless peace.

Surely there is an afterlife for all who have been loyal and true: a life to which light and peace shall come, where the burden shall be lifted and the heartache shall cease, where the love, the hope, and the



fulfillment that escapes us here shall be given to us to be ours forever.

*When there is a service at the home, the president and members may at this point place a poppy or carnation within or upon the coffin.*

*Benediction by chaplain, if desired.*

**Unit President:** Goodbye, till morning come again,

We part, if part we must, with pain,  
But night is short, and hope is sweet,  
Faith fills our hearts, and wings our feet  
And so we sing the old refrain,  
Goodbye, till morning come again.  
Goodbye, till morning come again,  
The thought of death brings weight of pain  
But could we know how short the night  
That falls, and hides them from our sight,  
Our hearts would sing the old refrain,  
Goodbye, till morning come again.

## **AT THE GRAVESIDE**

*If no previous American Legion Auxiliary service has been held, the service for church, chapel, or home may be read at the grave, prior to the following committal.*

**Unit President:** Forasmuch as it has pleased God to take unto Himself the soul of our departed member [name], we therefore place these poppies, the memorial flower of the American Legion Auxiliary, in her memory.

*Chaplain places poppies on casket or in a designated place.*

**Chaplain:** The Lord bless and keep you. The Lord make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace, both now and evermore. Amen.

*Benediction.*

## **POW/MIA CEREMONY**

**Narrator:** Today, we pay tribute to the men and women who have served our nation unselfishly. Within each of us lies the American spirit, a burning desire to dedicate and commit ourselves to the

American ideals of freedom. This desire is deep within the heart and soul of each Soldier, Sailor, Airman, Marine, and Coast Guardsman. It is undaunted by weather conditions, living conditions, or hardship of mission.

When the bells of freedom first rang out, we were there at Bunker Hill, Lexington, and the brutal winter at Valley Forge. Thousands of us gave our lives at Bull Run, Manassas, Antietam, and Gettysburg. We rode with Teddy Roosevelt and his Rough Riders up San Juan Hill.

Whenever and wherever America called, we were there. We fought battles of the Marne and Chateau Thierry in World War I. We were at the Battle of the Bulge, the Ardennes Forest and all along the European front of World War II. We endured Corregidor. We survived the Bataan Death March. We raised the Flag at Iwo Jima. We landed at Utah and Normandy on D-Day, 1944.

We have never failed to answer our country's call.

We fought the unrelenting fight at the 38th parallel, better known as Korea. We trudged through the rice paddies and jungles of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. We were the 241 Marines killed in Beirut. We were the pilots who flew the daring mission against Libya and international terrorism.

America has always counted on us. We were the peacekeepers in the Sinai; liberators of the tiny island nations of Grenada; restorers of democracy in Panama; victors in the sand of the Middle East. We were givers of hope in Somalia and Bosnia.

America's military has always been the beacon of freedom, shining for all to see. We have marched with our heads held high and served with pride.

Through all these periods of war and American history, one question remains unanswered: Where are our brothers—our prisoners of war, our missing in action veterans?

This is not an absence of choice but rather one, which emulates duty, honor, and country. Let us remember their absence. *(Pause)*

We call your attention to the small table, which occupies a place of dignity and honor. It is set for one, symbolizing the fact that members of our armed forces are missing from our ranks. They are referred to as POWs and MIAs. We call them comrades. They are unable to be with their loved ones and families, so we join together to pay humble tribute to them, and to bear witness to their continued absence.

The table is small, symbolizing the frailty of one prisoner, alone against his or her suppressors.

The tablecloth is white, symbolic of the purity of their intentions to respond to their country's call to arms.

The single rose in the vase signifies the blood they may have shed in sacrifice to ensure the freedom of our beloved United States of America. This rose also reminds us of the family and friends of our missing comrades who keep faith, while awaiting their return.

The red ribbon on the vase represents the red ribbons worn on the lapels of the thousands who demand, with unyielding determination, a proper account of our comrades who are not among us.

A slice of lemon on the plate reminds us of their bitter fate.

The salt sprinkled on the plate reminds us of the countless fallen hearts of families as they wait.

The glass is inverted; they cannot toast with us at this time.

The chair is empty. They are NOT here.

The candle is reminiscent of the light of hope, which lives in our hearts to illuminate their way home, away from their captors, to open arms of a grateful nation.

The American flag reminds us that many of them may never return—and have paid the supreme sacrifice to insure our freedom.

*As you say the following, a veteran of each military branch will place his or her cap, on the appointed plate. If preferred, members of The American Legion; American Legion Auxiliary, including Juniors; or Sons of The American Legion could place a flower rather than a cap.)*

Please rise. *Wait a few seconds.*

In honor of the United States Army, we place this cap [flower]. In honor of the United States Marines, we place this cap [flower]. In honor of the United States Navy, we place this cap [flower]. In honor of the United States Air Force, we place this cap [flower]. In honor of the United States Coast Guard, we place this cap [flower].

Please observe one minute of silence to honor these missing Americans. *Pause for one minute.*

Remember them, for surely they remember you. May God forever watch over them and protect them and their families.

## **FOUR CHAPLAINS DAY PROGRAM**

- Words of welcome by the president or commander
- Invocation
- Pledge of Allegiance
- The Story of the Chapel (See below.)
- Talk in memory of Chaplain George L. Fox
- Music
- Talk in memory of Chaplain Alexander D. Goode
- Offering (donated to American Legion Auxiliary program or Chapel of Four Chaplains)
- Talk in memory of Chaplain John P. Washington
- Music
- Talk in memory of Chaplain Clark V. Poling
- “God Bless America” (sung by all)
- Benediction
- Taps

## **THE STORY OF THE CHAPEL**

Early on the morning of February 3, 1943, the U.S. troop transport “Dorchester” was wallowing through icy seas off Greenland. Most of the 900 troops on board were asleep in their bunks. Suddenly a torpedo smashed into the Dorchester’s flank. The troops milled in confusion on the decks.

In those dark moments of panic, the coolest men aboard were four U.S. Army chaplains: First Lieutenants Clark V. Poling, Alexander D. Goode, John P. Washington, and George L. Fox. The four chaplains led the men into boxes of life jackets and passed them out to the soldiers with boat-frill precision. When the boxes were empty, the four chaplains quietly slipped off their own precious life preservers, put them on four young GIs and told them to jump.

The Dorchester went down 25 minutes later in a rumble of steam. Some 600 men were lost, but the heroic chaplains had helped save over 200. The last anyone saw of them, they were standing on the slanting deck, their arms linked in prayer to the one God they all served.

Far away in North Africa, Dr. Daniel A. Poling, distinguished American clergyman and father of Chaplain Clark Poling, was crouching in a foxhole when he learned of the heroic death of his son and his three fellow chaplains. In his mind was born the idea of a shrine in the memory of this noble sacrifice: a shrine where people of

all faiths could worship God in a spirit of unity without the need of uniformity.

In the heart of a great city, Philadelphia, the chapel opens its doors to people of all races and religious faiths. Every Sunday, there is a service of worship. It is also a memorial to the four chaplains who went down on the S.S. Dorchester. It is an interfaith shrine; in it are three altars: one for each faith—Catholic, Jewish, and Protestant. Above the entrance burns an eternal light that calls men to the unity these four chaplains so heroically demonstrated. Chiseled deep into the stone is this dedication:

*Chapel of Four Chaplains  
An Interfaith Shrine  
Here is Sanctuary for Brotherhood  
Let it never be violated*

**George L. Fox** was the oldest. In Vermont, they called him “the little minister” because he was only 5 feet, 7 inches tall. In 1917, he lied about his age and enlisted in the Marines as a medical corps assistant. He won a Silver Star for rescuing a wounded soldier from a battlefield filled with poison gas, although he himself had no gas mask on.

When George Fox came home to Vermont, he continued his education and became a public accountant as he had planned. He was successful, happily married, with two children. Then one evening he came home from work and told his wife he wanted to study for the ministry, and she approved. So George Fox became a minister.

The war came again. “I’ve got to go,” he told his wife. “I know from experience what our boys are about to face. They need me.” Before he boarded the Dorchester, he wrote a letter to his little daughter. She received it after the news that the ship was torpedoed. “I want you to know,” he wrote, “how proud I am that your marks in school are so high—but always remember that kindness and charity and courtesy are much more important.”

**Alexander D. Goode** was too young for World War I. While George Fox was winning medals on the battlefield of France, Alexander Goode was receiving medals in Eastern High School, Washington D.C., for tennis, swimming, and track. He led his class in scholarship too.

He planned to follow in his father’s footsteps and become a Rabbi, but that did not keep him from having a laughing, shouting, hail-

fellow-well-met boyhood with all the Protestant and Catholic boys in the neighborhood.

He married his childhood sweetheart, and they had four children. After he got his synagogue, he felt he was still not worthy. He would know better how to heal men's souls if he knew how to heal their bodies too, so for three years, he drove every day to John Hopkins University, 45 miles away, until he won his medical degree.

On day in 1943, Mrs. Goode received a telegram from her husband: "Having a wonderful experience," it read, and then Mrs. Goode knew her husband had found a warm companionship with the men with whom he could share his faith and his laughter.

**Clark V. Poling** was the youngest of the Four Men of God. Clark's first letter was written to his father. It was written in square block printing and addressed to his mother. The letter found Dr. Poling, February 1918, in a dugout on the Western front of another World War. The letter read: "Dear Daddy: Gee, I wish I were where you are. Love, Clark." And in exactly 25 years, that eager little boy received his wish. Clark was the seventh generation in an unbroken line of ministers of the Gospel.

When the war came along, he did not want to go as a chaplain. "I can carry a gun as well as the next guy," he told his father. "I'm not going to hide behind the Church in some safe office out of the firing line."

"I think you're scared," the elder Poling joked. "Don't you know the mortality rate of chaplains is the highest of all? As a chaplain, you have the best chance in the world to be killed. The only difference is, you can't carry a gun to kill anyone yourself." And so Clark Poling became a chaplain.

Just before Clark sailed, he visited his father. They were alone in D. Poling's study when Clark turned to his father and said, "Dad, Dad—you know how much confidence I have in your prayers, but Dad, I don't want you to pray for my safe return. That wouldn't be fair. No, Dad. Don't pray for my safe return—just pray that I shall do my duty and something more: Pray that I shall never be a coward. Pray that I shall have the strength and courage and understanding of men, and especially pray that I shall be patient. Oh, Dad, just pray that I shall be adequate."

**John P. Washington:** In Newark, New Jersey, there was once a little Irish boy named John Washington. Things weren't always easy in an Irish immigrant family. But John had his father's Irish grin and his mother's Irish tick-to-itiveness, and John sold newspapers.

Sure, he liked to play ball, just as much as the rest of the kids in his block, but if he took time off from his newspaper route, it was just so many pennies less to take home to Mom, and there were nine mouths in the Washington household to feed. John loved music and sang in the church choir, and John loved to fight.

And John was always laughing, right through his training as a priest and after he was ordained. He played ball in the streets with boys from his parish. He organized baseball teams, and when the war came along and his boys went into the Army, Father John went right along with them as a matter of course. They say that when the Dorchester went down, he was still laughing—laughing and singing and praying to comfort those who could not reach the lifeboats.

And so, these four men—Protestant, Catholic, Jewish: the country boy from Vermont, the city boy from Washington, the slum kid from Newark, and the parson's son from New York City—met on the slanting deck of the Dorchester. It was a rendezvous with God, too, and their voices rose above the cold, black churning water:

“Our Father...which art in Heaven...hallowed be Thy name...”  
“Schma Yisroel Adonay Eohenu Adonay Echod,” “...Thy Kingdom come...Thy will be done...”

The hand of God plucked these four men from their parishes and set them together in that icy February fog. And all at once, the fog melted away and all about them there was light.











# American Legion Auxiliary Mission:

*In the spirit of Service Not Self, the mission of the American Legion Auxiliary is to support The American Legion and honor the sacrifice of those who serve by enhancing the lives of our veterans, military, and their families, both at home and abroad.*

*For God and country, we advocate for veterans, educate our citizens, mentor youth, and promote patriotism, good citizenship, peace, and security.*



**American Legion Auxiliary  
National Headquarters  
3450 Founders Road  
Indianapolis, IN 46268  
P: (317) 569-4500 | F: (317) 569-4502  
[www.ALforVeterans.org](http://www.ALforVeterans.org)  
[www.ALAFoundation.org](http://www.ALAFoundation.org)**

© American Legion Auxiliary National Headquarters  
All rights reserved. 06/2021  
Produced in the USA