

# CHAPLAIN'S MANUAL



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# **National Constitution Preamble**

We, the American Veterans who have served or are serving in the Armed Forces of the United States during and since World War II, fully realizing our responsibility to our community, to our state and to our nation, associate ourselves for the following purposes: to uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States; to safeguard the principles of freedom, liberty and justice for all; to promote the cause of peace and goodwill among nations; to maintain inviolate the freedom of our country; to preserve the fundamentals of democracy; to perpetuate the friendship and associations of these veterans; and to dedicate ourselves to the cause of mutual assistance, this by the grace of God.

## **Important Role of the Post Chaplain**

The Post Chaplain has been aptly designated as the VIP (Very Important Person) of the AMVETS.

The Chaplain need not be a clergyman but he/she must be a person capable of moral and intellectual leadership and one who gives dignity and respect to the office. He/she should be in close touch with the Commander and other officers of the Post and should attend all meetings of the Post and Executive Committee. The leadership in many of the Post's activities belongs of right to the Chaplain and when this office is filled by the right person the usefulness of the Post to the Community will be greatly increased.

If the Chaplain is a clergyman he/she can invite the Post to attend his/her church as a body on Memorial Sunday and Armistice Sunday (Veteran's Sunday). The sermon should be patriotic, holding up high ideals of American citizenship. If not a clergyman, he/she can arrange for these services alternately with churches of the community.

He/she should cooperate with the Post Historian in his/her graves registration work and inspire the Post to its full duty in seeing that all graves of servicemen are appropriately decorated on Memorial Day. In case the Post Historian is negligent in his/her duty, the Post Chaplain should not hesitate to bring the matter before the Post.

Besides officiating at funerals of deceased members the Chaplain can be of great service in case of deaths in families of members.

The sick should be visited. If there are hospitals nearby, arrangements should be made for frequent visits to ALL service patients.

Families of servicemen who are in distress can be helped and if there are orphaned or destitute children the Chaplain can line himself/herself up with part of the great work the AMVETS is undertaking by seeking that these little ones are cared for.

If there is an asylum for the mentally ill, he/she can visit these comrades and learn if they are properly cared for.

Some of our “buddies” are in jails and prisons. Never mind - they are “buddies” still. He/she can visit them and help them work out their moral reformations. Experience shows that Chaplains in such cases have done much to rehabilitate character.

The Post Chaplain should present the condolences of the Post either in writing or personally to the families of those who met death in war.

It is suggested that you work closely with your Post Publicity Officer, meet and know your newspaper editors and writers and your radio and television station managers and broadcasters so that Post worthy activities may receive fullest credit.

**(The AMVETS official prayer)** Almighty God, the Father and Guide of our great nation, we beseech Thee to give us the light and strength faithfully to uphold and defend our constitution, to safeguard our principles of liberty and justice, to promote the cause of peace throughout the world, and to strengthen the bonds of friendship and mutual assistance among our fellow citizens. **Amen.**

## *Invocations*

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 AMVETS are founded. We ask this in your name. **Amen.**



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



Our Father in heaven, we hallow and praise Thy name. We praise thee for the gift of thy great love, for all thy

blessings, for this gathering in which we unite with other posts to further our programs in AMVETS. Guide us and direct us in our decisions, that in all things it may be pleasing in thy sight. In thy holy name we pray. **Amen.**



Oh God, we come to thee for help and light. Grant that we may hallow this meeting to thy service and find in thee peace, wisdom, and strength. Grant that we may serve thee in truth and build our work on the good foundation of justice and charity. Be with us in all our deliberations; give us this grace to think what is right and be our guide and counselor as we work for the good of our comrades, our communities, and for our state, and our beloved land. **Amen.**



Oh God, in whom we live and move and are, who has created us for thyself so that our hearts are restless until they rest in thee, grant us purity of intention and strength of purpose so that selfishness may not hinder us from knowing thy will and no weakness prevent our doing it. **Amen.**

Grant us, oh God, to know that which is worth knowing, to love that which is worth loving, to do that which pleases thee most. Increase in us wisdom and strengthen us from our weakness that we may work for thy glory. **Amen.**



Rule over our deliberations we beseech thee, O God. Direct us by thy Holy Spirit and sanctify us by thy Presence. **Amen.**



Give us O God, the spirit of loyalty; loyalty to convictions, to our friends, and to our country. Thus inspired we shall walk not in the darkness of indecision and weakness but in the light of Divine Guidance. **Amen.**





Teach us O God, to serve thee as thou deservest, to give and not count the cost, to toil and not seek for rest, to labor and not ask for any reward save that of knowing that we do thy will. **Amen.**

or

Oh God, teach us to serve you as you deserve. Show us how to give without counting cost, work toward your cause without tiring, and seek only your will without seeking personal reward, knowing that we do what you require of us. **Amen.**



O God, our Father, look down upon us gathered here and bestow upon us thy loving benediction. O God, from whom are all right counsels and just works, give us that peace which the world cannot give. Direct our activities and carry them on by thy assistance that every work of ours may begin with thee and thru thee be happily ended. **Amen.**



Grant to us, O God, vigilant hearts. Give us minds to know thee, diligence to seek thee, and wisdom to find thee. Give us ways of like pleasing to thee, perseverance to trust and await thee and finally to embrace thee. **Amen.**



O God from whom proceed all graces and blessings, grant to our country thy divine blessing in this land of abundance. Thou hast permitted men of all races to gather together under one flag. Here they can work out their salvation according to the ideals of right government and right living. May this land that has lighted the torch of liberty for the oppressed and directed them with the ways of peace be guided ever onward by thee. **Amen.**



O God from whom proceeds all graces and blessings, grant to our country your divine blessing in this land of abundance. You have brought together people of all races and creeds to gather together under one flag. Here they can work out their salvation according to the ideals of right government and right living. May

this land that has lighted the torch of liberty for the oppressed and directed them with the ways of peace be forever guided by you. **Amen.**



O God, guard our homes, churches, and schools, our entire land and all therein from harm and destruction. Preserve the integrity of this nation founded on religious principles by protecting it from all enemies within and without. **Amen.**

## *Benedictions*

Let us pause this moment that each of us, in the faith of his own heart, may hallow the memory of those, our fallen comrades, who made the supreme sacrifice, and gave their lives on the altar of patriotism to a great and grateful America." (Pause 30 seconds.) "God of all consolation and all mercy, may those comrades ever sleep in the bosom of Thy love. And do Thou bless us, our loved ones, our comrades, and our fellowman everywhere, now and evermore. **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.**



Be gracious unto us, O God, and bless us. As we depart from this place stretch forth thy protection and guard our country that we being devoted to thy service, may ever be defended by thy power. **Amen.**



God grant that the information of this meeting might become the inspiration we need as we go forward to the task of serving thee and our country. May thy will be done in all our efforts together. May the Lord keep watch between me and thee while we are absent one from the other. **Amen.**



Our heavenly Father, with heads uncovered and bowed in tribute to our fallen comrades, we bring this meeting to a close. Before we part and go our separate ways we pause to think of our members who are experiencing difficult times. For them and their families we pray for strength and courage. **Amen.**



May the strength of God sustain us. May the power of God preserve us. May the hand of God protect us. May the way of God direct us, and may the shield of God defend us. **Amen.**



God bless us and keep us. Unto his gracious protection we commit ourselves. May God be near us to defend us, within 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. **Amen.**



May the Lord bless thee and keep thee; may he show his face to thee and have mercy on thee; may he turn his countenances and give thee peace. May the Lord bless thee. **Amen.**



O God, let us go forth in peace with good courage, holding fast that which is good, rendering to no man evil for evil but strengthening the faint hearted, supporting the weak, helping the afflicted and honoring all men and loving and serving thee, O God. **Amen.**

## *Table Graces*

We thank thee, O God, for this food which reminds us of thy care over us and pray that it will strengthen us for the doing of thy good pleasure and give us power to render better service to thee. **Amen.**



Our Heavenly Father,  
Grant us, we pray  
Wisdom and strength  
To serve day after day  
Bless this food to our use  
And make us quite strong.  
So we can continue  
To serve well and long.  
**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 blessings on this food. May our fellowship as we partake be an added blessing as we strive to keep America "One nation under God."  
**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.**

## *Birthday Dinner Prayer*

O God, Judge over Nations, be with us as we come together this day to pay tribute to our \_\_\_\_\_ AMVETS Birthday. We rejoice that we are a source of support to our country. Help us with thy guidance in the work of our great organization. May our activities be counted among the good deeds that please thee. We ask for strength and the ability to do the tasks you set before us. Keep us concerned about the welfare and improvement of our community, the safety and pride of our homes, and the moral and spiritual values that guide our community living. We ask thy blessings upon our members and guests here gathered and to bless the food which we are about to partake together. All of this we ask "For God and Country". **Amen.**

## *Veterans Day*

O God of Hosts, we bow our heads in thankfulness for the victories thou hast granted us, to us and to those peoples who have united with us to stamp out the evils of aggression, intolerance and greed. **Amen.**



Grant us, too O God, the courage to so live with the family of nations around the world that the end of strife will be the beginning of enduring peace. Grant us patience in planning with our fellow men a world in which nations may resolve their differences in peaceful means. **Amen.**



Grant us now thy continued blessing upon unity and strength, which makes victories possible in war, that we may win greater victories of peace. **Amen.**

## ***Building Dedication***

O God, we invoke thy blessing on all of us assembled here for the dedication of this new building. Grant, we beseech thee, that these walls be hallowed with deeds of love and service for God and Country. Instill into the hearts of all who will meet here the inspiration to be true to the ideals of the AMVETS and quicken their spirit of comradeship. Bless those who have worked and sacrificed to make this building a reality and preserve in the hearts of all, the traditions of the AMVETS.

May this building be for those who built it a joy and pride and a lasting memorial to their service in time of war and their loyalty and love in time of peace. **Amen.**

## *Prayer for Our Prisoners of War*

Lord, shelter the prisoners of war in \_\_\_\_\_.  
Open the hearts and minds of their captors that they may be restored to their homes and loved ones. Each has carried the burden of battle. Each has discharged on obligation of his country. Each has been subjected to hazards, pain, and imprisonment beyond the lot of the soldier. O Lord, these gallant men who bear so great a burden must not be forsaken. God of Justice to whom we pray, thy compassion we beseech. Lift their burden, give them strength and strike the shackles that deny them freedom. **Amen.**

## *Prayers for Youth*

We invoke thy blessing O God on the children of America. Give joy to their hearts, understanding to their minds, courage and resoluteness to their wills, that they may be guided throughout life's journey, be strong in the fight against evil, and pursue that which is right and just. May their faith in thee never waver and may it make them ever true to themselves, to others, to their heritage as Americans, and true to thee O God. **Amen.**

## *Prayer for more solemn occasions*

Give Thy blessing to our world, to our nation, to our loved ones, and to our lives, that all may dwell in charity, in justice, and in peace under Thy loving care. Grant that we may serve our country well, in peace as in war; and that she may ever prevail as good and great, right and victorious among the family of nations on this earth. We beseech Thy special blessing on ourselves, banded together for good in this organization, and on all who have served our nation by suffering and sacrifice in time of national emergency, particularly those who today suffer from mental and physical disability. Most humbly do we ask these graces of Thy bounty. **Amen.**

### *Burial Ritual*

Arriving at the grave, the post halts and opens order.

- The firing party forms in a single rank about 10 yards behind the foot of the grave and about 5 yards to left of the grave.
- The body bearer's form in two files, facing the road and ready to receive the casket. The bugler stands a few paces behind the head of the grave. All personnel stand at ease.
- When the hearse comes into view, the commander calls the burial detail to attention.
- When the hearse is parked, the body bearers step forward and take the casket from the hearse.

- As soon as they have lifted the casket, the commander brings the firing party and bugler to the position of “present arms.”
- The body is brought to the bier.
- The post colors are dipped. (Never dip the U.S. flag.)
- The post forms around the gravesite and the chaplain pays tribute to the deceased.
- The commander brings the bugler and firing party to the order. With inclined heads, the bugler and firing party assume the position of parade rest.
- The body bearers lift the flag from the casket and hold it over the grave at waist height, holding it taut so that it will not sag.
- The chaplain invokes the Divine Blessing.
- When he finishes, he steps to one side and the bugler takes his position at the head of the grave.
- When the bugler is in position, the commander brings the firing party to attention and the bugler comes to the position of “present arms” at the same command.
- The commander orders, “Firing party, ready, aim, fire.”
- The post colors are dipped over the grave.
- The firing party fires three volleys and remains in the position of load. When the last volley is fired, the bugler comes to attention and **Taps** is played.
- During the playing of Taps, the officer in charge of the firing party gives the order **PRESENT ARMS** and executes the hand salute. At the conclusion of Taps, the commander brings the firing party to **Order Arms.**

- As soon as he has completed playing Taps, the bugler steps back a pace, salutes, **about-faces** and join the firing party.
- The body bearers fold the flag, hand it to the superintendent of the cemetery or the commander, face the foot of the grave and march off to the rear of the firing party.
- The firing party, body bearers and post members move off at quick time at the commander's order.

**Chaplain's Tribute:** At the grave or at the home, the chaplain can recite the following:

“As chaplain of Post (number), Department of (state), of the American veterans who have served or are serving in the Armed Forces of the United States during and since World War II, I bring to the next of kin, to the family and friends of our departed comrade, assurance of our heartfelt sympathy in their hour of sorrow, and assurance of our sincere appreciation of the service this departed veteran has rendered to our country and to us.”

“Every veteran stood one day in solemn pledging of himself to service of his God, his country, and his fellow men, in time of war, in time of peace. That pledge was to last as long as life, for the good of all. Our departed comrade one day left home and loved ones to go out across the world, over

land and sea as ordered, to fulfill that sacred oath. He (she) offered himself (herself) on the altar of patriotism for the nation he (she) loved. Only those who have suffered the wounds of war, physical and mental, can know the cost of sacrifice that is often necessary in fulfilling such an oath.”

“In the time of national emergency, America has never lacked the brave, devoted sons and daughters to go out and do battle for her sacred cause. America cannot, and will not, forget those brave veterans who in time of war saved her and in time of peace have preserved for all her way of life.”

“I speak for America and for every American today, when I say America would not be the America we know and love, were it not for the patriotic sacrifice of men and women like our departed comrade. It is a glorious thing to die for America. It is also a glorious thing to live for America. Our departed comrade speaks to us today and bids us to live for America as God-fearing, honorable citizens, ready to be of service at all times to our country and to our fellowman.”

“I speak for every AMVET, for every veteran, and for the United States Government, when I say that the patriotic service of this man (woman) will never be forgotten, and that we stand ready to be

of help, in every possible way, to the family and dependents of this or of any other of our fallen comrades.”

“One day each of us must go the way of all mortals, into the eternity of God. May that God deal kindly with His veterans, and may our ranks of comradeship once again form on the eternal shores of heaven and go marching on into the kingdom of God’s blessed and everlasting peace.”

**Divine Blessing:** The chaplain may write his own prayer or invoke the following Divine Blessing:

“Blessed Lord God, we invoke Your presence with and blessing on us as we commit to Your grace and Love AMVET (name). We thank you, Lord, for the life of AMVET (name). We pray AMVET (name) will live with You in life everlasting. **Amen.**”

or:

“Lord God Almighty, maker of all that exists, we invoke Your blessing and peace on us as we entrust to You the soul of AMVET (name). Lord, Your grace be on us now and always. **Amen.**”

**Memorial Prayer:** The chaplain may say his own prayer or the following:

“Loving God, eternal in heaven, our hearts are lifted to You in prayer. We do so, Lord, in thanksgiving for the life of AMVET (name). We thank You, Lord, for the love of AMVET (name) for You, for our country, and for family and friends; a love that has enriched all of our lives. We are most grateful that by the service of AMVET (name) in the armed forces of the United States of America, we are truly a free people in a free land. Your holy and infinite blessings be with the family and loved ones of AMVET (name) in all of time. Lord, receive AMVET (name) as Your own. Bless AMVET (name) with life everlasting. **Amen.**”

**Benediction:** The chaplain may give his own benediction or the following:

“The peace and blessing of the Lord be with us always. **Amen.**”

or:

“The love of God, which brings to comfort and peace from our Lord, be with us always. **Amen.**”





# *Funeral*

**Commander:** Another veteran has been called to the High Command, and has gone to report to the Commander of all of us.

**Chaplain:** Let us pray. Eternal God, Supreme Commander of us all, Lord of the far-flung battle line to whom the ranks of life report, we bow before You with reverent hearts and in sublime faith, knowing You lead us on in death as You have in life. For again You have ordered a veteran to that realm in the West, beyond the twilight and the evening star, where beauty, valor, and goodness dwell forever with the un-numbered multitude. Mindful of service nobly done You have called (name of deceased) to everlasting rest. You have sealed *(his/her)* lips. You have called our comrade to Eternal Peace, to the land of silent mystery. Hear now the sorrows of those who mourn. Touch their tired hearts, protect them with your holy care. **Amen.**

*A short eulogy may be given by  
someone who knew our friend well.*

**Commander:** This moment is sacred with the almost visible presence of the one who has gone before. We come to honor the memory of one who offered life and services for God and Country; one who has now enrolled in that great spirit army, whose footfalls cause no sound, but in our memory their soul goes marching

on. Proudly we remember their service in time of war, because of them our lives are free and our nation lives. We realize how futile are mere words to express our deep and abiding sympathy in your loss. May you feel our comrade is at rest and in endless peace.

**Chaplain:** Lord we entrust our (*brother/sister*) to your mercy. You loved (*him/her*) greatly in this life, now (*he/she*) is freed from all its cares, give (*him/her*) happiness and peace forever. May (*his/her*) soul and all the souls of the faithful departed rest in peace. **Amen.**

*All AMVETS present at the funeral service shall pass the casket and salute the deceased veteran.*

## ***Procedure at the cemetery***

**Chaplain:** For as much as God hath taken out of the world the soul of our departed comrade we therefore commit (*him/her*) back to the ground to sleep and (*his/her*) soul to endless peace to rest. The dust returneth to earth as it was and the spirit returneth unto God who gave it.

*Two pallbearers remove the Flag from the casket, fold it in the traditional manner, and hand it to the Chaplain who will give the Flag to the nearest of kin.*

**Commander:** (as the flag is being folded) This banner of love and devotion now being folded, is a

living memorial of the courageous thoughts of our comrade, the one you came to honor today. The blue field represents the sky that overlooks our land and denotes the watchfulness of God. The red stripes tell us of the blood, sweat, and tears that have been offered and conquered by our comrade's devotion to the responsible freedom of his country. The white stripes boldly proclaim the peace that he helped to bring to our future generations. This is HIS flag; this is our Spiritual Heritage. Receive it with the tears of our minds and the faith of our hearts. **Amen.**

*Firing squad fires three volleys  
- "Present Arms" -  
bugler plays Taps.*

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