

Dedication and rededication ceremonies



War Memorials Trust

The following information outlines possible elements which can be incorporated in dedication/rededication ceremonies and gives examples of the order in which such ceremonies can run.

Please note that there are no set rules about the content of these ceremonies. However, most groups choose to have a service which involves interested members of the local community. They can be either religious or non-religious in content and, as the creation of war memorials has traditionally been organised locally, then decisions about the form and style of any ceremony is generally held to be a local decision.

Order of service - example 1

Entrance of official party and standards

The welcome and introduction:

Minister: Welcome and introduction.

All say: The Lord's Prayer.

Opening texts: Minister or official reads.

Hymn: Congregation stands.

The lesson: Minister or official reads.

The address: Minister gives the address.

The prayers and intercessions:

During the intercessions the Minister will say: Lord in thy mercy to which all respond: Hear our prayer.

Hymn: Congregation stands.

The act of remembrance/ The dedication:

Minister: Let us remember before God, and commend to his sure keeping, those who have died for their country in war and peace; those whom we knew, and those whose memory we treasure, and all who lived and died in the service of their country and mankind.

Names of fallen who are commemorated on the memorial are read.

All say: May they rest in peace.

The laying of wreaths: Congregation sits for the laying of the wreaths.

War Memorials Trust 42a Buckingham Palace Road London SW1W 0RE

Telephone: 020 7233 7356/ 0300 123 0764 Fax: 020 7834 0202/ 0300 123 0765

Email: conservation@warmemorials.org Website: www.warmemorials.org

Registered Charity Commission Number: 1062255

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Minister: In friendship and service to one to another, we are pledged to keep alive the memory of those of all nations, who died in the Royal Navy, our Army and Royal Air Force. In their name we give ourselves to this noble cause.

All say: Proudly and thankfully we will remember them.

The exhortation:

From 'For the fallen' (Laurence Binyon, 1914):

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old, age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn, at the going down of the sun, and in the morning, we will remember them.

All say: We will remember them.

The anthem: Sung by the choir.

The last post: Congregation stands.

The silence: Congregation stands.

The reveille:

The 'Kohima epitaph':

When you go home, tell them of us and say, for your tomorrow, we gave our today.

Hymn: Congregation stands.

The act of commitment: Congregation stands.

Minister: Let us commit ourselves to responsible living and faithful service. Will you strive for all that make peace? Will you seek to heal the wounds of war? Will you work for a just future for all humanity?

All say: We will.

All say: Lord God our Father, we pledge ourselves to serve all mankind in the cause of peace, for the relief of want and suffering, and for the praise of your name. Guide us by your spirit; give us wisdom: give us courage; give us hope; and keep us faithful now and always. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The national anthem: Congregation stands.

The final blessing:

Minister: God grant to the living, grace; to the departed, rest; to the Church, Queen, the Commonwealth, and all humankind, peace and concord; and to us and all his servants, life everlasting; and the blessing of God almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, come down upon you and remain with you always. Amen.

Order of service - example 2

The welcome and introduction:

Official welcomes those gathered and explains the memorial(s). Standards bought in – parade comes to attention.

The act of remembrance/ The dedication:

Official: Let us remember those who have died for their country in war and peace; those whom we knew, and those whose memory we treasure, and all who lived and died in the service of their country and mankind.

Names of fallen who are commemorated on the memorial are read.

All say: May they rest in peace.

The exhortation:

From 'For the fallen' (Laurence Binyon, 1914):

They shall grow not old, as we are left grow old, age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn, at the going down of the sun and in the morning, we will remember them.

All say: We will remember them.

The last post: All stand.

The silence: All stand.

The reveille:

The 'Kohima epitaph':

When you go home, tell them of us and say, for your tomorrow, we gave our today.

Suggested bible readings:

Ecclesiasticus, chapter 44, verses 1-15

Isaiah, chapter 40, verses 25-31

John, chapter 15, verses 9-17

Micah, chapter 4, verses 1-5

Revelations, chapter 21, verses 1-7

Romans, chapter 8, verses 31-39

Suggested hymns:

Abide with me (Henry F Lyte, 1847)

Eternal Father, strong to save (William Whiting, 1860)

For all the saints, who from their labours rest (William Walsham How, 1864)

I vow to thee my country (Cecil Spring-Rice, 1921)

Jerusalem/ And did those feet in ancient time (William Blake, 1804; C Hubert H Parry, 1916)

Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us (James Edmeston, 1921)

O God, our help in ages past (Isaac Watts, 1719)

O valiant hearts who to your glory came (John Stanhope Arkwright, 1919)

The King of love my shepherd is (Henry W Baker, 1868)

The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want (23rd Psalm; Francis Rowe, 1650)

There is a green hill far away (Cecil Frances Alexander, 1848)

Suggested poems:

In Flanders fields (John McCrae, 1915)

For the fallen (Laurence Binyon, 1914)

The cenotaph (Charlotte Mew, 1919)

Anthem for doomed youth (Wilfred Owen, first published 1921)

Please note that this helpsheet is intended to offer informal advice and is a distillation of experience. The information contained in this helpsheet is not exhaustive and other sources of information are available.