

RITUAL

for

Flag Day Service



ANNUAL SERVICES — JUNE 14th

Commemorating the Birth of the American Flag

SUGGESTED PROGRAM

1. Singing: “Star-Spangled Banner” By the entire Assembly
2. Introductory Exercises Exalted Ruler & Officers
3. Prayer Chaplain
4. Music: “Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean”
5. History of the Flag
6. Singing: “God Bless America” By the entire Assembly
7. Response
8. Pledge of Allegiance By the entire Assembly
9. Patriotic Address By Member of the Order
or by an invited guest
(optional)
10. Conclusion Exalted Ruler

[The service shall be a public ceremony and may be held in the Lodge Room or a public hall, or in the open air. Sufficient seating space should be reserved to accommodate Members, and the reserved section should be appropriately decorated. Other suitable decorations are optional.]

[A large American Flag shall be placed to the right of the Exalted Ruler’s station or podium.]

[To begin the service, all Officers shall assume their seats, wearing their jewels of office.]

[If desired, a street parade, with music and banners, may be arranged to precede the ceremonies.]

[Members present should be provided with small American Flag Pins to be worn on the left lapel.]

[The program herein outlined may be changed to suit local conditions as to music, speakers, etc., but the use of the “History of the Flag” and the “Response” is mandatory.]

EXALTED RULER: Please stand and unite in singing the “Star-Spangled Banner.”

[Assembly sings.]

EXALTED RULER: Please be seated. [Brief pause.] Members and Guests, the purpose of this service is to honor our country's Flag, to celebrate the anniversary of its birth, and to recall the achievements attained beneath its folds. It is quite appropriate that such a service should be held by the Order of Elks, an organization that is distinctively American, intensely patriotic and without counterpart.

Esteemed Leading Knight, what are the fraternal aims of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks?

ESTEEMED LEADING KNIGHT: To inculcate the principles of Charity, Justice, Brotherly Love and Fidelity; to promote the welfare and happiness of mankind; to uphold our country and its laws; and to quicken the spirit of American patriotism.

EXALTED RULER: Esteemed Leading Knight, what is the significance of the American Flag?

ESTEEMED LEADING KNIGHT: It is emblematic of the crowning virtue, Charity.

EXALTED RULER: Esteemed Loyal Knight, what is the significance of the American Flag?

ESTEEMED LOYAL KNIGHT: It is emblematic of Justice for all.

EXALTED RULER: Esteemed Lecturing Knight, what is the significance of the American Flag?

ESTEEMED LECTURING KNIGHT: It is the symbol of Brotherly Love.

EXALTED RULER: Lodge Esquire, what is the significance of the Flag from the station of the Exalted Ruler?

ESQUIRE: It is the symbol of Fidelity.

EXALTED RULER: Charity, Justice, Brotherly Love and Fidelity are the cardinal principles of our Order and they are exemplified in all of our services. By them we teach love of country and of our countrymen and loyalty to our American way of life. To be an Elk is to be an American citizen who lives for their country and is ready to die for it.

Please stand. [Brief pause.] The Chaplain will lead us in prayer.

CHAPLAIN: [From his/her station without advancing to the Altar.] Almighty God, in this hour of patriotic observance of the birthday of the American Flag, we ask You to bless our Flag, and the people of these United States. For all that our Flag represents, both at home and abroad, we thank Thee, and that through all our history as a nation, it has been an ensign of freedom, liberty and opportunity. And through the years to come may this Flag wave as the banner of liberty, freedom and enlightenment. May this service bring to each of us a sense of loyalty to our country and enable us to be better patriots, truer citizens, and more loyal Americans, to Thy glory and to the honor of this great nation. Amen.

[Music: "Columbia, The Gem Of The Ocean."]

EXALTED RULER: Please be seated. [Brief pause.] That we may better understand the meaning of our Flag, I call upon Brother/Sister (*Name*) for the history of the Flag.

THE FLAG: ITS HISTORY

Heraldry is as old as the human race. The carrying of banners has been a custom among all peoples in all ages. These banners usually contain some concept of the life or government of those who fashion them.

The evolution of the American Flag marks the progression of the government of the American people.

From the founding of Jamestown in Virginia, in 1607, until 1775, the Flag of England was the Flag of the Peoples of America.

In 1775, the Pine Tree Flag was adopted for all colonial vessels, and this was the banner carried by the Continental forces in the Battle of Bunker Hill.

[Music: "Yankee Doodle."]

[Enter Pine Tree Flag.]

The Southern colonies from 1776 to 1777 used the Snake Flag.

[Music: "Chester, L.M."]

[Enter Snake Flag.]

In the latter part of 1775 the Continental Congress appointed a committee to consider the question of a single Flag for the thirteen colonies. That committee recommended a design of thirteen alternate stripes of red and white, with an azure field in the upper corner bearing the red cross of St. George and the white cross of St. Andrew. John Paul Jones, the senior lieutenant of the flagship "Alfred," hoisted this Flag to the masthead on December 3, 1775, and one month later it was raised over the headquarters of General Washington at Cambridge, Massachusetts, "In compliment," as he wrote, "to the United Colonies."

[Music: "A Successful Campaign."]

[Enter above-described Flag.]

This Flag, called "The Continental Colors" and "The Grand Union," was never carried in the field by the Continental land forces, but it was used by the Navy as its exclusive ensign, and was the first American Flag to receive a salute of honor, a salute of eleven guns from the Fort of Orange in the Dutch West Indies.

In response to a general demand for a banner more representative of our country, the Congress on June 14, 1777, provided: —

"That the Flag of the United States be thirteen stripes of alternating red and white; and that the union be thirteen stars, white on a blue field, representing a new constellation."

[Music: "Hail Columbia, Happy Land."]

[Enter above-described Flag.]

It is generally believed that in May or June of 1776, a committee consisting of George Washington, Robert Morris and George Ross commissioned Betsy Ross, a Philadelphia Quakeress, to make a Flag from a rough design they left with her. It is said that she suggested that the stars should have five points, rather than six.

This starry banner was first flown at Fort Stanwix, called Fort Schuyler at that time, near the city of Rome, New York, on August 3, 1777, and was under fire three days later at the battle of Oriskany, August 6, 1777, during a British and Indian attack.

The first official salute to the Stars and Stripes was given on February 14, 1778, by France, on the French coast, when the "Ranger," under command of John Paul Jones, was saluted by the French fleet.

This Flag, then carried by the "Ranger," was made by the young women of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, from stripes of their best colored-silk dresses and the white wedding gown of a recent bride.

It is said that this same "Ranger's" Flag was flown by Jones' ship, the "Bon Homme Richard" in its thrilling fight by moonlight, upon the high seas, with the British frigate "Serapis." When the "Serapis" struck her colors, the immortal fame of John Paul Jones was ensured as the intrepid defender of the youthful republic.

The original thirteen Stars and Stripes represented the original thirteen colonies. In 1795 two additional Stars and Stripes were added to represent admission to the Union of Vermont and Kentucky. Under this banner of fifteen Stars and Stripes was fought the War of 1812. It was the sight of it flying over Fort McHenry, on September 14, 1814, that inspired Francis Scott Key to write what was to become our national anthem, "The Star-Spangled Banner."

Miss Margaret Young, who cut the stars for that particular banner, was the mother of Henry Sanderson, the Grand Exalted Ruler of the Order of Elks in 1884.

[Music: "The Star-Spangled Banner."]

[Enter above-described Flag.]

The Congress on April 14, 1818, adopted a resolution that on and after July 4, 1818, the number of stripes should be thirteen and that the blue field should carry one star for each of the twenty states in the union and that a new star should be added for each state thereafter admitted.

[Music: "America."]

[Enter above-described Flag.]

Since 1818, there has been no change in the Flag design except that twenty-eight new stars were added before July 4, 1912, and this Flag of forty-eight stars flew over this nation for forty-seven years until just before the Vietnam War.

[Music.]

[Enter 48-star Flag.]

On July 4, 1959, a star was added for Alaska, our first non-connected state and a year later, Hawaii, our island state added a fiftieth star. Our present Flag — fifty stars and thirteen stripes. It is accompanied by the POW-MIA Flag to recognize the plight and demise of a special group of our Armed Services, those who were prisoners of war or still remain missing in action.

[Music.]

[Enter 50-star Flag.]

[Introduce color guards.]

EXALTED RULER: Please stand and salute our Flag.

[Produces the Flag, holding it in his/her hands. The Organist plays softly “The Star-Spangled Banner.” Exalted Ruler continues:]

As this emblem is first in our hearts as loyal Americans, so is it close to our Altar as loyal Elks. The gentle breezes with lingering caress kiss the folds of no Flag which can compare with it in beauty. There is no such red in budding rose, in falling leaf or sparkling wine; no such white in April blossom, in crescent moon or mountain snow; no such blue in woman’s eye, in ocean’s depth or heaven’s dome; and no such pageantry of clustering stars and streaming light in all the spectrum of the sea and sky.

Please be seated. [Brief pause.]

Our Flag is at once a history, a declaration and a prophecy. It represents the American nation as it was at its birth; it speaks for what it is today; and it holds the opportunity for the future to add other stars to the glorious constellation.

The Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks is the first and only fraternal body to require formal observance of “Flag Day.” In July of 1908, the Grand Lodge of this Order, at Dallas, Texas, then assembled, provided for the annual nationwide observance of “Flag Day” on the 14th of June in each year, by making it mandatory upon each Local Lodge of the Order.

This unique distinction as the strongest promoter of “Flag Day” is most becoming to the Order of Elks. This Order is distinctively American. Only American citizens are eligible to join it and it has no foreign affiliations. It has linked its destiny with the destiny of our country and made this Flag its symbol of self-dedication to God, to country, and to fellow men.

Please stand and join in singing “God Bless America.”

[Assembly sings.]

EXALTED RULER: Please be seated.

RESPONSE

[Suitable introduction. This is mandatory. To be delivered by an Elks Member designated by the Exalted Ruler.]

The Stars and Stripes, Flag of the United States of America! The world-wide hope of all who, under God, would be free to live and do His will.

Upon its folds is written the story of America — the epic of the mightiest and noblest in all history.

In the days when peoples of the old world groveled in abject homage to the heresy of “the divine right of Kings,” a new constellation appeared in the western skies, the Stars and Stripes, symbolizing the divine right of all to life, liberty, happiness and peace under endowment by their Creator.

To what man or woman is given words adequate to tell the story of the building of this nation? That immortal story is written in blood and sweat, in heroic deeds and unremitting toil, in clearing the primeval forests and in planting of vast prairies where once the coyote and buffalo roamed. Onward swept the nation, spanning wide rivers, leaping vast mountain ranges, leaving in its path villages and farms, factories and cities, till at last this giant nation stood astride the continent, from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

This is the heritage of the people of the United States. It has been repurchased by each succeeding generation and must be won again, again and again until the end of time, lest it too shall pass like the ancient Empires of Greece and Rome.

“The price of liberty is eternal vigilance.” What was won at Lexington and Concord and Bunker Hill had to be repurchased at Ticonderoga and Yorktown.

What John Paul Jones achieved upon the high seas in the War of Independence had to be repurchased by Commodore Perry on Lake Erie in the War of 1812.

The prestige of Admiral Dewey’s victory at Manila Bay in 1898 was won by the naval battles in the seas about the far-distant islands of the Pacific, after the sneak attacks upon Pearl Harbor and Manila in 1941 had summoned our country to assume its role in World War II.

What our troops achieved under the Stars and Stripes at Chateau-Thierry and Flanders in World War I, their sons were required to repurchase in World War II in the bloody trek across northern Africa, on the beachheads of Europe and in the Battle of the Bulge.

The Flag our American men raised at Iwo Jima was the same Flag later raised in the defense of Inchon, Pusan and Pork Chop Hill in far-off Korea. Then another generation under the same Flag bled to stem the threat of communism in far-off Vietnam.

Our young people were again called to carry our Flag in the defense of a free world in the actions in Grenada and Panama. Willingly, our brave men and women carried our Flag and the honor of the American people into battle in Operation Desert Storm.

And who among us will ever forget the sight of firefighters raising our Flag over the ruins of the World Trade Center, the military personnel draping our Flag on the side of the Pentagon, or the citizens of Somerset County, Pennsylvania, placing our Flag near the site where brave Americans died fighting the hijackers of Flight No. 93? No other symbol could have offered such comfort, as we still, today, endure the horrors of that day.

Today, American Armed Forces carry our Flag in the villages of Iraq, the mountains of Afghanistan and the jungles of the Philippines and wherever terrorism may reside. Their struggle against the sponsors of terrorism is the hardest battle yet, and this threat to our Nation, and to our way of life, is certainly as great a challenge as our Flag has ever seen.

The resurgence of patriotism since September 11, 2001, has rekindled respect for our Flag. Today, we see the Star Spangled Banner wherever we turn, on homes, businesses, automobiles and billboards. Such displays stimulate our love for our Nation and for what it stands; they remind us of the sacrifices being made by the men and women of our Armed Forces around the world; and, they are a tribute to the heroes of the Police and Fire Departments the Nation over.

The greatest significance of this Flag, however, lies in the influence it has in the hearts and minds of millions of people. It has waved over the unparalleled progress of a nation in developing democratic institutions, scientific and technological knowledge, education and culture. It has served as a beacon for millions of poor and oppressed refugees abroad and stands as a promise that the under-privileged will not be forgotten.

What is the meaning of the Flag of the United States? There can never be a definitive answer to that question. There are people in this world who see it as a symbol of imperialism; others see it as a destiny of the people. But reference to these and similar views of the Flag was resolved by Woodrow Wilson when he said: "This Flag, which we honor and under which we serve, is the emblem of our unity, our power, our thought and shape of this nation. It has no other character than that which we give it from generation to generation. The choices are ours."

Only love, true love of our fellow man, can create peace. The emblem and token of that love is the Stars and Stripes, the symbol of the American way of life.

"Our Fathers' God, to Thee,

Author of liberty,

To Thee we sing.

Long may our land be bright

With freedom's holy light.

Protect us by Thy might,

Great God, our King."

EXALTED RULER: Lodge Esquire, how shall we further honor our Flag?

ESQUIRE: The Flag is formally honored by the Pledge of Allegiance. This Pledge was written in 1892 by Francis Bellamy and published in “The Youth’s Companion” as part of a patriotic campaign of that magazine. The Pledge did not become part of the Flag Code until 1942, and in 1954, the phrase “Under God” was added.

EXALTED RULER: Let us all stand and pledge ourselves never to forget the principles represented by this Flag.

“I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands; one Nation under God, indivisible, with Liberty and Justice for all.”

EXALTED RULER: Please be seated.

[Suitable introduction.]

ORATION

[Oration optional.]

EXALTED RULER: In conclusion of this observance of Flag Day, let us rededicate ourselves to the Flag of the United States of America and may the principles of Charity, Justice, Brotherly Love and Fidelity ever increase in each of us.

I now declare this service closed.

