BEYOND THE PRAYER

VFW
NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS.

NOVEMBER 2026
THROUGH
JANUARY 2027

ISSUE 2

A PUBLICATION FOR VFW CHAPLAINS
DEPARTMENT OF FLORIDA

A Ministry of Presence

Walking Beside Veterans in Every Season of Life

Faith
Service
Community
Hope

CHAPLAINS SERVING FLORIDA'S VETERANS





VETERANS DAY
HONORING ALL WHO SERVED
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From the

DEPARTMENT OF FLORIDA

Chaplain's DESK

FAITH ★ SERVICE ★ COMMUNITY ★ VETERANS



David Bear
State Chaplain
Department of Florida
Army – Post 12186

Different Paths A Common Purpose

SUPPORT
ENCOURAGE
LISTEN
PRAY
SERVE
NEVER FORGOTTEN

Hello Chaplains and Friends,

Here is the next, and hopefully quarterly, edition of *Beyond the Prayer*. So far, the comments have been overwhelmingly good. As we move forward with it, please offer suggestions and input for upcoming issues. We can only improve if we know what your needs are and receive your ideas.

This issue focuses on what is reportable. Why? Many of you put in a chaplain's report but forget much of what you do is also reportable in Programs. Those reports help gather information for the VFW Fact Sheet, assist posts and districts meet dashboard standards, and more. You may find that by providing the post those program reports that they may support and encourage you more and better appreciate all you do. I am aware that none of us do it for those reasons, but it is nice to be acknowledged and encouraged sometimes.

The equally important thought in this issue is that ever present need to check on you and yours. Being a first responder, from now until about mid-January, is the highest number of suicides and suicide attempts. There is a Caretaker Tracker to help you track contacts and even a Training Simulator that will provide general guidance during those contacts. Both are available on Lotcs.org and VFWFl.org. Please at least take a look at these two available tools. Share them with those you believe may get some benefit from them.

Remember those buddy checks and keep doing the amazing things you do.

In Comradeship and Service,

David Bear

David Bear
Department of Florida State Chaplain
Army – Post 12186
727-359-6137

VFW DEPARTMENT OF FLORIDA • CHAPLAIN SERVICE

A PUBLICATION FOR VFW CHAPLAINS
DEPARTMENT OF FLORIDA

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Greetings Chaplains and Commanders!

November is a special month for those of us who have served. It is a time to honor our veterans, remember the sacrifices made by military families, and give thanks for the many blessings in our lives. But before we get too far into November, I have a little unfinished business.

Remember that homework I gave you?

It's BUDDY CHECK TIME!

For the past two months, I have been asking you to reach out to someone you have not heard from lately. In October, I encouraged you to make a Buddy Check and then tag someone else to do the same. Well, how did we do?

Did you make that telephone call, send that message, tag another veteran to do the same? I hope so. Sometimes we get so busy taking care of our responsibilities that we forget the simplest things can make the greatest difference. A telephone call may take only five minutes, but to someone who has been sitting alone all day, those five minutes might mean everything.

And remember, you can still use our A Simple Buddy Check tool at https://lotcs.org/tag.html. Tag someone, encourage them to tag another, and keep that chain of kindness going.

HONORING OUR VETERANS

On November 10, we celebrate the birthday of the United States Marine Corps. To our Marines, past and present, happy birthday! Your proud traditions of honor, courage, and commitment continue to inspire generations of Americans. The following day, November 11, is Veterans Day. This is a day that belongs to every man and woman who has worn the uniform of our Armed Forces.

Many of our Posts will hold ceremonies, parades, or gatherings to recognize the service of our fellow veterans. As chaplains, we may be called upon to offer prayers, provide words of encouragement, or simply stand alongside those who served. But I want us to remember something. Not every veteran will be standing in a parade. Some will be in hospitals or nursing homes. Some will be confined to their homes. Others may be carrying memories of their military service, or of comrades who never came home.

Those are the veterans I especially want us to think about this November. Attend the ceremonies. Honor the flag. Thank those who served. But afterward, find someone who could not attend. Give them a call. Pay them a visit. Let them know that Veterans Day includes them, too. That is how we turn remembrance into service.

REMEMBERING OUR MILITARY FAMILIES

November is also Military Family Appreciation Month. Having served ourselves, we understand that military service affects far more than the person wearing the uniform. There are spouses who manage households during deployments, children who miss birthdays and holidays with their parents, and families who wait anxiously for news from loved ones serving far from home.

As chaplains, we should remember to thank them, too. Perhaps your Post knows a family with someone currently deployed. Maybe there is a military spouse in your community who could use a little encouragement. Reach out. Sometimes asking, "How are you doing?" is just as important as thanking someone for their service.

A SEASON OF THANKSGIVING

On Thursday, November 26, our nation celebrates Thanksgiving. For many of us, Thanksgiving means gathering with family and friends, sharing a meal, and remembering the blessings God has provided throughout the year. But Thanksgiving can also be a difficult time. There are veterans who will spend the holiday alone, and families gathering around a table where someone is missing.

We should be especially mindful of them. If your Post is planning a Thanksgiving dinner, consider inviting someone who might otherwise spend the day alone. If you know a veteran who cannot leave home, perhaps someone could deliver a meal or stop by for a visit. Sometimes a plate of food, a friendly conversation, and a little companionship can turn a lonely holiday into a meaningful one.

Thanksgiving reminds us to be grateful for what we have. Chaplaincy reminds us to share those blessings with others.

PRAYERS FOR THE THINGS THAT ARE IMPORTANT TO YOU!

Our VFW National Chaplain website has a Prayer Request page at https://lotcs.org/prayer-request-chaplain.html. Requests submitted through this page come directly to me as your VFW National Chaplain. If you are facing a difficult situation, concerned about a loved one, or simply need someone to join you in prayer, please use this resource and share it with others who may need it.

PUTTING OUR GRATITUDE INTO ACTION

As we approach the end of November, I want to leave you with another little assignment. Yes, I know. More homework! This month, I am asking you to do three simple things. Thank a veteran. Remember a military family. Reach out to someone who may be alone this Thanksgiving. You do not need a special committee or an organized program to accomplish any of these things. You simply need a caring heart and the willingness to act.

And while you are doing that, please continue your Buddy Checks. Our responsibility to care for one another does not end when Veterans Day ceremonies are over or the Thanksgiving dishes have been put away. Chaplaincy is not something we do only when we are wearing our VFW caps or standing behind a podium. It is how we treat people every day!

IN FAITH AND SERVICE

As we give thanks this November, I am especially grateful for each of you who serves our veterans, their families, and our communities. May God bless you and your families, our veterans, our military families, and all those who continue to serve our nation. And may we never forget that sometimes the greatest way to show our gratitude is simply to share it with someone else.

Happy Veterans Day and may you all have a blessed Thanksgiving.

Deborah "Debb" Halter
VFW National Chaplain, 2026–2027
Big Ten Conference Chaplain
Department of Missouri Chaplain
Sky Pilot, Pup Tent #12, Missouri



Deborah "Debb" Halter
VFW National Chaplain
2026–2027

CHAPLAIN ZOOM MEETING

Third Thursday of each month
Nov 19 | Dec 17 | Jan 21

8:30–9:30 PM Eastern
7:30 Central | 6:30 Mountain | 5:30 Pacific

Meeting ID: 831 1936 1624
Passcode: 356550

JOIN ZOOM MEETING
us02web.zoom.us/j/83119361624
Use the link or meeting ID and passcode.

ONE-TAP MOBILE (US)
+1 646 931 3860
+1 929 205 6099 (New York)

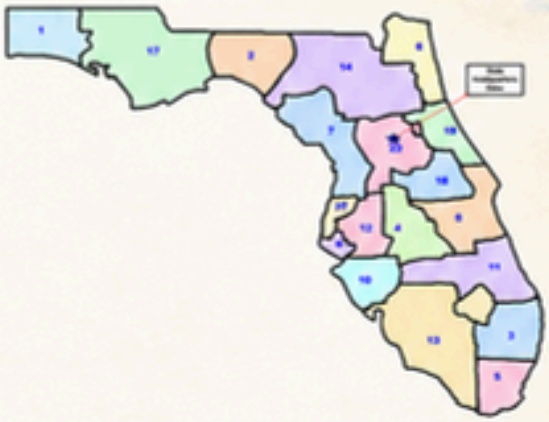
Additional dial-in numbers:
301-715-8592 | 305-224-1968
312-626-6799 | 346-248-7799
Local numbers: us02web.zoom.us/u/kbK01Us3jf

Department of Florida District Chaplains

2026–2027 | VFW Department of Florida

Serving veterans and families across Florida

Find your district on the map, then use the directory below to contact its chaplain.



DISTRICT CHAPLAIN DIRECTORY

District 1 / Home post: 11367
Chaplain Ronald Engberg
Engbergr@bellsouth.net
850-225-0626

District 2 / Home post: 4538
Chaplain Michael Mayfield

District 3 / Home post: 8195
Chaplain Gerald Adams
teotisadams@aol.com
954-928-6972

District 4 / Home post: 8002
Chaplain Dennis Mansell
Post8002@vfwfl.org
863-670-0819

District 5 / Home post: 4127
Chaplain Jean Alonsa
alonsojean2281@gmail.com
813-469-9432

District 6 / Home post: 7909
Chaplain Ty Strong
Ty.strong972@gmail.com
904-805-2912

District 7 / Home post: 5625
Chaplain Anthony Watts
Wattsab10@gmail.com
607-624-6690

District 8 / Home post: 10148
Chaplain HF Hanson

District 9 / Home post: 4364
Chaplain Matthew Pullis
Mpullis@outlook.com
727-698-5529

District 10 / Home post: 8118
Chaplain Richard Betrosian
HDsnJack59@yahoo.com
941-961-8313

District 11 / Home post: 10539
Chaplain Thomas "Sarge" Allen
Sarge@croomconstruction.com

District 12 / Home post: 4283
Chaplain George Walls
gwalls330@gmail.com
352-418-2314

District 13 / Home post: 4254
Chaplain David Hampe
Hampe33@yahoo.com
312-543-1770

District 14 / Home post: 10164
Chaplain Jim "Padre" Pritchard
jpritchardiii@gmail.com
904-710-6679

District 15 / Home post:

District 17 / Home post: 10555
Chaplain Robert Lemburg
Robertlemburgpcb@gmail.com
608-633-1849

District 18 / Home post: 5405
Chaplain John Travis
jtravis1@cfl.rr.com
407-810-9400

District 19 / Home post: 3282
Chaplain Twila Stahl-David
tstahldavis@gmail.com
717-729-8281

District 21 / Home post: 4412
Chaplain Ronald "Doc" Wood
Ronmwood@yahoo.com
813-695-7894

District 22 / Home post:

Contact details transcribed from the supplied 2026–2027 chaplains list.



Be the Lighthouse in Somebody's Storm

Every veteran has faced storms. Some were encountered on distant battlefields. Others are fought quietly at home through grief, loneliness, illness, moral injury, or memories that refuse to fade. As VFW chaplains, we will meet men and women navigating each of these challenges.

It is easy to believe we must have all the answers. We do not. Instead, think of being a lighthouse. A lighthouse does not calm the sea. It does not stop the wind or remove the rocks hidden beneath the waves. It simply stands where it is needed, shining steadily through the darkness. Its light offers direction, hope, and the reassurance that someone is watching over the journey. That is often the ministry of a VFW chaplain.

Your presence at a hospital bedside may mean more than the perfect prayer. A listening ear after a meeting may ease a burden someone has carried for years. A handwritten note, a phone call, or a quiet word of encouragement can remind a fellow veteran that he or she has not been forgotten.

Jesus described His followers as the light of the world. We are not called to draw attention to ourselves but to reflect His light so that others can find hope and direction amid life's storms. Often, the brightest witness is simply showing up with compassion, patience, and a willing heart.

You may not always see the results of your ministry. The veteran you encourage today may never tell you how much your kindness mattered. Faithful service is rarely measured by applause or recognition. It is measured by lives touched through simple acts of care, compassion, and steadfast love.

Whether you are beginning your service as a VFW chaplain or have served faithfully for many years, remember this: Your calling is not to rescue everyone from every storm. Your calling is to be a faithful light, shining consistently and pointing others toward hope, peace, and God's enduring presence.

A Beacon During the Holiday Season

Today, someone in your Post may be searching for that light. The holiday season can be a particularly difficult time for many veterans. Memories of loved ones who are no longer with us, time away from family, financial stress, health challenges, or feelings of isolation can make this season of joy especially painful.

As VFW chaplains, we have a unique opportunity to be a beacon during these winter months. A simple phone call, a visit, an invitation to a Post event, or a kind word can bring warmth to a veteran who is struggling. Your presence may help replace loneliness with connection and remind them that they are valued, appreciated, and never forgotten.

Let us shine a little brighter this season and be the lighthouse in somebody's storm.

Quarterly Watch

Key Military Observances, Holidays, and Commemorations for Chaplains

Quarter: November 1, 2026 – January 31, 2027

NOVEMBER 2026



Nov 1	**All Saints' Day** (Christian)	
Nov 3	**Election Day** (Federal Observance)	
★ Nov 11	**Veterans Day**	*A day to honor all who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces.*
Nov 26	**Thanksgiving Day** (Federal Holiday)	*A time of gratitude and reflection for God's many blessings.*

DECEMBER 2026



★ Dec 7	**Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day**	*Commemorates the lives lost and the bravery shown during the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941.*
Dec 13	**National Guard Birthday**	*Marks the establishment of the National Guard in 1636.*
Dec 25	**Christmas Day** (Federal Holiday)	*A celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ.*
Dec 26	**Kwanzaa Begins**	*A cultural celebration of family, community, and shared values (Dec 26 – Jan 1).*

JANUARY 2027



Jan 1	**New Year's Day** (Federal Holiday)	*A time for renewal, prayer, and setting new intentions.*
Jan 18	**Martin Luther King Jr. Day** (Federal Holiday)	*Honors the life, service, and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.*
★ Jan 27	**Signing of the Vietnam Peace Accord (1973)**	*Marks the signing of the Paris Peace Accords, which ended U.S. military involvement in the Vietnam War.*

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS®

HONORING OUR VETERANS THROUGH SERVICE, FAITH AND COMPASSION

TWO REPORTS, TWO PURPOSES

Understanding the Chaplain Quarterly Report and VFW Program Reporting

Helping Post Chaplains understand what to report, where to report it, and why it matters.

As VFW Chaplains, our responsibilities extend far beyond offering an opening prayer or closing a meeting. We visit the sick, comfort grieving families, assist veterans in difficult times, support our communities, and provide a compassionate presence when it is needed most.

But there is one area where confusion can arise: What belongs on the Chaplain Quarterly Report, and what should be submitted through VFW Program Reporting? Although some activities may appear on both reports, they serve different purposes.

THE CHAPLAIN QUARTERLY REPORT

Telling the Story of Our Ministry

The Chaplain Quarterly Report documents the work performed by the Chaplain during the reporting period. It provides District and Department Chaplain leadership with a picture of the spiritual care, compassionate outreach, and support being provided throughout our Posts.

Depending on the Department's reporting form, activities may include:

- Visits or calls to sick, hospitalized, or homebound members.
- Attendance at funerals, memorial services, and celebrations of life.
- Condolence cards, sympathy messages, and family outreach.
- Prayers, invocations, benedictions, and memorial observances.
- Assistance to veterans and families experiencing hardship.
- Other chaplain activities and significant concerns requiring follow-up.

Think of the Quarterly Report as a record of your work as a Chaplain. It helps leadership understand the needs of our veterans, families, and Posts.

VFW PROGRAM REPORTING

Documenting Service and Community Impact

VFW Program Reporting records qualifying activities performed by the Post and its members in support of veterans, military families, and the community. Chaplains participate in many activities that may qualify for Program Reporting, including:

VETERANS AND FAMILY ASSISTANCE
Providing qualifying assistance to veterans, visiting veterans in hospitals or care facilities, participating in outreach events, or helping connect veterans and families with needed resources.

COMMUNITY SERVICE
Participating in qualifying community outreach projects, food drives, disaster assistance, or other volunteer activities that benefit the community.

PATRIOTIC AND MEMORIAL ACTIVITIES
Supporting Memorial Day, Veterans Day, POW/MIA recognition, and other qualifying patriotic programs, when permitted under the Department's reporting categories.

SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES
Participating in qualifying projects that assist military families, surviving spouses, or families experiencing hardship.

An activity does not become reportable simply because a Chaplain performed it. It must meet the requirements of the applicable VFW program category.

CAN AN ACTIVITY APPEAR ON BOTH REPORTS?

Yes, when appropriate. For example, a nursing home visit may be included in the Chaplain Quarterly Report and may also qualify for Program Reporting. They are not duplicate reports — they are two different records of the same service.

QUICK REFERENCE CHART

Where Chaplain Activities Are Reported

CHAPLAIN ACTIVITY	CHAPLAIN QUARTERLY REPORT (Chaplain's Work)	VFW PROGRAM REPORTING (Qualifying Post Service)
Hospital or nursing home visit	Yes	Generally, if qualifying
VFW funeral or memorial service	Yes	Generally, if qualifying
Condolence or greeting cards	Yes	Depends on activity
Counseling a veteran outside Post functions	As applicable	Generally, if qualifying
Community outreach representing VFW	As applicable	Generally, if qualifying
Invocation at regular Post meeting	As applicable	Generally no
Attending routine Post meetings	Generally no separate count	No
Personal church or family activity	No, unless within Chaplain duties	Generally no

WHAT ABOUT PRAYERS AND ROUTINE MEETINGS?

An invocation at a regular Post meeting is part of the Chaplain's duties and may be documented in the Quarterly Report. However, a routine prayer or meeting invocation should not automatically be counted as a community service activity.

WORK TOGETHER TO CAPTURE THE SERVICES

Keep a simple record of the date, activity, location, number of volunteers, volunteer hours, and any qualifying donations or expenses. Communicate with your Post Commander, Adjutant, and the person responsible for Program Reporting.

REMEMBER: TWO REPORTS, TWO PURPOSES

The Chaplain Quarterly Report tells the story of the care we provide. VFW Program Reporting documents the qualifying service and impact of our Post. Both are important. Both support our mission.

Our service does not end with "Amen." It continues wherever a veteran,

Program-reporting eligibility is subject to current Department of Florida guidance

BEYOND THE PRAYER

A Publication for the VFW Department of Florida Chaplain Service

THE CHAPLAIN'S MAIL BAG

Your Questions. Your Ideas. Your Voice.



We Want to Hear From You!

Beyond the Prayer is more than a publication. It is an opportunity for VFW Chaplains, Commanders, and members throughout Florida to share experiences, exchange ideas, ask questions, and strengthen the work we do for our veterans and their families.

Have a question about your responsibilities as a Post or District Chaplain? Looking for suggestions on how to support a veteran or military family? Have an idea for an article, an upcoming event, or a story about the good work being done in your Post or District?

Send it to the Mail Bag!

We Welcome:

- **Questions from the Field:** Questions about chaplain responsibilities, ceremonies, resources, and supporting fellow veterans.
- **Ideas and Suggestions:** Topics you would like to see covered in future editions of *Beyond the Prayer*.
- **Stories of Service:** Share how your Post or District is making a difference in the lives of veterans and their families.
- **Resources Worth Sharing:** Helpful programs, community partnerships, and practices that other Chaplains may find useful.
- **Feedback on the Publication:** Tell us what you enjoy, what could be improved, and what would make this publication more valuable to you.

How to Reach Us

Contact the
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Your Input Makes a Difference

Not every submission will appear in the publication, but every contribution is appreciated and will be considered. Questions of general interest may be featured in future editions, with identifying information omitted when appropriate.

Please avoid including private medical information, personal contact details, or other sensitive information about veterans or families without their permission.

The best ideas often come from the people doing the work every day. We want to hear yours!

Because our mission doesn't end when the prayer is over.



251 YEARS

OF HONOR, COURAGE AND COMMITMENT

THE MARINE CORPS BIRTHDAY

NOVEMBER 10, 2026

A CHAPLAIN'S REFLECTION

On November 10, 1775, the Continental Marines were established in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. From those humble beginnings emerged a fighting force whose legacy would be defined by courage, sacrifice, discipline, and an unwavering commitment to service.

Today, as we celebrate the 251st birthday of the United States Marine Corps, we honor generations of Marines who have answered their nation's call, often under circumstances that tested not only their physical endurance but also their faith, hope, and spiritual resilience.

Behind the courage of the warrior stands another kind of strength: the quiet ministry of the chaplain.

Throughout Marine Corps history, Navy chaplains have accompanied Marines into battle, stood beside the wounded, offered comfort to the grieving, and provided spiritual guidance to those carrying the invisible burdens of war.

Their ministry is not measured by rank or recognition, but by presence. Sometimes it is a prayer whispered before a dangerous mission. Other times, it is a listening ear after the loss of a fellow Marine, a letter home, or simply sitting beside someone when words are no longer enough.

The chaplain's calling reminds us that even the strongest warrior needs compassion, understanding, and someone willing to walk beside them during life's most difficult moments.

The Marine Corps motto, *Semper Fidelis — Always Faithful* — carries meaning beyond the battlefield. For chaplains, it reflects a commitment to remain faithful to those entrusted to their care, regardless of religious belief, background, or circumstance.

As VFW chaplains, we continue that spirit of service long after the uniform has been put away. We are called to remember those who served, comfort those who mourn, encourage those who struggle, and ensure that no veteran feels forgotten.

On this Marine Corps Birthday, may we celebrate the proud traditions of the Corps while remembering the spiritual strength that has sustained generations of Marines and their families.

May we also honor the chaplains who have walked beside them, often without recognition, carrying hope into places where hope was difficult to find.

Happy 251st Birthday, United States Marine Corps.

Semper Fidelis — Always Faithful.

A PRAYER FOR MARINES

Heavenly Father,
We lift up our Marines—past and present—on this 251st birthday of the United States Marine Corps. Grant them strength in their service, courage in their calling, and peace in their hearts. Bless the chaplains and Religious Program Specialists who walk beside them, offering hope, guidance, and compassion. May all who serve know they are never alone. Hold their families in Your care, and continue to be their refuge and source of strength. Amen.



OPTIONAL RESOURCE — NOT REQUIRED

These prayers and remarks are provided for reference only. Chaplains may use, adapt, or prepare their own words. Their use is not required.

VETERANS DAY INVOCATIONS

Almighty God, be with us as we come together this day to pay tribute to those who have served and those who are presently serving in our Armed Forces. We are grateful for their dedication and commitment and the countless selfless acts they have performed—and the sacrifices of their families—so that we might continue to enjoy freedom. We thank you for their service to their nation and we thank you for their commitment and service to their families, to their communities, and to society in the years since they served. We are mindful of the fact that many of their comrades sacrificed their very lives on the fields, on the seas, and in the air where the battles of the war were fought; we remember those today with great reverence and thanksgiving. We thank you for our great land, for life, for liberty, and the freedom to pursue happiness that constitute the legacy of our forebears and the ongoing ideals of our Republic. Continue Your blessings upon us as we conduct this ceremony. Amen.

Almighty God, be with us as we come together this day to pay tribute to those who have served and those who are serving in our Armed Forces. We are grateful for their dedication and commitment and the countless selfless acts they perform so that we might continue to enjoy freedom. We thank you for our great land, and the wisdom of our founding fathers, and for those who down through the ages fought the forces of evil and gave their lives to preserve the freedoms we enjoy. We are grateful for life, for liberty, and for the freedom to pursue happiness. As we begin this day, we will now have a moment of silence to remember those who gave their lives . . ., those missing in action . . ., those held as POW. Continue Your blessings upon us as we enjoy the events that have been planned and may each of us as individuals and as a Nation continue to acknowledge You. Amen.

VETERANS DAY BENEDICTIONS

As we conclude this ceremony, we remember again all those who served and are serving in our Armed Forces. Today and every day, may we honor our veterans. May we continue to highly esteem those worthy men and women who gave their best when they were called upon to serve and protect their country. And now Lord, be gracious and merciful to us, and let Your good favor and blessing be with each of us. Help us as we seek to live as good citizens and carry out our responsibilities to always honor you. Amen.

Our Heavenly Father, we ask for Your benediction to rest on us this day. As You have graciously preserved our Nation through the years, and have led us in wondrous ways, grant that we may be worthy of our high calling as a Nation. Amen.

Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, we ask that Your blessing be bestowed on our friends and loved ones. We thank You for this opportunity to share with them this special occasion to honor our veterans. Let us always honor the memory of those

brave men and women who sacrificed so that we may experience freedom in our country. Heavenly Father, keep their families in Your kind care. Let us be reminded of Life, Liberty, Justice, Freedom, and Democracy, that we may be ever grateful to You for those veterans who served and protected our freedom. We ask Your blessing upon this program and when we depart, grant us Your continued fellowship that makes abiding peace. We ask this in Your Name. Amen.

PEARL HARBOR REMEMBRANCE DAY — OPENING REMARKS Today, as President Roosevelt declared it, we remember a "Day that will live in infamy." On December 7, 1941 Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, an act that pulled the United States into the Second World War, perhaps the darkest, most costly, and civilization-altering conflict in the history of human existence. English Prime Minister Winston Churchill, writing in a memoir about his reaction to FDR's December 7, 1941 telephone call to inform him of the attack said, "The fate of the Empire rests on this enterprise. Every man must devote himself totally to the task in hand." And every man and every woman in the United States did devote themselves totally to the war effort. That conflict pitted institutional tyranny against champions of religious and civil liberty, and the value of individual human life. In the end, at unimaginable cost, freedom prevailed. Today we are honoring and remembering those who paid this price to secure a victory for hope and virtue. I offer this prayer of thanks for their strength of resolve.

PEARL HARBOR DAY INVOCATIONS

Heavenly Father, we are gathered here to commemorate those who gave their lives at Pearl Harbor on December 7th, 1941. Let us always honor the memory of the brave men who sacrificed so that we may experience freedom in a country that is free. Let us be reminded of life, liberty, justice, freedom, and democracy that we may be ever grateful to You and those veterans who gave so much for their Country. We ask Your blessing upon us this day and grant unto us Your continued fellowship that makes abiding peace. Amen.

Dear God, not everything that happens in your world reflects your goodness and grace. You have given us freedom to choose, and with that freedom, individuals sometimes choose to do evil. Today we remember a time of great evil in our world—we remember December 7, 1941—the day Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, an act that pulled the United States into the Second World War. We also remember those who stood their ground against great evil, those who fought here at home and on the battle fronts to ensure that evil would not prevail. We thank you that in the hour of need you gave men and women the strength and resolve to stand, whatever the cost. May those brave souls who still remain here with us feel today your hand of favor and strength. In their last years here on earth give to them renewed hope and an awareness of our gratitude for their bravery and sacrifice. And Lord, as we invoke your blessing on all we say and do in this Memorial Service today, we lift up to you praise and thanksgiving for the grace you have shed upon us and may each of us as individuals and as a Nation continue to acknowledge You. Amen.

PEARL HARBOR DAY BENEDICTION

Dear God, we thank you for this occasion to pause and remember these heroes. Help us to draw courage from the example of the brave Americans we honor. We once again realize the value of being a part of this great Nation. As we go from here, may we be ever vigilant and ever valiant. And may each of us as individuals and as a Nation continue to acknowledge You. As in the words of these great hymns of faith, we pray "Guide us, O Thou Great Jehovah," and we ask that you grant us wisdom and courage in the days ahead. I ask all this in your name. Amen.

VFW
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS®

Department of
FLORIDA

Thanksgiving: Giving Thanks, Serving Faith

A Thanksgiving Message for Our VFW Chaplains and Members, Adapted from the U.S. Army Chaplain Corps Article "Giving Thanks, Serving Faith" (Nov. 26, 2025)

Thanksgiving invites us to pause, reflect, and give thanks to God for the many blessings in our lives. It is a time to remember that our freedoms, our families, and the opportunities we enjoy today are not by chance, but are the result of the sacrifice, dedication, and service of America's veterans and their families.

The U.S. Army Chaplain Corps recently reminded us in their message, "Giving Thanks, Serving Faith," that gratitude is more than a seasonal sentiment—it is a response of faith that shapes how we live and serve. They noted that Thanksgiving is a time to give thanks for God's faithfulness, to honor those who have served, to support military families, and to continue serving others in our communities with compassion and purpose.

This message speaks directly to the heart of our mission in the VFW. As chaplains, we are called to be a source of encouragement, hope, and spiritual care for our fellow veterans, service members, and their families. Thanksgiving offers a meaningful opportunity to strengthen those bonds, to check on those who may be lonely or grieving, and to remind them that they are valued, remembered, and not forgotten.

A Note from the Department of Florida

As we enter the Thanksgiving season, the Department of Florida extends our gratitude to all VFW chaplains for the care, compassion, and steadfast support you provide to our veterans, our members, and their families throughout the year.

Thanksgiving is a time to give thanks for God's many blessings, to remember the service and sacrifice of our veterans, and to renew our commitment to "Veterans Helping Veterans." We encourage you to use this season as an opportunity to reach out, share a kind word, offer a prayer, and be a comforting presence to those who may be alone, in need, or facing difficult circumstances.

May this Thanksgiving bring you, your family, and your Post and District continued blessings of faith, health, and fellowship.

A Chaplain's Thanksgiving Reflection

As chaplains, we are reminded that gratitude grows deeper when it is expressed through service. This Thanksgiving, let us:

- **Remember our veterans** — especially those who are hospitalized, homebound, or living alone.
- **Reach out to military families** — including those with loved ones currently deployed.
- **Support and encourage** — fellow members who are grieving a loss or facing a difficult season.
- **Serve with compassion** — through acts of kindness, fellowship, and community outreach.
- **Give thanks to God** — for the freedom to serve, the bonds of the VFW, and the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of others.

A Thanksgiving Prayer

Heavenly Father, we come before You with grateful hearts for the many blessings You have given us—our families, our freedom, and the men and women who have served and sacrificed for our Nation. We thank You for the strength, courage, and faith of our veterans, and for the families who have stood beside them. Be with those who are lonely, grieving, ill, or far from home this Thanksgiving. Give us hearts of gratitude and a spirit of service, that we may continue to care for one another and live out the VFW promise of "Veterans Helping Veterans." In Your holy name we pray. Amen.



JACKSONVILLE / NORTHEAST FLORIDA
FIRST COAST HONOR FLIGHT

FIRST COAST HONOR FLIGHT

First Coast Honor Flight serves Clay, Duval, St. Johns, Nassau, Baker, Bradford, Flagler, Putnam, and Union counties. Veterans travel at no cost to Washington, D.C., to visit the memorials dedicated to their service.

Next Flight Date: TO BE ANNOUNCED
Most recent flight: October 3, 2026
Departure Airport: Jacksonville International Airport (JAX)

1-888-400-1185
www.firstcoasthonorflight.org
www.facebook.com/FirstCoastHonorFlight

ABOUT HONOR FLIGHT

Honor Flight provides eligible military veterans with trips to Washington, D.C., to visit the memorials dedicated to their service. Veterans travel at no cost, with priority generally given to World War II, Korean War, Vietnam War, and terminally ill veterans.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

- World War II Veterans
- Korean War Veterans
- Vietnam War Veterans
- Terminally ill Veterans from any era

Their Service. Our Gratitude. Their Day.

WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

VETERANS
Apply to fly. It's free.

GUARDIANS
Volunteer to accompany veterans.

WELCOME HOME
Join the community in greeting our veterans as they return.

UPCOMING FLORIDA HONOR FLIGHTS

Based on publicly announced dates as of October 13, 2026. Dates and times are subject to change.

DATE	HONOR FLIGHT ORGANIZATION	DEPARTURE AIRPORT	DEPARTURE TIME	ARRIVAL (D.C.)	RETURN TIME	ARRIVAL (FL)
Oct. 17, 2026	Central Florida Honor Flight	Sanford (SFB)	6:00 AM	8:30 AM	6:00 PM	8:30 PM
Oct. 17, 2026	Space Coast Honor Flight	Melbourne (MLB)	6:30 AM	9:00 AM	6:30 PM	9:00 PM
Oct. 20, 2026	West Central Florida	St. Petersburg–Clearwater (PIE)	6:00 AM	8:30 AM	6:00 PM	6:30 PM
Oct. 20, 2026	Southwest Florida Honor Flight	Sarasota–Bradenton (SRQ)	6:00 AM	8:30 AM	6:00 PM	8:30 PM
Oct. 24, 2026	South Florida Honor Flight	Fort Lauderdale (FLL)	6:30 AM	9:00 AM	6:30 PM	9:00 PM
Nov. 7, 2026	Southeast Florida Honor Flight	Palm Beach (PBI)	6:00 AM	8:30 AM	6:00 PM	8:30 PM
Apr. 17, 2027	Southeast Florida Honor Flight	Palm Beach (PBI)	6:00 AM	8:30 AM	6:00 PM	8:30 PM
Apr. 24, 2027	Central Florida Honor Flight	Sanford (SFB)	6:00 AM	8:30 AM	6:00 PM	6:30 PM
May 29, 2027	Southeast Florida Honor Flight	Palm Beach (PBI)	6:00 AM	8:30 AM	6:00 PM	8:30 PM

FLORIDA HONOR FLIGHT CONTACTS

ORGANIZATION	PHONE	WEBSITE
First Coast (Jacksonville)	1-888-400-1185	www.firstcoasthonorflight.org
Central Florida	407-851-0900	www.honorflightcentralflorida.org
Space Coast	321-914-2084	www.spacecoasthonorflight.org
West Central Florida	727-865-9303	www.honorflightwcf.org
Southwest Florida	941-486-8001	www.swflhonorflight.org
Southeast Florida	561-395-5544	www.honorflightsefl.org
South Florida	954-476-6022	www.honorflightsouthflorida.org

NATIONAL HONOR FLIGHT NETWORK

HONOR FLIGHT NETWORK

Find other hubs and more information:
www.honorflight.org/find-a-hub-by-hub-name/

"We can never repay our veterans, but we can always say thank you."



A Season of Peace, Hope, and Service

Remembering Those Who Served, Honoring Every Faith, and Caring for One Another

As December approaches, communities across our nation prepare for a season filled with traditions, celebrations, and reflevith For many, Christmas is a sacred celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. For others, Hanukkah, other religiost observances, family traditions, or personal moments of reflection provide opportunities to celebrate faith, hope, and togetherness.

While our beliefs and traditions may differ, the values of compassion, kindness, generosity, and service are ones we can share.

For those of us serving as Chaplains within the Veterans of Foreign Wars, this season offers an important reminder: Our responsibility is not limited to those who share our personal faith. Our responsibility is to care for those who have served, regardless of their religious beliefs or traditions.



The Empty Chair at the Holiday Table

The holidays can be particularly difficult for veterans and military families.

Some veterans remember Christmas mornings spent aboard ships, in distant countries, or on deployments far from loved ones. Others remember comrades who never returned home. For Gold Star families, the holidays may bring renewed memories of a loved one whose chair remains empty.

Some of our fellow veterans are spending this season in hospitals, nursing homes, or alone in their homes. Others may be struggling financially, dealing with illness, or facing the emotional challenges that sometimes accompany military service.

In a November 2019 article titled "Holidays Feel Lonely for Some," VFW National Chaplain Jim Jenkins reminded members that reaching out to someone who is struggling can make a meaningful difference. Sometimes simply being present is the greatest gift we can offer. That message remains just as important today.

Serving Veterans of Every Faith

Our Armed Forces represent the diversity of the nation they defend. Christians, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, members of other religious traditions, and those who do not identify with a particular faith have all answered the call to serve.

The freedoms our veterans defended include the freedom of religion and the freedom of conscience.

As VFW Chaplains, we can honor those freedoms by respecting the spiritual needs and personal beliefs of every veteran.





Turning the Spirit of the Season Into Service



Throughout December, I encourage our Post and District Chaplains to consider reaching out to those who might otherwise be forgotten.

- Contact a veteran who has not attended a Post meeting recently.
- Visit a hospitalized or homebound member.
- Check on a surviving spouse or Gold Star family.
- Remember the families of those currently deployed.
- A handwritten Christmas card, holiday greeting, telephone call, or invitation to share a meal may seem small, but to someone experiencing loneliness, it can mean more than we realize.

The Department of Veterans Affairs has also recognized that the holiday season can intensify loneliness, grief, and stress for veterans. Our willingness to recognize these challenges and respond with compassion is an important part of serving our veteran community.

A Reflection for Our Chaplains

As we celebrate this season, I ask each chaplain to consider one question:

"Who among our veterans needs to know that someone remembers them this holiday season?"

The answer may be closer than we think. Our chaplaincy is not measured solely by the prayers we offer at meetings or ceremonies. It is also reflected in the calls we make, the visits we conduct, the comfort we provide, and the relationships we build.

Whether you celebrate Christmas, Hanukkah, another religious observance, or simply the opportunity to spend time with family and friends, may this season remind us of the responsibility we share to care for one another.

May we enter the new year committed to being present for those who need us most.

Because sometimes the most meaningful ministry begins after the prayer has ended.

A Seasonal Reflection for Chaplains

Offered as an optional reflection that may be adapted to the beliefs and traditions of those present.

May this season bring peace to those who are troubled, comfort to those who grieve, companionship to those who are lonely, and renewed hope to those facing difficult circumstances.

May we remember those who are serving far from home, honor those who have sacrificed, and extend kindness to every veteran and family we encounter.

May our differences never prevent us from recognizing our shared humanity, and may our commitment to service continue to unite us.

May peace, compassion, and goodwill guide our actions throughout this season and the year ahead.

Sources and Further Reading

- VFW National Chaplain Jim Jenkins, "Holidays Feel Lonely for Some," VFW, Nov. 12, 2019.
- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, "Helping Veterans Manage Holiday Stress," Dec. 19, 2022.
- Veterans of Foreign Wars, "Season's Greetings from the VFW," Dec. 23, 2024.

This Department of Florida chaplaincy reflection draws upon the themes of these resources. It is offered for encouragement and optional use by VFW Chaplains and is not a directive or required observance.



A New Year, A Renewed Commitment to Serve

2027: Moving Beyond the Prayer and Into the Lives We Serve

As we welcome 2027, we stand at the beginning of another year filled with opportunities, challenges, and possibilities. For VFW Chaplains, the new year is more than a fresh calendar. It is an invitation to renew our commitment to the veterans, families, and communities we are entrusted to serve.

Whose life will be better because we took the time to care?

Beyond the Meeting

The VFW Chaplain's work extends beyond invocations, benedictions, and ceremonial occasions. We nurture the living, comfort the grieving, remember those who have died, and remain present when a comrade needs someone to listen.

In 2027, perhaps our resolutions should include one additional phone call each week, a visit to a homebound veteran, or a handwritten note to a surviving spouse. Small gestures can make a lasting difference.

Remembering the Forgotten

Some veterans who once attended every Post event now face illness, limited mobility, financial strain, or the loss of a loved one. Others have withdrawn quietly, not because they stopped caring, but because life became difficult.

A call, visit, or invitation reminds them they still belong. Not every struggle is visible; sometimes the greatest gift a Chaplain offers is listening without judgment.

Serving Every Veteran

Our military family includes people of many faiths, cultures, and backgrounds, as well as those with no religious affiliation. Our personal beliefs may guide us, but compassion must extend to all.

A Chaplain's task is not to impose a belief. It is to offer dignity, encouragement, and appropriate spiritual or practical support, according to each veteran's wishes. Presence, understanding, and respect are powerful forms of service.

Service Across Florida

VFW Posts and Auxiliaries continue to show that service does not end when the uniform comes off. In 2026, the VFW Day of Service included 2,693 events across 13 countries and territories—from food drives to memorial preservation and neighborhood improvements.

Looking toward the 2027 Day of Service, Chaplains can help identify needs, encourage volunteers, and connect members with community partners. Our impact is measured not only in ceremonies conducted, but in lives touched.

"May our service speak as loudly as our prayers."

A RESOLUTION FOR EVERY VFW CHAPLAIN



Compassion in Action

Five commitments for the year ahead

Five Commitments for 2027

01 Reach Out Regularly

Contact a veteran or family member each week who might benefit from companionship or encouragement.

02 Remember Our Comrades

Support surviving families and preserve the memory of those who served.

03 Be Present

Visit the hospitalized, comfort those who grieve, and listen when someone faces hardship.

04 Build Community

Work with Service Officers, Auxiliaries, hospitals, faith leaders, and local support organizations.

05 Lead with Compassion

Make every veteran feel welcome, respected, and valued within our VFW family.

These commitments are suggestions for strengthening chaplaincy, not directives or requirements.

SOURCES & FURTHER READING

VFW, The Chaplain's Handbook (2026).
VFW, "Day of Service Sets New Record with Nearly 2,700 Events" (July 7, 2026).
VFW Department of Florida, The Chaplain's Brief.

A New Year of Purpose

We cannot predict every challenge 2027 will bring. We can, however, decide how we will respond: with compassion over indifference, understanding over judgment, and service over convenience.

The title of Chaplain is more than a position we hold. It is a responsibility we carry. May no veteran feel forgotten, no family feel abandoned, and no opportunity to serve pass unnoticed.

A New Year's Reflection

Offered as an optional reflection, adaptable to the beliefs and traditions of those present.

As we enter this new year, may we do so with gratitude for the past and hope for the days ahead.

May we remember those who served before us, honor those who serve today, and comfort those carrying the burdens of sacrifice.

May we find strength in challenges, wisdom in difficult decisions, and compassion when others need us.

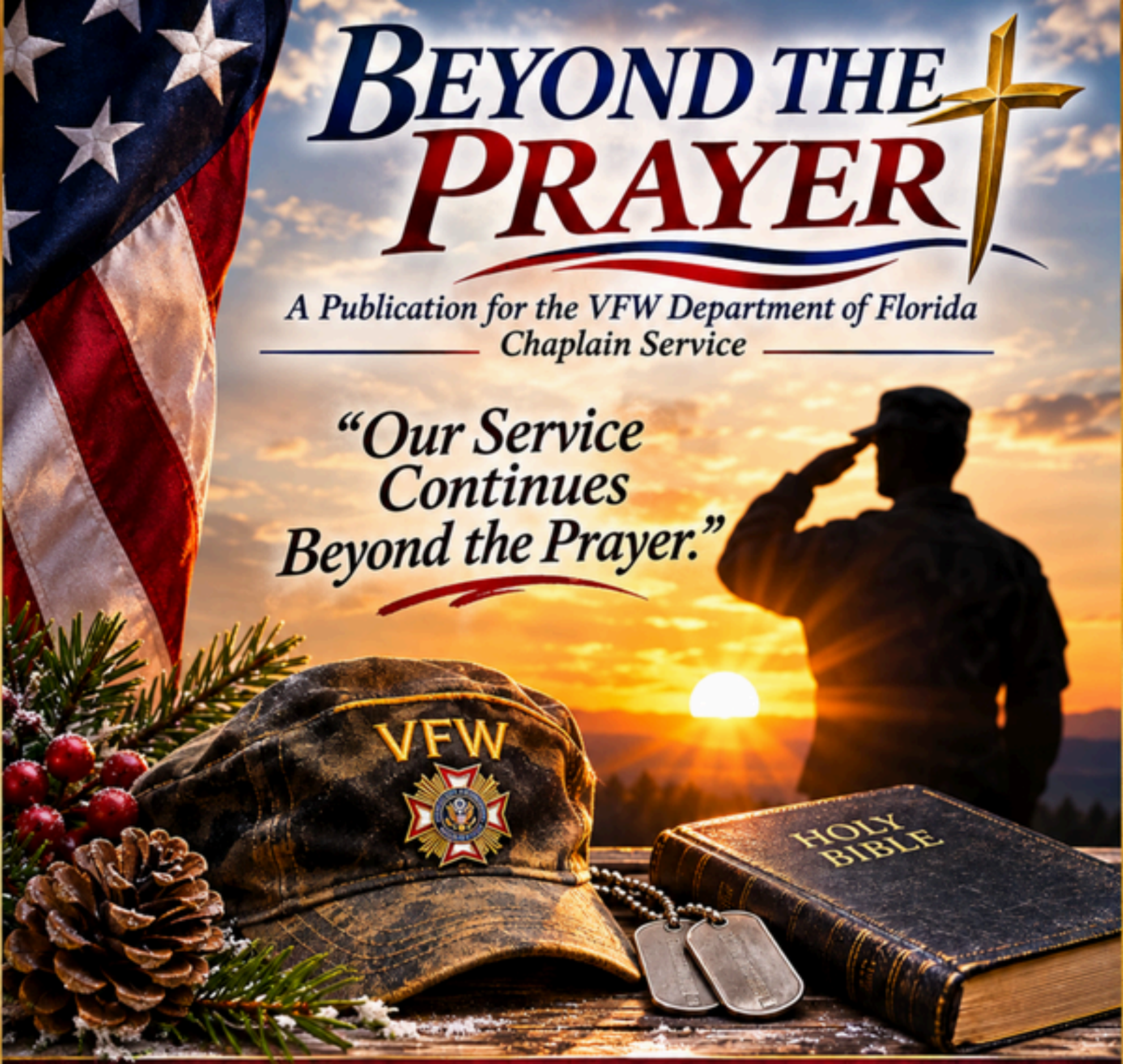
May our Posts and Districts be places of fellowship, encouragement, and service. May peace, understanding, and goodwill guide our actions throughout 2027.

"The mission does not end when the prayer has ended."

BEYOND THE PRAYER

A Publication for the VFW Department of Florida Chaplain Service

"Our Service Continues Beyond the Prayer."



FAITH ★ SERVICE ★ COMPASSION ★ FELLOWSHIP

"Honoring Our Veterans, Caring for Their Families, and Supporting Our VFW Community Throughout the Year."