

Flag Retirement Ceremony for Pathfinders

The Flag Retirement Ceremony – there is no other like it in Pathfinders. With it comes a great responsibility. If conducted improperly, great damage can be done not only to yourself and your club, but to the church and to the cause and mission of Christ. However, when properly conducted there is a spirit of deep respect. You may even shed a tear.

The purpose of the Flag Retirement Ceremony is to properly dispose of unserviceable national flags. Flags that become tattered, torn, or otherwise not representative of the nation fall into this category. Therefore a dignified manner of disposal is necessary. Burning is the preferred method.

("Title 36, Section 176, of the United States Code states: "No disrespect should be shown to the flag of the United States of America;"

Furthermore, Paragraph (K) of this same Title 36, Section 176, states: "The flag, when it is in such condition that it is no longer a fitting emblem for display, should be destroyed in a dignified way, preferably by burning."

Regardless of how you feel about your country, and, or its government, it is our home away from home. We are in the world but not of the world. We are to obey the laws of the land so long as they do not contradict the laws of God. We therefore should be faithful loving citizens and representatives of the best your country has to offer. You are an ambassador for this country, but even more you are an ambassador for Christ and His government.

Items Required

1. Outdoor venue with a campfire, and optionally a flag pole.
2. Flag to be retired.
3. Color guard of four to six pathfinders, depending on the size of the flag. You might want to use your TLTs for this special privilege.
4. Speaker or MC to conduct the ceremony.

Ceremony Overview

- Purpose of this gathering
- Present the flag to be retired and if possible and relevant to give some history of the national flag and specifically that flag.
- Final "Pledge of Allegiance"
- Committal to the flames
- Prayer of dedication and dismissal

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CEREMONY

Purpose of Gathering

SPEAKER: "The flag(s) we retire tonight has served us well, but due to it's condition it is no longer suitable for display. A fresh new flag now flies in it's place, to carry on the honor and dignity of "Old Glory" which flew many years ago."

SPEAKER: "Tonight we will retire this great symbol of freedom throughout the world. Please remain silent until directed otherwise. ABSOLUTE DIGNITY MUST BE MAINTAINED THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE CEREMONY!"

Present the Flag to be Retired

SPEAKER: Flag history and service details.

SPEAKER: "Color guard, present the colors to be retired." (the Color Guard opens the flag in preparation for the Pledge of Allegiance)

Pledge of Alligiance

COLOR GUARD: Prepare to place flag in the fire: * Flag should be carried waist high, parallel to the ground by four to six pathfinders in full class A uniform, one on each corner and one on each long side if necessary. Stop just in front of the fire.

SPEAKER TO AUDIENCE: "We are drawn here together in the sight of God to pay our "last respects" to this symbol of our great nation, "America", the land of the free and the home of the brave. Please join with me in reciting the pledge of allegiance."

Committal to the Flames

COLOR GUARD: * Walk the flag into the middle of the fire. Lower the flag into the fire, slow enough that it starts burning, but fast enough that the flames to not burn the carriers hands. Flip the corners of the flag into the fire to be burned. The color guard continues to face the fire and calls "Present, Arms". They hold this position until the flag is completely consumed. Then the command to "Order, Arms" is given. There is silence the entire time. The color guard then retreats away from the fire in an orderly fashion.

Prayer of Dedication and Dismissal

SPEAKER: Invite the audience to sing "God Bless America" by starting the song. This is not a performance singing, but heartfelt thanks to God for His providence and care.

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God Bless America

God bless America,

Land that I love.

Stand beside her, and guide her

Through the night with a light from above.

From the mountains, to the prairies,

To the oceans, white with foam

God bless America, My home sweet home

God bless America, My home sweet home.

Note about Fire Preparation:

It is important that the fire be sizable -- preferably having burnt down to a bed of red hot coals to avoid bits of the flag being carried off by a roaring fire -- yet be of sufficient intensity to ensure complete burning of the flag.

This document has been prepared using information from the following websites and resources;

<http://www.ushistory.org/betsy/more/flagretirement.htm>

http://www.macscouter.com/ceremony/Flag_retirement.asp#T369

<http://www.senate.gov/reference/resources/pdf/RL30243.pdf>

It is important to note that there are many variations on the flag retirement ceremonies. The important thing is for it to be special, respectful, and dignified.