

### Invocation

Our Father in Heaven, we are gathered today to honor the life and service of Staff Sergeant xxxxx xxxxx. I give thanks for his valiant example as a warrior and leader of Soldiers, and recognize the poignant loss we feel in his absence. Father please comfort our sorrows and uphold our efforts as we remember our brother. In the name of God I ask this blessing upon us, Amen.

### SSG xxxxx Memorial

Today we pay tribute to Staff Sergeant xxxxx xxxxx, our brother and fellow Soldier. We honor his service as a member of our team and our family. And although our hearts ache as we feel the loss of such a strong warrior and leader, we honor his memory by uniting to share and with time overcome our sorrow with the same courage, determination, and loyalty that he embodied during his service among us.

When a Soldier joins the U.S. Army, he or she enters into an agreement to make any sacrifice in defense of our Nation, up to and including one's own life. Soldiers do not choose when or in what manner those sacrifices are rendered, but instead stand ready to perform whatever duty is required at all times and in all places. Sergeant xxxxx fully understood and accepted the dangers inherent in military service. He enlisted into an Army that was already at war with a determined and dangerous enemy, and went overseas multiple times to engage with that enemy in deadly combat. He was prepared to do whatever was necessary to serve his country.

If a Soldier falls while at war, we might take comfort in the knowledge that death is an unavoidable cost of battle. We give thanks for the willingness of a Soldier to pay

the debt that our nation incurs when entering into hostile conflict. However, when a Soldier falls during training or other non-hostile activities, we might find it harder to place the loss in the correct context. It is normal and understandable if our reaction is to ask “how could this happen,” or “why was it necessary?” Sergeant xxxxx understood that realistic training is necessary in preparation for battle, and that the more highly trained our Soldiers are, the more prepared they are to destroy the enemy and reduce losses to our own forces. As such, we rightly acknowledge that Sergeant xxxx died in defense of his country as surely as if he had been taken by an enemy bullet. He is a hero in an Army that is at war now and in the future. And because of his service, his Soldiers and our Army are better prepared to fight and with the nation’s wars. Thus we sincerely honor his sacrifice with an appropriate military tribute, but more personally and significantly we thank him within the quiet confines of our own hearts.

As a devout Christian, Sergeant xxxxx did not believe that death is the end of our existence. The ancient prophet Job asked, “If a man die, shall he live again?” Xxxx would have taken heart in Paul’s explanation that “we shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed...and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.” Those who share xxxxx faith may indeed take comfort in the fact that the bitterness of death is swallowed up in the hope of resurrection, and the glory of God’s victory.

Elsewhere in scripture it is written, “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” We often interpret this to mean the willingness one has to die in defense of others, and Sergeant Xxxxx certainly fulfilled this meaning. However, he also embodied this saying in another manner. As Soldiers our lives may be

taken in a single traumatic instant, but they may also be laid down one moment at a time as we choose to sacrifice our desires and comforts in order to serve others. Xxxx fulfilled this as he exemplified the Army value of selfless service to his Soldiers and his country. We can pay tribute to him by continuing his work as we lay down our own lives, not in death (although we are certainly aware of that possibility), but in subordinating our own wishes to the requirements of the mission and the needs of our fellow Soldiers. SSG xxxxx xxxxx set aside his life daily while carrying out these two basic but incredibly important responsibilities of a Non-Commissioned Officer, and we can honor his memory by doing the same.

#### Benediction

Oh God, our Father and Creator, I give thanks for Soldiers like Staff Sergeant xxxxx xxxxx, and for thy guidance during this trying time. Wilt thou bless this congregation and all who mourn him wherever they may be that Thy peace, which surpasses all understanding, will guard our hearts and minds. Be it so according to Thy wisdom and mercy, Amen.