



Memphis firefighter Brook Farr walks among dozens of flags as firefighters and other Memphis area first responders process down Adams to start the annual September 11 Observance and Firefighters Memorial Service at the Fire Museum of Memphis.

Emergency workers and law enforcement personnel gathered at the Fire Museum of Memphis and St. Peter Catholic Church on Sunday to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, remembering the 343 firefighters killed that day and honoring local fire departments and law enforcement.



Photo by Mike Brown
Memphis firefighter Todd Conklin removes his hat for a prayer prior to the September 11 Observance and Firefighters Memorial Service at the Fire Museum of Memphis

"We're all one family," said Memphis Fire Department Director Alvin Benson. "Everything that happens in the fire department -- in New York, L.A., Miami or Chicago -- in a way, indirectly or directly, it affects us here. The fire service is one single family. We all wear the Maltese cross."

More than 200 Memphis firefighters and police officers, along with Shelby County deputies and government officials, attended morning and afternoon prayer services at St. Peter's in Downtown, two of several events in Memphis commemorating 9/11, including a 5 p.m. ceremony at Bellevue Baptist Church hosted by the church and Shelby County Mayor Mark Luttrell.

The 8:15 a.m. service at St. Peter's was followed by a procession to a ceremony at the nearby museum, where dozens of firefighters hoisted American flags and marched west on Adams Avenue to the legato of bagpipes.

In New York, 20 firefighters represented the Memphis Fire Department for memorial services at ground zero.

"These men and women ... have, for years, made it their life's objective to serve the public," U.S. Atty. Edward Stanton said at the Memphis commemoration. "These men and women put themselves at risk each and every day."

Fifty-three Memphis firefighters who have been killed while on duty were honored at the ceremony, with family members of the fallen placing roses before their memorial plaques.

Among those honored were Trent Kirk and Charles Zachary, 39-year-old firefighters killed in 2003 while responding to an arson fire in Frayser. The two were trying to rescue civilians they believed were trapped inside a blazing Family Dollar store.

Stanton said that like many first-responders of Sept. 11, Kirk and Zachary "made the ultimate sacrifice."

It was a sacrifice that firefighters, who "understand the dangers of the job, but choose to do it anyway," are prepared to make, Benson said.

"Firefighters face danger every day. ... For someone to go with that in mind, someone that can go in a building and lose their life, it says a lot," he said.

Members of Tennessee Task Force One, an urban search-and-rescue team deployed to the Pentagon after the terrorist attacks, were also honored during the Fire Museum ceremony. Team members were recognized with an engraved plaque, which was mounted on wood used during Sept. 11 rescue efforts to support the Pentagon's buckling walls.

"It's still very emotional for all of us that responded to that event," said task force member Fred Steward, 63. "It's something we'll never forget."

A 3 p.m. service at St. Peter included scripture readings by Shelby County Sheriff Bill Oldham and Memphis Police Department Deputy Chief Joe Scott.

More than three dozen officers, deputies and Memphis firefighters bowed their heads and received a "blessing of first responders" at the service's conclusion.

"Send down your blessings on these, your servants, who so generously devote themselves to helping others," prayed Bishop J. Terry Steib.

More than 200 law enforcement officers and firefighters from as far away as Texarkana, Texas, helped fill Bellevue Baptist Church Sunday evening, according to Brent Perkins, public information officer for the Shelby County Fire Department.

Dignitaries, including a member of the 9/11 Commission, were in attendance for the service, where the focus was on first responders.

Perkins said many spouses of emergency personnel wept to hear what their husbands' and wives' jobs entailed.



A Memphis firefighter casts his shadow among roses left in remembrance of local firefighters that lost their lives in the line of duty during the September 11 Observance and Firefighters Memorial Service at the Fire Museum of Memphis. The service began with a blessing of first responders outside St. Peter Catholic Church prior to a procession down Adams to the museum