

# Mother's Day for Peace

In the United States, Mother's Day was originally suggested by poet and abolitionist activist Julia Ward Howe. In 1870, after witnessing the carnage of the American Civil War and the start of the Franco-Prussian War, she wrote the original Mother's Day Proclamation calling upon the women of the world to unite for peace. This "Mother's Day Proclamation" would plant the seed for what would eventually become a national holiday.

After writing the proclamation, Howe had it translated into many languages and spent the next two years of her life distributing it and speaking to women leaders all over the world for this cause. In her book *Reminiscences*, Howe wrote, "Why do not the mothers of mankind interfere in these matters to prevent the waste of that human life of which they alone bear and know the cost?" Her activity on this proclamation initiated annual "Mother's Day" gatherings in Boston, Massachusetts and elsewhere.

In 1907, thirty-seven years after the proclamation was written, women's rights activist Anna Jarvis began campaigning for the establishment of a nationally observed Mother's Day holiday. Her mother, an Appalachian homemaker, had worked to develop better sanitary conditions for both sides in the Civil War, and to reconcile Union and Confederate neighbors after the war. Jarvis sought to honor her mother's work and vision, and in 1914, four years after Howe's death, President Woodrow Wilson declared Mother's Day as a national holiday on the second Sunday of May.

***This Mother's Day, the North Carolina Council of Churches encourages you to honor mothers past and present by reading Julia Ward Howe's proclamation aloud in your congregation. We also encourage you to support mothers and families in Iraq that have been displaced as refugees by making a designated gift to your denominational mission or relief agency, if active in Iraq or Jordan.***

## A Mother's Day Proclamation

*Julia Ward Howe, 1870*

Arise then...women of this day!  
Arise, all women who have hearts!  
Whether your baptism be of water or of tears!  
Say firmly:  
"We will not have questions answered by irrelevant agencies,  
Our husbands will not come to us, reeking with carnage,  
For caresses and applause.  
Our sons shall not be taken from us to unlearn  
All that we have been able to teach them of charity, mercy and patience.  
We, the women of one country,  
Will be too tender of those of another country  
To allow our sons to be trained to injure theirs."

From the voice of a devastated Earth a voice goes up with  
Our own. It says: "Disarm! Disarm!  
The sword of murder is not the balance of justice."  
Blood does not wipe our dishonor,  
Nor violence indicate possession.  
As men have often forsaken the plough and the anvil  
At the summons of war,  
Let women now leave all that may be left of home  
For a great and earnest day of counsel.  
Let them meet first, as women, to bewail and commemorate the dead.  
Let them solemnly take counsel with each other as to the means  
Whereby the great human family can live in peace...  
Each bearing after his own time the sacred impress, not of Caesar,  
But of God -  
In the name of womanhood and humanity, I earnestly ask  
That a general congress of women without limit of nationality,  
May be appointed and held at someplace deemed most convenient  
And the earliest period consistent with its objects,  
To promote the alliance of the different nationalities,  
The amicable settlement of international questions,  
The great and general interests of peace.

***The North Carolina Council of Churches***  
***Strength in Unity, Peace with Justice***  
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