

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

MAY 12, 2022

In 1914 President Woodrow Wilson signed a bill designating the second Sunday in May as a legal holiday to be called Mother's Day. It was to be "dedicated to the best mother in the world, your mother." It has become a day for buying gifts and sending cards and special family celebrations. Interestingly enough, it didn't begin that way; indeed far from it. Several women were involved in the beginnings of what transpired: Ann Reeves Jarvis, Julia Ward Howe, and Ann's daughter, Anna M. Jarvis.

As a young woman, Ann Jarvis lived in Appalachia where she was a homemaker and taught Sunday School in the local Methodist church in Grafton, West Virginia. She began Mother's Day Work Clubs to help teach young mothers sanitary conditions and improved care for their young children. When the Civil War began she organized women's groups, giving no consideration to which side of the war they supported. Following the war Ann organized Mothers' Friendship Day to promote peace between Union and Confederate families.

Julia Ward Howe, a contemporary of Jarvis, had volunteered for the U.S. Sanitary Commission, helping with sanitary conditions in hospitals that treated wounded soldiers. Howe believed that a united front by mothers could prevent the cruelty of war and the loss of life. She promoted an annual Mother's Day celebration in Boston that lasted for about 30 years but quickly ended with the beginning of World War One.

Anna became the person who started a campaign to honor her mother for her work, and in the process, honor all mothers. In May 1907 she held a service memorializing her mother at the same Methodist church where she had served. Philadelphia and then Washington, D.C. soon followed.

The second Sunday in May is intended to celebrate the many roles of women, ways they have made the lives of children better, promoted social welfare and focused on non-violence. It also honors surrogate mothers who have cared for children in any way.

Lord, we thank You for all of the women in our lives who have made our lives better and have found a ministry for others within your Church. Amen.

Pastor Louise