

A History of Memorial Day in the United States



Memorial Day was originally known as **Decoration Day**, a time set aside to honor the nation's Civil War dead by decorating their graves. It was first widely observed on May 30, 1868. During the first celebration of Decoration Day, General James Garfield (later, President Garfield) made a speech at Arlington National Cemetery, after which 5,000 participants helped to decorate the graves of the more than 20,000 Union and Confederate soldiers buried in the cemetery.

By the late 1800s, many communities across the country had begun to celebrate **Memorial Day**; and after World War I, observances also began **to honor those who had died** in all of America's wars. In 1971, Congress declared **Memorial Day** a national holiday to be celebrated the last Monday in May. **Veterans Day**, a day set aside to honor all veterans, **living and dead**, is celebrated each year on November 11.

Memorial Day is celebrated at Arlington National Cemetery with a ceremony in which a small American flag is placed on each grave. In keeping with that commemoration, US flags are placed on veterans' graves in the cemetery here at Alamance Presbyterian. The United States flag is raised on the flagpole (located near the first church monument on the north side of the cemetery) in their memory. Take time during this holiday weekend to walk through our cemetery and visit the final resting places of the many men and women who served God and our country. Veterans from wars dating back to the American Revolution are buried here. It is a history lesson for all of us about our church, our community, and the dedication of its people.



2020 Pandemic Procedures, Phase Two

The Session has formed a Reopening Task Force, to create a timeline and policies and procedures for reopening the church for in-person gatherings. Last Sunday, Session approved these four recommendations from the task force:

- **We will not resume in-person worship until AT LEAST the Sunday after three full weeks of Phase 2 of the NC Moving Forward plan.** As you know, the governor has ordered that the state move into a modified version of Phase 2 on Friday, May 22. Please note: Session has not yet set a date for the resumption of in-person worship. **Do NOT expect to be back in the sanctuary on June 14.** That simply is the earliest possible Sunday we would consider it. We will keep you up-to-date as we make these decisions.
- **When we do return to in-person worship in the sanctuary, we will enforce social distancing by closing portions of our seating, and we will require all attendees to wear masks throughout the service.** Those who would prefer not to wear masks, and those who may have additional risk factors, are encouraged to continue to attend the service remotely through Livestream.
- **We will not resume any other church activities in the building until some time has passed after the beginning of Phase 3.**
- **We will continue to develop creative opportunities for ministry apart from the building. We affirm the continued operation of the Food Pantry and our service at Potter's House, provided proper distancing and mask use are observed.**

These measures were approved unanimously by the Reopening Task Force and the Session. While some of us may personally hold different convictions about the shape and scope of reopening, we hope everyone will understand that these recommendations take into account the diverse perspectives, demographics, and needs of our congregation.

We will always intentionally err on the side of the safety and well-being of our whole membership. We are committed to following the guidelines and recommendations given to us by federal, state, and local governments; where they apply.

You may note that courts have ruled that the government has no authority to force churches to suspend in-person gatherings. That ruling, however, does not fundamentally change the guidance the government and its public health agencies have offered us. We seek the wisdom of those charged to govern, just as we seek the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit in the decisions we make as a church.