**Memorial Day 2025 *(sjm 5-25-2025)***

**Originally called Decoration Day, is a day of remembrance for those who have died in our nation's service.**

Memorial Day was officially proclaimed on 5 May 1868 by General John Logan, national commander of the Grand Army of the Republic, in his [General Order No. 11](http://www.usmemorialday.org/order11.html), and was first observed on 30 May 1868, when flowers were placed on the graves of Union and Confederate soldiers at Arlington National Cemetery. the day, honoring their dead-on separate days until after World War I (**when the holiday changed from honoring just those who died fighting in the Civil War to honoring Americans who died fighting in any war**). It is now celebrated in almost every State on the last Monday in May

* ***Memorial Day is a time to remember the sacrifices made for our freedom.***
* ***It is also a time to reflect on the cost of freedom and the importance of peace.***
* ***We can honor the fallen by living lives that reflect the values they fought for.***

*Traditional observance of Memorial Day has diminished over the years. Many Americans nowadays have forgotten the meaning and traditions of Memorial Day. At many cemeteries, the graves of the fallen are increasingly ignored, neglected. Most people no longer remember the proper flag etiquette for the day. While there are towns and cities that still hold Memorial Day parades, many have not held a parade in decades. Set aside one day out of the year for the nation to get together to remember, reflect and honor those who have given their all in service to their country.*

Memorial Day is not about division. It is about reconciliation; it is about coming together to honor those who have given: **All gave some & some gave all!**

**Memorial Day from the Christian Perspective: (there is another war and lives have been taken)**

In perspective about 1.2m American soldiers haves died in wars from 1775–2024 *(651k combat)*

However, it is estimated that over 70m Christians have died as a result of persecution with the most between 1901 -2000. Some estimate about 1,000 now annually.

**All gave some, some gave all. Where do you stand in this?**

**Mark 16:15** And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and **preach the gospel to every creature**.

 **16**He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

 **17And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;**

 **18 They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.**

 **20 And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.**

God’s Love compels us to get the gospel & love of Christ to a unsaved & often unloved world!

 **John 3:16** For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

 **\*John 15:13** Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

 **Acts 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you & you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem & in all Judea & Samaria, & to the ends of the earth.” *(Greek witness =Martys)***

 ***Defined: In the context of Christianity, it refers to someone who suffers persecution or death for their faith***

 ***1) One who bore testimony***

 ***2) Actually one who witnesses unto their death***

**Where are you at with accomplishing the sharing of the gospel (with words or with actions?)**

**Reflect on the People that have Spiritually Affected your life that you especially remember today?**

 **What about people you have positively affected you in enhancing your relationship with God!**

- Was it your parents who taught you biblical principles that apply to your life!

- Was it a Sunday school teacher who spent extra time with you explaining various Christian principles?

- Was it you local Pastor who spend hours with you in your time of crisis - encouraging you?

- Was it your prayer partner who spent time unselfishly praying for you?

- Was it a bible study teacher who opened your eyes to revelations that made a breakthrough in your life?

- Was it a neighbor who showed you acts of kindness (babysitting, meals, rides w/o asking anything in return?)

- Was it a friend whose Christian example inspired you?

 You see if God can’t get the gospel out in one way, he will get it to you another!

**I Believe with many others that now is the time God is pouring out his Holy Spirit for Kingdom Business!**

**Acts 2:17** In the **last** days saith God, I will pour out my spirit on all flesh ………. *(Last = final)*

**Deut 11:14** That I will give you the **rain** of your land in his due season, the first **rain** and the **latter** **rain**,

**Zech 10:1** Ask ye of the Lord **rain** in the time of the **latter** **rain**; so the Lord shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of **rain**, to every one grass in the field.

**James 5:7** Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and **latter** **rain**.

**John 2:10** This is wonderful stuff!” he said. “You’re different from most. Usually a host uses the best wine first, and afterwards, when everyone is full and doesn’t care, then he brings out the less expensive brands. But you have kept the best for the last!” *(best, choice, excellent or right)*

**Haggai 2:9** The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts:

**Open Doors research teams create the World Watch List:**

* Around 365 million Christians are subject to “high levels of persecution and discrimination”. This [compared to 340 million in 2021](https://media.opendoorsuk.org/document/pdf/WorldWatchListreport-2021.pdf) (PDF).
* 1 in 7 Christians are persecuted worldwide, including 1 in 5 in Africa and 1 in 7 in Asia. This compared to [1 in 8 worldwide in 2021](https://media.opendoorsuk.org/document/pdf/WorldWatchListreport-2021.pdf) (PDF).
* In 2024, 4,998 Christians were killed for faith-related reasons. [90% of those killed were in Nigeria](https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/persecution/countries/nigeria/), where attacks on Christians have become more common since 2020 as [part of a wider rise in political violence against civilians](https://acleddata.com/2022/07/21/fact-sheet-attacks-on-christians-spike-in-nigeria-alongside-overall-rise-in-violence-targeting-civilians/). Open Doors estimates the number of Christians killed for faith-related reasons worldwide was 5,621 in 2023, 5,898 in 2022, and 4,761 in 2021.
* 14,766 Churches and Christian properties were attacked.
* North Korea, Somalia, Libya, Eritrea, and Yemen had the highest rates of reported persecution against Christians.

North Korea has been consistently ranked as having one of the highest rates of persecution [since the World Watch List was first conducted in 1983](https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/research-reports/wwl-documentation/). The number of countries ranked as conducting “extreme” or “very high” persecution has risen from 23 in 2015 to 55 in 2023.

Open Doors UK has also published an [Advocacy report](https://media.opendoorsuk.org/document/pdf/2024-Advocacy-Report.pdf) (PDF) in 2024, which makes several recommendations on UK Government action, including:

* Prioritising freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) and making it central to engagement with other countries and in international organisations.
* Committing resources to fragile states to support FoRB.
* Targeting programmes to address gender-specific persecution.
* Ensuring Artificial Intelligence and other emerging technologies are not used to persecute religious groups, and to establish global standards to this end.

Government actions on FoRB

The UK Government says promoting the right to freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) is [a priority in its human rights work](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/global-britain-in-a-competitive-age-the-integrated-review-of-security-defence-development-and-foreign-policy/global-britain-in-a-competitive-age-the-integrated-review-of-security-defence-development-and-foreign-policy) internationally.

The Commons Library research briefing, [The UK and global Freedom of Religion or Belief](https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9849/), September 2023, sets out UK Government and policy to promote and protect FoRB. This includes:

* The prioritisation of FoRB in the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office’s work (section 4.1).
* The role of the Special Envoy for FoRB (section 4.2).
* UK aid spending on FoRB (section 4.3).
* UK diplomatic activity, including though the International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance (section 4.4).
* Sanctions against those who abuse human rights (section 4.5).
* Analysis and reports on the effectiveness of UK work on FoRB, including by the [Government-commissioned Bishop of Truro report on Christian persecution in 2020](https://christianpersecutionreview.org.uk/report/) and the [Independent Commission for Aid Impact on UK aid and human rights overseas in 2023](https://icai.independent.gov.uk/review/the-uks-approach-to-democracy-and-human-rights/) (section 4.6).

Fiona Bruce MP has also introduced a Private Member’s Bill, [International Freedom of Religion or Belief Bill 2022-23](https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3499) (Bill 373). This would put the role of Special Envoy for International Freedom of Religion or Belief onto a statutory footing and require the Government to provide staffing and other facilities to support the office.

Henrietta Blyth, CEO of Open Doors UK, has called upon the Government [to place the office on a statutory footing](https://www.opendoorsuk.org/news/latest-news/worldwatchlist-parliamentary-launch/). The [Bishop of Truro’s report in 2020](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bishop-of-truros-independent-review-of-fcdo-support-for-persecuted-christians-assessment-of-recommendations-implementation/assessment-of-the-implementation-of-recommendations-of-bishop-of-truros-independent-review-of-fcdo-support-for-persecuted-christians) also called for the role to put on a permanent footing.

The [Government has said it is “committed” to the role](https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-11-07/150) but has not issued any statement on whether it should be put on a statutory basis.

1. [North Korea](https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/north-korea/)
2. [Somalia](https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/somalia/)
3. [Yemen](https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/yemen/)
4. [Libya](https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/libya/)
5. [Sudan](https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/sudan/)
6. [Eritrea](https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/eritrea/)
7. [Nigeria](https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/nigeria/)
8. [Pakistan](https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/pakistan/)
9. [Iran](https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/iran/)
10. [Afghanistan](https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/afghanistan/)

11  [India](https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/india/)

1. [Saudi Arabia](https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/saudi-arabia/)
2. [Myanmar](https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/myanmar/)
3. [Mali](https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/mali/)
4. [China](https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/china/)
5. [Maldives](https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/maldives/)
6. [Iraq](https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/iraq/)
7. [Syria](https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/syria/)
8. [Algeria](https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/algeria/)

19  [Burkina Faso](https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/burkina-faso/)

1. [Morocco](https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/morocco/)
2. [Laos](https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/laos/)
3. [Mauritania](https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/mauritania/)
4. [Bangladesh](https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/bangladesh/)
5. [Uzbekistan](https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/uzbekistan/)
6. [Cuba](https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/cuba/)
7. [Central African Republic](https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/central-african-republic/)
8. [Niger](https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/niger/)
9. [Turkmenistan](https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/turkmenistan/)

30  [Nicaragua](https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/nicaragua/)

1. [Mexico](https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/mexico/)
2. [Oman](https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/oman/)
3. [Ethiopia](https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/ethiopia/)
4. [Tunisia](https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/tunisia/)
5. [DRC](https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/drc/)
6. [Bhutan](https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/bhutan/)
7. [Mozambique](https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/mozambique/)
8. [Kazakhstan](https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/kazakhstan/)
9. [Tajikistan](https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/tajikistan/)
10. [Egypt](https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/egypt/)
11. [Qatar](https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/qatar/)
12. [Comoros](https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/comoros/)
13. [Cameroon](https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/cameroon/)
14. [Vietnam](https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/vietnam/)
15. [Türkiye](https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/turkiye/)
16. [Colombia](https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/colombia/)
17. [Kyrgyzstan](https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/kyrgyzstan/)
18. [Brunei](https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/brunei/)
19. [Chad](https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/chad/)
20. [Jordan](https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/jordan/)

**Example for North Korea**

* **If your Christian faith is discovered in North Korea, you could be killed on the spot.**
* **If you aren’t killed, you will be sent to a horrendous labour camp and treated as a political criminal. You will be punished with years of hard labour that few survive.**
* **North Korean authorities are also likely to round up your extended family and punish them too, even if your family members aren’t Christians themselves.**
* **North Korean refugees in other countries, particularly China, are at risk of being rounded up and sent back to appalling punishments. If it is discovered that a North Korean has become a Christian, or even simply heard the gospel or came into contact with Christians, then they will be singled out for severe punishment.**
* **Any Christian connection in your family history means that party membership is withheld, and you are consigned to the worst jobs and lowest positions.**

**Somolia**

* **Somali Christians are often killed on the spot when their faith is discovered – murdered either by Islamic militants or even their own family.**
* **Believers who aren’t killed can face persecution from family members including house arrest, forced marriage, sexual violence or being forced to take part in Islamic rituals.**
* **There has been a huge rise in sexual violence against girls by Islamic militants, and those suspected of following Jesus are particular targets.**

**China**

* **Unregistered churches, even those once tolerated, are considered illegal and increasingly put under pressure, as authorities seek to enforce regulations and tighten policies. State-approved churches come under strong ideological pressure, and smaller congregations are often forced to merge to make a larger church that is easier for the state to control.**
* **Children under 18 are forbidden from attending church. Officially registered churches are carefully regulated to make sure nothing they promote falls outside guidelines set by the Chinese Communist Party.**
* **Christian leaders are targeted in China and face intense surveillance. They may be imprisoned if their outlawed religious activities are discovered.**
* **In regions where Islam or Tibetan Buddhism are majority faiths, Christian converts can face additional scrutiny and pressure – and sometimes violence – from their families and communities.**

**“It has become unsafe for our brothers and sisters to connect in groups; otherwise, they might be questioned by the authorities anytime.”**

**Hollace\*, Open Doors partner**

**Why are Christians persecuted in China?**

**Eastern Orthodox church popular in Ukraine**