

June 2017

# Juneteenth Resources



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Dear Beloved Community,

Juneteenth originated in Galveston, Texas on June 19, 1865. On this date, the people of Texas learned that the Civil War had ended and slaves had gained their freedom. Major General Gordon Granger, the leader of the Union troops, issued General Order Number 3, emancipating the last 250,000 slaves who remained captive despite President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation of 1863. Justice was delayed but ultimately not denied.

The name Juneteenth may capture the excitement those slaves felt. According to the "Queen's English," the celebration should be called "June Nineteenth." But when chains of captivity fell from their bodies and souls, their tongues were not concerned about grammar. Newfound freedom prompted the creation of a new word, "Juneteenth." (Source: African American Lectionary)

This resource includes worship litany, history and additional resources that can be used within your community and congregation.

Blessed to be a blessing to you,

Sheila P Spencer

Juneteenth is the oldest known celebration of the ending of slavery. "From its Galveston, Texas origin in 1865, the observance of June 19th as the African American Emancipation Day has spread across the United States and beyond. Today Juneteenth commemorates African American freedom and emphasizes education and achievement. It is a day, a week, and in some areas a month marked with celebrations, guest speakers and family gatherings. It is a time for reflection and rejoicing. It is a time for assessment, self-improvement and for planning the future. In cities across the country, people of all races, nationalities and religions are joining hands to truthfully acknowledge a period in our history that shaped and continues to influence our society today.

## Juneteenth Litany Emancipation Day

O Lord, we celebrate your strong hand of deliverance. We have seen your grace in the midst of life's burdens.

**Lord God of Hosts, on the anniversary of our freedom from slavery, we know that we can do all things through Christ, who strengthens us. (see Phil. 4:13)**

The Emancipation Proclamation freed African slaves in the United States on New Year's Day in 1863. But actual freedom for the last slaves did not come until a June day two and a half years later, This Juneteenth milestone reminds us of the triumph of the human spirit.

**Lord God of Hosts, be with us always, as you were with Harriett Tubman.**

The Constitution once defined African Americans as three-fifths human. But we have labored and died as whole men and women.

**Lord God of Hosts, be with us always, as you were with Frederick Douglas.**

The Thirteenth Amendment abolished the heinous institution of slavery, but we still struggle against the chains of racial discrimination.

**Lord God of Hosts, be with us always, as you were with Vernon Johns.**

The Fourteenth Amendment made us citizens by legislation because our blood, sweat, and tears helped to build this nation.

**Lord God of Hosts, be with us always, as you were with Thurgood Marshall.**

The Fifteenth Amendment said we could not be denied the right to vote because of our color; yet we have faced systematic exclusion from the political process, and we continue to struggle for full inclusion.

**Lord God of Hosts, be with us always, as you were with Barbara Jordan.**

The Twenty-fourth Amendment abolished poll taxes, voting tests, and other restrictions upon our right to vote; but these soon were replaced by gerrymandering and political apathy.

**Lord God of Hosts, be with us always, as you were with Benjamin Quarles.**

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 translated into law most of the goals of the Civil Rights Movement, protecting all citizens from racial segregation and discrimination. Let us remain ever vigilant in our commitment to proactive citizenship.

**Lord God of Hosts, be with us always, as you were with Stokely Carmichael.**

Our hopes soar to heights of joy when we remember the emancipation of Nelson Mandela in 1990, and his ascendancy to President of South Africa after twenty-six long years in prison. Blessed are the righteous.

**Lord God of Hosts, be with us always, as you are with Desmond Tutu.**

Let us leave behind those sins that pulled us down in the old year, and answer the high calling of your will for our lives in the new year.

**Lord God of Hosts, on the anniversary of our freedom from slavery, we know that we can do all things through Christ, who strengthens us.**

\* Litany from the book: *African American Heritage Hymnal*

## The Church and Juneteenth

From the establishment of the first black church in America, throughout slavery and beyond, the church has been the foundation of the black community. During the horrific days of slavery it provided relief and nourishment for the soul with its promise of a better life after death. The church gave the slave dignity and assured him he was equal in the eyes of God. Despite his earthly condition he was loved and valued as a person of God no matter how difficult his burden became or unbearable his suffering was. Jesus, who too suffered, prepared a place of rest for him when his time was up on earth. It was this religious faith that sustained the slave and enabled him to endure his bondage.

The slave owner was able to observe a glimpse of this faith as he heard the incredible music that seemed to come out of the slave's soul while toiling in the field. If the slave owner had ventured into a slave church, his strong defense of slavery would no doubt have been weakened. He would have seen the people he considered inferior and sub-human without the defensive masks they wore in the fields; in their churches, enslaved men and women displayed a dignity and stateliness that survived the slave owner's dehumanizing oppression.

The church was more than a safe house. It served as a launching pad for black leadership and was involved early on in working for liberation. Many free blacks in northern churches participated in the Underground Railroad, raised money for freedmen after the Civil War, and helped keep the black community intact.

The importance of the black church cannot be overstated. It was, and perhaps still is, the single most important institution in the black community. It permitted self-expression and supported creativity at a time when it could have meant death. An example is found in the spirituals, gospel and other forms of music that helped blacks explain and endure their sojourn in America. Blacks were able to use their churches to hone organization and leadership skills useful in the economic, social and political development of their community. It's no accident that Martin Luther King, Jr., Jesse Jackson and a host of civil rights leaders got their start through the black church.

The Black Church provided a haven from the daily oppression slaves faced, but after freedom it was also the center of social activities including the sponsorship of the annual Juneteenth Celebration.

A portion of The Black Church and Juneteenth by Dr. Charles Taylor. The whole paper can be found online at <http://www.njclc.com/njclchistory.html>.

Juneteenth, celebrated on June 19, is the name given to emancipation day by African-Americans in Texas. On that day in 1865 Union Major General Gordon Granger read General Order #3 to the people of Galveston. General Order #3 stated "The people of Texas are informed that, in accordance with a proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free. This involves an absolute equality of personal rights and rights of property between former masters and slaves, and the connection heretofore existing between them becomes that between employer and hired labor. The freedmen are advised to remain quietly at their present homes and work for wages. They are informed that they will not be allowed to collect at military posts and that they will not be supported in idleness either there or elsewhere." --  
Courtesy Texas State Library

## Why We Celebrate Juneteenth...

**J**uneteenth represents the joy of freedom – the chance for a new beginning.

**U**nless we expose the truth about the African-American slave experience, Americans won't truly be free.

**N**ever must we forget our ancestors' endurance of one of the worst slave experiences in human history.

**E**very American has benefitted from the wealth blacks created through over 200 years of free labor and Juneteenth allows us to acknowledge that debt.

**T**To encourage every former slave-holding state to follow Texas' (and Oklahoma's) example and make Juneteenth a state holiday.

**E**veryday in America, blacks are reminded of the legacy of slavery. Juneteenth counters that by reminding us of the promise of deliverance.

**E**ven on the journey to discover who we are, Juneteenth allows us to reflect on where we've been, where we're at and where we're going as a people.

**N**"Never give up hope" is the legacy our enslaved ancestors left. It was this legacy that produced black heroism in the Civil War and helped launch the modern civil rights era. It is this legacy we celebrate.

**T**To proclaim for all the world to hear, that human rights must never again become subservient to property rights.

**H**istory books have only told a small part of the story; Juneteenth gives us a chance to set the record straight.

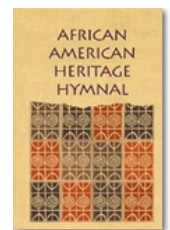
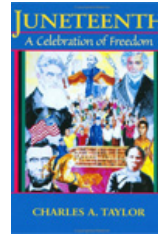
Freedom is always worth celebrating!

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# Juneteenth Resources

- Video on Juneteenth – African American Lectionary:  
<http://www.theafricanamericanlectionary.org/videos.html#v35>
- History of Juneteenth and resources: <http://www.juneteenth.com/>
- African American Lectionary Resources:  
<http://www.theafricanamericanlectionary.org/PopupLectionaryReading.asp?LRID=305>
- National Juneteenth Holiday Campaign. Online location: <http://www.juneteenth.us/>
- Texas State Historical Association. Online location:  
<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/lkj01>
- 2017 Juneteenth Events – Click link for info on Juneteenth celebrations that are near you  
<https://www.everfest.com/seasonal/juneteenth-festivals>
- Taylor, Charles A., *Juneteenth: A Celebration of Freedom*, Greensboro, NC: Open Hand Publishing, LLC, 2002.
- *African American Heritage Hymnal: 575 Hymns, Spirituals, and Gospel Songs* by Rev. Dr. Delores Carpenter – General Editor, Rev. Nolan Williams – Music Editor <https://www.giamusic.com/products/P-5400.cfm>



## Additional Resources

- **Black Disciples Who Make a Difference** Issue 1-5: These resources contain brief biographies of African Americans whose lives are a significant part of our Christian faith.  
<https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/congregations/african-american-congregational-nurture/resources/>
- **African American History Month:**  
<https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/congregations/african-american-congregational-nurture/resources/african-american-history-month/>

