

JUNETEENTH

FREEDOM DAY PROPER S AND PRAYERS

INTRODUCTION¹

Juneteenth marks our country's second independence day. Although it has long celebrated in the African American community, this monumental event remains largely unknown to most Americans.

On "Freedom's Eve," or the eve of January 1, 1863, the first Watch Night services took place. On that night, enslaved and free African Americans gathered in churches and private homes all across the country awaiting news that the Emancipation Proclamation had taken effect. At the stroke of midnight, prayers were answered as all enslaved people in Confederate States were declared legally free. Union soldiers, many of whom were black, marched onto plantations and across cities in the south reading small copies of the Emancipation Proclamation spreading the news of freedom in Confederate States. Only through the Thirteenth Amendment did emancipation end slavery throughout the United States.

But not everyone in Confederate territory would immediately be free. Even though the Emancipation Proclamation was made effective in 1863, it could not be implemented in places still under Confederate control. As a result, in the westernmost Confederate state of Texas, enslaved people would not be free until much later. Freedom finally came on June 19, 1865, when some 2,000 Union troops arrived in Galveston Bay, Texas. The army announced that the more than 250,000 enslaved black people in the state, were free by executive decree. This day came to be known as "Juneteenth," by the newly freed people in Texas.

¹ From the National Museum of African American History & Culture:
<https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/stories/historical-legacy-juneteenth>

COLLECT

Almighty and eternal God, in every generation you kindle in the hearts of your people the flame of freedom and the light of liberty. We remember before you those who, on this day, received the glad tidings of emancipation and those who were messengers of freedom. Grant us grace, in our own time, to contend fearlessly with the evils of slavery and to make no peace with oppression; that we may use our liberties for the cause of justice and peace among the nations; through Jesus Christ our liberating Savior. Amen.

HEBREW SCRIPTURE READING: ISAIAH 58:6-9

New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition

Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them and not to hide yourself from your own kin? Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you; the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, "Here I am."

PSALM 118:1-9

1 Give thanks to the Lord who is good;
the mercy of the Lord endures for ever.
2 Let Israel now proclaim,
"The mercy of the Lord endures for ever."
3 Let the house of Aaron now proclaim,
"The mercy of the Lord endures for ever."
4 Let those who fear the Lord now proclaim,
"The mercy of the Lord endures for ever."
5 I called to the Lord in my distress;
who answered by setting me free.
6 The Lord is at my side, therefore I will not fear;
what can anyone do to me?
7 The Lord is at my side to help me;
I will triumph over those who hate me.
8 It is better to rely on the Lord
than to put any trust in flesh.
9 It is better to rely on the Lord
than to put any trust in rulers.

NEW TESTAMENT READING: GALATIANS 3:23-29

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Now before faith came, we were imprisoned and guarded under the law until faith would be revealed. Therefore, the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came, so that we might be reckoned as righteous by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian, for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek; there is no longer slave or free; there is no longer male and female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise.

THE GOSPEL: LUKE 4:16A-22

New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition

When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth.

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

The Prayers of the people incorporate traditional African American Spirituals and images from the African diaspora. The prayers may include a sung response using LEVAS II #117 or the spoken response included in the prayers. The choir or cantor introduces the sung response.

Presider Abba, you bind the baptized as one people, formed in Christ the cornerstone, and freed for the work of justice and peace; in your mercy abide with us as we together pray, that built upon the foundation of the saints we may ask what you desire and live what you command.

Voice 1 Come, Holy Spirit, come from the four winds O Breath of God, and fill your people gathered here.

Voice 2 Lift every voice and sing the praises of our God, who has led us through the places watered with the blood and tears of our ancestors. Come Holy Spirit.

All ***Heal us and make us whole.***

Voice 1 Come, Holy Spirit, lead your church to unity and peace, that together, with N. our Presiding Bishop, N. our Bishop, N. our priest and N. our Deacon, inspired by Christ, we may see more clearly a vision of God's reign of love.

Voice 2 On Christ the solid rock we stand, help us to stand together, to pray together, to love together, to be the people you call us to be. Come Holy Spirit.

All ***Heal us and make us whole.***

Voice 1 Come, Holy Spirit, come rekindle, refresh and renew your people.

Voice 2 Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on your people, melt us, mold us, fill us, use us to tell the Good News of salvation to every village and hamlet, every city and town. Come Holy Spirit.

All ***Heal us and make us whole.***

Voice 1 Come, Holy Spirit, strengthen us as you have strengthened our ancestors in ages past.

Voice 2 Revive us again, fill each heart with your love, that following the example of *local African American freedom fighters or activists may be added here* we may be pioneers of your reign. Come Holy Spirit.

All ***Heal us and make us whole.***

Voice 1 Come, Holy Spirit, come with healing in your wings for the broken, the hurting and the lost.

Voice 2 O Lord our God, when we in awesome wonder consider your love in sending Christ to be our healer and guide, grant us to be messengers of wholeness and healing to *names may be offered silently or aloud*. Come Holy Spirit.

All ***Heal us and make us whole.***

Voice 1 Come, Holy Spirit, receive the souls of your faithful people, who now find rest in the regions of light.

Voice 2 Soon we'll reach the shining river, soon our pilgrimage will cease and we will join the glorious band of saints in light. Yes, we will gather at the river with *names may be offered silently or aloud* at the river that flows by the throne of God. Come Holy Spirit.

All ***Heal us and make us whole.***

Voice 1 Come, Holy Spirit, fill us with thankfulness and praise for the gifts of those blessed with Ebony grace who yearned to breathe free.

Voice 2 We have come over a way that with tears has been watered, to stand on the shoulders of greatness. Come Holy Spirit.

All ***Heal us and make us whole.***

Voice 1 Come, Holy Spirit, fill our hearts with song and our steps with grace as we celebrate *thanksgivings may be offered here* in this community.

Voice 2 Lead us, guide us along the way, for if you lead us we cannot stray from the places our God where we met you. Come Holy Spirit.

All **Heal us and make us whole.**

Presider Living God, whose Spirit enlivens the whole creation, hear the prayers of your people as we cry to you. Send us the gift of your Holy Spirit that we may proclaim your marvelous works as revealed in Jesus Christ your Son; who is a live and reigns with you, One God, now and for ever. Amen.

A GATHERING RITE

Once all are in place the Presider says,

Presider Dear friends in Christ, we gather today as an act of remembrance, repentance, and reparation, as we celebrate Juneteenth Freedom Day. We remember the millions of African Americans who were stolen from their homelands, enslaved in bitter bondage, and who yearned always to breathe free. We repent of the ways in which we and those who have gone before us have been complicit in continuing systems of suppression, subjugation, and supremacy. We seek to repair the legacy of brokenness, brutality, and betrayal that perpetuates injustice and oppression in our own day. We gather today with the echoes of the past in our ears and hope of the future on our lips. Therefore in the silence let us call to mind the need of remembrance, repentance and reparation to which we have been called in Christ Jesus our Savior.

Silence is kept for a time.

Presider Let us pray.

Silence is kept for a time.

Presider Emancipating God, you delivered your people from captivity, and brought them to the land of promise; deliver us from the bondage of injustice, from the yoke of oppression and the burden of division and set us free. As you have shown us compassion, help us to be compassionate. As you have liberated us, help us stand up against injustice everywhere. As you have delivered us, help us fight for freedom for all still enslaved. Remember us, hear us, and be with us always; through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

Presider "For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery." –Galatians 5:1

The liturgy continues with the opening acclamation.