



C4SO

JUNE TEENTH

A QUICK-START GUIDE TO JUNETEENTH

[The Revelation 7:9 Task Force for Racial Diversity and Inclusion](#) invites C4SO to join them in a celebration of freedom and liberation through simple acts of remembering, reflecting and responding. As many C4SO churches are predominately white and few of them have Black leadership, we are committed to continually educating ourselves, loving our Black brothers and sisters and seeking freedom for the captive.

REMEMBER.

- What is Juneteenth? Juneteenth (short for June 19th) marks the historic moment when African Americans were freed from slavery in Texas. Juneteenth commemorates African American suffering and overcoming, and honors the end to slavery in the United States. On June 19, 1865, federal troops arrived in Galveston, Texas, to take control of the state and ensure the freedom of all enslaved people. During the two-and-a-half years between the signing of the [Emancipation Proclamation](#) and the troops' arrival, many Black people still functioned as slaves. In 2021, the U.S. government officially declared Juneteenth a federal holiday. Juneteenth is also referred to as Juneteenth National Independence Day, Jubilee Day, Emancipation Day (Texas), Freedom Day, and Black Independence Day.
- Why do we celebrate? Juneteenth is an opportunity for us all, as the Church, to celebrate the freedom of our black brothers and sisters (Romans 12:15). As followers of Jesus, we emphatically proclaim that slavery in our country was a terrible and evil act from the beginning. We recognize this as a sinful stain on the history of our country. We also acknowledge that people claiming a Christian faith participated in the sinful act of buying, owning and selling slaves. As the Church, we look back with disgust on these acts and, together, celebrate this historic day when the liberation of slaves was communicated to the people in Texas.
- We also need to be clear that racism and its sinful impact on our society did not end on June 19th, 1865. However, the proclamation that equal value is placed on all men and women, both former masters and former slaves, is in alignment with our Lord's heart and certainly worth celebrating. And, as Christians who are seeking justice, Juneteenth is a day we can ALL celebrate the breaking of an unjust and unrighteous institution. There is still much work to be done, but praise the Lord for His faithfulness to His people. May we continue to seek the Kingdom, love our neighbor as ourselves, and seek freedom for the captive (Matthew 6:33, Mark 12:31, Isaiah 61:1).



REFLECT.

“Juneteenth invites us to reflect upon the fact that during the two-and-a-half-year period between Emancipation Day and Juneteenth, there were still some people of color, people of African descent in the United States, who were still in bondage. They were still functioning as slaves, though legally they were free. Juneteenth, then, was for them a delayed celebration, a delayed enforcement of freedom. It represented a lagging liberation. This time lag of liberation is a metaphor of what it means to exist in the in-between of freedom, in freedom’s now-but-not-yet. In other words, Juneteenth points to the fact that liberation is not a one-time event. It is an ongoing project beckoning us to write the vision of freedom and issue renewed proclamations of ‘freedom now.’ Juneteenth signifies the fact that freedom and liberation is both behind and ahead of us.”—**J. Kameron Carter**, *African American Lectionary*

RESPOND.

- Support Black-owned businesses in your community.
- Attend a Juneteenth Celebration in your community.
- Attend [this webinar](#) hosted by Christianity Today.
- Be intentional about speaking up against racism in your spheres of influence.
- Educate yourself about the Emancipation Proclamation and the history of slavery in the United States.
- Meditate on Exodus 3:7, 9. “Then the Lord said, ‘I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings.’”
- Sing the song “Lift Every Voice and Sing” at church or at home.*
- Lead the “Responsive Reading for Juneteenth” below with your family or church community.**

What are some other meaningful ways you personally celebrate Juneteenth? [Let us know.](#)



*“Lift Every Voice and Sing”

Lyrics by [James Weldon Johnson](#) (1871–1938) and music by his brother, [J. Rosamond Johnson](#) (1873–1954). Written from the context of African Americans in the late 19th century, the hymn is a prayer of thanksgiving as well as a prayer for faithfulness and freedom, with imagery that evokes the biblical Exodus from slavery to the freedom of the “promised land.”

Lift every voice and sing,
'Til earth and heaven ring,
Ring with the harmonies of Liberty;
Let our rejoicing rise
High as the listening skies,
Let it resound loud as the rolling sea.
Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us,
Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us;
Facing the rising sun of our new day begun,
Let us march on 'til victory is won.
Stony the road we trod,
Bitter the chastening rod,
Felt in the days when hope unborn had died;
Yet with a steady beat,
Have not our weary feet
Come to the place for which our fathers died.
We have come over a way that with tears has been watered,
We have come, treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered,
Out from the gloomy past,
'Til now we stand at last
Where the white gleam of our bright star is cast.
God of our weary years,
God of our silent tears,
Thou who has brought us thus far on the way;
Thou who has by Thy might
Led us into the light,
Keep us forever in the path, we pray.
Lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where we met Thee,
Lest our hearts drunk with the wine of the world, we forget Thee;
Shadowed beneath Thy hand,
May we forever stand,
True to our God,
True to our native land.



**** Responsive Reading for Juneteenth**

By the Rev. Dr. Leslie Copeland-Tune, COO, National Council of Churches

Leader: Today, we gather to remember, to reflect, to celebrate FREEDOM!

Congregation: Freedom is not free. We thank You, O God, today for our freedom in You and remember those for whom freedom was so costly a price to pay.

Leader: We remember those who were enslaved. We recognize that slavery tried to erase the humanity of so many of Your people – those who were enslaved and those who brutalized and dehumanized others, not realizing the cost for their own souls. Lord, have mercy!

Congregation: Forgive us, O God. Help us to always treat one another as we want to be treated and to, above all, recognize that we are all created in Your image and likeness. We remember today. In Your mercy, O God, hear our prayers.

Leader: We reflect on the gift of freedom today and the many ways that the struggle continues. We lament those who are still treated as less than Your very own as we recommit to fight for freedom and dignity for all of Your people.

Congregation: Help us, O God, to be courageous in fighting for justice and righteousness for all of Your people until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream!

Leader: We celebrate today! For freedom has come and will come again. For those in cages at our borders, for those locked up in jail cells away from their families, for those who are caught up in human trafficking, for those living without clean water, for those trapped in the bondage of an opioid addiction – God as we celebrate freedom today, help us to continue the fight for freedom across the global village in every form and in every way.

Congregation: We celebrate FREEDOM today! We celebrate with renewed determination, knowing that our work is not done and our task has not been fully accomplished until all of God's children are truly free from bondage.

ALL: We remember, we reflect, we celebrate this Juneteenth. Thank You, O God, for reminding us that freedom is possible, necessary and a promise from You.

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