

Worship Resources for Juneteenth 2022

(Sunday, June 19, 2022)



Juneteenth commemorates the occasion of some African's, and their descendant's, enslaved in America, learning of their emancipation of a June day in 1865. Juneteenth was proclaimed a federal holiday in 2021 by President Joseph R. Biden. This designation introduced the Juneteenth holiday to a wider American audience, although the holiday has been celebrated for over 150 years among some African Americans.

The liturgical elements below, crafted by The Rev. Dr. Anthony Scott, have been crafted to aid clergy and congregations, in the Rocky Mountain Conference of the United Church of Christ and beyond, to engage this celebration in informed and appropriate ways in the context of Christian worship. Why would Juneteenth be an appropriate occasion to commemorate in worship? God is a God of justice and liberation; testaments, Hebrew and Greek, make explicit God's preferential option for those who are poor and those who are oppressed. Juneteenth commemorates the good news of physical liberation to those who were oppressed. It was a message too long overdue. When justice is done, the will of God is done. Juneteenth can also be a call, to engage in the work of dismantling racism.

Call to Worship

Litany

Unison Prayer

Hymn Suggestions

Call to Worship

One: Come, let us draw near to worship God, the great liberator.

Many: Those whom the son sets free are free indeed.

One: God brought God's people out of bondage in Egypt; Adonai is the great liberator.

Many: Those whom the son sets free are free indeed.

One: God makes chains shatter and seas part. Barriers to freedom are not of God; they are tools of greed, domination, and evil.

Many: God make us to blossom into your image and likeness. Make us liberators, chain breakers, and makers of peace that all who breath might experience liberty, hope, and justice.

Prayer

(unison)

God of compassion, God of love, God of justice, God who makes those taken hostage by life to know liberation, we come. We come to worship with thanksgiving because in you we find freedom and joy. We come to worship with grief that Africans were enslaved in America and were denied dignity and freedom for so long. We come to worship lamenting evils past and present. Make us to be forces of repentance, conciliation, and repair for evils past and present. Make us to be forces for liberation in this time and in time to come. Make us implements of your justice, righteousness, and shalom here and now. We pray this in the strong name of Jesus, our liberating LORD. Amen.

Litany

(Leader | Congregation)

Mighty God, we remember that you are mighty to save; through you, the bound are loosed, the ignorant find wisdom, and oppressors are humiliated.

The Emancipation proclamation freed Africans enslaved in the confederate states in the U.S. American Union as a war measure. That freedom began on January 1st, 1863. There were those, enslaved Africans from whom news of emancipation was concealed until a June day two- and one-half years later. This day is commemorated as Juneteenth.

Liberating God, we perceive your will through the courageous action of Harriet Tubman.

The Constitution defined African Americans as beings less than human. God made us all in God's image and likeness; all are, by rite of creation, equally human, equally belonging, and equally worthy of life free from fear, bondage, and terror.

Liberating God, we perceive your will through the words and work of Martin Luther King Jr.

The 13th amendment abolished slavery except in case of imprisonment. This led to the criminalization of Blackness, through Black codes, Jim Crow, and other policies designed to return the descendants of Africans enslaved in America to involuntary servitude.

Liberating God, we perceive your will through the protest of Angela Davis.

The civil rights act of 1964 and the voting rights act of 1965 codified the basic ideals of the African American Movement for civil rights. The movement was a success and yet failed to do what no law could force. It did not change the hearts of American whites. Laws could not make American whites see Black people as equals, as humans, as beloved.

Liberating God, we perceive your will through the preaching and scholarship Samuel DeWitt Proctor.

The 21st century has seen a radical resurgence and reemergence of white supremacist ideology complete with lynchings, terror, and racist legislation. The gradual gutting of the voting rights act of 1965 has disenfranchised some Black voters and other voters of color from participating in this fundamental Democratic process. Black people are killed by police and imprisoned in numbers disproportionate to their composition of the U.S. Population. This is not because Black people are predisposed to criminality, but because of systemic oppression and stereotypes which work for the perpetual disenfranchisement of Black people in the United States of America.

Liberating God, we perceive your will through the conviction and resolve of Fannie Lou Hamer.

Passivity and inaction in the face of injustice is as helpful as complicity. Working for and towards the dismantling of racist structures, policies, and beliefs is holy work. It is work to which God calls us until justice comes.

Liberating God, free us from idolatry to ideals that will not save. Free us from bonds of complicity, complacency, and silence. Free us to make justice and liberation manifest in this realm.

Hymn Suggestions

Lift Every Voice and Sing	New Century Hymnal	593
Community of Christ	New Century Hymnal	314
Lord, You Are Welcome	Sing! Prayer and Praise	31
We Are Called	The Faith We Sing	2172