



Worship Resources: Juneteenth

Juneteenth is a holiday that commemorates the end of slavery in the United States. It recalls how the states of Louisiana and Texas heard the news that President Abraham Lincoln had signed the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863. Slavery continued in those two states for more than two years after the proclamation was signed because the word had yet to travel there. Texas and Louisiana finally got the good news on June 19, 1865. Former slaves broke out in spontaneous celebration. These were dangerous times. Even in the face of resistance and threat, the formerly enslaved Africans found ways to give voice to the wide range of thoughts and emotions at the announcement of the end of legalized slavery in the United States of America.

This resource may be used in whole or adapted based on your local traditions. Additional assembly song may reflect the theme and text of the day.

+GATHERING+

GATHERING SONG

We Are Marching In the Light of God, TFF 63 / ELW 866

A LITANY ADAPTATION OF “LIFT EVERY VOICE AND SING”¹

Celebration rises, up from the deep places,
finding voice in the light and air no longer denied.

**Lift every voice and sing, sing till earth and heaven ring,
ring with the harmonies of liberty.**

Celebration rises, not blind to the suffering, not blind to the sorrow.
Celebration comes at a cost.

**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 parents sighed.**

Celebration rises, remembering the way we have come,
the paths taken that have brought us here now to this place and time of celebration.
Celebration rises, up and up, full of remembering.

¹ Using text adapted from "Lift Every Voice and Sing" by James Weldon Johnson (1871-1938). In public domain.

Remembering the ones led to freedom by Harriet;
Remembering lives and freedom stolen
[names may be added here by appointed voices and/or congregation]
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 till now we stand at last where the white gleam
of our bright star is cast.

Celebration rises, recognizing what has been done and left undone,
knowing there is still and yet much to do, so much further to go.
Celebration rises, naming the victories, recognizing the challenges yet ahead.
Celebration rises on voices offering unfinished praise.
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;

Celebration rises, resisting illusions,
to be embraced by the real and abiding presence of God who breaks our chains,
and sets us free for freedom, in power and love and joy.
God of our weary years, God of our silent tears
thou who hast brought us thus far on our way;
thou who has by thy might led us into the light,
keep us forever in the path, we pray.

Celebration rises, with the power of healing wings and promise to endure.
Celebration rises, celebrating that by God's grace,
I am because You are, You are because I am;
Celebrating that the fullness of my humanity does not diminish yours
and the fullness of your humanity does not diminish mine.
Shadowed beneath thy hand may we forever stand, true to our God,
true to our native land.
True to who we are, True to who we have been and who we are becoming,
thanks be to God.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Holy and righteous God, you created us in your image. Grant us grace to contend
fearlessly against evil and to make no peace with oppression. Help us, like those of
generations before us who resisted the evil of slavery and human bondage in any form
and any manner of oppression. Help us to use our freedoms to bring justice among people
and nations everywhere, to the glory of your Holy name through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

A POURING OF LIBATIONS

The pouring of libations may be offered by pouring fresh water in to a living plant of appropriate size. The offering of water as sign and source of life, poured (offered) giving up some of what has been so graciously given acknowledging: After each pouring the gathered people say 'Ashe' (Ahshay) or Amen. (See TFF pg. 12)

The gathered people may be invited to lift up names of ancestors, those to be remembered at the appropriate times. Every generation (elders, infants, teens, children, young adults, middle age) should be represented as a gathered visible presence as libations are poured.

- First Pouring: to acknowledge God our source, our Creator, the giver of Life
- Second Pouring: to acknowledge the full presence of God with us Source, Savior and Holy Spirit
- Third Pouring: to acknowledge our ancestors, the great cloud of witnesses now one with God.
- Fourth Pouring: to acknowledge the generations that fought died and led us to freedom from slavery persecution, Jim Crow laws, inequitable access to rights and resources in this society .
- Fifth Pouring: to acknowledge, those who have led the struggle for freedom in recent times and even now. We name them with our voices and in our hearts as we pour thanking God.
- Sixth Pouring: to acknowledge our children and our children's children. The generations of hope and promise entrusted to us by the Grace of God. We pour in thanksgiving and in Hope.
- Seventh Pouring: to acknowledge God our Source, Our Savior Jesus the Christ, Our Sustainer and Counsel and Comforter the Holy Spirit.

Thanks Be to God.

+ WORD +

SANKOFA

The West African spiritual proverb and teaching reminds us to “Go back and fetch it”. Taking hold of our past, our history in such a way that it becomes nourishment and guidance for journeying into our future.

“Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world. Now I've been free, I know what a dreadful condition slavery is. I have seen hundreds of escaped slaves, but I never saw one who was willing to go back and be a slave.” ~ Harriet Tubman

“Liberty is meaningless where the right to utter one's thoughts and opinions has ceased to exist. That, of all rights, is the dread of tyrants. It is the right which they first of all strike down. They know its power. Thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers, founded in injustice and wrong, are sure to tremble, if men are allowed to reason... Equally clear is

the right to hear. To suppress free speech is a double wrong. It violates the rights of the hearer as well as those of the speaker.” ~ Frederick Douglass

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Lectionary text for Sunday before or after the actual date of Juneteenth..

MEDITATION ON THE WORD

HYMN OF THE DAY

Based on texts lectionary texts or other song as desired in your worship planning related to this observance.

ADDITIONAL PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION:

O God, you made us in your own image and redeemed us through Jesus your Son. Look with compassion on the whole human family; take away the arrogance and hatred that infect our hearts; break down the walls that separate us; unites us in bonds of love; and, through our struggle and confusion, work to accomplish your purposes on earth; so that, in your good time, every people and nation may serve you in harmony around your heavenly throne.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**
Or other response used in your congregation.

Out of the darkness we cry to you, O God. Enable us to find in Christ the faith to trust your care even in the midst of pain. Assure us that we do not walk alone through the valley of the shadow, but that your light is leading us into life.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

O God, where hearts are fearful and constricted, grant courage and hope. Where anxiety is infectious and widening, grant peace and reassurance. Where impossibilities close every door and window, grant imagination and resistance. Where distrust twists our thinking, grant healing and illumination. Where spirits are daunted and weakened, grant soaring wings and strengthened dreams.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

O God, call us into a deeper relationship to be your church for the sake of the world. Help us to see with new eyes the injustices within church and society. Call us to have a loving heart that respects and uplifts the humanity and dignity of every person; open our ears to listen to and learn from the experiences of people of color. Open our mouths to speak up and about injustices. Join us with others to work for racial equity and inclusion for all people.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

PEACE

+ MEAL +

For the offering and/or setting the table, use music that reflects the practice of your congregation.

OFFERING

A special offering may be considered and designated for supporting the work of eradication of racism and racial justice in the United States.

SETTING OF THE TABLE

GREAT THANKSGIVING

If Holy Communion is celebrated, the recommended Eucharistic Prayer should come from either TFF pg. 84 or ELW Eucharistic Prayer VIII.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

+ SENDING +

A SENDING/CHARGE TO THE PEOPLE

“Go out into the world in peace; have courage;
hold onto what is good; return no one evil for evil;
strengthen the faint hearted; support the weak,
and help the suffering; honor all people;
love and serve the Lord, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.”

BLESSING

SENDING SONG

Lift Every Voice and Sing, TFF 29 / ELW 841

DISMISSAL