**Authors’ Note on Context Awareness**

We wrote and compiled this liturgy from a specific vantage point. As three white cisgendered individuals, we recognize not only the need for education surrounding Juneteenth, but also the specific work that the white community needs to do. We imagine this liturgy to be used in a largely white congregation. We do acknowledge that our denomination (PCUSA) has congregations of color, but we felt unable to speak/write for persons of color and wish not to steal their unique voices.

-Elizabeth Brinegar, Kristy Rodgers, Kyle Walker

**Call to Worship (A Pouring of Libations)**

The pouring of libation dates back to Genesis 35:14 when Jacob poured out a drink offering on the pillar to mark the spot he had spoken with God. It also dates back to Egypt as a way to honor the ancestors and the story that comes before us. Today we worship and remember the stories of our ancestors that journey with us today.

The pouring of libations may be offered by pouring fresh water into the baptismal font. 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. 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. Each pouring may be done by a single individual or by different persons.

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 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.[[1]](#endnote-1)**

**Invitation to Confession**

In a few weeks, we will celebrate Independence Day. We will celebrate our freedom from the British crown to pursue life, liberty and happiness in a place where all men are created equal. But at the time those words were penned, we were already 157 years into the practice of chattel slavery, and it would be 87 more before the Emancipation Proclamation would legally end it. Sadly, it would then be an additional two and a half years for that word to reach the last of the enslaved people in this country.

Today is June 19th—Juneteenth; a day of liberation celebrated by our black brothers and sisters, particularly those in Texas, since 1866. On this day in 1865, Union soldiers arrived in Galveston, Texas to bring that word to the state. Lest we underestimate the impact of that decree, consider this: It is estimated there were 250,000 slaves in Texas at the time.

Friends, how can we, born unrestrained, truly appreciate what it would have been like; laboring enslaved and suddenly declared free? Now, 157 years after the fact, we sit in an awkward place; a largely white community of faith trying to figure out what to do with this history and now, this holiday. Do we celebrate? Observe? Commemorate? Mourn? The answer may well be, “All of the above”, eventually, but today we’ll start with confession. Will you join me?

**Prayer of Confession**

One: This is hard history, O God, and we need your eyes

**All: to see the painful truth and acknowledge that reality.**

One: Holy One, we need your ears, as well,

**All: to hear the voices of those long-silenced.**

One: We need your mind and your wisdom,

**All: to understand the generational impact of that injustice.**

One: And, God of compassion, we need your heart,

**All: to allow us to feel your pain at their suffering.**

One: As your people in this place, show us the way forward;

**All: a way of sorrow that moves us to repentance;**

One: from repentance to repair,

**All: and from repair to relationship, as we move toward justice.**

One: Forgive us for the harm we have caused your beloved children

**All: and, knowing better, help us do better.**

One: Let us confess in the silence of our hearts that which burdens our hearts. (silent confession)

**Assurance of Pardon**

Amen. Friends, Jesus came into the world to save sinners, just like you and I. He did it before we recognized, acknowledged or repented of those sins. By the grace of his sacrifice, we can believe the good news of the Gospel:

All: In Jesus Christ we are forgiven. Amen.[[2]](#endnote-2)

**Affirmation of Faith**

We believe

• that God has revealed himself as the one who wishes to bring about justice

and true peace among people;

that God, in a world full of injustice and enmity, is in a special way the

God of the destitute, the poor and the wronged

• that God calls the church to follow him in this; for God brings justice to

the oppressed and gives bread to the hungry;

• that God frees the prisoner and restores sight to the blind;

• that God supports the downtrodden, protects the stranger, helps orphans

and widows and blocks the path of the ungodly;

• that for God pure and undefiled religion is to visit the orphans and the

widows in their suffering;

• that God wishes to teach the church to do what is good and to seek the

right;

• that the church must therefore stand by people in any form of suffering

and need, which implies, among other things, that the church must witness

against and strive against any form of injustice, so that justice may roll

down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream;

• that the church as the possession of God must stand where the Lord stands,

namely against injustice and with the wronged; that in following Christ the

church must witness against all the powerful and privileged who selfishly

seek their own interests and thus control and harm others.[[3]](#endnote-3)

**Invitation to Offering**

God has richly blessed us with abundance. In God’s good creation, there is enough for every person and yet we listen to the lie of scarcity and choose not to share.

Acknowledging that our church offerings in and of themselves continue to largely support white systems of power, we give with faith and hope into the brokenness, understanding we must work to repair relationships in community, sharing what God has given us.

**Prayer of Dedication**[[4]](#endnote-4)

God of provision and abundance, June 19, 1865 announced an emancipation that can only be fully realized in our willingness to make those words a flourishing reality for people everywhere. May these gifts provide for healthy bodies, minds, and spirits for the oppressed and the oppressor, that none may be chained by their inheritance of cycles of poverty or trapped by the spiritual impoverishment of affluence. Help us level spiritual and material mountains and valleys of our community that we may all share in your abundance without benefitting at the expense of each other, but that all may live free as whole persons. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

**Prayers of the People**

Today, we commemorate the end of slavery in America.  
This day partially reminds us of the progress made.  
This day also partially reminds us of the progress we have not made.  
We celebrate the freedom of black lives in our nation.  
We grieve that we have not correctly reconciled racism in our nation.

You created each person in Your image.  
The two greatest commandments call us to love You with all our heart, souls, and minds;  
Then, to love our neighbor as ourselves.  
Your love for us motivates us to love each other.  
If we do not love each other, then ultimately, we have not experienced Your love.

As much as we commemorate and celebrate Juneteenth, we grieve this day.  
We mourn that our black brothers and sisters have not been loved as our neighbors.  
We mourn that our black brothers and sisters have been treated [as less than your Holy] image throughout history.  
So, Lord, we confess our sins and repent.  
The healing and reconciliation we desire comes from the gospel.

On Juneteenth this year, we ask You to guide our nation.  
May the good news of the gospel motivate us to love each other.  
May the ideals of our words match the practices of our lives.  
May a fresh empowerment of Your Spirit unite us together.  
Give us eyes to see and ears to hear Your will and leading.[[5]](#endnote-5)

We pray these things in the name of the One who is all grace, truth, and reconciliation, using the prayer he taught us saying **Our Father…**

**Hymn Suggestions**[[6]](#endnote-6)

753 Make Me a Channel of Your Peace

754 Help Us Accept Each Other

\*756 O God of Every Nation

\*759 O God, We Bear the Imprint

765 Canto De Esperanza

\*772 Live Into Hope

\*Denotes hymns that deal explicitly with racial diversity.

1. Copyright © 2019 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. This document may be reproduced for use in your congregation with attribution. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Invitation to Confession, Prayer of Confession, and Assurance of Pardon written by Kristy Rodgers [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. From *The Confession of Belhar* [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Invitation to Offering & Prayer of Dedication written by Kyle Walker [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. *Peter Englert* [*https://www.xavier.edu/jesuitresource/online-resources/prayer-index/juneteenth-prayers*](https://www.xavier.edu/jesuitresource/online-resources/prayer-index/juneteenth-prayers) [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Hymn suggestions provided by Kyle Walker [↑](#endnote-ref-6)