



Written by Rev. Kyle Walker, N4DR

Juneteenth is the commemoration of the ending of slavery in the United States. It is so named because on June 19, 1865, Union soldiers landed at Galveston, Texas, to ensure that the Emancipation Proclamation was enforced in Texas. This was 2 ½ years after President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation became law on January 1, 1863.

In my last church, I was working through the church office holidays in the personnel manual (I know, it's the last thing we think of while reading the Great Ends of the Church!).

That's just the thing though, in working with the session on this I found out that we tried to follow the state holidays, so I looked at the state holidays and noted we in fact took off for all the state holidays except one...Juneteenth. And we were closed for Columbus Day.

It occurred to me that right there in front of me was a way to BEGIN to decolonize our office culture. We swapped Columbus Day for Juneteenth bringing more awareness to our history and present consciousness on race. Small step but it has caused Juneteenth to stick with me ever since.



The Juneteenth flag
was designed by L.J. Graf.

(Over)

For the first time this year, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Foundation Board of Trustees voted to make Juneteenth an official holy day of remembrance during its November 2020 meeting. They issued the following statement:

"The Presbyterian Foundation is giving sustained, intentional focus on our strategic priority of diversity, equity, and inclusion in who we are as a Board and as a staff, cultivating a culture of education of, conscientization in, and proficiency in dynamics of historical, institutional, and systemic racism," says Rev. Dr. Neal Presa, Chair of the Presbyterian Foundation Board of Trustees. "Juneteenth is a sacred day of reckoning for the Church, and we dare say, for our nation, as it brings to attention the delay of more than two and a half years for official word to reach enslaved Blacks in Texas that the Emancipation Proclamation had been issued years prior. The tragedy of that gap in time — of justice delayed was justice denied — calls forth our collective wills that we as Christians and as a people can never rest until the fulness of racial equality and racial equity is realized."

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How might Juneteenth become more of your community's consciousness and reality this year?*

Volunteer with a civil rights organization

Watch a movie like 'Fruitvale Station' or TV show like "Watchmen

Buy a book by a black author for yourself and another for your child or church's children's library

Donate to a civil rights organization or black-led philanthropy

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God of new opportunity, in faith we know our unmet promises of yesterday and today can, by your Holy Spirit and the willingness of our hands and feet, become a new reality right now and tomorrow. May we be mindful of this Juneteenth and bring justice and opportunity for people of color across this land. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen



***For specifics on our ideas
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