JUNETEENTH WORSHIP, DEVOTION & STUDY SUPPLEMENT

“Freedom Delayed, Freedom Declared, Freedom Lived”

Theme Scripture:
“For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.” — Galatians 5:1

WELCOME

Today we remember Juneteenth, June 19, 1865—the day enslaved African Americans in Texas learned they were free, more than two years after the Emancipation Proclamation.

Juneteenth reminds us that freedom is both a gift and a calling. We celebrate God’s liberating power, honor the resilience of those who endured bondage, and commit ourselves to the ongoing work of justice, reconciliation, and love.

OPENING PRAYER

God of Exodus and Emancipation,

You heard the cries of your people in Egypt.
You walked beside those who traveled through slavery,
segregation, discrimination, and injustice.

Today we thank You for freedom won,
freedom proclaimed,
and freedom still unfolding.

Give us courage to speak truth,
strength to pursue justice,
and hearts that reflect Your love for all people.

In Jesus ’name we pray.

Amen.

RESPONSIVE READING

Leader: We remember those who longed for freedom.

People: Their faith carried them through generations of struggle.

Leader: We remember those who worked, prayed, marched, and persevered.

People: Their witness reminds us that God is faithful.

Leader: We remember June 19, 1865, when freedom was proclaimed in Texas.

People: We celebrate God's liberating power.

Leader: We remember that freedom is more than a moment.

People: It is a responsibility we carry forward.

Leader: Let us walk in freedom, justice, and love.

People: By God's grace, we will.

JUNETEENTH REFLECTION

Freedom Delayed

The Emancipation Proclamation became effective on January 1, 1863.

Yet many enslaved people remained unaware of their freedom.

On June 19, 1865, Union General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston, Texas, announcing that enslaved people were free.

The message had been delayed.

The freedom had already been declared.

But the people had not yet heard the news.

How often do we live as though we are still bound by fear, shame, bitterness, or despair—even after God has declared us free?

Juneteenth reminds us that God's promises are true, even when the world delays their fulfillment.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Old Testament

Exodus 3:7-8

"I have observed the misery of my people… indeed, I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them."

Psalm

Psalm 126

"Those who sow in tears shall reap with shouts of joy."

Gospel

Luke 4:18-19

"He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives…"

Epistle

Galatians 5:1

"For freedom Christ has set us free."

DISCUSSION OR BIBLE STUDY QUESTIONS

Remember

1. Why is it important to remember difficult parts of history?
2. What does Juneteenth teach us about perseverance and hope?

Reflect

3. What forms of bondage still exist in our world today?
4. What forms of spiritual bondage does Christ free us from?

Respond

5. How can our church be an instrument of freedom and justice?
6. What is one action God may be calling you to take this week?

PRAYER OF THE PEOPLE

For those whose freedom was denied,
we remember.

For those who fought for justice,
we give thanks.

For those who continue to experience oppression,
we pray.

For our communities,
our nation,
and our world,
we seek Your peace.

Teach us to be agents of reconciliation,
builders of beloved community,
and witnesses to Your liberating love.

Amen.

BLESSING OF FREEDOM

Invite worshipers to light candles or hold battery-operated lights.

Leader:
As these lights shine before us,
we remember those who carried hope through the darkness.

May their courage inspire us.

May their faith strengthen us.

May their freedom remind us that God's light cannot be extinguished.

People:
Thanks be to God.

SENDING BLESSING

Go forth remembering:

Freedom is God's gift.

Justice is God's work.

Love is God's command.

May the God who brought Israel through the sea,
the ancestors through oppression,
and Christ through the grave,
lead us into lives of courage, compassion, and freedom.

Amen.

Suggested Hymns from

This Far By Faith

- "Lift Every Voice and Sing"
- "We Shall Overcome"
- "Guide My Feet"
- "Oh Freedom"
- "This Little Light of Mine"

This supplement can be used as a **4-page church insert, a Juneteenth Bible study handout, or a personal devotional guide** with only minor formatting changes.

Children's Message for Juneteenth

"The Good News Finally Arrived!"

Object: A wrapped gift box or envelope labeled "Good News"

Ask the children:

Good morning, friends!

Have you ever waited for something exciting?

Maybe your birthday?
Maybe Christmas?
Maybe a letter, a package, or a special surprise?

(Allow a few responses.)

I brought something with me today. (Hold up gift box or envelope.)

Suppose I told you this gift belongs to you. It has your name on it. It's yours!

But what if I never told you?

Would you know it was yours?

(No!)

The gift would belong to you, but you wouldn't know it.

Today we are celebrating Juneteenth.

A long time ago, many African American people were enslaved. They were not free to make their own choices or live the lives God intended for them.

Then a very important announcement was made: they were free.

But many people did not hear that news right away.

Some people had to wait more than two years before they learned they were free.

Can you imagine waiting that long for good news?

On June 19, 1865, the news finally reached people in Texas. That day became known as Juneteenth.

Juneteenth reminds us how important it is to share good news.

And that reminds me of Jesus.

Jesus came to bring the best news of all:

God loves us.
God forgives us.
God wants us to live in freedom, hope, and joy.

Just as people celebrated when they learned they were free on Juneteenth, we celebrate because Jesus tells us we are loved and free in Him.

Today we remember that every person is precious to God.

Every person deserves dignity.

Every person deserves respect.

And every person deserves to hear the good news that God loves them.

Prayer

Dear God,

Thank You for Juneteenth.

Thank You for freedom.

Help us to treat every person with love and respect.

Help us share Your good news wherever we go.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.