

Rector's Note
June 18, 2025

This Thursday June 19 is Juneteenth, recognized as a state holiday in Texas since 1979, and as a federal holiday in 2021. It marks the day in 1865 when General Gordon Granger of the Union Army arrived in Galveston, Texas, to read aloud the proclamation that "All slaves are free."

This news was announced over two years after Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, and over two months after Lee's surrender. And it was not really news to anyone. Enslavers had moved their human prisoners to far-flung Texas as the war was ending, purposely, in order to be far removed from Washington, and to evade the law for as long as possible.

Enslaved people were likely aware of the news as well, but had few choices. Some enslaved people did run away, but some were killed or caught trying to escape.

General Granger was not so much telling people something revelatory, but rather, appearing with US troops to enforce the law. Our armed forces showed up to protect our most vulnerable citizens. That date in June was one step on the road to Black freedom, and freedom for us all from the evil system of slavery. A system we are still trying to get free from.

Juneteenth underscores the mythology of thinking that we can pinpoint freedom to any one specific date. Freedom is rather a process, a collective process of learning and growing and seeing and becoming.

We here at St Martin's are part of that journey to freedom, for ourselves, for each other, as a community and as a world. We are discerning how to respond to the injustices of our day, how to protect the most vulnerable. It is a deeply spiritual journey, difficult, and painful, and also purpose-filled and joyous.

On this Juneteenth, may God show us the way to even greater freedom, and give us the courage to take those steps.

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