

# What is Juneteenth and Why Is It Important to Celebrate?

**Juneteenth** is the commemoration of June 19, 1865, the day when Union troops arrived in Galveston, Texas, and announced that enslaved people were free. Although the Emancipation Proclamation had been issued more than two years earlier, many enslaved people in Texas had not yet experienced its effect.

## Why Is Juneteenth Important?

**It celebrates freedom.** Juneteenth commemorates the liberation of enslaved African Americans and honors the long struggle for freedom, dignity, and human rights.

**It tells a fuller American story.** The observance helps us remember that freedom was not experienced equally or immediately by everyone. It encourages a deeper understanding of our nation's history and the ongoing pursuit of justice.

**It honors resilience and hope.** For generations, African American communities have marked Juneteenth with gatherings, worship, music, education, storytelling, and celebrations that affirm the strength and perseverance of those who endured slavery and worked for freedom.

**It calls us toward a more just society.** Juneteenth invites people of all backgrounds to reflect on the past, celebrate progress, and recommit themselves to building communities marked by justice, reconciliation, and mutual respect.

For many churches, Juneteenth is also an opportunity to give thanks for God's liberating work in human history and to reflect on the Christian call to seek justice, love mercy, and uphold the dignity of every human being.