



JUNE 19 1865

# TOGETHER WE RIDE THE JUNETEENTH WAVE OF FREEDOM TO LIBERTY



**EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN  
CHURCH IN AMERICA  
FLORIDA-BAHAMAS SYNOD  
JUNE 19, 2025**



## **JUNETEENTH DEVOTION**

**Theme: *Together We Ride the Juneteenth Wave of Freedom to Liberty***

June 19, 2025

ELCA, Florida Bahamas Synod

**Scripture Theme:** *"So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed."* – John 8:36 (NRSV)

### **Order of Devotion**

#### **1. Opening Hymn**

 **Lift Every Voice and Sing** – *This Far by Faith* #286

#### **2. Invocation Prayer**

*God of Liberation and Light,*

*On this Juneteenth day, we remember not only a moment in 1865 but a movement that still marches forward. As we ride the wave of freedom toward true liberty, let us be inspired by those who came before and empowered by the Spirit to continue the work of justice and love.*

*In Jesus' name, Amen.*

#### **3. Scripture Readings**

- John 8:36 – *"So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed."*
- Galatians 5:1 – *"For freedom Christ has set us free..."*
- Isaiah 58:6 – *"Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice..."*

#### **4. Musical Reflection**

 **Guide My Feet** – *This Far by Faith* #214

### **A Juneteenth Story: Pvt. William Costley**

In 1841, a baby named William Costley and his mother Nance Legins-Costley were freed through the legal advocacy of a young lawyer—Abraham Lincoln. Costley would grow up near Lincoln's home in Illinois, and years later, inspired by Frederick Douglass' call to arms, he enlisted in the United States Colored Troops (USCT).

Despite being wounded in battle, Costley chose not to be discharged. In May 1865, his unit was called to serve as a "show of force" on the Texas–Mexico border. Sailing from City Point, Virginia (present-day Hopewell), they encountered a storm and made port in Galveston, Texas. On June 19, 1865, thousands of Black soldiers, including Costley, disembarked.

Upon learning that freedom had not yet been enforced, they posted General Order No. 3 on the door of the Colored Church (present-day Reedy Chapel AME). They marched through the city, proclaiming liberty and turning Juneteenth into a living celebration of faith, courage, and justice.



## Devotional Reflection: “Freedom Indeed”

Jesus declared in John 8:36 that those He frees are “*free indeed*.” Juneteenth echoes this spiritual truth. Though the Emancipation Proclamation had been signed over two years earlier, freedom was delayed for many. It took the living witness of Black soldiers—many formerly enslaved themselves—to bring that freedom to life.

As we remember, we are also called. True freedom requires vigilance, love, and action. We ride the wave of liberation knowing that liberty is not only legal—it is spiritual. Together, we continue the journey.



## Prayer of the People

*God of Every Generation,*

We honor those who believed, resisted, and built. We pray for liberty where there is still bondage. Strengthen us to be people of justice and joy. Let our lives reflect the power of Your freedom.

**Amen.**



## Call to Action

This Juneteenth, consider:

- ✓ Reading a Juneteenth story aloud
- ✓ Supporting a Black-led justice organization
- ✓ Sharing your family’s freedom story
- ✓ Hosting a youth discussion on faith and freedom



## Closing Hymn



**We’ve Come This Far by Faith** – *This Far by Faith* #197



## Juneteenth Educational Resources

- **The Emancipation Proclamation**  
<https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured-documents/emancipation-proclamation>
- **General Order No. 3**  
<https://www.nps.gov/articles/general-order-number-3.htm>
- **13th Amendment (Abolished Slavery)**  
<https://www.archives.gov/historical-docs/13th-amendment>
- **14th Amendment (Citizenship and Equal Protection)**  
<https://www.archives.gov/historical-docs/14th-amendment>
- **National Juneteenth Observance Foundation (NJOF)**  
<https://www.njof.org>



## Closing Blessing

*May the God who delivered Israel,  
the Christ who conquered death,  
and the Spirit who empowers liberty  
go with you as you ride the wave of freedom—  
not only today, but every day.  
Amen.*

# AMERICAN VALUES

From the time people were first brought from Africa and forced into slavery, Black Americans have fought for the same values and rights that are important to all Americans. This fight continues today.

## Activity

Find these American values in the word search below. Look down, across, up, backward, and diagonally. One has been done for you.

C	O	D	I	Y	F	U	N	A	S	L	E	E	M
Y	R	E	V	A	R	B	E	S	H	C	P	Y	I
T	T	C	D	T	O	I	E	C	I	R	E	H	R
I	M	I	T	U	E	C	H	P	R	A	C	A	O
L	F	T	N	C	C	A	F	U	T	E	N	R	C
A	C	S	D	U	E	A	C	L	E	S	E	D	E
U	N	U	S	T	M	P	T	P	O	T	D	W	E
Q	A	J	B	I	O	M	S	I	M	R	N	O	D
E	K	P	L	O	D	E	O	E	O	E	E	R	Y
N	C	Y	R	W	E	B	A	C	R	N	P	K	G
L	A	Y	T	R	E	B	I	L	I	G	E	L	L
L	R	M	F	Y	R	L	C	E	L	T	D	O	E
E	D	G	A	D	F	I	D	O	E	H	N	T	B
O	L	E	O	P	P	O	R	T	U	N	I	T	Y

### WORD BOX

BRAVERY  
COMMUNITY  
EDUCATION  
EQUALITY

FAMILY  
FREEDOM  
FREE SPEECH  
HARD WORK

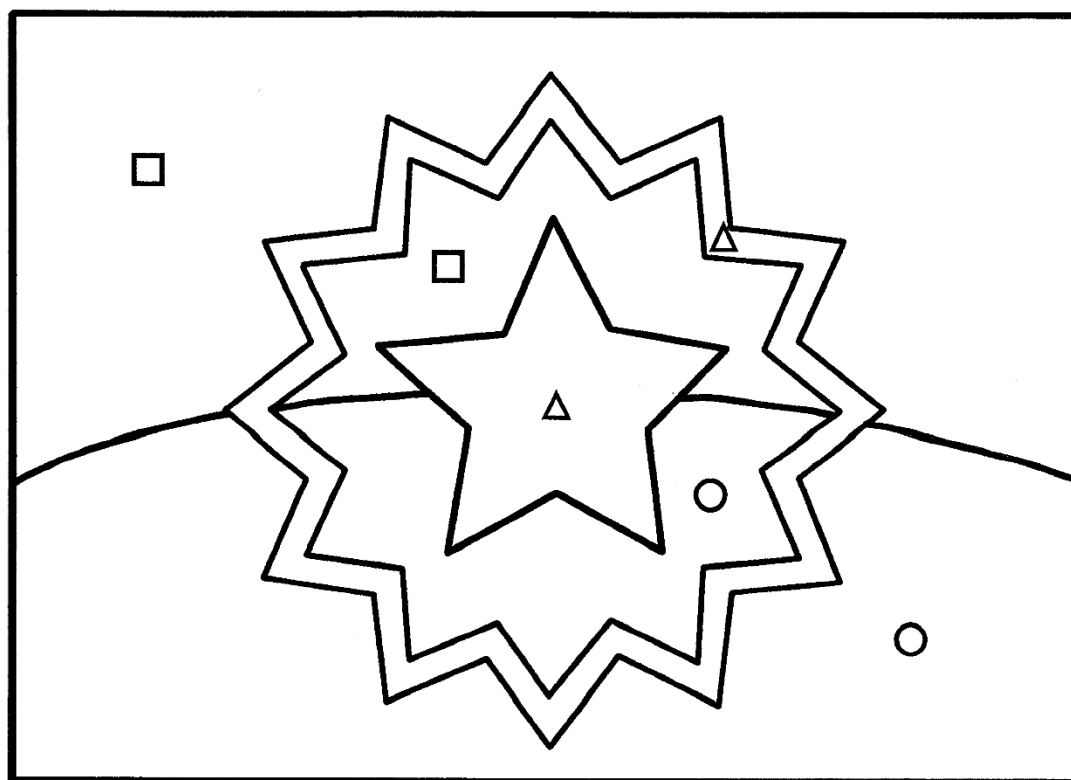
INDEPENDENCE  
JUSTICE  
LIBERTY  
✓ OPPORTUNITY

RESPECT  
STRENGTH  
SUCCESS

# THE JUNETEENTH FLAG

The Juneteenth flag was created in 1997. Since then, there have been flag-raising ceremonies on June 19 in many communities around the country.

Use the Color Key to color the Juneteenth Flag.



## COLOR KEY

□  
BLUE

○  
RED

△  
WHITE

### SYMBOL

The center star

### WHAT IT REPRESENTS

Texas (the Lone Star State). It also represents the freedom of African Americans in all 50 states.

The burst around the star

A nova—a star that suddenly looks much brighter. The name means “new star.” It represents a new beginning.

The red curve

A horizon, meaning a new era for African Americans.

The red, white, and blue colors

The American flag, a reminder that enslaved people and their descendants are Americans. They should have the same rights and freedoms as all other citizens.

# THE EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION

President Abraham Lincoln wanted slavery to stop everywhere. He also wanted to keep his country together and end the war. After more than a year of war, he wrote the Emancipation Proclamation. The Proclamation ordered Confederate states to come back to the Union and free enslaved people.

Confederate states ignored the order, and the war continued. Only 20,000 enslaved people were freed right away. The rest stayed enslaved until the Union army arrived in Confederate States and freed them. It took two and a half years.

