



## STEWARDS OF OUR EARTH *All of God's Creation*

Social Justice Committee, Holy Cross Parish, Mt. Airy, June 18, 2023

### Juneteenth National Independence Day

In 2019, Pennsylvania established Juneteenth (June 19), the day marking the legal end of enslavement of Black people in the United States, as a state holiday. “It is a day to celebrate and remember one of our difficult national histories that both honors evolution and rejects oppression. **It is a day to honor Black American culture, music, food, history, art, values, and experience.**”

A little-known fact of major coincidence is that on June 19, 1862, the Act to secure ‘Freedom to all Persons within the Territories of the United States’ (37th Cong. Chap. CXI, 1862) was signed by President Abraham Lincoln. The Emancipation Proclamation, an executive order, was enacted on January 1, 1863. It took over two years for soldiers to deliver and read on June 19, 1865, the Presidential Proclamation securing the promised freedom to over 250,000 enslaved Black people in Texas. U.S. General Gordon Granger read the order: ‘The people of Texas are informed that, in accordance with a proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free.’ Over 100 years later, in 1979, Texas was the first to officially declare Juneteenth as a state holiday.” (Jacqueline Wolf Tice, *Sierra Club Pennsylvania*, May 30, 2022)

Mayor Kenney issued an executive order in 2020 making Juneteenth an official city holiday. **President Biden signed legislation into law on June 15, 2021, which made June 19th, or Juneteenth, a federal holiday**—placing that date at the same level of other important milestones of United States history.

However, Black communities have celebrated Freedom Day for decades. **Juneteenth celebrations then, like now, recognize the ongoing fight for human rights and equality** and are commemorated through family cookouts, faith services, musical performances, and storytelling. Today, Juneteenth celebrates African American resilience and achievement while aiding in the preservation of those historical narratives that promoted racial and personal advancement since Freedom Day.

You can learn more about the significance of the holiday from the [National Museum of African American History and Culture](https://www.nmaahc.si.edu/en/learn/teach/lesson-plans/juneteenth).



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**“As we continue to celebrate Juneteenth as a federal holiday, we remember and recognize how the Black community continues to make a way out of no way, overcoming trials and celebrating triumphs while honoring the place and price of freedom.”**

Kevin Young, Andrew W. Mellon Director,  
NMAAHC