



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

Social Justice Committee, Holy Cross Parish, Mt. Airy, June 19, 2022

Juneteenth: A Day to Mark and Celebrate and Spur Us On

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.

“One of the largest Juneteenth celebrations in the nation is the annual **Philadelphia Juneteenth Parade & Festival** on **Sunday, June 19 from 12-8 p.m.** at 52nd Street and Parkside Avenue featuring activities, local merchants, food vendors, and art exhibits, as well as health initiatives offering COVID-19 testing and vaccinations for those who are interested.” (*Discover Philadelphia*, June 2, 2022)

As we celebrate, we must also recognize that we are not finished with rejecting oppression. Only recently (March 7, 2022), our country signed a bill into law to make lynching a federal hate crime, more than 100 years after such legislation was first proposed. The **Emmett Till Anti-Lynching Act** makes it possible to prosecute a crime as a lynching when a conspiracy to commit a hate crime leads to death or serious bodily injury. The House approved the bill 422-3 with eight members not voting, after it cleared the Senate by unanimous consent. (Taken from Darlene Superville for *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 30, 2022)

Yes, let us celebrate the victories, but let us also keep pressing for the rights and dignity of all people.

“Though God created the world, God did not finish it. It is our common, human task to do that. For we were all born into the world wanting the same things. We are human beings. We share the same last name: ‘beings.’ So we each, in our own particularity try to take ‘enlightened action’ that will get us to even more progress.” (Greg Boyle, *America*, April 2022)