

Worship services can recognize and celebrate Juneteenth

by Rev. Daniel Hanson, Trinity Lutheran, Mason City

Count me as one of the many people who did not know the history of Juneteenth until recently. I am still learning the history of slavery and how this injustice, and other racial injustices, shape our present.

If you are also still learning, Juneteenth is a celebration of freedom first celebrated by emancipated African American slaves in Texas in 1865. It took over two and half years after President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 for slaves in Texas to be freed. Only when Union soldiers arrived in Galveston, Texas, on June 19, 1865, did enslaved people learn of their freedom. This celebration of freedom

was the beginning of what we now celebrate as Juneteenth.

Some faith communities are choosing to mark Juneteenth by confronting racism and prejudice that still exist in our country and our church communities today. St. John Lutheran Church hosted an ecumenical Juneteenth service this year in Cedar Falls. Collaborating with Bethlehem Lutheran and Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopal, and Disciples of Christ neighbors, a service of repentance was held.

This worship service included scripture, prayer, and confession. The mayor of Cedar Falls was present to name examples of how the city historically participated in white supremacy. During a call to confession, attendees were invited to write on a card the things they have done/left undone or said/left unsaid to confess their conscious or unconscious complicity in racism. These cards were placed on the altar, given

to the mercy of God. A recording of Dr. Martin Luther King's Letter to the American Church was also shared.

For Pastor Amy Eisenmann of Bethlehem Lutheran, a meaningful moment in the service was listening to Dr. King's recorded speech. She said, "Listening to Martin Luther King's speech helped us re-live history so that we don't repeat history."

When asked why a congregation would host a Juneteenth Service of Repentance, Pastor Brian Julin-McCleary of St. John's Lutheran responded, "Repentance is a core practice of Christianity. Juneteenth provides a moment for us to face the lies of white supremacy. Repentance sets the stage for us to live a new way."

Offering a worship service of repentance is one way to mark Juneteenth. If your congregation is interested in offering a service of repentance, the Racial Justice Network would be happy to offer resources.

SYNOD COUNCIL WELCOME

Three new Synod Council members elected at the 2023 Northeastern Iowa Synod Assembly began serving three-year terms in July:

- **Bill Stoen**, a member of Big Canoe Lutheran, Decorah
- **Robin Kime**, a member of St. John, Cedar Falls, and campus ministry associate for ThreeHouse Collaborative Campus Ministries;
- **Pastor Charlie Underwood**, who serves St. John, Clarksville

Christine Schmitt has also joined the Synod Council after being elected president of the Synodical Women's Organization in June.

View the complete list on the synod website, www.neiasynod.org/about/leadership-and-staff.

Boundaries Education for Clergy

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Registration begins in August for the synod-wide day of Boundaries Education set for Thursday, Nov. 7, for all actively serving rostered members. This training is offered in coordination with all 12 synods of ELCA Region 5.

Ministers will gather from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at satellite locations within each synod for the online training, along with in-person discussion

and Q & A. The cost to attend is \$100 per person, which includes lunch. This training day replaces the online Safe Gatherings training for clergy.

Watch for more information about the satellite locations and registration information. Questions can be directed to Pastor Steve Brackett at the synod office, 319-352-1414.

Read more at www.neiasynod.org/2024/04/s-a-f-e-ministry-team.