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 Bethlehem Lutheran Church - Davey

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Bethlehem Star

June 2021

Ancestors

These late spring and early summer months hold a lot of important historical dates. Last weekend was Memorial Day where we honor those who sacrificed their lives in service to our nation.

Coming up in three weeks is Juneteenth. This isn't a holiday most of us knew much about until the last few years. It commemorates June 19, 1865 when the order ending slavery was delivered to Texas, the last place to get the news. It marked the end of at least 250 years of slavery in this country.

Then, a couple weeks after that is the 4th of July…our Independence Day. We celebrate the foresight and courage of the founders as they fought – in the legislative chambers, pubs, newspapers, and battlefields – to win freedom from the British and create a new nation.

There was a time not so long ago when many of us would not have questioned the shining image of our founders and ancestors. Even now, many people resist an image of that history that isn't so shiny.

But the fact is, the work of Juneteenth is not finished. And our Independence Day is not always viewed as unambiguously positive by those who did not gain independence on July 4th, 1776 – namely the descendants of African slaves and the Indigenous people (the Native Americans.)

Over recent years, there's been a push to teach history more realistically. History is told from the standpoint of the victors and the stories of the vanquished and oppressed often get diminished. The reaction to attempts to balance the telling of our national story is often one of defensiveness and even outrage. Too often people believe that to tell the story of Native Americans and African slaves as it really happened is to dismiss everything good about this nation.

But this week we read something in our current anti-racist book that I found very helpful. The book is *Native: Identity, Belonging, and Rediscovering God* by Kaitlin Curtice. On the pages of the book, Kaitlin Curtice wrestles with her Potawatami and European ancestry and what it means for her identity and culture…and for us as a nation.

She wrote, "We must remember that the work we do today, the work of *both* honoring our ancestors *and* asking the questions about the work they left for us means that ultimately we are working to create a better world."

We don't have to dishonor our founders; we don't have to disparage our ancestors who toiled on the Nebraska prairie and survived blizzards and grasshoppers and droughts. But we do have to recognize that they left work for us to do where our relationship with the Indigenous people and people of color is concerned.

I know that many people struggle to see what racism and white supremacy have to do with them. White supremacy is so ubiquitous many white people can't even see it and certainly don't consider themselves racist. None of us alive owned slaves and maybe can't even see any role we played in the Jim Crow era, although we all need to hedge our bets there. The effects of that era still have not been undone.

But with Native Americans it's a little easier to connect the dots. Our churches were built on land that once belonged to Native American tribes. And through broken treaties, squatting and the selling of native land by the government, diseases, and outright lynching and warfare, it was taken from them.

Out of greater awareness and a willingness to begin to repair the damage of the past, it has become a practice in many places to do a land acknowledgement – an acknowledgement of whose soil we are on. It's a baby step towards honoring the people who lived here before white people…the people who were the stewards and caretakers of this land before we were.

So, in this time of honoring founders and ancestors,

> **We acknowledge that Bethlehem Lutheran Church sits upon the lands of the Otoe (Jiwere) tribe. In addition, this area is also historically tied to the Sioux nation, the Pawnee tribe, and the Omaha tribe.**

Source: https://native-land.ca/

We can and should celebrate our founders and ancestors. We should honor those who gave their lives in service to our country. We can have our 4th of July parades and displays. But we can also recognize that those ancestors left unfinished work where a sizeable section of God's people in this nation are concerned. Embracing both is what will enable us to help create a better world for all.

Christ' peace,

Pastor Kris

Calendar

All services are in person and on Zoom. Recording is uploaded to YouTube for later viewing.

June 6	10:30 am—worship with Holy Communion.
June 13	10:30am—Worship
June 20	10:30 am—Worship with Communion—
June 27	10:30 am—Worship

Share your experience

I have my vacation Sundays scheduled. I'm hoping to get people from the congregation to share some of your experience from this year...how it impacted your faith, how your faith helped, what you learned about yourself or the world, what you see for the church coming out of this year...things like that. It wouldn't have to be more than a few minutes.
Here are the remaining dates:
July 18—Brandon
August 29
October 24

Please make every effort to attend, either in person or on line, when one of your brothers and sisters share. We all have something to share about our faith, especially over this last 14 months. Hearing those stories can help us all grow. And now that we're on YouTube, I plan to listen as well.

June Helpers

Lector—June 6/20 Brandon; June 13—Jerri D.; June 27—Mike
Tech—schedule tbd
Cleaners—Weeks 1/2—Judy Hanson
          Weeks 3/4—open
Usher—Larry and LaDonna Pasco
Altar—LaDonna Pasco
Communion Assistant—Marilyn Kahler