

Beacon of Light

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"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in the darkness but will have the light of life." John 8:12



Pastor's Corner

“What’s Love Got to Do with It?”

For the first time in three years, members of the Baltimore-Washington Conference (BWC) gathered May 31st-June 3rd in Baltimore for the annual session of this regional assembly of Methodist clergy and laity. After meeting virtually as an Annual Conference since the beginning of the pandemic in 2020, it felt good to finally see and fellowship with fellow clergy and laity in person without the restrictions of Covid protocols. (Ebenezer will begin the

process of lifting its Covid related protocols this September.)

While there was discussion and action taken (23 churches were formally approved for disaffiliation from the denomination) regarding the Church’s, as of yet, unsettled stance on matters of human sexuality, the most memorable and significant moment of Conference for me was a massive Friday morning service project involving six Baltimore inner-city schools. All BWC clergy and laity members were invited and encouraged to take part in some level of service, whether providing outdoor playground and parking lot cleanup and grounds maintenance, packing some 2,000 individual school bags with school supplies, or writing “love notes” of encouragement to Baltimore City school children.

(Continued on page 2)

Inside This Issue	
Pastor’s Corner	Page 1-2
Inspirational Thoughts and Encouragement	Page 3-4
Kidz Corner	Page 5-8
Celebrating Our 2023 Graduates	Page 9
Keeping You Informed	Page 10
➤ 5 Surprising Foods That Can Spike Your Blood Sugar	Page 10-12
➤ A Visual Guide to Generalized Anxiety Disorder	Page 13-14
➤ Conditions That Look Like Anxiety	Page 15-16
➤ The Health Benefits of Watermelon	Page 17-18
The Story Behind Juneteenth and How It Became a Federal Holiday	Page 19-20
Birthdays	Page 21
Wedding Anniversaries	Page 22
From the Newsletter Editor	Page 23

Pastor's Corner (continued from page 1)

This massive BWC missional effort was coordinated in partnership with “Heart of America”, a non-profit entity that specializes in setting up worthwhile volunteer service opportunities for institutional partners. For one morning, on one day, we were all united in fanning out across the city of Baltimore in dozens of school buses to demonstrate Christ’s selfless love for others, providing tangible witness of this year’s Conference theme, “All About Love”.

Speaking of “love”, **“What’s Love Got to Do with It?”**, was the title, as well as the question, raised in the number one charted U. S. Billboard Song in 1984 recorded by Tina Turner, the iconic singer and legendary performer, whose death we recently mourned. As demonstrated over and over again in scripture, and made vividly clear in the proceedings of this year’s BWC, “love” has everything to do with being or becoming a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ. And this version of love is not necessarily the sentimental, emotional love alluded to in the Tina Turner song. Instead, as Bishop LaTrelle Easterling stated in her message to Conference members, **“Love is not an emotion; it is an action. It is better provided than professed...We must do love, be love, and give love to one another. Love is as love does.”**

It will be important for us to remember this version and standard of love as we prepare to re-engage with each other, with our community, and with our larger world more robustly, and in person, come this fall. It will especially be important for others to continue to see in us, as inner-city Baltimore school children saw in all BWC participants involved in that Friday morning service project, a healthy measure of the love of Jesus Christ. For, as James 1:22 admonishes us, **“But be ye doers of the word, and not merely hearers only...”**

Pastor Mark D. Venson



Inspirational Thoughts and Encouragement

When You Walk Through the Valley: Three Truths to Remember

Source: Daily Hope



“Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me.”— Psalm 23:4 (NIV)

You may not be in the valley of the shadow of death right now, but you may be in another valley. Valleys are the hard places on your journey, where it’s easy to doubt or overlook God’s goodness. But you can always trust that God walks through the valleys with you. And he’s promised to bring you through to the other side.

Here are three truths to remember

when you are in the valley:

1. You are not alone. God is with you.

The shadows in your life are evidence of the presence of light. How do you deal with a shadow? You turn your back to the shadow and look at the light. Jesus said, *“I am the light for the world! Follow me, and you won’t be walking in the dark. You will have the light that gives life”* (John 8:12 CEV).

The Bible says that God is light and that in him there is no darkness at all. You need to stop focusing on the dark things that scare you: those bills, health concerns, or worries about your children or aging parents. When you move your focus off your fears, you can focus on the Father.

2. God has a good purpose for your valley.

God cannot do evil. Even when you’re facing problems, conflict, grief, fear, or failure, God is at work, creating good from your valley.

Romans 5:3-5 says, *“We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us”* (ESV).

3. The reward will last forever.

You’re going to be rewarded for remaining faithful to Christ in the valley of failure, in the valley of fear, in the valley of conflict, in the valley of grief, and in the valley of trouble. You’ll be in heaven less than a minute before thinking, “Why did I complain so much? Why did I worry when I was going through those valleys? God was right there with me all the time, and he was good to me all the time.”

As the Bible says, “*For our present troubles are small and won’t last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever!*” (2 Corinthians 4:17 NLT).

Talk It Over

- What do you fear most right now? What lies are you believing that are making you so afraid?
- How can you be reminded of God’s goodness when you walk through your next valley or while you finish walking through the valley you’re in right now?
- Why is it important to look for the good that God is working out while you’re in your valley and not just after you’ve come through to the other side?



KIDZ CORNER



CALENDAR OF FUN

Easter Holiday Fun: We hope all the children enjoyed Easter and their Easter Goodie Bags. The Children’s Ministry provided Easter Goodie Bags full of candy, snacks, and treats for all the children and youth. Additionally, Easter treats were distributed on Easter Sunday at church!!!!



Virtual Sunday School: We will continue holding virtual Sunday School for the month of June and then take a break in July and August. Virtual Sunday school is held via Zoom on Sunday’s after EUMC Church Service. Virtual Sunday School is at 1:00PM. Please contact Terri Ware, aattware@aol.com if you want to participate!

Virtual Sunday School Bursts into Spring

During March, April, and May, Sunday School focused on the many Fruits of the Spirit. Do you have a favorite? Many times we get distracted and diverted by the chaos and craziness of this world. God wants us to stay focused on Him.

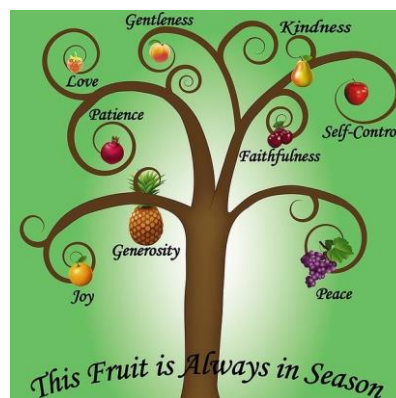
The Fruit of the Spirit

The Book of Galatians 5: 22 -23 and 25



“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”

Since we live by the Spirit let us keep in step with the Spirit



The people in the early churches got easily distracted, just like us!!



The letter to the church in Galatia



Paul was upset and saddened to learn that the Galatian people were so quickly and easily being led away from Jesus. So, he sent them a letter.



Dear Church,

But the fruit of the Spirit is:

- Love
- Joy
- Peace
- Patience/Forbearance
- Kindness
- Goodness/Generosity
- Faithfulness
- Gentleness
- Self Control



Since we live by the Spirit let us keep in step with the Spirit.

During our Sunday school lessons over **the 40 days** of **Lent** we also discussed **ways** to **get** closer **to** God.

How Do we get Closer to God?



Prayer always brings us closer to God and is a direct communication line to God; we can pray anywhere & anytime!!



Prayers for children, family, community, country and world



God continues to bless us in 2023!!!



How has God blessed you? How can you be a blessing to someone else?



Celebrating Our 2023 Graduates

Evan J. Pickett



On May 21, 2023, Evan J. Pickett graduated from Landmark Christian School in Fairburn, Georgia. Evan will be attending the University of North Carolina Charlotte where he will study Computer Science. Evan is the grandson of Bro. James and Sis. Gloria Pickett. To God be the glory.

Submitted by Sis. Gloria Pickett

Rayonna Gibson



Rayonna graduated from KIPP DC Legacy College Preparatory School located in Washington, D.C. The Commencement Ceremony was held at the Washington Convention Center on Sunday, June 11. She graduated with honors receiving five Student Distinctions Awards – Red Cord for being one of the top ten GPAs from her class; Blue and Gold Cord and White Stole for the National Honor Society for two years; Silver Cord for dual enrollment; and a Light Blue Cord for Student Athlete.

Rayonna's GPA was 3.64. She applied to 13 colleges and was accepted in all. She has decided to attend Bennett College (HBCU) located in Greensboro, NC. She will be pursuing a career in Media and Journalism.

Rayonna was an acolyte and a member of the Children's Choir and the Dance Group at Ebenezer. Her hobbies include swimming, reading, and drawing.

Rayonna is the daughter of Raynika Gibson and Great-Granddaughter of Gaye Patrick.

Submitted by Sis. Gaye Patrick



Live, dream, soar.
The possibilities are
endless.
Congratulations on
your graduation.



Keeping You Informed

5 Surprising Foods That Can Spike Your Blood Sugar

By Kimberly Goad, AARP

It's not just cookies, sodas and other sweet treats in the dessert aisle. Sugar is sneaky. Just when you think you've got its whereabouts figured out, you begin taking a closer look at nutrition labels, only to discover the sweet stuff is hiding out in any number of foods and beverages not on the cookie, candy and soda aisles.

The unsavory truth: Sugar is used by all kinds of food manufacturers to enhance flavor and texture.

In a study published in *The Lancet Diabetes & Endocrinology*, researchers conducted a survey of 1.2 million packaged foods and drinks purchased in the U.S. between 2000 and 2013 and found that a whopping 68 percent of them included added sweeteners. Some of them were the obvious culprits—soda, for instance—but many were not.

That, of course, makes it tricky for anyone watching their sugar consumption, in particular the 37 million people in the U.S. with diabetes (or 1 in 10) and the 96 million more with prediabetes who need to keep an eye on all carbohydrate consumption.

“High blood sugar levels in the diabetes and prediabetes ranges can cause serious damage throughout the body,” says Jill Weisenberger, a registered dietitian nutritionist in Virginia and author of *Prediabetes: A Complete Guide*. “We once thought that only people who had diabetes for some length of time had these problems. Now we have data that even people with prediabetes have a number of problems due to high blood sugar.”

Pointing to the research, Weisenberger says about 14 percent of people with prediabetes have eye disease from high blood sugar; nearly 18 percent have chronic kidney disease; and 11 to 25 percent of people with prediabetes have nerve damage.

Complicating matters: More than 80 percent of people with prediabetes don't realize they have it, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Regardless of whether you have prediabetes, diabetes or none of the above, you should aim to limit big spikes in your blood sugar, says Vandana Sheth, a registered dietitian nutritionist and spokesperson for the Association of Diabetes Care & Education Specialists: “Big fluctuations in blood sugar, specifically spikes, can cause damage to the blood vessels, increasing the risk of stroke and heart disease.”

Keep reading to learn more about the surprising foods that can spike your blood sugar.

1. Refined grains

White bread and bagels, white rice, regular pasta and other foods that have been made with white flour have been stripped of the fiber and other key nutrients found in their whole-grain counterparts. Sure, some have been “enriched,” which means essential vitamins and minerals have been added back in during processing, but they still have what’s known as a high glycemic index (GI). High-GI foods are digested quickly and, as a result, they’re more likely to spike blood sugar.

Instead: The American Diabetes Association recommends subbing with whole grains. Not only do foods like brown rice, barley, bulgur, quinoa and farro (all good substitutes for white rice), whole-grain bread and whole-wheat pasta provide fiber and essential minerals and vitamins like B and E, they’re low-GI foods. Foods that rank low on the glycemic index are digested more slowly and are less likely to cause rapid spikes in blood sugar. Not sure if that loaf of bread or package of pasta is a good choice? Look for “whole grain” or “whole wheat” at the top of the list of ingredients.

2. Plant-based milks

If you’ve adopted at least some part of a plant-based diet in the name of better health for both you and the planet, you’re not alone. A report from the International Food Information Council found that more than 40 percent of consumers assume a product described as “plant-based” is healthier than one that isn’t; 24 percent are consuming more plant-based dairy.

But here’s the rub: Some plant-based milks—meaning oat milk, almond milk, soy milk, rice milk, the list goes on—can have a lot of added sugar. In a study of 17 milk substitutes, published in *Plant Foods for Human Nutrition*, researchers found that plant-based milks can vary substantially in terms of nutrition. Some were very low in protein and had a high GI. The researchers’ conclusion? Some plant-based milk substitutes shouldn’t be perceived as healthy; they should be considered a treat.

Instead: If you prefer plant-based over cow’s milk (or have an allergy or intolerance), be sure to check the nutrition label first. Whatever your milk of choice, “consider drinking with a meal or a snack that provides more protein and some fat to decrease the spike in blood sugar,” Sheth advises.

3. Sugar-free snacks

As counterintuitive as it may seem, recent research suggests anything containing a sugar substitute—whether it’s “zero-sugar” chocolate, sugar-free protein bars, cookies or candy—may up your risk of developing insulin resistance, a precursor to diabetes.

Instead: The ADA gives a partial green light to using artificial sweeteners in place of sugar as a way to combat obesity, metabolic syndrome and diabetes, with this word of caution: Claims like “sugar-free,” “reduced sugar” or “no sugar added” do not necessarily mean carbohydrate-free or lower in carbs than the original version of the food. Not sure? “It’s a good idea to meet with a registered dietitian at least once to get a good understanding of these foods,” says Revital Gorodeski Baskin, M.D., an endocrinologist and obesity program director at the Diabetes and Obesity Center at University Hospitals in Beachwood, Ohio.

4. Dried fruit

Dried fruit can be a healthy and convenient snack choice, but beware: Some food makers add sugar in the drying process. It’s also easy to eat a lot in one sitting, so the calories will add up.

Instead: While fresh fruit is the preferred choice, some are better than others. “Fruit such as watermelon, grapes and bananas contain very high quantities of simple sugar,” Baskin says. “Focus more on the berries family — strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, blackberries. They tend to have lower sugar levels.” Indeed, the American Diabetes Association (ADA) includes berries on its list of “superstar foods.”

5. Diet soda

Although diet soda is obviously free of sugar, new research suggests it may still play a role in altering blood sugar levels. In a study published in 2022 in the journal *Cell*, researchers looked at four sugar substitutes and found that they don’t travel through the body without consequence.

Two of the artificial sweeteners—saccharin and sucralose—altered gut bacteria in a way that, at times, may change blood sugar levels. The researchers noted that it’s too soon to recommend permanently canning that can of diet soda.

“We know for certain that too much added sugar spikes blood sugar and can lead to other health problems,” Weisenberger says. “If the choice is regular or diet soda, I recommend diet soda. A diet soda every now and then—I drink one or so a month—is unlikely to hurt you.”

Instead: Substitute diet soda with seltzer or sparkling water flavored with a squeeze of lemon, lime or orange juice. “They are the best.”



A Visual Guide to Generalized Anxiety Disorder

Source: WebMD; Medically Reviewed by Poonam Sachdev

What's Normal? It's natural to worry during stressful times. But some people feel tense and anxious day after day, even with little to worry about. When this lasts for 6 months or longer, it may be generalized anxiety disorder. Many people don't know they have it. So they may miss out on treatments that lead to a better, happier life.

What It Feels Like. The main symptom is a constant and exaggerated sense of tension and anxiety. You may not be able to pinpoint a reason why you feel tense. Or you may worry too much about ordinary things, such as bills, relationships, or your health. It can upset your sleep and cloud your thinking. You may also feel irritable due to poor sleep or the anxiety itself.

Physical Symptoms. Body problems usually come along with the worry. They can include:

- Muscle tension or pain
- Headaches
- Nausea or diarrhea
- Trembling or twitching

When It Won't Stop. Your troubles will naturally concern you. What sets generalized anxiety disorder apart is the feeling that you can't stop worrying. You may find it very hard to relax, even when you do something you enjoy. Severe cases can hamper work, relationships, and daily activities.

Who Gets It? People of any age can develop generalized anxiety disorder, even children. It tends to appear gradually, with the first symptoms most likely to happen between childhood and middle age. Twice as many women as men say they have it.

What Are the Causes? The genes passed down through a family may put some people at a higher risk for anxiety, but that's not the whole picture. Your background and experiences also matter. Brain chemicals called neurotransmitters, as well as a pair of structures inside the brain called the amygdalae, seem to be involved.

How It's Diagnosed. There's no lab test, so the diagnosis is based on your description of your symptoms. Your doctor may ask, What do you worry about? How often? Does your anxiety interfere with any activities? It may be generalized anxiety disorder if you have felt anxious or worried too much for at least 6 months.

How Psychotherapy Helps. One kind of talk therapy is very effective in treating anxiety. It's called cognitive behavioral therapy. A counselor helps you identify your negative thoughts and actions. You may do homework, such as writing down the thoughts that lead to excess worry. You will also learn how to calm yourself.

Anti-Anxiety Medicine. Medicines may be part of your treatment plan. Some newer antidepressant drugs work well to lower anxiety. It may take about 4 weeks to feel better. Your doctor might prescribe a benzodiazepine during this time or for a short while. Some of these drugs carry a risk of dependence. Sometimes, older types of antidepressants can treat generalized anxiety disorder if your symptoms include depression or panic. Talk with your doctor about pros and cons.

Taking Care of Yourself. A few simple changes can help. Avoid caffeine, illegal drugs, and even some cold medicines, which can boost anxiety symptoms. Try to get enough rest and eat healthy foods. Use relaxation techniques, such as meditation. Also, exercise! Research shows that moderate physical activity (like a brisk walk) can be calming.

Herbal Remedies: Caution. If you are thinking about trying a supplement, talk to your doctor first to find out if it's safe. Kava, for instance, has been reported to cause liver damage. St. John's wort can affect other medicines, including antidepressants and birth control pills.

When It's More Than Anxiety. People who have generalized anxiety disorder may also develop depression, alcoholism, or drug addiction. It's also common for people with GAD to have another anxiety disorder. These can include panic disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and social phobia.

Panic Disorder. People with panic disorder have sudden attacks of terror. Symptoms can include a pounding heart, sweating, dizziness, nausea, or chest pain. You may think you're having a heart attack, dying, or losing your mind. It's one of the most treatable of all anxiety disorders.

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder. Some people develop posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) after living through a terrifying event. The symptoms include vivid flashbacks and a loss of interest in activities that were once enjoyable. People may also have trouble being affectionate. They may feel irritable or even become violent. Treatments include medicine and counseling.

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder. People with obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) have troubling thoughts they can't control. They may feel that they need to repeat rituals, such as washing their hands or checking that the door is locked. They may get dressed in a certain order or count objects for no good reason. It's often treated with medication and psychotherapy.

Social Anxiety Disorder. People with social phobia feel panicky and self-conscious in ordinary social situations. Symptoms include a sense of dread before social events and sweating, blushing, nausea, or trouble talking during the events. In severe cases, they may avoid school or work. It can be treated with psychotherapy and medicine.

Other Phobias. A phobia is an intense fear of something that is not likely to cause you any harm. Common ones include heights, closed-in spaces like elevators, dogs, flying, and water. Many people don't seek help because it's easy to avoid whatever they fear. But phobias can be treated.

Where to Get Help. Start by talking with your family doctor. If an anxiety disorder seems likely, they will probably refer you to a mental health specialist who is trained in psychotherapy. It's important to choose someone you're comfortable talking to.



Conditions That Look Like Anxiety

Source: WebMD; Medically Reviewed by Brunilda Nazario, MD

Heart Problems. These can spike your heart and breathing rates the same way anxiety does. Panic attacks and heart attacks in particular have similar -- and sometimes identical -- symptoms. Both can cause dizziness, chest pain, and trouble breathing. They can also trigger sweating, nausea, and a feeling of fear. It can be hard to tell them apart without testing. Call 911 or go to the ER right away if you have any of these symptoms, especially if you don't have a history of panic attacks.

Asthma. Both it and anxiety can cause shortness of breath, chest pain, and lightheadedness. And both can be triggered by stressors like relationship or financial problems. Many people with asthma also have panic attacks. You may think it's anxiety if you start to have these symptoms as an adult, but you could be dealing with adult-onset asthma. Red flags include wheezing, coughing, and symptoms that change day by day.

Diabetes. With uncontrolled diabetes, sugar rushes and dips can lead to trembling, sweating, and a fast heart rate. It can cause headaches and nausea, too. These symptoms are sometimes confused with anxiety. Talk to your doctor if you're often very hungry, thirsty, tired, or peeing a lot. Or if you're losing weight, have blurry vision, dry skin, or sores that heal slowly. You may need your blood sugar tested.

Hyperthyroidism. Hormonal imbalances can look like anxiety. For example, an overactive thyroid gland makes too much thyroid hormone. This can speed up your metabolism and lead to nervousness, restlessness, and a fast heartbeat. It can also cause sleep trouble and irritability, all common with anxiety. A "thyroid storm" can look very similar to a panic attack. Keep an eye out for unexplained weight loss and increased sensitivity to heat, both signs of hyperthyroidism.

Sleep Apnea. When you can't breathe properly at night, you might wake up feeling breathless or with a racing heart. Sleep apnea can lead to other anxiety-like symptoms including headaches, mood changes, memory trouble, and nightmares. It can even trigger panic attacks. Talk to your doctor about getting tested for sleep apnea, especially if you also snore loudly.

Adrenal Dysfunction. When our adrenal glands make too much or too little of any of our hormones, it can cause a number of symptoms. These include anxiousness, depression, and fatigue. Disorientation, fast heart rate, and trouble concentrating may happen, too. Talk to your doctor about adrenal dysfunction if you also have weakness, pains or spasms in your muscles, purplish streak marks on your abdomen, or if you're bruising easily. Tell them about any unexplained weight changes, too.

Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS). Many people with anxiety get stomachaches. But IBS can also cause belly pain and cramps. These conditions often go hand in hand, and each can make the other worse. So it's sometimes hard to know which is the root cause. If you have bloating, gas, constipation, and diarrhea, IBS may be the source. Getting the right treatment will help you feel better physically and mentally.

Electrolyte Imbalance. If you have really high or low levels of electrolytes like sodium or potassium, it can cause anxiety or panic-like symptoms. These include shortness of breath, confusion, and rapid heartbeat. You might also be irritable, lightheaded, fatigued, or have headaches or nausea. Electrolyte imbalance can have many possible

causes, including drinking too much or too little water, not eating healthy foods, chemotherapy, or certain medications, as well as heart, kidney, or liver disease.

Neurological Conditions. Many disorders of the brain can look like anxiety because they sometimes cause symptoms like headaches, memory problems, and tremors. They can also trigger anxiousness, fast heartbeat, and shortness of breath. Talk to your doctor if you have a family history of neurological conditions such as Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, or multiple sclerosis.

Lung Diseases. They often cause shortness of breath, a common symptom of anxiety, along with nausea and chest pain or pressure. If you also cough or wheeze a lot and have trouble taking a deep breath, you could have chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). The risk is higher if you're a smoker or have had a respiratory infection.

Fibromyalgia. Because the symptoms are vague, this lifetime pain disorder is hard to diagnose. It often causes sleep trouble, fatigue, memory and concentration problems, headaches, and emotional and mental distress. Doctors may assume you have anxiety, which can also involve general aches and pains. If that doesn't sound right, see a rheumatologist. Some people also have jaw pain, digestive problems, and tingling or numbness in their hands and feet.

Endometriosis. This condition happens when your uterine lining grows outside the uterus. Many people go undiagnosed for years because the pain can be hard to pin down. It's often chalked up to IBS or "bad periods." It can also be misdiagnosed as anxiety. And if you actually do have anxiety, it may stem from your symptoms. Talk to an obstetrician/gynecologist (OB/GYN), if you have irregular, heavy, or very painful periods or ongoing pelvic pain. Be sure to tell them if you have pain during sex, stomachaches, or pain when you poop or pee.

Ankylosing Spondylitis (AS). Inflammatory disorders often look like or cause anxiety or panic disorders. AS, a form of arthritis, inflames the joints in your pelvis and spine. Back pain is common. Sometimes it spreads to your ribs, making it painful or difficult to breathe. It can also cause fatigue and digestive symptoms. If you have chronic pain or stiffness in your lower back, hips, neck, jaw, knees, heels, or buttocks, particularly in the morning, see a rheumatologist.

Crohn's Disease. Gastrointestinal symptoms like stomach pains and changes in bathroom habits can trigger anxiety. If you often get stomach cramps, constipation, diarrhea, nausea, or blood or mucus in your bowel movements, ask your doctor to check for Crohn's. Symptoms can be similar to IBS, but unlike IBS, a doctor can see signs of Crohn's with an imaging test. The two conditions are treated very differently, so it's important to get the right diagnosis.

Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS). This is a complex hormonal condition that can cause symptoms sometimes linked to anxiety. These include weight gain, headaches, sleep problems, mood changes, and depression. It can also lead to extra hair growth, acne, and irregular periods. All of the symptoms, even ovarian cysts, can stem from other conditions. PCOS is common, especially in people who are overweight.



The Health Benefits of Watermelon

Source: WebMD. Reviewed by Kathleen M. Zelman, RD, LD, MPH

Loaded With Lycopene

The cheery red color comes from lycopene, an antioxidant. Studies show it may help curb your risk of cancer and diabetes as part of a healthy lifestyle. Watermelon has more of this nutrient than any other fruit or veggie—even tomatoes. To load up on lycopene, choose a melon with bright red flesh rather than yellow or orange. And the riper, the better. Also, seedless melon tends to have more lycopene than those with seeds.



Sun Benefit?

Some pigments help protect plants from the sun. Oddly enough, just eating them may shield your skin, too—at least a little. The lycopene in watermelon may make it less likely that you get sunburned. But that's not for sure, so keep using your broad-spectrum sunscreen with SPF of 30 or higher every day.

Healthier Heart

Watermelon is rich in an amino acid called citrulline that may help move blood through your body and can lower your blood pressure. Your heart also enjoys the perks of all the lycopene watermelon contains. Studies show that it may lower your risk of heart attacks. Of course, your whole lifestyle affects your heart health. So make sure you also work out, don't smoke, limit saturated fat, and keep up with your doctor's advice.

Protects Your Joints

Watermelon has a natural pigment called beta-cryptoxanthin that may protect your joints from inflammation. Some studies show that over time, it could make you less likely to get rheumatoid arthritis.

Easy on Your Eyes

Just one medium slice of watermelon gives you contains 9-11% of the vitamin A you need each day. This nutrient is one of the keys to keeping your eyes healthy. Foods are the best ways to get all the vitamins and minerals that your body needs.

Naturally Sweet Hydration

Juicy watermelon is 92% water, so it's a simple way to help stay hydrated. Every cell in your body needs water. Even a small shortage can make you feel sluggish. If you get really dehydrated, it can become serious enough that you need to get fluids by IV.

Soothes Your Skin

Vitamins A, B6, and C in watermelon help your skin stay soft, smooth, and supple. Because it's loaded with water, melon also makes a great face mask. Mix 1 tablespoon of watermelon juice with the same amount of Greek yogurt. Spread over your face and leave on for 10 minutes to slough off any dry, dull skin. Rinse and pat dry.

Satisfies Your Sweet Tooth

A cup of ice cream will set you back around 300 calories. You can enjoy the same amount of watermelon for just 45.6 calories. And unlike many other desserts, it's fat-free, cholesterol free, and has no sodium. Plus, the water in it will help you stay fuller longer. To make an easy sorbet, puree some watermelon in your blender, add a squeeze of lime, and pop in the freezer until it hardens.

Boosts Your Workout

Watermelon's high water content, antioxidants, and amino acids may make for a better workout. It's also high in potassium, a mineral that could cut down on cramps at the gym. You can sip watermelon juice after you sweat, too. Doing so could help prevent muscle soreness, as long as you don't push yourself too hard.

Won't Spike Your Blood Sugar

Trying to keep your blood glucose levels steady? You're in luck. Watermelon has a glycemic index (GI) value of 80, about the same as a bowl of cornflakes. But it's got few carbs. That means its glycemic load (how quickly it enters your bloodstream and how much glucose it can produce) is a mere 5. Enjoy a slice without guilt!

Easy to Digest

If you have a digestive condition like Crohn's or colitis, the list of what not to eat during a flare can be long. You can put watermelon on your "yes" list. Its soft, fleshy fruit is easy for even an inflamed gut to digest. (Just don't eat the rind or the seeds if you need to limit fiber.)

What If I Eat a Seed by Accident?

You may have been told as a kid that if you swallow watermelon seeds, they'll grow in your belly. Not true! After all, your stomach has no sunlight or soil, and a lot of gastric acid. Many melons are seedless these days, but don't worry if you do swallow a seed. They're actually full of nutrients!

Choose a Good One

Pick a melon that's free of dents, nicks, and bruises. Look for a yellow, not white, spot on the bottom. This signals that it's ripe. A juicy, ready-to-eat watermelon will feel heavy for its size. When you thump it, it should sound hollow.

Safely Cut and Store Your Melon

Wash the outside of your melon before you slice into it. You don't want your knife to transfer any germs to the inside. While melon tastes best right after it's cut, you can store it in your fridge for up to 5 days. Freezing is an option, too. While the watermelon won't stay crisp, you can thaw it to use in smoothies.

Don't Stop With a Slice

A slice of fresh watermelon tastes great, but you can do more with it. Top a salad with cubed melon and crumbled feta cheese. Make a watermelon pizza by topping wedges with yogurt, mint, slivered almonds, and berries. And save the seeds! Tossed with olive oil and sea salt, they can be roasted for a tasty (and healthy) snack.



The Story Behind Juneteenth and How It Became a Federal Holiday

Source: Britannica



Many Americans are celebrating Juneteenth, marking the day in 1865 when the last enslaved people in the United States learned they were free. For generations, Black Americans have recognized the end of one of the darkest chapters in U.S. history with joy, in the form of parades, street festivals, musical performances or cookouts.

The U.S. government was slow to embrace the occasion — it was only in 2021 that President Joe Biden signed a bill passed by Congress to set aside Juneteenth, or June 19th, as a federal holiday.



And just as many people learn what Juneteenth is all about, the holiday's traditions are facing new pressures— political rhetoric condemning efforts to teach Americans about the nation's racial history, companies using the holiday as a marketing event, people partying without understanding why.

Here is a look at the origins of Juneteenth, how it became a federal holiday and more about its history.

How Did Juneteenth Start?

The celebrations began with enslaved people in Galveston, Texas. Although President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation freed the slaves in 1863, it could not be enforced in many places in the South until the Civil War ended in 1865. Even then, some white people who had profited from their unpaid labor were reluctant to share the news.

Laura Smalley, freed from a plantation near Bellville, Texas, remembered in a 1941 interview that the man she referred to as “old master” came home from fighting in the Civil War and didn't tell the people he enslaved what had happened.

“Old master didn't tell, you know, they was free,” Smalley said. “I think now they say they worked them, six months after that. Six months. And turn them loose on the 19th of June. That's why, you know, we celebrate that day.”

News that the war had ended and they were free finally reached Galveston when Union Maj. Gen. Gordon Granger and his troops arrived in the Gulf Coast city on June 19, 1865, more than two months after Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee surrendered to Union Gen. Ulysses S. Grant in Virginia.

Granger delivered General Order No. 3, which said: “The people of Texas are informed that, in accordance with a proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free. This involves an absolute equality of personal rights and rights of property between former masters and slaves, and the connection heretofore existing between them becomes that between employer and hired labor.”

Slavery was permanently abolished six months later, when Georgia ratified the 13th Amendment. And the next year, the now-free people of Galveston started celebrating Juneteenth, an observance that has continued and spread around the world. Events include concerts, parades and readings of the Emancipation Proclamation.

What Does 'Juneteenth' Mean?

It's a blend of the words June and nineteenth. The holiday has also been called Juneteenth Independence Day, Freedom Day, second Independence Day and Emancipation Day. It began with church picnics and speeches, and spread as Black Texans moved elsewhere.

Most U.S. states now hold celebrations honoring Juneteenth as a holiday or a day of recognition, like Flag Day. Juneteenth is a paid holiday for state employees in Texas, New York, Virginia, Washington, and now Nevada as well. Hundreds of companies give workers the day off.

Opal Lee, a former teacher and activist, is largely credited for rallying others behind a campaign to make Juneteenth a federal holiday. The 96-year-old had vivid memories of celebrating Juneteenth in East Texas as a child with music, food and games. In 2016, the "little old lady in tennis shoes" walked through her home city of Fort Worth, Texas and then in other cities before arriving in Washington, D.C. Soon, celebrities and politicians were lending their support. Lee was one of the people standing next to Biden when he signed Juneteenth into law.

How Have Juneteenth Celebrations Evolved Over The Years?

The national reckoning over race ignited by the 2020 murder of George Floyd by police helped set the stage for Juneteenth to become the first new federal holiday since 1983, when Martin Luther King Jr. Day was created. The bill was sponsored by Sen. Edward Markey, D-Mass., and had 60 co-sponsors, a show of bipartisan support as lawmakers struggled to overcome divisions that are still simmering three years later.

Now there is a movement to use the holiday as an opportunity for activism and education, with community service projects aimed at addressing racial disparities and educational panels on topics such health care inequities and the need for parks and green spaces.

Like most holidays, Juneteenth has also seen its fair share of commercialism. Retailers, museums and other venues have capitalized on it by selling Juneteenth-themed T-shirts, party ware and ice cream. Some of the marketing has misfired, provoking a social media backlash. Supporters of the holiday have also worked to make sure Juneteenth celebrators don't forget why the day exists.

"In 1776 the country was freed from the British, but the people were not all free," Dee Evans, national director of communications of the National Juneteenth Observance Foundation, said in 2019. "June 19, 1865, was actually when the people and the entire country was actually free."

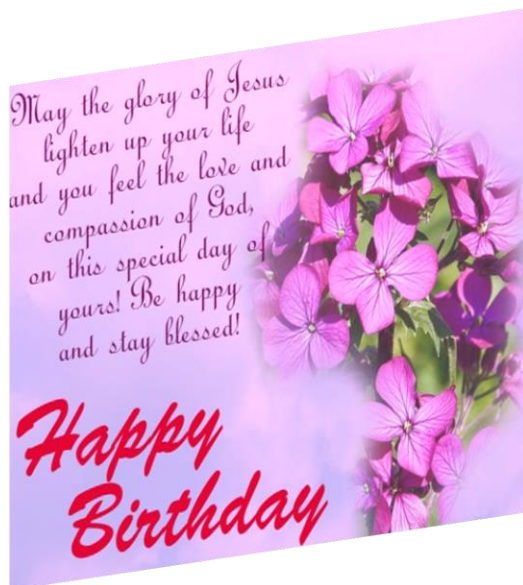
There is also sentiment to use the day to remember the sacrifices that were made for freedom in the United States — especially in these racially and politically charged days. Said Para LaNell Agboga, museum site coordinator at the George Washington Carver Museum, Cultural and Genealogy Center in Austin, Texas: "Our freedoms are fragile, and it doesn't take much for things to go backward."



Birthdays

April	
Ella Mae Atkinson	1
Maudie Goodrum	2
Madison Walker	2
Gabrielle Patrick	10
Stella Oluokun	12
Elijah Davis	13
Patricia Boone	13
Joyce Kamara	17
Christine Freeman	17
Kathleen Jones	18
William Butler, III	18
Flossie Branch	20
Denise Lynch	22
Letitia Ross	22
Kimberly Jones	24
Michelle Finney	24
Kenneth E. Bowman	25
Shavaughn Scott	28
Robert Neal	30

May	
Micaela Miles	1
Ezekiel Davis	2
Jeff Miles, Jr.	3
Philip Hazell	3
Mel Jenkins	4
Shamario Scott	8
Jade Winbush	10
Ishmael Kamara	12
Shirley Scott	15
Lynn Pittmon	18
Wayne Fells	20
Thomas Proctor	20
Leonard Sledge, Jr.	23
Daryl Barber, Jr.	25
Tina Brown	26
James Trent	30



June	
Deborah Butler	1
Barbara McIntosh	4
Taylor Wright	10
Reginald Miller	11
Brooke Roberts	13
Simone Dixon	16
Helen Plater	21
Donald Jackson	22
Harry L. Laury	24
Daryl Barber, Sr.	26
Susan Walker	27
Taylor Ware	27
Charmaine Van Dyke	30



Wedding Anniversaries

Blessings on Your
Wedding Anniversary

Wesley & Deborah
Brown
May 15, 1981
[42 Years]

Angelo & Caprice
Brown
May 17, 1997
[26 years]

Larry & Mary
Frelow
June 8, 1968
[55 years]

Thomas & Joan
Brown
June 11, 1966
[57 years]

Harry & Cylestine
Laury
June 11, 1966
[57 years]

Daryl & Joanna
Barber
June 24, 1995
[28 years]

Doug & Carolyn
Jackson
June 15, 1963
[60 years]

From The Newsletter Editor

Hymn Story: Abide With Me

Source: *One Hundred and One Hymn Stories*

The spirit of the walk of Christ with the disciples to Emmaus at eventide is reproduced in the hymn, "Abide with Me." This has been sung at the close of many a day, and, indeed, of many a Christian life, as believers have uttered it as a prayer for the presence of Christ. It was composed one Sabbath evening in 1847 out of a deep sadness that had settled down upon its author, the Rev. Henry F. Lyte. He had conducted his last communion service that day at the close of a pastorate of twenty-four years at Brixham, England. A fatal illness had already seized him and he was about to leave England to prolong his life, if possible, in the South.

Toward evening he walked down his garden path to the seaside and there thought out the imagery and many of the lines of his famous hymn. Into this he has woven the sense of change and of helplessness that one must feel in the presence of death, and also the trustful dependence upon Jesus Christ, the "Help of the helpless," which every true Christian must feel in that solemn hour.

Returning to his home, he wrote out the hymn, perfecting its lines and giving to the Christian world one of its tenderest prayer-hymns. He left at once for the south of France, and soon after his arrival in Nice his strength failed him, and whispering the words, "Peace! Joy!" while he was pointing his hand heavenward, he died.

"Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee; In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me!"

Abide With Me

*Abide with me; fast falls the eventide;
The darkness deepens; Lord with me abide.
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me.*

*Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;
Earth's joys grow dim; its glories pass away;
Change and decay in all around I see;
O Thou who changest not, abide with me.*

*I need Thy presence every passing hour.
What but Thy grace can foil the tempter's power?
Who, like Thyself, my guide and stay can be?
Through cloud and sunshine, Lord, abide with me.*

*I fear no foe, with Thee at hand to bless;
Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness.
Where is death's sting? Where, grave, thy victory?
I triumph still, if Thou abide with me.*

*Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes;
Shine through the gloom and point me to the skies.
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee;
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.*





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"Your *talent* is
God's gift to you.
What you *do* with it is
your
gift back to *God*."
Leo Buscaglia