***Proposed Deliverance***

 *Legacies of Slavery – section 3*

a) Commend the report on ‘the Church of Scotland and the legacies of slavery’ for study and action and reaffirm the Church of Scotland’s teaching and action for racial justice.

b) Instruct the Faith Impact Forum to consider ways to support the delivery of the recommendations set out in the report.

c) Instruct the Faith Impact Forum, in partnership with the Theological Forum and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group to prepare a statement of acknowledgment and apology for the Church’s involvement with and connection to historic chattel slavery, to be considered for adoption at a future General Assembly.

d) Encourage congregations to research the history of slavery and its connections in their local areas, and to continue to celebrate Racial Justice Sunday to challenge racism and speak out against racial injustice.

 **THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND AND THE LEGACIES OF SLAVERY**

**Introduction**

In 1846 New College, Edinburgh – now home to the General Assembly Hall – opened its doors as a training college for the ministers of the newly seceded Free Church of Scotland. In the same year the Free Church would find itself in the middle of a transatlantic moral storm which gathered momentum when a trio of American abolitionists arrived in Britain, including the self-liberated former slave Frederick Douglass (Shepperson 1951). The impetus for the Americans’ visit was an event which had taken place two years earlier. Following the 1843 Disruption, a deputation was sent by the Free Church of Scotland to the United States of America to raise support for the new Free Church. Amongst the donations, around £3000 was received from southern congregations who admitted slave owners into their fellowship. The new Free Church of Scotland thus found themselves embroiled in a fierce debate on the compatibility of slave ownership and church membership which was dividing the American Church and Nation (Whyte 2012).

Douglass spoke passionately against slavery and proclaimed that Christianity and slavery were incompatible. He declared that the Free Church should “send back to America, that blood stained money”. The cry of ‘send back the money’ would be repeated numerous times during the course of 1846. In response to the furore, Free Church minister John MacNaughton argued, in a speech given in Paisley in April 1846, that the abolitionists’ demand was both impractical and hypocritical. If the money was to be returned, he stated, then “We must not buy [American] cotton, nor wear it, we must not use their rice nor purchase their tobacco, [for] the stamp of slavery is on them all.” (Quoted in Murray 2023)

The intense debate was influenced by wider social, political, and moral issues on both sides of the Atlantic, but this episode in Scottish church history is one of many that highlights that everyday religious life in Scotland was not isolated from the tragedy of slavery in Africa, the Caribbean and the Americas.

This report focuses on connections between the transatlantic slave trade and the Church of Scotland during the years between the Union of Parliaments (1707) and the Emancipation of the British West Indies (1838). Connections relating to the historic Free Church of Scotland and the United Presbyterian Church are generally not included, although these do in some cases constitute part of the present-day Church of Scotland’s legacies. It is hoped that this work encourages the Church, as a largely White institution, to engage in self-reflection and to examine the roots of racial discrimination that many in Scotland still experience today. It does not seek to lay blame or make people today feel guilt for actions that happened in the past.

Nearly 200 years have passed since the Abolition of Slavery Act 1833 was passed which gradually outlawed slavery across most of the British Empire, however slavery sent waves across the globe that continue to this day. It has shaped our modern world economies and contributed considerably to the wealth of slave owning nations. Enslaved people in the Caribbean produced many of the raw materials that drove industrial revolution in Europe, whilst the Caribbean nations themselves were excluded from participating in industrialisation with long lasting effects. Intergovernmental organisation CARICOM (2013) assert that 400 years of “trade and production policies of Europe could be summed up in the British slogan: “not a nail is to be made in the colonies””. The effect is not purely economic either. Across the Caribbean poor health outcomes in present-day Black communities have been correlated with the harsh treatment and malnutrition of historically enslaved populations (CARICOM 2013). On the other side of the Atlantic, slavery also severely deprived many African nations of generations of men and women who would have otherwise contributed to local economies. The transatlantic slave trade was the largest of four major slave trades to affect the African continent. It is estimated that around 20 million people were translocated out of Africa between the years 1400-1900 due to slavery, with at least one study concluding that slavery is directly responsible for the significant income gap between African nations and the rest of the world (Nunn 2008).

Closer to home, the legacy of slavery still shapes the experiences of Black people living in Britain. Chattel slavery (whereby enslaved people were considered the legal personal property of the enslaver in perpetuity) helped to shape a worldview where Black people were treated as lesser than White people. Many of the offensive attitudes that fuel racist behaviours today stem from ideas and beliefs that were used to justify the transatlantic slave trade. Chaplain and psychotherapist Delroy Hall notes that “the history of dehumanization of African Caribbean people has been detrimental and the effects are still not fully known” (Hall 2021:5).

**Summary of the Church’s Position**

*Over the last 25 years racial justice and tackling racism has at times been more of a slow gander than a quick sprint for the Church of Scotland, both ecumenically and as a national church. That said, there have been several deliverances passed and reports received by the General Assembly on racism and racial justice, including:*

*In 2005*

*Deliverance: Recognise the continuing problem of racism in Scottish society and encourage Church members to take every opportunity to inform themselves of the issues, and to find appropriate ways to support work for racial justice, including the marking of Racial Justice Sunday. Commend to the Church inter-faith dialogue and acts of solidarity which seek to overcome religious or racial intolerance.*

*In 2011:*

*The Church and Society Council brought its report ‘One Scotland Many Cultures’ to the General Assembly. The report took its name from a Scottish Government project aimed at tackling racism and discrimination in Scottish society. The Church of Scotland offered its support for the eradication of racist views, prejudice and discrimination in Scotland, with its prayers and action for racial justice. The report and its follow-up literature for congregations stated:*

*The culture of the Church itself is not homogenous. We need to ask how our culture fits in with a diverse and changing Scotland. Of central importance is how as a Church with a real focus on mission, our culture can speak to those outwith the Church, either as a counter-cultural witness, or as a way to reach those to whom the Church’s traditional way of being is outside their comfort zone. Continuing to offer Jesus’ radical hospitality must remain one of our core principles.*

*The report focused on radical hospitality but did not go as far as actively tackling or supporting congregations to tackle racial injustice.*

*In 2013*

*Deliverance: Reject racism and religious hatred and condemn antisemitism and Islamophobia.*

*In 2020:*

*The General Assembly reaffirmed that racism is a sin and declared Black Lives Matter, and for the first time the legacy of slavery was linked with racial justice issues.*

*What is unclear is whether these deliverances have had any impact over the years. Did they influence local Church of Scotland congregations and the communities they serve, both in Scotland and its English and International congregations? What impact, if any, have they had on people within these congregations who are suffering from and experiencing first-hand racial injustice?*

(Extract from *The Church of Scotland and the Race for Justice,* by Rev. Mandy Ralph, EDI Group

Convener, in *Race for Justice (Reddie 2022)*

 **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)**

The Church of Scotland’s Theological understanding of Equality and Equity “means recognising that all humans are created alike in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-28). All humans have equal dignity in the eyes of God (Psalm 8). All humans deserve respect, and all humans are equally loved by God (John 3:16). Christians are called to love their neighbour as themselves (Mark 12:31). In Jesus we are one and the divisions of this world are broken down (Galatians 3:28). We are called to a form of discipleship marked by justice, fairness, acceptance and love (Amos 5:24; Psalm 89:14; Luke 4:18-19; John 15:12).” (Church of Scotland 2023).

The mission of the EDI Group is to ensure that everyone in the Church of Scotland is made to feel and know that all are welcome. This may sound like a mission that the Church has already fully embedded, evidenced by the fact that many Churches have ‘all are welcome’ on their signs and notice boards. However, the practical elements of helping visitors and members feel valued, loved and accepted are what turns a ‘welcome’ sign into a lived reality. It is the subtle act of using language that is inclusive and considerate. It is in the act of encouraging behaviours and building cultures that help people feel seen and not ignored, that know the difference between showing interest in a person’s story and alienating them by it. Welcome is also found when the Church creates environments that meet the physical and practical needs of everyone. When it comes to a racially just welcome, this can mean checking one’s assumptions about another person’s background. It can also mean recognising what is known as micro aggressions. These often occur when those from the majority White community ask questions or make comments which alienate and belittle others. These may not be intentionally aggressive, but the impact is often experienced as such. This is partly due to the frequency with which they are experienced by those from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds and also because they subtly point to stereotypes and differences in a way which is alienating and othering. Such aggressions include being repeatedly asked ‘where do you really come from?’, ‘do you find it cold here?’, or ‘when are you going back?’

Conversely, a lack of welcome can also be experienced by those from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds when no one from the congregation reaches out as people are too worried about saying anything wrong or assuming a person won’t be able to speak English. This can feel profoundly lonely. Work on the legacy of slavery, and other work like this, alongside research on the contemporary experiences of Black and minority ethnic members of the Church or Scotland are vital to helping the EDI Group identify gaps in the collective knowledge of the Church. This is not always easy, but by listening and understanding we can recognise patterns of behaviour that have been shaped by the history, culture and theology of an era in which stereotypes and inequality were pervasive, and yet still shaped so much of the world we see and experience today.

**Race relations in Britain**

This April (2023) marked thirty years since Stephen Lawrence was murdered in South-east London by a group of White men in an unprovoked racially motivated attack. The subsequent bungled metropolitan police enquiry became a watershed moment in the history of UK race relations. Lawrence’s killing was just one of many murders of young Black and Asian people to take place in the UK during the 1980s and 1990s, often without prosecution. The Government inquiry which followed, stated that the police’s handling of Lawrence’s murder had been “marred by a combination of professional incompetence, institutional racism and a failure of leadership” (Macpherson 1999:365), and brought the term ‘institutional racism’ into the public forum.

More recently, a renewed wave of interest in racial justice issues swept across Europe and North America following the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota in the summer of 2020. Floyd’s death followed a number of well publicised homicides in the USA, and became a symbol of police brutality worldwide. The global ‘Black Lives Matter’ demonstrations that followed Floyd’s death can now be seen as a major moment in the ongoing campaign for racial equality. In the UK many people who had not previously encountered issues such as institutional racism and White privilege began to become aware of the systemic nature of racism in British society.

Despite this, there has been a perception among some British people that racism is more prevalent in other parts of the world. In Scotland, because of historically low levels of racial diversity, the perception ‘that racism is not a problem here’ persisted much longer. Floyd’s murder was not an isolated incident on the other side of the world, however. The deaths of Black men in police custody, similar to that of George Floyd, were covered in a 2021 BBC Panorama documentary which also re-examined evidence relating to the killing of Sheku Bayoh in Kirkcaldy, Fife in 2015. A public enquiry into Bayoh’s death began evidential hearings in May 2022 and will examine if race was a factor in the killing. This conversation was reignited once again in September 2022 when 24-year-old Chris Kaba was killed by a Metropolitan Police officer following a police pursuit of the vehicle Kaba was driving in Streatham Hill, South London. Kaba was unarmed. Institutional racism in British society, it would seem, is endemic.

**British Church Responses to Legacies of Slavery**

Whilst some of the key figures in the abolition movement were heavily involved in Christian churches, such as the influential ‘Clapham Sect’ which included William Wilberforce MP, many churches now are learning that there is another side to the abolition narrative, and that many European churches also benefitted from Black enslavement.

As a result, a number of denominations and ecumenical groups across Britain have committed to addressing their legacies of slavery over the last two decades. Including;

* The United Reformed Church
* The Methodists in Britain
* The Baptist Union of Great Britain
* The Church of England (a number of Dioceses and the Church Commissioners)
* Quakers in Britain
* Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI)
* Council for World Mission
* The Scottish Episcopal Church

Research by Dr Katherine Gerbner (2018) into the relationship between Protestant Christianity and slavery in the Caribbean suggests that Christianity, rather than Whiteness, was used as the primary symbol of power and authority over the enslaved in the emerging plantation societies. Scripture was also sometimes used to defend keeping another person in a state of chattel slavery (e.g. Ephesians 6:5-8; Philemon 12), whilst the so-called ‘curse of Ham’ (Genesis 9:24-27) was manipulated to specifically sanction Black slavery. In this way scripture could be use alongside the invention of ‘scientific race’ and ‘racial categories’ to differentiate between White ‘labourers’ and Black ‘slaves’.

**Methodology**

**Legacies of Slavery Project Group (LoSPG)**

The Church of Scotland Legacies of Slavery Project Group was formed in August 2021 to fulfil the 2020 Deliverance:

*Reaffirm that racism is a sin, and declare that Black Lives Matter; instruct the Faith Impact Forum, in partnership with the Faith Nurture Forum, Assembly Trustees, and General Trustees to report to a future Assembly on the issue of racial justice and the legacy of slavery and the Church of Scotland and to consult widely with people of colour in the Church of Scotland and with Black Majority churches in Scotland.*

The group consisted of members of staff from the Faith Action Programme and the General Trustees, and the Convenor of the EDI Group and reported to the Faith Impact Forum. The LoSPG was joined by representatives from the Presbyterian Church of Trinidad and Tobago and the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria in November 2021. Between April and September 2022, the LoSPG was supported by an MSc Heritage student from the University of Stirling who carried out targeted research with two churches in Inverclyde.

**Group Remit**

The agreed scope of this research was to ascertain whether legacies of slavery, primarily within our church buildings could be barriers to inclusion. The group sought to examine church buildings held in trust by the General Trustees of the Church of Scotland to note any physical evidence of slavery connections, such as memorial stones, inscriptions and stained-glass windows dedicated to enslavers. They also noted links to slavery in buildings that were historically associated with the Church of Scotland but are no longer the responsibility of the General Trustees, as these serve to evidence a cultural legacy of slavery within the Church. Burial Grounds fell outwith the scope of this report. The group also sought to uncover the ways the Church may have benefitted from slavery, financially or otherwise.

The group’s discussions were guided by the following three questions:

1. What physical evidence remains in Church of Scotland buildings today that reveals involvement in the transatlantic slave trade?

2. To what extent did the Church of Scotland benefit both directly and indirectly from the profits from transatlantic slavery?

3. What is the cultural legacy of slavery in the Church today?

**3.5.4** In this report direct connections to slavery are considered as links with enslavers and traders. Indirect connections are less easily defined, but generally refer to links with the decedents of slave owners, and also those linked with businesses that traded in commodities produced by slave labour. As indirect connections to slavery have repercussions for almost every part of life in Scotland from the Seventeenth century onwards (see MacKinnon and Mackillop 2020), this report will almost certainly underestimate the impact of slavery on the Church.

**Language**

The terms enslaved person/people and enslaver are used throughout this report in place of slave and slave owner, except in specific circumstances. This is to afford dignity to the enslaved people who, although they were considered property, were autonomous individuals forced into slavery against their will. Likewise, the term slave owner refers to a hierarchical system where one individual was legitimised in their ownership of another. Although this may have been accepted in the social system of the time, this hierarchy intentionally devalued the lives of countless Black men, women and children and our language should reflect this.

**Methods**

Over a period of 18 months, the group examined Scottish heritage sources, historic and archival records, and published academic texts and databases. By far the most enlightening source of information was the University College London Legacies of British Slavery database, an encyclopaedia of British slave-ownership at the moment of abolition in 1833, largely comprised of the records of the Slave Compensation Commission.

Between August and September 2022, a questionnaire on church history and architecture was distributed to each Presbytery in Scotland to be forwarded to every congregation. Eighty-two congregations responded to the questionnaire. The responses informed this report and shaped our recommendations. A summary of the questionnaire responses can be found in a separate report available online at https://churchofscotland.org.uk/general-assembly-2023/reports-documents.

In January 2023 a focus group of ministers and members of congregations met with the project group to discuss both the challenges and the opportunities of researching the role of the Church of Scotland in relation to issues such as historic slavery (see Section 9).

**What have we been finding?**

**The role of Presbyterian Church in the Caribbean in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century**

The *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticanae* provides a comprehensive list of Church of Scotland’s appointments in the Caribbean from 1799 onwards. A Church of Scotland presence is recorded in The Bahamas, Grenada, Jamaica, Tobago, and Guyana (British Guiana), between 1799 (first missionary) and 1838 (emancipation) and later in Antigua, St Vincent, Belize (British Honduras) before the end of the Nineteenth century. By far the largest Church of Scotland presence during this period was in Guyana and Jamaica.

The earliest missionary recorded is Joseph Bethune, who was appointed by the Scottish Missionary Society to Jamaica. Bethune arrived in 1799 however died from a fever after only a few months. He is the only Presbyterian missionary recorded in the *Fasti* to have been in the Caribbean pre-1807 (abolition of the slave trade).

Up to as many as 20,000 Scottish migrants arrived in the West Indies during the latter half of the Eighteenth century. Dr Stephen Mullen (2016) has argued that the establishment of Presbyterian churches across the Caribbean towards the end of the slavery period demonstrates the desire of Scots abroad to preserve their national identity. It is likely however that many places of worship in the Caribbean, like many historical buildings, were built by enslaved people. For example, St Andrews Church, St George’s, Grenada, where Church of Scotland ministers were in post between 1833 to 1945, was constructed by enslaved labourers whilst the church bell was cast in Glasgow. Part of the cornerstone inscription reads (in Latin) “For the worship of the True God, Omnipotent, Eternal, according to the rights and disciplines of the Presbyterian Church, est. in native Scotland” (Presbyterian Church Grenada 2023).

**Guyana (British Guiana)**

Although Guyana is located in mainland South America, it has more in common culturally, demographically and historically with the Caribbean islands. The historic colonies that today make up Guyana were ceded to British from the Dutch in 1814. The country is perhaps best known for the production of sugar in the Demerara region.

Archibald Browne was for several years the only Scots Minister, serving between 1816 and 1824 at St Andrews Kirk, Georgetown. Browne travelled widely across the colony and it is recorded that he married and baptised a number of enslaved people. He was in post when the 1823 Demerara uprising broke out, and wrote an article for the pro-slavery *Glasgow Courier* criticising the role of the London Missionary Society in the uprising. He also published three sermons, later serialised in the *Courier*, entitled “*On the Duties of Subjects to their Sovereign and the Duties of Slaves to their Masters*” (Alston 2021).

St Andrews was the first church in British Guiana that admitted enslaved people, with members recorded as early as 1819. During the 1823 uprising the building was requisitioned by the Demerara Militia as barracks to supress the revolt (Hernandez 2013).

Rev. James Struthers, Church of Scotland clergyman and minister of the Scots Kirk in Georgetown between 1826-1857 is recorded in the registers of the Slave Compensation Commission. The extent of his compensation or slave ownership is unknown.

**Jamaica**

Jamaica was a key destination for Scottish ‘sojourners’ (temporary residents). Scots played a disproportionate role in the administration of the British Empire, despite only representing around ten percent of the British population. People of Scottish descent constituted a significant minority in Jamaica making up around one third of the White population in the year 1774. Enslaved people in Jamaica made up forty percent of all enslaved people in the British West Indies. As such, Jamaica was also one of the most profitable colonies and the island contributed just over half of the entire wealth of the British Caribbean (Whyte 2004).

The Established Church in colonial Jamaica was the Anglican Church; Presbyterianism was considered a dissenting faith. Although ‘non-conformists’ had originally been barred from political life in Jamaica, by the 1800s there were a number of powerful Scots in the Jamaican Assembly. In 1814 a failed attempt to achieve legal establishment of Presbyterianism in Jamaica led to a substantial amount of money being secured from the Jamaican Assembly to contribute towards a place of Presbyterian worship (Mullen 2016).

**The Scots Kirk, Kingston**

The building of the ‘Scots Kirk’ (St Andrews) was completed in 1819, financed primarily by subscription from Scots in Kingston and two grants from the Jamaican Assembly. Many of the first trustees were wealthy attorneys, merchants and plantation owners (Mullen 2016).

Under part of the Jamaican legal system (*Code Noir* (1696)), slave owners were encouraged to baptise and instruct slaves into the Christian faith, however in practice many enslavers felt that the Christian message of freedom in Christ would encourage slaves to challenge their enslavement. The Rev Peter Duncan, a Wesleyan Missionary, confirmed to a Commons Select Committee in 1832 that there was “general hostility” amongst planters that enslaved people should receive religious instruction by “the Established Church of England and by the Church of Scotland”. During the later 1700s and following 1807 however, some policies which encouraged the religious instruction of enslaved people began to emerge. Mullen (2016:10) quotes kirk minutes from 1819 to note that the minister, Rev. John Brown – appointed by The Presbytery of Edinburgh – supported a petition to the Jamaican Assembly stating that “one of the great and most important objects [of the Kirk]…[was that] Ministers should be devoted to the instruction of people of colour and slave population’ in order to encourage them to ‘attach themselves to the congregation”.

**Scots Ministers Engaged on the Plantations (Estates)**

The above 1832 Select Committee *report* makes several references to Church of Scotland ministers and Scottish missionaries being present on the plantations in Jamaica. Additionally, the *Annals of the Calabar Mission 1846-1945*, notes the appointment of Rev George Blyth of the Scottish Missionary Society in 1824 to minister to the enslaved population at the Hampden and Dundee estates, Trelawny, Jamaica. As part of the appointment half of the expenses for the chapel built at Hampden were paid for by Scots Archibald Stirling (the Younger) and William Stothert, Scottish-born owners of the Hampden and Dundee estates.

 **Evidence of the Legacies of Slavery within The Church of Scotland in Scotland**

 **The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.**

There is little research that specifically examines the role of the Church of Scotland in slavery and the slave economy. Much of what is known about Scottish churches’ involvement in transatlantic slavery comes from the work of Dr Iain Whyte. His research (2004;2006) provides key insights into the role of Scotland’s Christians in the abolition movement.

Whyte notes that there were many anti-slavery petitions promoted by Church of Scotland Presbyteries and Synods, and highlights individual Church of Scotland ministers who played key roles in anti-slavery campaigns. There are no records that the General Assembly, despite condemning slavery, ever petitioned parliament in relation to transatlantic slavery (Whyte 2004).

The 1788 General Assembly received proposals on the abolition of slavery from three Synods (Lothian and Tweeddale, Angus and Mearns, and Merse and Teviotdale). Whyte (2004) references a contemporary report from *The Scots Magazine* which described the commissioners as mostly unanimous in their agreement on the principal of abolition, (save for concerns about loss of life and property for Europeans in the Caribbean, and one commissioner who believed the atrocities of the slave trade to be ‘greatly exaggerated’). They were however less decided over ‘the mode in which they ought to interfere’. It was suggested that the issue should be raised in a loyal address to the King, as to petition Parliament would be ‘beneath the dignity’ of the supreme court of the National Church. The vote to petition lost by 34 votes. The Assembly instead declared,

*“The General Assembly think themselves called upon as men, as Christians and as members of the national church, to declare their abhorrence of a traffic contrary to the rights of mankind and the feelings of humanity.* (Whyte 2004:111)

The 1788 deliverance was reaffirmed in 1791, and the Assembly was satisfied to trust Parliament to take the necessary steps towards abolition. The 1792 General Assembly produced a more strongly worded deliverance that the slave trade was “‘incompatible with the great principles of religion and morality” and expressed “ardent wishes and earnest prayers’ that Parliament should speedily act to bring the trade to an end” (Whyte 2004:112). The debate was observed favourably by Black abolitionist Olaudah Equiano, and the sentiments of the General Assembly were reflected in the petitions sent by Presbyteries and Synods. Whyte contends that even without any formal petitions from the General Assembly, the activities of the lower courts of the Church in 1792 represent a truly national campaign for abolition (Whyte 2004:140).

Following abolition in 1834, the General Assembly wrote to King William IV,

*…the Ministers and Elders of the Church of Scotland beg leave to embrace the opportunity which our meeting in the General Assembly affords us, of approaching your Majesty’s throne, for the purpose of expressing the lively satisfaction with which we have observed, that an Act has recently been passed by the Legislature, in consequence of which the system of Slavery, so long contemplated by ourselves and our brethren with feelings of regret and anxiety, will, before the termination of the present year, stand abolished forever throughout the British dominions. We humbly beg to congratulate your Majesty on this event, as one which cannot fail to bestow eminent distinction on your Majesty’s reign and to afford so great facilities for the spread of the Gospel throughout your Majesties Colonies…*

*(Records of the General Assembly, 1834)*

**Individuals within the Church with links to slavery**

The British Government paid £20 million to slave owners in compensation for their loss of ‘assets’ when slavery was abolished across most of the British Empire in 1833. The funds distributed by the Government were precured as a loan and it was only in 2015 that British tax payers finished paying towards this Government debt. This is despite the dehumanising ‘Apprenticeship Scheme’ which followed, where former slaves were compelled to work for their former masters for indecently low wages. The scheme was argued to ease the social transition from enslavement to freedom and to prevent the collapse of colonial economies, however it was considered to be slavery by another name by abolitionists. The scheme was ended and enslaved people finally emancipated in 1838.

The records of the Slave Compensation Commission have been digitised by the University College London Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slavery (LBS), which holds the most comprehensive registers of British slave ownership and involvement in the Caribbean. The records contain references to a number of individuals related to the Church of Scotland, including some who benefited from slavery through inheritance. In some cases, money from slavery was bequeathed to parishes for specific purposes, such as poor funds distributed by the kirk.

Listed below are a number of examples from the LBS database:

**Angus MacKellar** – Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland (1840), Minister at Pencaitland, inherited a part-share of Hampden and Kerr estates in Jamaica through his wife Helen Stirling.

**John Ross of Berbice** – Plantation owner in Berbice and later Scottish merchant and banker. Elder in the Church of Scotland, commissioner at the General Assembly for a number of years (Alston 2021)

**Rev. Thomas Davidson** – Minister at Tollbooth Church, Edinburgh, party (capacity unknown) to a deed in 1804 concerning the Providence estate in Tobago

**Rev. Stair McQuhae** – Minister of St Quivox and son of senior clergyman Rev. William McQuhae, awarded compensation with others as executor and trustee of Alexander McDowal, likely to be his half-brother-in-law, for the Two Mile Wood estate in St Catherine, Jamaica.

**James Smith of Jordanhill** – Elder in the Church of Scotland. Silent partner in Leitch/Leith and Smith, West India merchants. Received compensation from a number of estates in Grenada.

**William Taylor** – Member of the Church of Scotland, one-time merchant and attorney in Jamaica turned abolitionist.

**Rev. Peter Robertson** – Minister at Callander, awarded compensation for enslaved people on the Friendship Estate, Jamaica as an executor and trustee of Duncan Robertson (uncle).

**Rev. Robert Walker** – Prominent abolitionist, minister at Cramond and later Canongate Kirk, known as, “the skating minister”, was left the residuary estate of his brother John Walker, merchant in London and St Lucia.

**Rev. Robert Walker (Snr)** – Moderator of the General Assembly (1771) and Minister of St Giles’ left £100 by John Walker (above)

**Sons and relatives of Church of Scotland Minsters recorded on the LBS Database**

**William, Thomas and James Collow** – Sons of the Rev. John Collow, Minister of Penpont, slave-traders and merchants in St Vincent, St Domingue, St Vincent and Tobago.

**Robert Haldane Scott** – Enslaver, Jamaica, son of Rev. James Scott, Presbytery of Dundee, and nephew of Thomas Munroe (below).

**Thomas Munroe** – Wealthy planter and surveyor. Owner of the Kinloss and Esher Estates, Jamaica. Son of Rev. James Munroe, minister of Kinloss, Presbytery of Elgin.

**Katherine Forbes** – Wife of Rev William Asher, minister of Inveraron. Major beneficiary in the will of John Gordon in Jamaica, who owned numerous estates and 300 enslaved persons.

**Richard Brodie** – Son of Rev James Brodie, minister of Latheron, Caithness. Resident in Jamaica, enslaver.

**Robert Douglass of Better Hope** – Son of George Douglass, minister of Kirkwall and later Tain. Planter in Demerara.

**William Morrice** – London West India Merchant, and awarded compensation for several estates in Jamaica, chiefly as a trustee. One of three sons of Rev William Morrice, of Kincardine O’Neil who went to Jamaica.

**Hugh Rose of Glastullich** – Fifth son of Rev Hugh Rose, minister of Tain, Rosshire. Wealthy enslaver in Berbice, and land owner in Scotland.

**Church Buildings**

Details relating to church buildings were gathered where possible from information on individual church websites, from academic publications, Historic Environment Scotland’s CANMORE database, and through the questionnaire survey. This data is incomplete as a full index of Church of Scotland buildings is not currently searchable, and to research each church building individually was beyond the scope of this project. Some of the buildings noted are no longer the property of the Church of Scotland. There are also a number of former Free Church of Scotland buildings that are now in the care of the General Trustees of the Church of Scotland. Some of these buildings are likely to have been financed by donations from enslavers from both Scotland and the USA, (as referenced in Section 1). Additional research should be undertaken on the history of the former Free Church buildings.

**A note on the responsibilities of the General Trustees: church buildings and closures.**

In the majority of cases church buildings including the fixtures and fixtures are vested in The General Trustees, although there are examples mostly former United Presbyterian churches, which are held by local trustees. The furniture and other movable items are the property of the congregations.

When a church closes and is sold, any remaining funds are held on behalf of the congregation in the consolidated fabric fund. Once a building is sold Church of Scotland interest ceases, and responsibility for the building passes to the new owner.

**Alexander Grant of Aberlour** – Enslaver and merchant in Jamaica, nephew of Rev. Alexander Grant, minister of Glenrinnes. Financed the clock tower at Aberlour Parish Church (Questionnaire).

**Margaret MacPherson Grant** – Heiress of Alexander Grant, financed the building of a school at Craigellachie which is now a Church of Scotland building (Questionnaire).

**Stanley Parish Church** (closed) – The building of the church, housing and stipend of the minister was financed by Dennistoun, Buchanan and Co, a West India Merchant firm and cotton mill investors (Cooke 2012).

**Killearnan Parish Church** – It is understood that the church building benefitted from the local laird and heritor whose fortune was made in sugar, and the son of a former minister who owned a plantation (other details not known – Questionnaire).

**St Columba’s, Oban** (closed) – Originally built as Argyll Square Free Church, the building was given £1000 by Robert MacFie whose family had made their fortune from sugar refining in Greenock (Questionnaire).

**Gourock Old and Ashton** – The coat of arms of Gourock, which is widely understood to depict an enslaved man, appears in several locations in the church, including on one exterior wall. The coat of arms has strong links to Duncan Darroch, who made his fortunes in Jamaica (Zuliani 2022).

**St George’s Parish Church (St George’s Tron)** – Highlighted in the Glasgow Slavery Audit as having been the place of worship for a number of Glasgow’s elite merchants, including John Gordon, James Ewing, Colin McLachlan, James Connell (Mullen 2022).

**St Andrews-in-the-Square, Glasgow** (closed) – Served some of Glasgow’s wealthiest citizens, the Church was built between 1739-1756 and was paid for by the magistrates and the city council, it is also assumed that the tobacco merchants of Glasgow contributed toward the cost. The mahogany interiors were imported from plantations in the Caribbean (Mullen 2009).

**Buchanan Parish Church** – Built in 1764 by William Graham, 2nd Duke of Montrose, son of the James Graham 1st Duke of Montrose, who kept a black servant in his Glasgow home. This servant may have been one of the earliest black slaves in Scotland and may also have worn a silver ‘slave collar. (Lewis 2019).

**3.6.26 Monuments, memorials and dedications within churches**

All data gathered from the UCL Legacies of British Slavery Database, unless otherwise stated.

**Glasgow Cathedral** (under the care of Historic Environment Scotland) – Contains a number of memorials to prominent Glasgow merchants who made their fortunes through tobacco and sugar in addition to plantation owners in the West Indies. These include,

1. Memorial Window to Alexander Spiers of Elderslie, “Tobacco Lord”
2. Memorial Window to William Stirling, Chancellor of Glasgow University, son of enslaver Archibald Stirling (the Younger).
3. Memorial inscription to Sir James Stirling of Keir, enslaver in Jamaica
4. Memorial inscription to Andrew Cochrane, Lord Provost of the City “Tobacco Lord”
5. Cecilia Douglas, Grand Dame of Glasgow, planter, enslaver and art collector donated a large window to the Cathedral.

**St Machar’s Cathedral, Aberdeen** – Memorial window (Bishops’ Window) to Hugh Leslie and his wife Ann Agnes Lamond, absentee owner of an estate in Jamaica.

**St Michael’s, Edinburgh** – Stained-glass window in memory of Robert Dall, owner of the Cedar Valley estate, Jamaica.

**Bothwell Parish Church** – Two memorial inscriptions to Cecilia Douglas and her husband Hugh Douglas, planters and enslavers in St Vincent and Demerara.

**Dornoch Cathedral** – Memorial window to the Hoyes Family, whose wealth came from Lewis Hoyes, a merchant resident for 34 years in Grenada. Dornoch Cathedral itself was rebuilt between 1835 and 1837 with funds obtained from Elizabeth, Countess-Duchess of Sutherland. Sutherland is largely infamous for her role in the Sutherland Clearances, however she is also noted to have familial links to inherited wealth from slavery in Jamaica, through her mother and grandfather (Alston 2021).

**Dallas Parish Church** – Memorial to Thomas Cuming of Demerara, prominent member of Demerara society and owner of two plantations.

**St Nicholas’, Aberdeen** – Memorial erected in 1787 by the Jamaica merchant and slave-trader, Alexander Allardyce, to his wife Ann Baxter in St Nicholas’ Kirk.

**Rosemarkie Parish Church** – Memorial to John Fowler, an estate owner in Jamaica and agent for the Bristol based slave-trader James Rogers.

**Greyfriars Kirk, Edinburgh** – Memorial inscription to Frances James Adam, part owner of the Nismes Estate in British Guiana.

**Fullarton Parish Church** – Memorial to James Montgomery, abolitionist poet and hymn writer (Scotland Churches Trust 2023).

**Colinton Parish Church** – James Gillespie and brother John, philanthropists and tobacco merchants are buried in the church yard and understood to be memorialised inside the church as well (Dick 2018).

**Crimond Parish Church** – Clock gifted by James Laing of Haddo, doctor and plantation owner in Dominica (Crimond Parish Church 2023).

**Funds and financial legacies**

All data gathered from the UCL Legacies of British Slavery Database unless otherwise stated. At the time of abolition (1830s) £100 had the equivalent purchasing power of around £6780 today.[i] Financial legacies predating abolition may have had greater purchasing power.

**Logan Parish Church** – Bequeathed £500 Jamaican currency (recorded £3500 sterling) by John Bean, owner of the Stirling Castle estate Jamaica.

**Irvine Kirk Session** – Bequeathed £100 in trust for the benefit of the poor of the Parish by William Gemmell, merchant in Messrs Gemmell, Bogle & Scott. Associated with the Mount Craven estate, Grenada.

**Reverend Thomas MacKnight** – Minister at Edinburgh, and Moderator of the General Assembly in 1820, left £250 by William Gemmell (as above).

**Minster and Kirk Session (likely Forres)** – Bequeathed £100 sterling by John Hoyes of Grenada, likely merchant in St George, Grenada, Speaker of the House of Assembly Grenada and Treasurer of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, for the purchase of coals and ‘other articles’ for the poor of his “native town”.

**Presbytery of Aberlour** – Bequeathed £200 in trust for the local schoolmaster by Alexander Green associated with two estates in Jamaica.

**Ministers and elders of the parish of Aberlour** – Bequeathed £100 for the benefit of the poor by Joseph Green, attorney and enslaver in Jamaica.

**Ministers and Elders of the parish of Kilmadock** – Bequeathed £300 for the poor of the parish by Thomas Paterson, owner of Downe Castle estate Jamaica.

**Parishes of Selkirk and Roberton** – Bequeathed “£20 sterling to the poor” of both parishes by William Chisholme, owner of sugar plantations in Jamaica. Also left “£20 to the minister of Selkirk for a ring”.

**Alexander Urquart** – Minister at Tough, Aberdeenshire, left £60 per annum for “his natural life” by Robert Harvey enslaver in Antigua.

**Rev. Norman McLeod, North Uist** – Named in the will of Malcolm McLeod, enslaver in Jamaica.

**Ministers of Kilmarnock** – Left a perpetual annuity of £180 by William Paterson, an attorney in Jamaica. One half of the annuity was for the “indigent” poor of the town and the other to “promote rivalry and emulation” amongst the scholars of the town.

**Minister of Sanquhar, Dumfriesshire** – Left £40 for the poor of the parish by Charles Scott, attorney and enslaver in Jamaica.

**Dollar Kirk Session** – John McNabb, ship owner who transported slaves to the West Indies and benefactor of Dollar academy, left “70,000 pounds bequeathed to Dollar Kirk Session for a “Charity or School for the parish of Dollar and shire of Clackmannan wheir I was born.”

**Bell’s Trust** – Rev Andrew Bell was a Church of England clergyman who spent a portion of his career in Virginia. He became involved in tobacco trading and received shares and bonds as payment for tutoring services. He left the City of Glasgow £10,000 for educational purposes, and the funds were disseminated by ten Kirk Sessions.

**Augusta Lamont Bequest** – The great niece of John Lamont, a sugar planter and enslaver resident in Trinidad who received £9000 in compensation on the abolition of slavery. Although illegitimate, John is credited with reviving the Lamont family’s fortunes, and he left the majority of his wealth to his nephew James, Augusta’s father. Augusta was the last of the family to inherit Clan Lamont’s property in Scotland. Upon her death in 1950 she bequeathed the entirety of her share of the estate, which largely related to the contents of Knockdow house, to the Church of Scotland to further the work of the Church in the Cowal Penisula. The sale of the property and the contents was completed in 1990 and in 1992 £1,549,814.16 was received by the Church of Scotland. The fund is currently understood to be valued at just over £5.5 million.

**Miscellaneous**

**Guarantor: Rev. John Anderson of Bellie** – Controversial minister, demitted in 1819. He paid a “substantial sum” as a guarantee for Kenneth McPherson, a relative of his wife, and indebted enslaver in Jamaica (LBS).

**Architect: John James (JJ) Stevenson** – Architect who designed a number of churches across Scotland. Son of James Stevenson, merchant, broker, co-owner of a cotton spinning mill and business partner of members of the Oswald family, who were linked heavily with slavery (Dictionary of Scottish Architects 2016; MacLehose 1885).

**Trustee: Rev Lewis Gordon** – Minister at Kinnadar, named as a trustee for lands, plantations, shares of ships and all personal and real estate in Scotland and Jamaica by James Peterkin, estate owner in Jamaica (LBS).

**Communion Ware, Kilmadock Parish Church** – Two silver communion cups commissioned for Kilmadock Parish Church by William ‘King’ Mitchell, enslaver in Jamaica and activist for the West India Interest. Now in the ownership of National Museums Scotland (National Museums Scotland 2023).

**Robert Story, St Modan’s** – A previously enslaved man who was transported to Trinidad via Rio de Janeiro. He was brought to Scotland as a free man by Stewart Kerr of Kelso, and taken in to the manse by Rev. Robert Story, under whose name he is buried (Questionnaire).

**Executor: Rev Morris Forsyth** – Minister, Mortlach Church. Executor of the will, and received the compensation payments, of his late brother James a ‘mortgagee of an estate in St Lucia” (LBS).

**Heritors**

The heritors of a church were generally local landowners, who would have contributed towards the church building and its upkeep. Some of this landholding and wealth predated slavery however, there is an interconnected relationship between colonial Britain and estate ownership in Scotland, particularly in the Highlands and Islands. Profits derived from slavery often financed large scale land purchases in the region during the early-to-mid 19th century (Mackinnon and Mackillop 2020).

In general, assessing the wealth of individual heritors requires site specific research which goes beyond the scope of this report. Similarly, without examining the rolls of each individual church it is not possible to know exactly who was worshipping in each church, (aside from some high-profile examples), paying teinds (a historic form of tithing based on agricultural produce), or contributing in other ways towards financing the ministers’ stipends.

There were exceptions to these traditional funding arrangements. For example, across Scotland’s major cities some minsters’ stipends were paid for by mixture of teinds, voluntary giving, and funds from the municipality (Sawkins 2022). Prof John Sawkins (2022) has noted how in 1661 a 6% annuity tax was placed on the rental values of a number of premises across Edinburgh to finance the stipends of six ministers serving the Burgh churches. Another six ministers were financed from other revenue sources, including seat rents and a duty on goods imported through Leith Harbour. The 6% annuity tax was abolished in 1860 with the establishment of the Edinburgh Ecclesiastical Commission, and the harbour duty soon after. Overall the income derived from the Leith Harbour duty was minimal, however Leith Harbour Custom House was noted by the Edinburgh Slavery and Colonialism Legacy Review as having a minor link to slavery as the “importation of goods produced by enslaved people into Leith was a major part of the trade coming into Edinburgh, generating significant revenue” (Edinburgh City Council 2022).

**What have we learned?**

Through this work the Legacies of Slavery Project Group have become aware of a wider story around slavery and the Church of Scotland which goes beyond the role of the Church in abolition. We have learned that stories of slavery and abolition are often nuanced and not always clear cut. For example, we note that one of the most visually recognisable proponents of abolition Dr Robert Walker, Edinburgh, (immortalised as the ‘skating minister’ by Henry Raeburn), who led the Presbytery of Edinburgh to petition parliament in 1788, was also named eight years previous in 1780 as the residuary heir of the estate of his brother John Walker, a merchant operating in St Lucia. We are also mindful of the number of ‘sons of the manse’ who profited, some significantly, from the enslavement of their fellow humans, whilst also recognising the commendable campaigns of many Presbyteries and Synods as part of the abolition movement.

In many cases we do not see clearly defined direct relationships between slave ownership and the Church of Scotland, although slavery related connections between Scotland and the Caribbean clearly abound. This research however has identified the breadth of indirect connections between the Church and slave derived wealth.

We have learned that there is architectural evidence of connections to slavery within some of our church buildings, although it is not believed to be as wide spread as first thought. There are some prominent examples, such as those at Gourock Old and Ashton, which has been the subject of previous media reports, and others which specifically mention Caribbean connections, such as the window dedicated to Robert Dall at St Michaels, Edinburgh, or the memorial to Thomas Cuming at Dallas Parish Church. Many examples however require a degree of local or historical knowledge to connect them with slavery, such as the examples of the clock tower and church building in Aberlour, or the clock gifted to Crimond Parish Church. Others such as the memorial to James Gillespie at Colinton Parish Church relate to slavery indirectly through associated industries (in this case tobacco). There are also examples of memorials to those connected to the abolition movement, such as James Montgomery in Fullarton Parish Church. It is hard, however, to ascertain whether a memorial within a church relates to someone connected with slavery by their name alone. There are certainly examples which have been missed by this research as a nation-wide examination of every person named on a church memorial would have been impractical.

There are some examples where the Church or ministers can be seen to have benefitted directly from the profits of slavery, for example enslaver Robert Harvey left £60 a year to the minister at Tough, Aberdeenshire for the rest of his natural life. These examples are not widespread however. What we do see are many instances where money was left to ministers and kirk sessions to distribute amongst the parish or to be used for philanthropic causes: Does this itself though, constitute a benefit to the Church?

Many of the examples listed above relate to Scots who made financial and social gains from enslavement but left a portion of their money for what could be seen as ostensibly ‘good’ purposes, caring for the poor for example. This raises important questions regarding the origins of money from which many people in Scotland, including the Church, benefitted. If the Church is committed to seeking racial justice then we must seek to acknowledge the origins of such funds that the church either received for its own use, or distributed for others.

The case of the Augusta Lamont bequest, which was donated to the Church, does however represent a direct benefit. This family’s revived fortunes originated mainly with Augusta’s great uncle John Lamont and his business interests, and slave ownership, in Trinidad. The money donated to the Church came primarily from the sale of the contents of the estate in Scotland, rather than directly from the Caribbean. We know that Augusta played no part in slavery personally and, from original documents, she had a strong connection to the Church of Scotland with a desire to see the work of the Church furthered in her local area. But we also know from the experiences of people in our partner church in Trinidad and Tobago that the actions of Augusta’s family had an irrevocable impact on the lives of people living in Trinidad, both in the past and today.

**Statement on the impact of slavery in Trinidad and Tobago**

*Daily life in Trinidad and Tobago, as in most if not all of the Caribbean, is constant testimony to the legacy of slavery. Streets, parks and communities are named after slave owners. Landholding patterns and usage were dictated by those who owned slaves and plantations and then chose to dispose of the land and resources as they chose.*

*To use one example, the Lamont family owned several plantations in Trinidad and, after the abolition of slavery, disposed of their property and possessions according to their economic, political, religious and social interests.*

*The Church of Scotland was established in Trinidad and Tobago by those who were part of the British Empire at the time of slavery. The Presbyterian Church of Trinidad and Tobago began afterwards with missionaries whose families had migrated to Canada because they had lost their homes in the highland clearances in Scotland. These Presbyterian missionaries saw people here who, like them, had been forced from their homes, culture and language. The missionaries established schools whose locations and curriculum were then shaped by local powerful interests such as those of the Lamont family.*

*Our present green spaces, roads, social and economic infrastructure have all developed from the decisions made by slave owners. It is therefore a fair conclusion to say that the way we eat, breathe, think and talk as well as the places we live, study, work and worship are all today influenced by slavery and slave owners.*

(Rev. Adrian Sieunarine, Principal St Andrews Theological College, Trinidad and Tobago)

 **Where do we go from here?**

 **The Church’s Legacy of Slavery and Racial Justice today.**

A focus group was held in January 2023 made up of ministers and members of congregations from across the Church of Scotland; participants came from both rural and urban locations. The group explored three questions to draw some conclusions about the legacy of slavery in Scotland and the Church, and what the role of the Church should be today in addressing these legacies.

1. **What do you think the legacy of slavery is in Scotland today, and does this episode of history have an impact on our Church?**

The focus group acknowledged that a substantial proportion of Scotland’s wealth came from the industries connected to transatlantic slavery, and that this wealth was not just confined to cities, such as Glasgow. For one participant, alongside the abhorrence of slavery was also a sense of gratitude towards the enslaved, and an acknowledgment that our lives in Europe would be very different had slavery not been integral to the industrial revolution. This was also evidenced in others’ reflections that poor funds, schools and church buildings in their areas were known to have been partially, or fully, funded by the profits of enslavers. Many participants shared they had no knowledge of slavery links in their local areas before beginning to actively research the topic. The focus group concluded that there has not been enough acknowledgment of this part of Scotland’s past, which extended to an acknowledgment that the Church had also profited through slavery. It was thought that the perception of Scotland as a ‘freedom-loving country’, with no mention of slavery in its past has been allowed to perpetuate for too long. Many felt this was a difficult issue to address in congregations, although it was suggested congregations did need to be challenged to engage in new ways of addressing historic slavery and present-day racial justice. Participants felt churches often wanted to raise awareness but were unsure about how they could do this well without increasing risks of inflaming local tensions, or taking on a disproportionate responsibility for this part of Scotland’s history.

1. **What is the responsibility of the Church to address issues such as historic slavery?**

It was felt that the Church should use any knowledge it had about past links to slavery to educate people, and learn from this past, not to downplay or try to conceal it. It was felt that physical features of buildings that had links to historic slavery should not be removed, but instead used to help congregations and people the local area learn about this part of Scotland’s history. This was seen as an opportunity for the whole Church to examine the story we tell about who we are and what we value. One participant questioned whether, as part of this, the Church should seek to better understand the ways that Christianity was introduced to other parts of the world. It was also suggested that part of the Church’s response to the issue of historic slavery and racism today should be to examine its internal structures, addressing where our processes may have been shaped by biases and ignorance, often inadvertently, and thus have been exclusionary. The importance of listening to, and taking seriously, the experiences of people within the Church who are not White was voiced strongly. It was expressed that any acknowledgment or apology must be carefully considered so that the Church is fully aware of what is being acknowledged and apologised for, and there must then be actions behind these words.

1. **What role does the Church of Scotland have in working towards racial justice across Scotland?**

Whilst it was acknowledged that there is national work that can be done, some participants felt that there would be more benefit in exploring what can be done locally in communities to make changes. It was expressed that there is not a one-size-fits-all approach that would be effective across the whole of Scotland. It was hoped that a fresh look at liturgy and resources could help equip congregations to have conversations about racial justice, and sharing examples of what is being done and working well could help everyone to engage. It was suggested that the Church

often waits for anniversaries or specific moments to progress work around issues such as racial justice when instead we should be weaving equality and justice into all aspects of our common life. One participant felt that we can take the lessons we have learned about the Church and historic racial injustices and apply this to climate change today, and encourage the Church to consider that climate change caused by fossil fuel extraction in the wealthy global north has had a disproportionate effect on the poorer global south. Others were keen to point out that slavery still continues today and we should support work that fights against this. In discussing if the Church should take steps towards reparations, it was acknowledged that engagement with ethnic minorities in Scotland were critical, as are our relationships with Churches abroad. The group also noted it was important to consider how any reparative action today differs from the philanthropy of those who made their fortunes from slavery.

**Next steps for Churches**

The findings of the Legacies of Slavery Project Group can be supplemented by the work of MSc Heritage student Nathan Zuliani who undertook research with two churches in Inverclyde during 2022. Zuliani quotes Annalisa Bolin (2022) to explain that “what we do with heritage reflects how we understand ourselves: who we were, who we are, and who we want to be” (quoted in Zuliani 2022:58). Zuliani worked to understand how both churches, who had links to historic slavery wealth, aimed to acknowledge their past, consider difficult objects in their buildings, and tell this story to present and future generations

Zuliani (2022) recommends a three-step approach that churches could take when dealing with difficult or challenging pasts: **Understanding; Engaging; and Managing for future uses**. This framework can apply nationally, but would allow individual churches to make decisions based on their own communities and in ways that make sense for them locally.

**Step 1: Understanding** means describing what is already known and openly discussing the outcomes within the church community. A key part of this is also acknowledging the differing moral context between the present day and of the past period.

**Step 2: Engaging** asks congregations to work through the following questions;

- What does this history mean for us – as the people who are the inheritors of this history?

- Why does this history need to be told? Why is it important to tell it?

- What is it about that history that still speaks to us today? Is it meaningful? Is it a warning?

- For objects: What was the objects purpose then, and what is its purpose now?

**Step 3: Managing for future uses** moves these questions into considering practical actions. Churches can then consider;

- How do we share what we know today so that it will not be forgotten?

- How do we deal with physical evidence of the past? Can we remove, relocate, replace, reframe or re-tell it? And what do we need to do this?

- Are we equipped to bring people to engage, converse and interpret safely? What training or guidance do we need?

- Are there any other means available to help us tell difficult stories and help people engage with them?

(adapted from Zuliani 2022:66-67)

**Acknowledgement and Apology**

The questionnaire responses (see in the online additional appendix at https://churchofscotland.org.uk/general-assembly-2023/reports-documents) and the discussions of the focus group evidence a desire of many to see the Church acknowledge the harms that slavery has done in our society and to acknowledge, and apologise in some cases, for the role the Church of Scotland played in these harms.

**3.9.5** Through this research we can see that there is evidence of historical connections to, and benefits from, slavery within the Church. As such, the Legacies of Slavery Project Group feel that the Church should acknowledge these connections, confess that we do not worship in a church that is untouched by racism and racial injustices, and offer an appropriate apology.

**Apology: A Theological Response**

In its 2022 report, ‘Apologising for Historic Wrongs,’ the Theological Forum of the Church of Scotland drew attention to the importance Jesus placed on being reconciled with a brother or sister who has something against us. The history recounted above highlights a number of wrongs that might stand between sisters and brothers of African descent and the Church of Scotland. Past officers and members of the Kirk participated in or benefitted financially from the enslavement of others. They also embraced racist ideals that they attempted to justify on theological grounds. Many of them bequeathed their racist ideals and ill-gotten gains to the Kirk. And subsequent generations of the Church continued to make use of both the material and the ideological inheritance for years thereafter, in some cases extending up to the present day. The Theological Forum observed that ‘Issuing an apology for our historic sins can be an important step toward reconciling with neighbours from whom the church’s past has alienated her’ (CofS Theological Forum 2022). For this apology to succeed in helping to reconcile us with the communities that were wronged, more will be required than merely words. Nevertheless, an apology is a good place to begin.

(Prof. Glen Pettigrove, Chair of Moral Philosophy, University of Glasgow and member of the Theological Forum)

 **Recommendations**

1) A statement of acknowledgment and apology should be brought to a future assembly, to be worked up by the Faith Impact Forum (or any successor body) in collaboration with the Theological Forum and the EDI group. This should include a process of consultation with the wider church where possible to ensure a Whole Church approach.

2) A permanent acknowledgement of our legacies of slavery by creating a dedicated page on the church website

3) A commitment to becoming anti-racist church and to encourage congregations and presbyteries to continue to engage with the topics of historic slavery, racial justice, and to mark Racial Justice Sunday

4) An appropriate art work is commissioned that can help congregations to begin conversations around historic slavery and racial justice in their own local contexts

5) The Church supports an academic scholarship, with student support, in partnership with a Scottish University. Our recommendation would be that this scholarship be open to any student linked with our partner churches in Africa and the Caribbean, with as little restriction on topic of study as possible.

For a list of references for this report, see Appendix 1.

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