

FAQs

What prompted the Church Commissioners to look into its history?

In 2019, the Audit and Risk Committee of the Church Commissioners raised the question about the origins of its endowment. Despite having been established in 1704, predecessor fund Queen Anne's Bounty had not previously been looked into with regard to historic links with transatlantic chattel slavery. When the project began, the Church Commissioners did not know what the research would reveal, but the information discovered in our archives is clear about the origins of the fund and its links to transatlantic chattel slavery.

What did the research reveal?

Our research revealed that one predecessor fund of the Church Commissioners' fund, Queen Anne's Bounty, invested in and received income from South Sea Company securities. The South Sea Company transported and traded enslaved people. Queen Anne's Bounty also received numerous benefactions, some of which may have come from individuals linked to, or who profited from transatlantic chattel slavery and the plantation economy. The research has shown that Edward Colston, among others, was a benefactor, whose giving to Church of England causes included Queen Anne's Bounty. Funds in Queen Anne's Bounty were used to augment the income of poor clergy before ultimately the balance of the fund was subsumed into the Church Commissioners' fund when formed in 1948, along with assets of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, perpetuating the legacy of the linkages to the transatlantic chattel slave trade.

Why have the Church Commissioners decided to respond to what they have learned about their past?

We believe that by addressing our past transparently, particularly this part of our past, the Church and its teachings will be more relevant to more people. We see our response as an important missional activity that will support the work and ministry of the Church of England in England.

The Church Commissioners seeks through the research it has done, and its response, to acknowledge the truth of our past, apologise for the wrongs that this research has highlighted, and to address these wrongs through repentance, remembrance, reconciliation, and renewal.

What is the £100 million supposed to do?

The hope of the Church Commissioners is that the £100million will:

- create an in-perpetuity impact investment endowment fund, i.e. a separate charitable fund, that will grow over time, seeking to attract others to join us or

take similar investing action of their own so that the ultimate size and impact of the endowment fund is materially larger and thereby seeks to make a lasting impact.

- invest in a better, fairer future that promotes human flourishing for historically marginalised and vulnerable groups, in particular communities impacted by historic transatlantic chattel slavery, creating a fairer future for all.
- inspire others to act.

Are your actions reparations and if not, why not?

Our response is not about paying compensation to individuals, nor is it purely about the money. We want to be clear that no amount of money will ever be enough to repair the horrors of the past. That is why, through this fund, we are seeking to invest for a better and fairer future for all, in particular for communities affected by historic transatlantic chattel slavery.

We are hopeful that the work of the Church Commissioners to address its shameful past will be seen as a first step on a pathway to reparatory justice.

There are many different models for reparatory justice, and the independent Oversight Group advising the Church Commissioners is creating proposals that are informed by these models. The Church Commissioners themselves are not experts on reparatory justice, and also do not seek to judge their own actions. When we have adopted a detailed model for the response, we hope it will be possible to evaluate whether or not this can serve as a reparatory act.

Isn't this just virtue signalling? Are you just trying to look good?

No. The Church Commissioners is profoundly sorry for its involvement in historic transatlantic chattel slavery. The legacy of this evil impacts the lives of many people in the world today and we own up to our role in that. The Church Commissioners' Board considered this matter in detail and unanimously voted in favour of the establishment of the fund as a response to our findings.

Has the Church Commissioners genuinely apologised - legally, morally and theologically - for its entire involvement with Transatlantic Chattel Slavery?

Yes, the Church Commissioners has made an apology for what it knows about its historic links to transatlantic chattel slavery, as have senior Bishops from its Board. As soon as we became aware of the investment of Queen Anne's Bounty in transatlantic chattel slavery, we wanted to apologise and take action. We still don't know the full story of our historic involvement, and we have committed to further research in the future to help us to reach a comprehensive understanding.

The Archbishop of Canterbury

The Archbishop of Canterbury, the Chairman of the Board of the Church Commissioners, has apologised for the Church Commissioners' involvement with Transatlantic Chattel Slavery noting:

"This abominable trade took men, women and children created in God's image and stripped them of their dignity and freedom.

"The fact that some within the Church actively supported and profited from it is a source of shame.

"It is only by facing this painful reality that we can take steps towards genuine healing and reconciliation - the path that Jesus Christ calls us to walk."

Furthermore, the Archbishop of Canterbury has been unequivocal on the theology of the issue, noting on his visit to Cape Coast Castle in Ghana in February 2023:

"It was a reminder that the abomination of transatlantic chattel slavery was blasphemy: those who imprisoned men and women in those dungeons saw them as less than human.

"It is to the Church of England's eternal shame that it did not always follow Christ's teaching to give life. It is a stain on the wider church that some Christians did not see their brothers and sisters as created in the image of God, but as objects to be exploited.

"Our response must begin on our knees in prayer and repentance. In calling on the God who blesses the broken, the reviled and those who mourn. In looking to God who transforms, redeems and reconciles.

"But our response does not end there. We are called to transform unjust structures, to pursue peace and reconciliation, to live out the Beatitudes in big ways and small."

The Church Commissioners

Apology from Bishop David Urquhart, Chair of the group that had oversight of the research, June 2022, upon the release of the interim report.

"The Church Commissioners is deeply sorry for its predecessor fund's links with transatlantic chattel slavery. The Church Commissioners aims to be transparent about its history and we will use this knowledge to ensure we are at the forefront of responsible investment globally. Alongside this work to consider our past, we continue to lobby for change in the companies in which we invest today and call for those companies to champion human rights within their supply chains.

Through our policy of advocating ‘respect for people’ we aim to create a fairer world today in which all God’s children can flourish.”

Why aren’t the Church Commissioners just giving the money directly to descendants of enslaved people?

The Church Commissioners are being advised by an independent Oversight Group with expertise in a range of disciplines, including reparatory and economic justice, about what to do with this fund. The Oversight Group have been free to propose a range of options for best uses of the fund to the Church Commissioners.

Our hope is that the fund will expand and grow over time while benefitting communities impacted by the legacy of transatlantic chattel slavery over the long-term through impact investments and grant-making.

Are you speaking for the Church of England or other bodies within the Church of England?

The Church Commissioners is speaking on its own behalf, relating only to the historic investment of Queen Anne’s Bounty in transatlantic chattel slavery. The historic involvement of the wider Church of England in transatlantic chattel slavery is a topic beyond the bounds of the work of the Church Commissioners.

Are you speaking for the Anglican Communion?

No. The Church Commissioners is speaking on its own behalf, relating only to the historic investment of Queen Anne’s Bounty in transatlantic chattel slavery. The Anglican Communion operates autonomously from the Church Commissioners.

Does the Church Commissioners’ response to historic links with transatlantic chattel slavery fall within the remit of the Church of England’s Racial Justice Unit?

No, although the Church Commissioners works collaboratively with the Racial Justice Unit to ensure mutual support is given to their respective areas of focus.

How are you engaging with corporates, other organisations, the Crown and the Government on this issue?

What do the Church Commissioners mean by ‘Justice for All’?

The Church Commissioners exists to support the work and ministry of the Church of England, which means supporting the flourishing of every human: all are made in the image of God. “Respect for People” is one of our Responsible Investment principles. Whilst the predominant impact of African chattel enslavement has been and is on people of African descent, the enduring mindset and attitudes have consequences for many communities and indeed all of humanity. We hope and pray that our response will be a meaningful process of healing, repair and justice, addressing barriers to economic parity and quality of life for all who have been impacted by the legacy of

African chattel enslavement, and seeking outcomes that demonstrably catalyse, directly or indirectly, a better, fairer future for all historically marginalised and vulnerable groups.

What is the Church Commissioners' relationship to the USPG, and in particular the Codrington Plantation in Barbados?

The Church Commissioners and USPG are separate, independent organisations, and the Church Commissioners can only speak on its own behalf relating to the historic investment of Queen Anne's Bounty in transatlantic chattel slavery. As such, questions about USPG's work to address its history should be directed to USPG.

In 1710, what was then the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG), a Church of England mission organisation and predecessor to USPG, inherited two sugar plantations on the eastern side of Barbados, Codrington and Consett, including 300 enslaved Africans from Sir Christopher Codrington III (1668-1710). Codrington, born in 1668 on the island of Barbados, was a third-generation landowner whose wealth was a product of chattel enslavement, sugar, and molasses. The SPG continued to exploit the labour of enslaved Africans, branding the word 'Society' on the chests of the enslaved.

During the course of our research, the Church Commissioners have found documents in Lambeth Palace Library and Archive relating to the Codrington Plantation. For example, one letter that can be found [here](#). In this letter we see Charles Bolton, the former town agent for the Codrington estates, writing to Philip Bearcroft who was the Secretary of the SPG, on 25 April 1741. In his letter, Charles Bolton accuses Daniel Moore, who succeeded him as town agent for the Codrington estate, of various malpractices, including cruelty to the enslaved:

'I need not display to the venerable board, the cruelty of his un-Christian treatment of their unhappy slaves. I shall only take notice of the mischief it brings upon the Estate, which perhaps may not be so obvious to them. For want of proper food the Negroes cannot have strength enough to undergo their daily labour; this exposes them to the hurryings, slashes of their Drivers, which tires and tortures and quickly wears them out...'

This archival letter provides valuable insight into the mistreatment of enslaved people on the sugar plantations and highlights the complicity of the Anglican Church leadership in turning a blind eye to such atrocities. It underscores the pervasive cruelty inflicted upon enslaved Africans and the detrimental impact it had on their well-being (and hence also on the productivity of the estate). Charles Bolton connected the scarcity and quality of food to the behavioural issues on the sugar plantations. Running away, protesting mistreatment, lower productivity, and the managers resorting to forms of

punishment to keep enslaved people in line all plagued SPG's Barbadian plantations leading up to the 1738 labour protest on the sugar plantation (Strickland, M.B 2019: 102).

The letter also highlights the enduring myth of the "happy slave," which Frederick Douglas in his book 'Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, and Written by Himself' criticizes and challenges. In the letter, Charles Bolton refers to the "unhappy slaves" who face unchristian treatment. All enslaved Africans on the plantation would be victims of the brutality and violence of enslavement and therefore would not be 'happy' with their condition even if they did not resist their enslavement. This letter adds to our understanding of the historical context of slavery and the complex dynamics between plantation owners, agents, and the Church in perpetuating this system of exploitation.

We have not concluded the exploration of our archive, and we are aware that there are artefacts relating to the Codrington plantations in Lambeth Palace Library, so we anticipate having more information and artefacts to share in due course.

What is the Church Commissioners' theological framework for the actions it is taking?

Senior bishops on the Board of the Church Commissioners and representing the two Archbishops have shaped and will continue to shape the theological framework for the actions the Commissioners will be taking.

You are "The Church Commissioners for England" and your funding remit is legally restricted at the current time to England. So do you have the authority to engage with issues outside the geographical boundaries of England?

The Church Commissioners exists to benefit the Church of England primarily through its ethical management of the Church's endowment fund, which is invested in a diverse range of assets globally. We do not believe that we can either fully support the work of the Church of England, or claim to be ethical investors, without addressing our historic links to transatlantic chattel slavery. We believe that by addressing our past transparently, particularly this part of our past, the Church and its teachings will be more relevant to more people. We see our response as an important missional activity that will support the work and ministry of the Church of England in England. We will consider how best we can ensure that the new fund is established so that we are able to meet this objective, and expect that we will engage with the relevant regulatory bodies about the establishment of this fund.

How are you engaging with the Anglican Communion on the issue and ensuring that their voices are heard?

The Church Commissioners have met with Anglican Communion stakeholders in Ghana, Barbados and Jamaica, and have received valuable input to this work from the Archbishop of the West Indies, and the Archbishop of the Church of The Province of West Africa, as well as the Secretary General of the Anglican Communion Office. Several members of the Anglican Communion have attended engagement events to help to inform this work and have also responded to a global survey to share their insight.

Who is making the decisions about this money?

The Church Commissioners Board of Trustees have legal responsibilities for decision-making that we must fulfil taking into account Charity Commission guidance. However, we have actively sought for many descendants of enslaved people to input to our response, including members of the Commissioners' Board and a majority of the independent Oversight Group that is advising the Church Commissioners. The Oversight Group and the Commissioners' Board have also been informed by engagement events and a diverse global survey commissioned as part of the Oversight Group's work.

Why is what happened 300 years ago relevant today?

While we rejoice that transatlantic chattel slavery was abolished centuries ago, there is no doubt that there is a direct link between its legacy and unequal health and education outcomes, financial insecurity, reduced access to opportunity, and the blight of discrimination for many still today. Having learned that the Church's endowment was invested in this cruel legacy, the Church Commissioners believes that we should respond to this knowledge by investing in a better future for all.

What about modern day slavery?

The Church Commissioners is a lead investor in the '*Find It Fix It Prevent It*' programme which brings together investors, academics and non-governmental organisations to help end modern slavery. Across our equity investments we screen potential investee businesses for forced labour issues, we engage with companies to improve practices and we vote against companies who perform poorly in independent assessments of their approach to modern slavery. We also work with the *Clewer Initiative* to support action in the agricultural sector, particularly relating to tenanted businesses on Church Commissioners' land, and we are actively engaged on the emergent issue of modern slavery linked to the seasonal workers scheme in the UK.

The independent Oversight Group that the Church Commissioners has appointed will be issuing a report with recommended actions - to what extent is the Board of the Church Commissioners bound by them?

The Board of the Church Commissioners recognises that trustees are responsible for governing the charity and making decisions about how it should be run. In doing so

they take into account Charity Commission guidance. The Church Commissioners is also committed to listening to those who are expert in this work as part of the response and ensuring that our response is informed by the best available expertise. The Oversight Group comprises experts on impact investing, reparatory frameworks, history, the law and theology, and the Church Commissioners is grateful for their independent expert advice and challenge.

How did you arrive at the sum of £100 million? What methodology did you employ?

The Church Commissioners identified this sum knowing that no amount of money will ever be enough to repair the horrors of the past.

The Church Commissioners' Board wanted to commit a significant and impactful amount financially, while also being confident that it will not impact its ability to honour its existing financial commitments to fund certain aspects of the Church. The Board looked at other institutions with similar histories that had set aside funds in response when considering the level of funding it would make available.

We assessed that £100 million over 9 years was an appropriate figure which would enable us to act in thoughtful and meaningful ways whilst respecting our existing financial commitments and statutory mandate.

The total commitment is equal to approximately 1% of the current endowment fund. The initial £100 million funding commitment over nine-years sits alongside expected total distributions by the Church Commissioners in support of the mission and ministry of the Church of England of £3.6 billion over the same period (representing about 3% of these total distributions). The Oversight Group have recommended accelerating the rate of investment so that the £100m is deployed in a five-year period. We will continue to honour our funding commitments to the Church while exploring how best to accelerate the deployment of the £100m, which will still span three triennia funding periods.

The ultimate ambition is that the impact investment fund will hopefully grow in perpetuity and establish a lasting positive legacy for a wide range of communities. There is also potential for other institutions to participate, further enabling growth in the size and impact of the fund.

What will the money be spent on?

The Board is working with an independent Oversight Group to advise and guide us in how to shape and deliver the response, including how the funding will be invested. The money will be invested in a global impact fund and grant funding within communities. We are committed to ensuring that communities most impacted by the legacy of transatlantic chattel slavery will be at the heart of our work.

How are you ensuring that the voices and interests of those impacted by the legacy of Transatlantic Chattel Slavery have been consulted, heard and acted upon?

The appointment of an independent Oversight Group, with a material element of its membership from those who are expert in the historic legacies of transatlantic chattel slavery has been an important step towards this.

In October 2023, the Commissioners hosted a range of engagement events which were designed to gain input from stakeholders of communities impacted by the legacy of Transatlantic Chattel Slavery, as well as launching a global survey targeted at these communities. 1,106 people were involved through these engagement routes. The insight gained through this has been invaluable and will inform the Church Commissioners' response. The future of this work will continue to be informed by communities impacted by the legacy of Transatlantic chattel slavery.

How will the fund work?

The primary aim is that the fund achieves impact through investments, and it is hoped that these investments will enable the fund to grow over time, leaving a lasting positive legacy, as well as enabling a programme of grant-making.

The Oversight Group's recommendations will be used to help guide the type of investments the new impact fund will make, and the type of grants it may give in the future.

How can I apply for a grant from the fund?

We are aiming to establish the fund in 2024. We are very keen to take sufficient time to do this, working closely with the Oversight Group, and anticipate that this will take some months.

Once we have more information, we will communicate this via our website.

Why are the Church Commissioners putting forward such a small amount of money relative to its total endowment?

The Church Commissioners recognise that no amount of money will ever be enough to address the impact of their involvement in transatlantic chattel slavery.

The Church Commissioners sees the £100m as a seed investment. We will be seeking to attract other organisations and institutions to join us or take similar investing actions of their own so that the ultimate size of the endowment is materially larger in seeking to make a lasting impact.

The Church Commissioners is hoping that this fund will grow over time, and that we will inspire others to act.

Why aren't the Church Commissioners concerned about Africa and the consequences of the transatlantic chattel slave trade for that continent?

Through the Anglican Communion, the Church Commissioners has proactively engaged with partners in Africa, with the Chief Executive, Deputy Chair and First Church Estates Commissioner visiting Ghana in February 2023, and the Archbishop of the Church of The Province of West Africa visiting the Deputy Chair and project team in October 2023.

The Church Commissioners are not experts on the history or impact of transatlantic chattel slavery worldwide. They are being advised by an independent Oversight Group who have proposed a global model for the response that is created with this context in mind.

Why is the Church Commissioners concerned about Africa? Didn't African people sell their own people?

The Church Commissioners are not experts on the history or impact of transatlantic chattel slavery worldwide. They are being advised by an independent Oversight Group who have proposed a global model for the response. The intention of the Church Commissioners is to act in a reconciliatory way, creating a fairer future for all.

Why aren't you spending this money on the Church, especially when church attendance is falling?

The endowment that the Church Commissioners manage on behalf of the Church of England is an in-perpetuity endowment fund that provides funding to support the mission and ministry of the Church of England, including funding for parishes and dioceses in the poorest areas and initiatives to support church growth. The Church Commissioners have committed to a 30% increase in funding for the Church between 2023-25, a total £1.2 billion of funding.

The £100 million funding sits alongside expected total distributions by the Church Commissioners in support of the mission and ministry of the Church of England of £3.6 billion over three triennia funding periods, representing about 3% of these total distributions.

Where church attendance is concerned, there are many reviews and studies which show that the Church is not always seen as a safe and inclusive space for UK minority ethnic worshippers. Visibly demonstrating that the Church of England is for all will help to make it more relevant to more people across our nation and support an increase in both the number and diversity of worshippers. That everyone is welcome in his Church is something that Jesus was at pains to point out was essential. We can support this

through taking responsibility for past involvement in the degradation of fellow humans - the need for us to do this is critical to many from communities who have not previously seen us do this in a way that is meaningful to them.

We believe that by addressing our past transparently, particularly this part of our past, the Church and its teachings will be more relevant to more people. We see our response as an important missional activity that will support the work and ministry of the Church of England in England.

Do you need to seek General Synod's approval for your actions?

The Church Commissioners' Board of Trustees has legal responsibility for decision-making that we must fulfil, taking into account Charity Commission guidance. The Church Commissioners is not legally bound to gain Synod's approval for their research and response relating to transatlantic chattel slavery. However, we recognise the importance of consulting with our beneficiaries and as important stakeholders for this work, and we were pleased to present an update to Synod in February 2024 and the questions asked following that presentation have been valuable in helping us think about our implementation plans. We are hoping to run fringe sessions at July Synod to gain more input from Synod members.

Will you be spending money in Africa and the Caribbean?

We are hoping to be able to create a global investment fund and grant programme that will include Africa and the Caribbean.

Why did the Church Commissioners only look into the origins of their own fund? Why didn't they look into the whole of the Church of England's involvement in transatlantic chattel slavery?

The Church Commissioners is responsible for the ethical investment of the Church of England's historical endowment fund. Given this responsibility, the fund – how it was originated, funded and invested – has been the focus of the Church Commissioners' research. The Church of England is made up of thousands of separate charitable organisations and is not one body from a legal and corporate perspective, and so the Commissioners is not able nor legally authorised or empowered to investigate all of these separate entities.

In our original research report we highlighted some of the documents we discovered when carrying out our work related to other areas and institutions across the Church of England, with a view to encouraging those other areas to look into it. We believe that we have already seen examples of others across the Church of England and the Anglican

Communion beginning to act as a result of the publication of the Church Commissioners' report.

As part of our response, we seek to inspire and facilitate further research, including supporting dioceses and parishes to research and address their historic links with transatlantic chattel slavery, and sharing best practice with other organisations researching their slavery legacies. We have also received recommendations from the Oversight Group which relate to wider research which seeks to tell the full story of the Church Commissioners and the Church of England's involvement in transatlantic chattel slavery.