

Paper 13

Legacies of Slavery – proposals for repairing justice

Mission Committee

Basic information

Contact name and email address	Sarah Lane Cawte, Convenor of URC Mission Committee slanecawte@gmail.com Karen Campbell, Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries karen.campbell@urc.org.uk
Action required	Discussion and decision.
Draft resolution(s)	Resolution 32 1. General Assembly resolves that anti-racism training should become mandatory for specific groups and individuals who occupy positions of leadership and influence within the URC. This includes, but is not limited to, the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Officers of the General Assembly• The General Secretariat• Staff Secretaries• Assembly Committee Convenors and Secretaries• Synod Moderators• Synod Clerks• Members of the Panel for General Assembly appointments• Members of the Assessment board• The Assembly Standing Panel on Discipline• The Disciplinary Investigation Panel• The Commission Panel• The Disciplinary Appeals Commission List• The CYDO+ Team• Synod Racial Justice Coordinators and Advocates (RJAs)• Active Ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers (Categories 1, 2, 5 and 8 as defined in the Active Ministers Policy, Paper H5 Assembly Executive 2021)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members of Assembly Committees and Advisory Groups • Training and Development Officers (TD+ Network) • Synod Mission Enablers. <p>Resolution 33</p> <p>2. General Assembly asks the Legacies of Slavery Task Group to work with the Ministries and Education and Learning Departments to explore how and when anti-racism training can be rolled out more widely in the URC, particularly to include those roles defined as URC Office holders.</p> <p>Resolution 34</p> <p>3. General Assembly endorses the schedule and timetable of mandatory anti-racism training outlined in the Legacies of Slavery Task Group report and agrees an initial budget of up to £20,000 to meet the cost of training sessions and related expenses up to General Assembly 2024.</p> <p>Resolution 35</p> <p>4. General Assembly recognises that further funds will be required as the anti-racism training is rolled out more widely, and asks the Legacies of Slavery Task Group to bring updated costings to General Assembly 2024 informed by the actual costs incurred in delivering the early stages of the training.</p> <p>Resolution 36</p> <p>5. General Assembly endorses the work of the Legacies of Slavery Task Group, the direction of travel outlined in the task group’s report, and asks the task group to continue its exploration of regional and global proposals, aiming to bring costed proposals to General Assembly 2024.</p> <p>Resolution 37</p> <p>6. General Assembly asks Mission Committee to maintain the existence of a Legacies of Slavery Task Group to steer the future work as outlined in the task group report.</p>
--	--

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	Update on the work of the Legacies of Slavery Task Group. Adoption of resolutions arising from this work.
---------------------------	---

Main points	General Assembly is asked to make anti-racism training mandatory for specific groups within the Church; to endorse a proposed schedule of anti-racism training to be delivered from early 2024; and to endorse the task group’s proposals for repairing justice at local, regional and global levels.
Previous relevant documents	<p>Healing: Hope in Action – Mission Committee Paper, Sept 2019 LoS Consultation Documents 2021/2022 Paper E1, Affirmative action towards an anti-racist Church (Equalities Committee) - General Assembly 2022.</p> <p>Various past resolutions, including: From ‘Not Racist’ to Anti-Racist – Mission Council November 2020 URC statement of Confession and Apology regarding the legacies of transatlantic slavery (2022) General Assembly commitment to concrete acts of repairing justice in response to the continuing legacies of transatlantic slavery (2022).</p>
Consultation has taken place with...	<p>The Positive Action Task Group Members of the CYDO+ Team The Finance Committee The General Secretary The Deputy General Secretary, Mission The Mission Committee The Equalities Committee The Secretary for Education and Learning The Secretary for Ministries The Synod Moderators Cascades of Grace The Training Officer for the Ministerial Incapacity and Discipline Process The Head of Children’s and Youth Work.</p> <p>Prof Anthony Reddie – renowned theologian, and expert in the field of anti-racism training.</p> <p>Various ecumenical partners, including colleagues in The Methodist Church, The Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Racial Justice Advocacy Forum and Churches Together in Britain and Ireland.</p>

Summary of impact

Financial	£20,000 to be budgeted for expenditure in the period up to General Assembly 2024, with further funds to be committed from General Assembly 2024. The Finance Committee has been specifically consulted.
External (eg ecumenical)	Our main ecumenical partners are all engaged in similar or related work concerning racial justice in general, and addressing the legacies of transatlantic slavery in particular –

	<p>including the need for reparative justice. Close ecumenical partners, including The Methodist Church and The Baptist Union of Great Britain, are seeking to learn from the URC's legacies of slavery (LoS) journey. In response to the task group's work, the URC Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries was invited to join a panel exploring possibilities for reparations by The Methodist Church. Through the Secretary, the URC is also contributing to LoS and reparations round table conversations hosted by CWM Europe.</p>
--	--

Report of the Legacies of Slavery Task Group for General Assembly 2023

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In 2022, General Assembly adopted a statement of Confession and Apology regarding transatlantic slavery and its continuing legacies. In addition, Assembly affirmed its “commitment to practical actions to address the continuing negative impacts of the legacies of transatlantic slavery on Black communities in the UK, the Caribbean and Africa”, and instructed the Legacies of Slavery (LoS) Task Group “to bring concrete and costed proposals to General Assembly 2023 for a considered programme of repairing justice”.
- 1.2 The task group has continued to meet to consider the actions which might be undertaken by the URC. It has been supplemented by two members of the CYDO+ team, demonstrating the commitment to ensure an intergenerational perspective on the URC's LoS journey. The group has also included two members of the Positive Action Task Group, helping to ensure a joined-up approach to areas of work previously endorsed by General Assembly. It has reviewed the LoS Consultation responses to identify emerging themes, and has consulted with individuals and groups both within and beyond the URC.
- 1.3 There is no question that the continuing racist legacies of transatlantic slavery have immeasurable negative social and financial impacts on Black communities both in the UK and around the globe. The task group has been equally clear that the URC's repairing justice response must be “costly” – in terms of money and impact – to demonstrate that our statement of Confession and Apology is truly meaningful. We cannot commit only to what we think we can easily afford – but must be bold in our commitment to justice and ‘putting right’ that which we know to be wrong. That said, the imperative for costly action has been held in tension with the need for any proposals to be realistic and possible for a church of our size.

2. What has emerged?

- 2.1 Three main proposals have emerged from the task group's work, seeking to address the legacies of transatlantic slavery at three ‘different levels’:
 - Local – within the body of the URC

- Regional – in different geographic locations within the UK which have a specific historic connection with transatlantic slavery, and
- Global - working with our partners in/through the Council for World Mission (CWM) to support initiatives identified by churches in the Caribbean and Africa, or to develop joint initiatives with them.

While the task group is proposing that all of these are actioned, it has not been possible to properly research and cost all the proposals in time for General Assembly 2023. The group believes it is better to walk slowly, and thereby successfully reach the desired destination, than to race ahead without properly preparing for the journey. It is with this in mind that the task group outlines all three proposals in the paragraphs below, but with only one being recommended for immediate action. It is suggested that all proposals form part of a five-year plan, starting from Assembly 2023.

3. Local proposal: Mandatory anti-racism training – to be actioned from General Assembly 2023

- 3.1 Matthew 7:3-5 advises that we remove the log from our own eye to see clearly to remove the speck from our neighbour's eye.
- 3.2 Racism is a persistent, daunting and unacceptable reality in our world. That said, it is too easy for the Church to look out and critique the world beyond itself without addressing the issues within its own body. The LoS Task Group was very clear that the URC's starting point for actions of repairing justice must be to put our own house in order – even before and while seeking to comment on the world around us. The Legacies of Slavery Consultation and the subsequent Synod conversations highlighted that many people in our Church are painfully aware of the racial inequalities within the URC; some are on a journey of discomforting realisation; too many others are in complete and even hostile denial that any issues exist. Repeatedly, the task group has heard the view that we need to elicit a culture change within our Church if we are to build a more equitable future for all. The recommendation for anti-racism training to be implemented across our Church, and for such training to be mandatory for specific post holders and employees within the Church, is a first step in seeking to kick-start that culture change, and brings concrete action to our 2021 commitment to journey from “not racist” to “actively anti-racist”.
- 3.3 Working in partnership, the LoS Task Group (Mission Committee) and the Positive Action Task Group (Equalities Committee) are recommending the introduction of mandatory anti-racism training for specific groups and individuals who occupy positions of leadership and influence within the URC. The training will seek to open eyes, to make us more aware of the racist structures around us, and the racist norms and assumptions which inadvertently influence the ways we think and operate. Effective training will move us to question “the way things are done round here” in every sphere of URC life, and to implement changes as necessary

to elicit more equitable ways of doing and being: This *is* the movement from not racist to anti-racist.

- 3.4 Representatives from both task groups met with Prof Anthony Reddie, a renowned theologian, author, and expert in the field of anti-racism training from a specifically Christian theological perspective, to discuss what is needed. All parties recommend that the training should be in depth and in-person, with the first round of training being delivered by Prof Reddie and starting in early 2024. This will accommodate Prof Reddie's autumn sabbatical and give time to organise and advertise the sessions. The sessions will be held at regional centres around the UK, seeking to secure venues relatively near to where attendees live.
- 3.5 The task groups further recommend that the training should begin with the following groups (recognising many people will fall in more than one category, but will be required to be trained only once):
- The Officers of General Assembly
 - The General Secretariat
 - Staff Secretaries
 - Assembly Committee Convenors and Secretaries
 - Synod Moderators
 - Synod Clerks
 - Members of the Panel for General Assembly appointments
 - Members of the Assessment board
 - The Assembly Standing Panel on Discipline
 - The Disciplinary Investigation Panel
 - The Commission Panel
 - The Disciplinary Appeals Commission List
 - Synod Training & Development Officers (TD+ Network)
 - Synod Racial Justice Coordinators and Advocates (RJAs).
- 3.6 There will be an ongoing process of honing and adapting in light of feedback from these groups to shape a finalised training programme to be delivered more widely across the Church over the next few years. The Synod TD+ Network and RJAs will be specifically trained to join in delivering the anti-racism training, although there is no presumption that all of these individuals will feel comfortable or equipped to take on this very specific task.
- 3.7 The LoS and Positive Action Task Groups propose that further rounds of in-person training should be rolled out as soon as practical, and include:
- The CYDO+ Team
 - Members of Assembly Committees and Advisory Groups
 - Synod Mission Enablers
 - Active Ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers (Categories 1,2,5,8 as defined in the Active Ministers Policy 2021).

They further propose to work with the Ministries and Education and Learning Departments to explore how anti-racism training can be extended more widely across the URC, and specifically include individuals in roles defined as URC Office holders.

- 3.8 The task groups have considered the challenges of achieving in-person training for so many people, and are also conscious of the weight of mandated training which may be faced by ministers serving in ecumenical partnerships. Even so, the task groups recommend that, as a benchmark, the URC's anti-racism training should be mandatory and in-person for the cohorts named above, with alternative options explored on an as needed basis.
- 3.9 The task groups are also mindful of the work of the Church Life Review Group, and the prospect of significant structural changes being implemented in the Church before the work outlined above reaches completion. The groups are confident that the proposals are flexible enough to be adapted as necessary.

4. Regional proposal: Mentoring and pioneer ministry – to be further developed

- 4.1 The LoS Consultation responses highlighted a need for work with young Black men in particular, who are disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system. Mentoring was cited as a specific, positive means of intervention.
- 4.2 The LoS task group has researched existing mentoring projects in a number of UK cities which have specific links with transatlantic slavery, in locations spanning Scotland, England, and Wales. Members of the group are having conversations with a number of these projects to explore how the URC might offer meaningful support beyond simply 'making a donation'. Ideas include pairing the project with a local URC to establish an ongoing point of contact, prayer and support, and possibly using the URC building to host aspects of the project's work.
- 4.3 The task group is proposing the development of a small network of regional pioneers – one person to be located in each of the four identified local churches – who will work in partnership with the church, the mentoring project, and with each other, to develop wider and joined-up work across the UK.

5. Global proposal: Work with global partners with and through the Council for World Mission (CWM) – to be further developed

- 5.1 This work is still at a fledgling stage. The task group has made contact with the new CWM Mission Secretary for Europe, who is keen to work with the URC to explore possible repairing justice initiatives. The task group was delighted to be contacted by the Revd Dr Gordon Cowans, former Moderator of the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands (UCJCI), and current Chair of the UCJCI Reparations Task Force. The Revd Cowans warmly commended the URC's Statement of Confession and Apology, and is keen for us to work together

in developing appropriate initiatives. The LoS Task Group will be engaging more closely with CWM and the UCJCI during the coming year.

6. Looking to the future

- 6.1 Members of the present group propose that General Assembly asks Mission Committee to maintain the existence of a Legacies of Slavery Task Group to steer the future work outlined in this report, albeit recognising that some changes of personnel may be necessary in the light of members' other commitments.
- 6.2 The current task group commends this report to General Assembly, and would welcome General Assembly's endorsement of the work to date, and the proposals detailed here.