

Paper B7

Legacies of Slavery – Affirming the Will & Finding the Way(s)

Faith in Action

Basic information

Contact name and email address	Sarah Lane Cawte, Convenor of Faith in Action Committee slanecawte@gmail.com Karen Campbell, Head of Global & Intercultural Church karen.campbell@urc.org.uk
Action required	Discussion and decision
Draft resolution(s)	<p>Resolution 12 General Assembly adopts the specific three-strand Repairing Justice proposals offered by the Legacies of Slavery Task Group</p> <p>Resolution 13 General Assembly adopts the allocation of monies from the Legacies of Slavery Fund in the following proportions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Up to 30% to be apportioned to the regional strand• A minimum of 60% to be apportioned to the Global strand – including, but not limited to, the development of New Free Villages in Jamaica. <p>Resolution 14 General Assembly instructs the Legacies of Slavery Task Group to continue its work establishing partnerships both in the UK and globally to be resourced by the URC Legacies of Slavery Fund.</p> <p>Resolution 15 General Assembly delegates the authority to determine specific funding allocations for each project to the Faith in Action Committee, to be advised by the Legacies of Slavery Task Group, bringing updates to General Assembly via the usual reporting processes.</p> <p>Resolution 16 General Assembly instructs the Legacies of Slavery Task Group to work with the Senior Leadership Team, the Legal</p>

	Advisor, The United Reformed Church Trust and other relevant bodies as necessary to ensure that appropriate governance and safeguarding structures are in place to honour the URC's fiduciary responsibilities.
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Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	<p>A report from the URC's Legacies of Slavery Task Group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing a timeline of the URC's Legacies of Slavery journey to help us understand the present, reaffirm our commitment to the practical out-working of the 2022 URC statement of Confession and Apology, and propose possibilities to enable our responses to continue and flourish. • Addressing concerns about the legality of the Legacies of Slavery Fund, established after endorsement by General Assembly 2024. • Seeking a mandate for the Legacies of Slavery Task Group to continue its work, with oversight from the Faith in Action Committee, without needing to return to future General Assemblies for 'permission' to do the work with which it has been tasked.
Main points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An update as to where we are regarding the three-strand 'repairing justice' proposals presented to successive General Assemblies since 2022. • An update about the Legacies of Slavery Fund. • Addressing concerns about the legality of contributing funds into the Legacies of Slavery Fund (ie does this fall within our charitable aims?), and concerns about lines of accountability – including a response from the Law and Polity Advisory Group.
Previous relevant documents	<p>Paper I1: Mission Committee Report to General Assembly 2025</p> <p>Paper I4, Legacies of Slavery – acts of repairing justice: progress report – General Assembly 2024</p> <p>Paper I3: Legacies of Slavery – proposals for repairing justice, General Assembly 2023</p> <p>Paper I6: Legacies of (transatlantic) Slavery - General Assembly 2022</p> <p>Paper E1: Affirmative action towards an anti-racist Church (Equalities Committee) - General Assembly 2022</p> <p>From 'Not Racist' to Anti-Racist – Mission Council November 2020</p> <p>Healing: Hope in Action – Mission Council, November 2019</p>

Consultation has taken place with...	The Senior Leadership Team; General Secretary; DGS Ministries; Synod Moderators; Chief Finance Officer; Resources Committee; Law & Polity Advisory group; URC Legal Advisor; Revd Ron Nathan (Consultant)
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Summary of impact

Financial	Giving confidence to synods to contribute to the Legacies of Slavery Fund; continued commitment of central funds to cascade anti-racism training to all active ministers.
External (eg ecumenical)	Enabling partnerships to be initiated and/or further developed in the UK and globally. Four mentoring projects to be initiated/supported in the UK – impacting the partners themselves plus their local contexts. In Jamaica – homes being provided for people who have no other means of securing properties and enabling the potential for wealth production to foster long-term stability. Our progress is watched by and impacts the journeys of various ecumenical partners including the Methodist Church, Church of Scotland, Racial Justice Advocacy Forum.

Legacies of Slavery: Affirming the Will and Finding the Way(s)

It is now four years since General Assembly adopted the URC statement of Confession and Apology concerning the legacies of transatlantic slavery. Much has happened in the ensuing period — not all of which has been immediately visible. Indeed, not everyone is aware of the journey which led to General Assembly 2022. This paper seeks to:

- remind us of the journey we have been on
- help us understand the present
- reaffirm our commitment to the practical out-working of the URC Apology
- propose possibilities to enable our responses to continue and flourish.

1. The URC Journey

Below is a broad timeline of key dates and developments in the URC's Legacies of Slavery (LoS) journey. It does not seek to capture everything — much of which has already been reported to previous General Assemblies by way of proposal and update papers drafted by the evolving LoS Task Group since its inception in 2019. Neither does the timeline start at the beginning of our journey; there have been individuals aware of the need for this work long before our focussed engagement began. Of particular note is the late Revd Dr Peter Cruchley, a URC Minister working with the Council for World Mission (CWM) — the driving force behind CWM's Legacies of Slavery Project which became the spur for the URC's own focussed engagement.

2017 Launch of CWM's Legacies of Slavery Project. The project sought to engage with the history of transatlantic slavery particularly pertaining to the

Church, uncover the hidden/untold histories, and recognise and address the legacies which continue to impact Black communities today.

- 2018 CWM project report published. CWM sought to engage with its own past, while member churches were encouraged to engage with their respective histories and contexts.
- 2019 URC LoS Task Group formed under the remit of the Mission Committee, to engage with the CWM report, and consider the URC response under three headings: Apology; Reparations; White Privilege.
Task Group report, 'Healing: Hope in Action', recommended that the URC should make an apology; should offer reparations, and should actively seek to address and dismantle the phenomenon of 'white privilege' in our Church and communities. The report was received by Mission Council, autumn 2019, with a request for further consultation.
- 2020 COVID; George Floyd's murder; Black Lives Matter.
URC's public statement following George Floyd's murder led to exploration of the question 'Do Black Lives Matter in the URC?'
URC commitment to journey from 'not racist' to becoming actively 'anti-racist' (Mission Council, November 2020)
- 2021 LoS Task Group begins a URC-wide consultation, including presentations and discussion at synod meetings and other gatherings. Individual and group responses received, collated, and publicised.
- 2022 General Assembly adopts statement of Confession and Apology regarding transatlantic slavery and its continuing legacies.
General Assembly commits to acts of repairing justice; concrete and costed proposals to be brought to Assembly 2023.
Revd Dr Gordon Cowans — United Church of Jamaica and the Cayman Islands (UCJCI), and Churches' Reparations Action Forum (CRAF) — reaches out to accept the apology and offers to partner with us on repairing justice.
- 2023 Three-strand 'repairing justice' proposals presented to General Assembly:
Local (within the URC) — anti-racism training;
Regional (across the URC/UK) — Mentoring of young Black men;
Global — working with global partners to address areas of work identified by them.
Assembly mandates anti-racism training for specific colleagues/roles, to be funded centrally. Professor Anthony Reddie engaged to deliver the training.
LoS Task Group asked to continue its work, aiming to bring costed proposals for regional and global strands to GA 2024.

- 2024 URC participation in ecumenical pilgrimage to Jamaica to further the CRAF partnership with particular focus on New Free Villages. General Assembly Moderator, the Revd Dr Tessa Henry-Robinson, delivers the URC apology, in person, in Jamaica. UCJCI Moderator, Revd Gary Harriot, accepts the Apology and pledges church-owned land as UCJCI's input to development of New Free Villages.
General Assembly agrees creation of URC Legacies of Slavery Fund to finance regional and global strands. Initial input of £250k from central funds with synods invited to input as they feel led.
- 2025 LoS Regional Sub-Group begins work with independent Consultant — the Revd Ron Nathan
Standing Together Programme (in partnership with the Synergy Network) — a week-long initiative exploring serious youth violence and creative church/faitH-based responses. Relationships and insights feeding into regional proposals.

2. So, where are we up to?

a. Local: Anti-Racism Training

Sessions organised by the Global & Intercultural Ministries team (now Global & Intercultural Church) and delivered by Professor Anthony Reddie took place throughout much of 2024, with a limited number in 2025. Most of the postholders and groups mandated to receive the training have been reached (see Appendix 2), with the exception of 'Active Ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers', with focus now shifting to those roles. Feedback reflects wide agreement that sessions were generally 'not what I expected' — but all the better for that fact. Considerable thought has been given to how the training might be cascaded to reach all active URC ministers, and other colleagues who occupy key roles, or have significant points of engagement with local churches — such as interim moderators, accredited lay preachers, elders, etc. Initial focus was on developing a resource which is denominationally produced and locally delivered. Following conversations with Synod Moderators and consultation with the Senior Leadership Team, it has been decided that we ask Professor Reddie to complete the rollout of anti-racism training to active ministers, delivering a minimum of one session in each Synod. Thought is being given to follow-up 'refresher' sessions to ensure the learning points become embedded in what we do, and how we do it.

The Head of Global & Intercultural Church (GIC) will work with the Deputy General Secretary (Ministries) to ensure the successful rollout to ministers. The LoS Task Group/GIC will continue work on developing the denominational resource to be used locally for congregations and church groups.
(See Appendix 1 for the current task group membership.)

b. Regional: Mentoring of young Black men

In 2025, the Regional Sub-Group engaged the services of the Revd Ron Nathan as an Independent Consultant. Revd Nathan brings a wealth of relevant experience, including the areas of establishing governance structures, lines of accountability, and sustainable partnership working. He has created a roadmap for bringing each of the proposed projects from concept to fruition over a 24-month period, including strategies for oversight, management, evaluation, and shared learning. The sub-group, accompanied by Revd Nathan, is exploring an exciting potential partnership with a London-based, Black-led charitable organisation engaged in early intervention, mentoring, and support, primarily reaching young Black men. If this comes to fruition, further projects will be explored in Wales, Scotland and the north of England (4 projects in total). In each case, conversations will be sought with the respective synods as part of the decision-making process to foster ownership of the emerging project.

The task group proposes that the projects, as they develop, will relate to the Faith in Action Committee via Global & Intercultural Church, with in-person updates by invitation, and less frequent updates to General Assembly as helpful.

An application has been submitted to CWM's 'The Onesimus Project' (TOP) towards funding of the mentoring proposals. If successful, this could attract up to £100k. (We anticipate receiving a decision by the time General Assembly meets.)

c. Global: CRAF and New Free Villages

Our partnership with the Church Reparations Action Forum (CRAF) has particular emphasis on the creation of New Free Villages, addressing the situation in which 30% of Jamaica's population are classed as squatters. The work will see the Church in Jamaica and the UK each engaging with the legacies of slavery as pertains to them — the Jamaican Church (initially the UCJCI) offering land inherited as a legacy of slavery and colonisation on which the villages will be built, the URC contributing resources towards the development and construction. Prospective residents will be allocated housing, modest but resilient, each with a small plot of land, offering the possibility of growing food and generating income. It is intended that each village will be overseen by a local management group and include residents from a mixture of economic backgrounds. While this work was already urgent, the devastation wrought by Hurricane Melissa has exposed and exacerbated the underlying issues of housing poverty (both quantity and quality), food poverty, financial poverty, and more. It is *because* of these ingrained legacies that Melissa was able to wreak such havoc. The hurricane highlighted that the work is even more urgent than previously recognised.

The CRAF construction plans are being revisited in the wake of the hurricane. Research into 'Melissa-proof' construction and its costs is ongoing — currently estimated at £5m for each village of 40 dwellings, housing an estimated 120 residents. The National Housing Trust, the public sector body charged with increasing Jamaica's housing stock, will be approached to collaborate in the design process and provide potential funding options for eventual recipients to develop and possibly expand their new homes.

3. Resourcing the journey

a. The Legacies of Slavery Fund

When General Assembly adopted the URC Statement of Confession and Apology in 2022, this was accompanied by an 'in principle' commitment to acts of repairing justice. Assembly 2023 endorsed the rollout of mandatory anti-racism training and asked the task group to continue exploring regional and global proposals, aiming to bring costed proposals to Assembly 2024. Conversations in light of the budget deficit revealed that no funds had been allocated to finance any regional or global proposals. Further conversations with the URC Treasurer and Chief Finance Officer led to the creation of the URC Legacies of Slavery Fund, endorsed by General Assembly 2024. The Fund was started with a £250k input from central funds, with synods invited to contribute as they felt able, seeking to resource the work and encourage whole-Church ownership. The Fund currently stands at £1,133, 524.34, with £875k having been contributed by synods. Further monies have been pledged but not yet received. The LoS Task Group wishes to thank all synods which have contributed. We also offer sincere thanks to Avenue St Andrews URC, Wessex, for their contribution — the proceeds from a Communion offering. While the fund necessarily seeks to resource our repairing justice commitment, we are very clear that the underlying issue *is not* 'money'. It is not the size of the contribution that essentially matters but offering what we can to make a difference. We point to the biblical examples of the feeding of the 5,000, and Jesus' affirmation of the widow's mite.

b. Fiduciary and governance concerns: Does the Church have the legal power to make donations to the Fund?

This concern has been heard and taken seriously, with the Law and Polity Advisory Group (LPAG) offering the following response:

"There have been questions raised in some quarters about the Church's power to make donations to the Legacy of Slavery Fund. The Law and Polity Review Group has been asked to express an opinion.

The key question is whether such donations align with the charitable purposes of the funds. In this case, the Legacy of Slavery Fund advances the Christian faith in accordance with the principles and practices of the United Reformed Church (URC), which is consistent with the charitable objectives of the general funds. These purposes apply across synods. Furthermore, the General Assembly has endorsed this initiative, and as the body responsible for defining the URC's principles and usages, its support reinforces the legitimacy of this allocation.

The URC's charitable purposes include ancillary purposes which extend beyond worship to include visible and practical expressions of Christ's love in the world. The Legacy of Slavery Fund, as described, supports charitable work (that is, charitable according to the law of England and Wales or Scotland, as the case may be) internationally.

The only caveat is regulatory: trustees must ensure that funds sent abroad are used for their intended charitable purposes, but there are several guidance notes issued by the Charity Commission to help the trustees of the Fund apply the funds safely. The Group offers this guidance robustly and confidently.”

The Chief Finance Officer has further clarified that the LoS Fund is designated as a restricted fund and needs the permission of the Faith in Action Committee for payments up to £5,000, and authorisation from the Business Committee for expenditure greater than £5,000, as per Paper A1, Assembly Executive February 2026.

The LoS Task Group deeply appreciates the consideration given by Law Polity and Advisory Group (LPAG) and the Chief Finance Officer and recognises the need for appropriate oversight of the Fund. At the same time, the task group feels compelled to remind the whole URC that the LoS Fund *is not* about ‘charity’, or what will be done with ‘our money’. The establishment of the fund was always intended as an outworking of our Apology — an act of ‘giving back’ or releasing, acknowledging that something is in our hands which rightfully belongs elsewhere. This understanding is central to the principle of repairing justice, with the story of Zacchaeus providing a biblical underpinning for this approach. We need to exercise a light touch, holding the fund only as tightly as enables us to practice release by letting it go. As Revd Dr Collin Cowan (CRAF Principal) reminds us: Jamaica and the UK are two sides of a shared history; a relationship broken by the sin of slavery, which denied the human dignity of one for the gain of the other. Reparations (or repairing justice) is about restoring dignity, agency, getting out of the way so people can determine the best paths for themselves. We can walk the path with them, alongside them — by invitation, but we should never act in ways which dictate or restrict their path. And if, or when, they might go wrong, let’s lament with them — without judgment — remembering this work is made necessary by the wrongs of our forebears which we have so far failed to put right, and there are times when we still go wrong today.

c. Funding and Accountability

- Local: Anti-Racism Training — costs of the training for those for whom it is mandatory will continue to be met centrally, and the work overseen by GIC and Ministries.
- Regional: Mentoring of young black men — this will be part-funded by a grant from CWM’s The Onesimus Project (should our application be successful), and part from the URC LoS Fund. Independent Consultant, Revd Ron Nathan, has a specific brief to help develop appropriate governance structures with prospective partners. While it is intended that the regional work will include supporting ‘start-up’ initiatives, the task group is currently exploring a relationship with an established charitable organisation – starting with ‘low-hanging fruit’ while remaining open to more challenging options down the line.
- Global: CRAF Partnership — the New Free Villages initiative ‘belongs’ to CRAF and the Jamaican people. While monies released from the URC LoS Fund will contribute to resourcing the construction of the villages, the homes developed will belong to and

be maintained by partners in Jamaica. CRAF is a registered charity in Jamaica, with close links to the UCJCI, and will ensure compliance with relevant Jamaican regulations. There is no intention of any ongoing legal or management responsibility for the URC once a village comes to fruition — although it is hoped we will retain the friendships developed through our partnership working.

4. Affirming the Will and Finding the Way

The LoS task group is well aware that this report presents work very much in progress. At General Assembly 2022, when we first referred to costed proposals being brought the following year, no one foresaw just how complex the journey would necessarily be. There have been many moving parts — all of which the task group has negotiated as effectively as could realistically be expected. The group has evolved according to the emerging contexts, with members learning through engaging. The task group is convened by a long-time member of the URC, and includes URC staff members, two Children's and Youth Development Officers, two Racial Justice Advocates, lay and ordained members, five Black colleagues plus an expert consultant (see Appendix 1). Some of the information the Church would like to have is not yet concrete and, as we have indicated in previous updates, has no definitive answer — but the task group has been travelling the path and feels confident in negotiating the way forward. How much will the mentoring projects cost? We will know that once we confirm the partnerships and respond to the specific dynamics of each context. How much do we propose to contribute to the creation of New Free Villages in Jamaica? This depends on how much we have available to offer; the fund may not yet have reached its final tally — however, we certainly know our contribution will never exceed the sums needed for this work. The task group will continue its conversations with CRAF to explore how we can work together to bring this work to fruition, bringing further specific proposals to future General Assemblies as and when they are clarified. In addition, both the regional and global contributions from the fund will be influenced by whether and how much we receive from our application to CWM.

While the conversations about money may appear somewhat circular, the direction of travel is definite and purposeful. The LoS task group has diligently carried out its work, sometimes at great personal cost to its members for whom this is not just 'another area of work' but relates to their history and life's journey. The commitment to repairing justice is not new but was made in 2022 at the same time that General Assembly adopted the Confession and Apology. The proposals are not new but were brought to General Assembly in 2023 (Anti-Racism Training; Mentoring), 2024 (proposals regarding the partnership with CRAF), and there have been ongoing updates at every stage. The aim of this report is to ask General Assembly to formally endorse the work of the task group of which Assembly is already aware — and, indeed, requested, and entrust the task group to bring that work to fruition as it engages with existing and prospective partners in consultation with the URC's legal advisor, LPAG, and other bodies as might be necessary to ensure we honour our fiduciary responsibilities. In short, once Assembly affirms its will, those entrusted to do so will find the way(s).

This work is important, as underscored by the recent UN resolution declaring transatlantic slavery to be ‘the gravest crime against humanity’ (March 2026). It matters to the Black communities in the UK and beyond who bear the ongoing wounds of that crime, have seen our Apology, and await our promised actions. It matters to CRAF who never fail to champion our efforts — and to our ecumenical partners who look to our work as a point of reference and encouragement for their own engagement. This is an invitation for us to finish what we have started – and it matters that we do so.

5. Suggested Reading

A lot of material has been written concerning the Legacies of Transatlantic Slavery and the call for reparations and reparative justice. Particularly accessible for enabling personal/local church reflection are:

- We Will Repay — <https://ctbi.org.uk/resources/we-will-repay-bible-study/>
- Faith in Repair — a Christian Aid resource. (A weblink/access information will be sourced by the time General Assembly meets.)

6. What are we asking of General Assembly?

The Faith in Action Committee proposes the following resolutions:

1. General Assembly adopts the specific three-strand Repairing Justice proposals offered by the Legacies of Slavery Task Group.
2. General Assembly adopts the allocation of monies from the Legacies of Slavery Fund in the following proportions:
 - Up to 30% to be apportioned to the Regional strand
 - A minimum of 60% to be apportioned to the Global strand — including, but not limited to, the development of New Free Villages in Jamaica.
3. General Assembly instructs the Legacies of Slavery Task Group to continue its work establishing partnerships both in the UK and globally to be resourced by the URC Legacies of Slavery Fund.
4. General Assembly delegates the authority to determine specific funding allocations for each project to the Faith in Action Committee, to be advised by the Legacies of Slavery Task Group, bringing updates to General Assembly via the usual reporting processes.
5. General Assembly instructs the Legacies of Slavery Task Group to work with the Senior Leadership Team, the Legal Advisor, The United Reformed Church Trust and other relevant bodies as necessary to ensure that appropriate governance and safeguarding structures are in place to honour the URC’s fiduciary responsibilities.

Appendix 1: Current members of the Legacies of Slavery Task Group

Professor David Reynolds — Convenor

Karen Campbell — Head of Global & Intercultural Church

Revd Stephen Ansa-Addo

Revd Dr John Campbell (Racial Justice Advocate)

Lindsey Brown — Head of Ecumenical Relations and Evangelism

Revd Zaidie Orr (Racial Justice Advocate)

Veronica Daniel

Lorraine Downer (Children & Youth Development Officer)

Tom Hackett (Children & Youth Development Officer)

Revd Ron Nathan - Independent Consultant

Appendix 2:

Paper I3, GA2023 Legacies of Slavery – proposals for repairing justice

Resolution 32

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:

- 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)
- Members of Assembly Committees and Advisory Groups
- Training and Development Officers (TD+ Network)
- Synod Mission Enablers.