

Healing, support and justice

The facts about the Church Commissioners' work to address links with enslavement.

In 2023, the Church of England Church Commissioners announced a commitment to £100 million of funding, delivered over nine years, to a programme of investment, research and engagement to address some of the past wrongs of the church in relation to transatlantic chattel slavery.

Where will the money for the investment fund come from?

The £100 million is part of the endowment that the Commissioners already manage for pension and investment purposes to support the mission and ministry of the Church of England.

Surely the Church was fundamental in abolishing slavery?

While that is correct, in 2022, the Church of England Church Commissioners learned from research it commissioned that Queen Anne's Bounty had links with transatlantic chattel slavery. Queen Anne's Bounty, a fund set up in 1704 with the aim of tackling poverty amongst Church of England clergy, merged in 1948 with the Ecclesiastical Commissioners to form the Church Commissioners.

The Church Commissioners has said, that while it "recognises the leading role clergy and active members of the Church of England played in securing the abolition of slavery, it is a source of shame that others within the Church actively perpetrated slavery and profited from it."

Is any money that parishioners donate going towards this fund?

None of the money given to a parish church will be used for this fund. It will not be taken from donations via Parish Share, nor will it come from parish income. Every gift made through the collection plate, Parish Giving Scheme, Ways to Give and other means, will go to the intended beneficiary, now and always.

Why are we giving money away when our churches are struggling?

The Church Commissioners is distributing £3.6 billion over eight years to support local parishes and the front-line work and ministry of the Church of England. This is completely separate from the £100 million of funding, over nine years, that is planned to address historic links with enslavement.

Is the fund planned to be £100m or £1 billion?

The £1 billion figure which has been reported is an aspirational amount that the fund may grow to.

The hope is that the £100 million commitment from the Church Commissioners acts as a seed fund and an encouragement for other institutions to invest in. For example, those who may have similar histories to address.

How will the fund operate?

The £100 million of funding, over nine years, is committed to a programme of impact investment for the benefit of communities who are still affected by the practical legacy of African chattel enslavement. Some of it will be used for grants and research, but most of it will be invested to make a profit.

The criteria which the Commissioners will apply in order to make investments from this new fund will change over time, with the aim that the funds are invested to try to make a positive social impact, especially within those communities impacted by historic slavery. 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.

Why do we need to make reparations for something that happened so long ago?

The legacy of slavery impacts the lives of many people in the world today.

Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury says, “The report lays bare the links of the Church Commissioners’ predecessor fund with transatlantic chattel slavery. I am deeply sorry for these links. It is now time to take action to address our shameful past. Only by obeying the command in 1 John 1:6-7 and addressing our past transparently can we take the path that Jesus Christ calls us to walk and face our present and future with integrity. It is hard to do this at a time when resources in many parishes are so stretched, but by acting rightly we open ourselves to the blessing of God.”

Find out more about the fund at hrjfund.org

“If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin.”

John 1:6-7