

# LEGACY OF SLAVERY REPORT

General Assembly 2023

Appendix 1: Summary of Questionnaire responses.



## Appendix 1: Summary of Questionnaire responses.

This appendix contains a summary of the responses to the questionnaire survey sent out to congregations, via Presbyteries, during August and September 2022. In keeping with the privacy notice which accompanied the questionnaire, individual respondents and specific congregations are not named in this analysis.

Responses were received from 82 congregations with a large geographical spread from the Scottish Borders to Orkney (see Fig.1). Responses were received from churches the following presbyteries (presbyteries were self-reported by respondents)

*Lothian, Edinburgh and West Lothian, Perth, Dundee, Kincardine and Deeside, Moray, Orkney, Ross, Locharron-Skye, Lochaber, Argyll, Clyde, Ayr, Dumfries and Kirkcudbright\**



(Fig 1. Approximate locations of responding churches)

There was particularly good representation from the City of Edinburgh. There was a lack of responses from Glasgow churches which is regrettable, as this would have been particularly useful for this research given the connections between the city and the slave trade.

*\*Dumfries and Kirkcudbright is a historic presbytery.*

## Part One

The questions in part one of the questionnaire related to church buildings, their histories and links to historic slavery.

### Q. Are there any historic links to the transatlantic slave trade in the areas that your church serves?

A. 13 churches reported a known historic link with slavery. 36 churches reported no links with slavery and 33 stated that they did not know.

The 13 churches that answered yes to this question gave 14 examples of links to slavery. These links fell into four main categories:

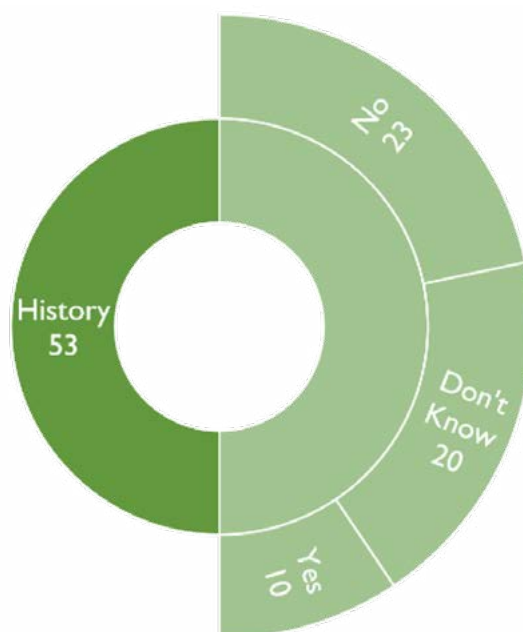
- Specific or direct connections with people who financed church building and improvements (5)
- Close Links with well-known individuals in the local area, although no specific benefits to the church itself (5)
- Tangential links with slavery through people living in the parish or local area (3)
- Links to enslaved people (1)

### Q. Has anyone ever researched the history of your church?

A. 53 churches reported that they had done some historical research on their church. 20 churches said that they did not know, and nine stated that there had not been any historical research carried out on their church.

Comparing the results of this question with the earlier question about links to slavery provided some interesting results. Out of the 53 churches who reported historical research having been carried out, only ten churches were confident of links to slavery. Meanwhile 23 churches were confident that there were no links to slavery, and 20 churches remained unsure, representing over a third of the churches (see fig 2).

This finding has important implications for the recommendations of this research. Based on the answers to this question it appears that simply encouraging churches to take a renewed interest in their histories is unlikely to reveal any previously unknown links with slavery. This is partly because evidence of involvement in slavery is often difficult to uncover as links can be indirect, and partly because this history has previously been consistently underreported. A more targeted approach would be needed.



(Fig 2: Church history vs knowledge of slavery connections 37.74% don't know)

**Q. Are there any architectural features\* of your building(s) that are connected to families and individuals that owned slaves or profited from slavery?**

**A.** This question was asked in relation to architectural features such as stone memorials, galleries or aisles, and stained-glass windows.

Less than 5% of respondents (3) reported that they knew of specific architectural features in their buildings which could be linked with slavery. 20 respondents did not know, whilst the majority of respondents (72% (59)) stated that there were no features of their building with links to slavery.

A sample size of 82 is too small to confidently apply these statistics to all of these buildings held in the care of the General Trustee's of the Church of Scotland, however they provide an interesting illustration.

Seven churches provided additional text responses to this question.

- Two of these churches noted that they either had no church buildings, or that their buildings were too modern to represent any direct links to slavery.
- Two churches noted specific features which were either directly linked to a slave owning family or to a feature which has been gifted to the church by an enslaver.
- One church noted that the age of their building(s) made it likely that individuals with connections to slavery were buried in the churchyard (not covered by this research)
- Two churches noted that benefactors and prominent families represented in the church were known by name but their slavery connections, if any, had not been researched.

An optional follow on question was asked regarding whether these architectural features has been discussed by the congregation. Only one church responded yes. This church had identified a specific feature in their building. Seven churches responded no and four did not know.

## Part 2

In part 2 of the questionnaire respondents were asked how links with historic slavery could be interpreted in the Church, and what could be done in the Church of Scotland to acknowledge the harms of historic slavery.

### **Q. Would written guidance on how to manage or interpret architectural features that are considered difficult or challenging be helpful for your church?**

**A.** A minority of churches (16% (13)) stated that this would be helpful for them, while 16 respondents did not know if this was needed. The majority of respondents, however (65% (53)) responded No to this question, which implies that at present there is not a widespread need for this sort of detailed guidance to be provided to all churches.

A basic qualitative coding exercise was carried out on the written responses to this question. This exercise identified the key topics which were of interest to those who asked for guidance. These were;

- Memory and education (5)
- Tracing financial legacies (3)
- First steps in research (3)
- Investigating architectural features (2)
- Historical social issues (research) (1)

It is suggested that the answers to many of these questions may be found in research guides produced by other denominations (particularly the Church of England) and museums and heritage bodies. A basic check list for how churches can move forward if they want to start addressing the legacy of a particular feature of a building or local history, and questions to consider, is detailed in the main body of the report (Section 9 – Where do we go from here?).

### **Q. What can be done in the National Offices and in congregations to acknowledge the harm that the transatlantic slave trade inflicted, mainly on Black men, women and children, and their descendants?**

**A.** The responses to this question were wide and varied. Detailed qualitative coding of the responses found several key themes emerging, with some relevant sub-themes also.

## Major Themes

- **Acknowledgement (26)**

By far the most prominent theme was acknowledgment. Many responses noted that the Church much acknowledge any links to slavery which were found, and the impact that slavery has had for both Scotland society and for the enslaved people and their descendants. It is noted that as the question contains the phrase 'acknowledge' this could have had an affect on these responses. However, as a number of responses claimed either not to know or responded negatively to the question, (19 responses) it is unlikely to have had a disproportionate effect on the data.

- **Research and Education (15)**

The second most prominent theme was the need for more research and on-going education. This theme could be divided into sub-themes which made the distinction between general education for the Church and for the public (6), (including hosting talks and events), and the need to continue this research in some capacity across the Church (5). There were some responses that recommended informative plaques or texts to be placed in church building where links to slavery have been found (4).

There was a small number of responses which advocated for the removal of certain features within church buildings (2), however this was countered by other responses that pressed for a "retain and explain" approach to difficult heritage objects (4).

- **Penitence and Prayer (12)**

Together penitence and prayer made up 12 responses, six for prayer and six for acts of penitence. Penitence included seeking forgiveness (2), dedicated worship services (2) and confession of sin (1).

- **Equalities Issues (11)**

There were a number of responses which could be grouped around the theme of equalities issues, both in Scotland and worldwide. This theme could also be divided into sub-themes. The most prominent sub-theme which emerged was related to modern-day slavery and the need to challenge and raise awareness of this (6). Other sub-themes in this category included the duty of the church to challenge racism (1), and to challenge global exploitation in supply chains (1), as well as a small number of other responses which related to the aims of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion work programme to make the church a welcoming space for all (4).

- **Apology (10)**

Ten responses called for a direct apology. This ranged from a general apology for the role of Scotland in the slave trade, to specific apologies from the Church where evidence of links to slavery was found.



## Minor Themes

- **Consultation (8)**

The theme of consultation referred both to further consultations with campaign groups (4) and with the descendants of enslaved people (1). This theme also included responses which cited the need for the conversation within the Church around historic slavery to be ongoing (2).

- **Acceptance (6)**

This theme ranged from accepting that harm was inflicted by the slave trade (1) to a more general acceptance that slavery is a part of Scotland's past (3), as well as two responses which were non-specific in their aims.

- **Reparations (5)**

Although discussions around reparation were not widespread, the range of reparative action suggested was broad with several different approaches raised by respondents. These included,

- **Repatriation of artefacts (1)\***

Partnerships or twinning initiatives with churches in affected countries (1)

Support for the descendants of enslaved peoples (1)

\*no such artefacts have been identified by this research.

- **Abolition (2)**

A minority of responses advocated for more research and acknowledgement of the role the Church played in abolition and the abolition cause more widely.

## Q. Is there anything else you would like to tell us on this topic?

A. The responses showed that there was a general interest in the research and it's aims among most of the congregations who responded, but also highlighted there was some confusion from others around why the questionnaire had been circulated (although this represented a minority of answers).

## Other issues raised included;

- Other forms of earlier slavery (i.e. Viking slaves) and reiteration of the subject of modern-day slavery.
- The negative effects of the British Empire both in and outwith Scotland.
- One church noted they had used the questionnaire as an opportunity to facilitate an inter-generational conversation between their elders and young people.