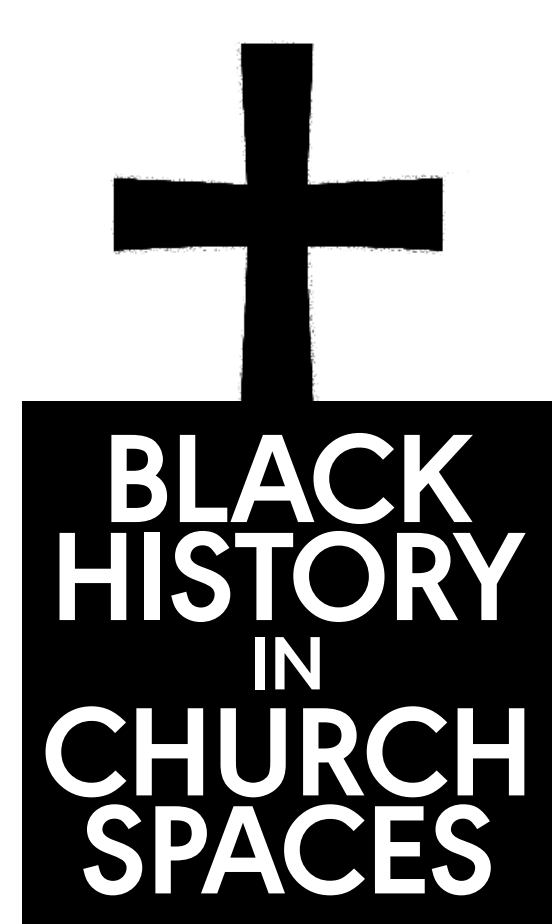
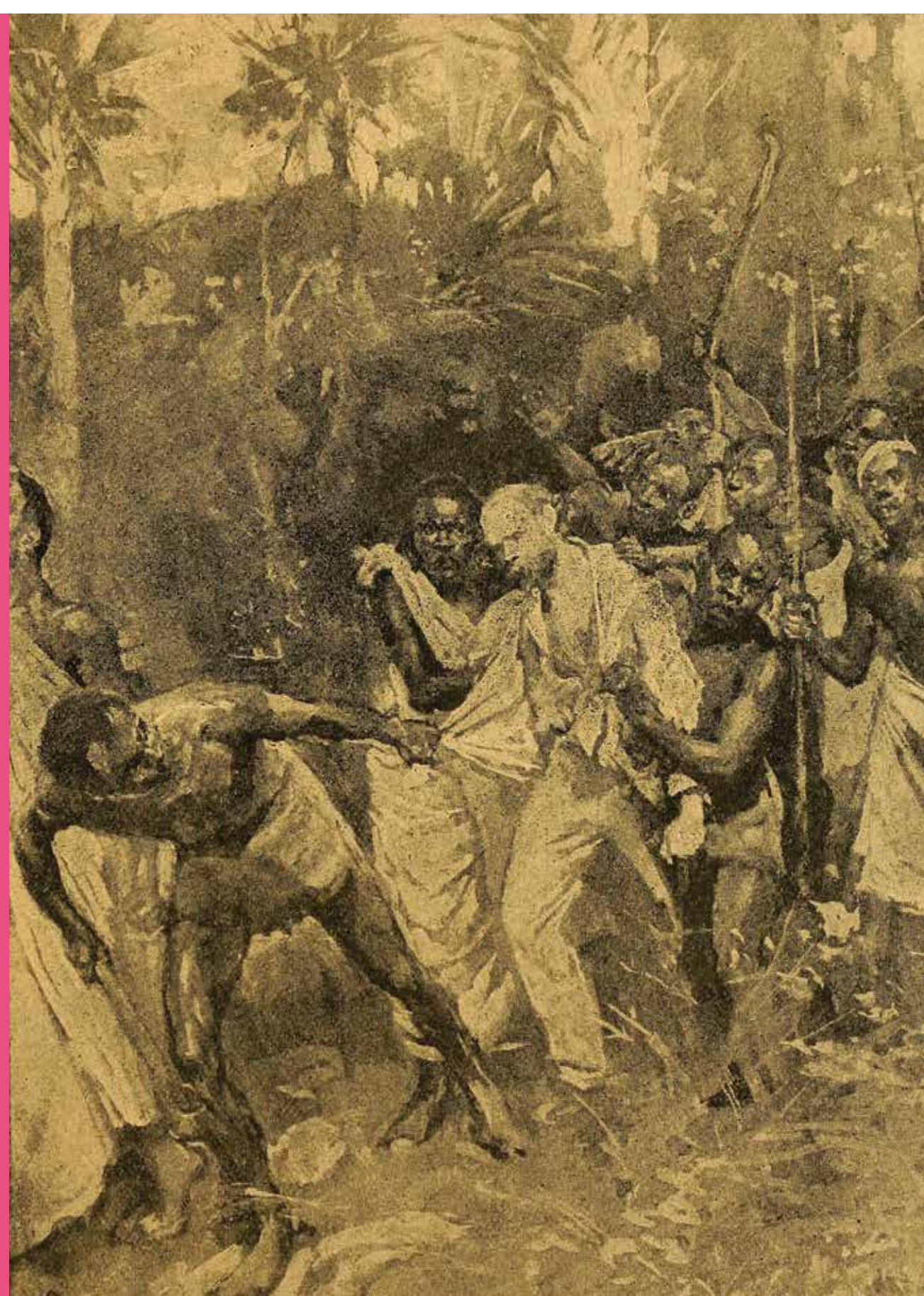
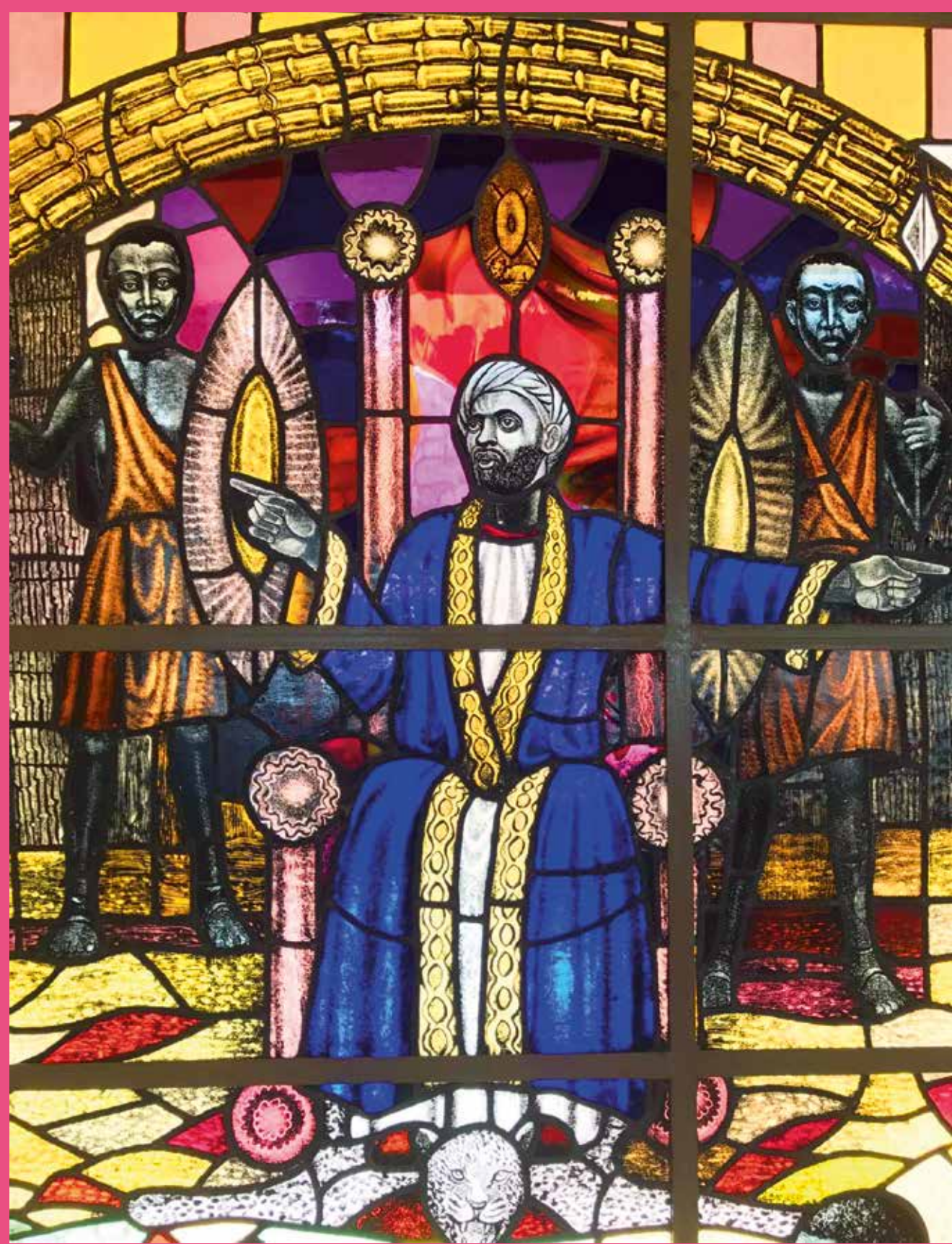




Saints of Colour



Above: Seizure of Bishop James Harrington by William Hatherell
Source: University of Connecticut Libraries



Above: The Royal Court of King Mwanga II of Buganda, 26 May 1886
Source: Ecumenical Lexicon of Saints heiligenlexikon.de



Above: The 22 Martyrs
Source: Uganda Martyrs Shrine Organisation, The Saints of Uganda

Below: Today, 3 June is celebrated as Uganda Martyrs' Day. At Namugongo, where many of the martyrs were killed, millions of pilgrims gather each year. Their story has travelled far beyond Uganda, becoming part of the history and devotional life of Christians across Africa and around the world.
Source: Wikimedia Commons

From the mid-nineteenth century, East African kingdoms were coming into increasing contact with Muslim traders (including slave traders) from Zanzibar and Christian European imperial powers intent on suppressing slavery but colonising ever greater swathes of Africa. It was within this contested landscape that Christianity took root in the kingdom of Buganda, bringing new alliances, rivalries and tensions to the royal court.

When the young King Mwanga II came to power in 1884, Christianity had already attracted a growing number of converts, including members of the royal household. For some of Mwanga's courtiers, the new faith was not only a challenge to established religious authority but also a potential foothold for European colonial influence.

Tensions soon turned to violence. In 1885, Mwanga ordered the execution of the Anglican missionary James Hannington, who had entered Buganda from the east, a route the king regarded as forbidden. Hannington was born in Hurstpierpoint, West Sussex, and educated in Brighton. When Joseph Mukasa, a Christian member of the royal household, protested against Hannington's killing, he too was executed.

Following further political and military upheaval, Mwanga turned against the Christian pages of his court. Between 1885 and 1887, dozens of young Anglican and Catholic converts were executed for refusing to renounce their faith. At Namugongo, many were burned alive. Around 45 Anglican and Catholic converts are traditionally commemorated as martyrs, forming part of a wider persecution in which approximately 100 Christians were killed.

Among them was Charles Lwanga, a Catholic convert and leader of the pages. As those condemned to death faced their final moments, Lwanga encouraged them with the words: "We shall meet again in Heaven." His courage, and that of the other young men who refused to abandon their faith, would eventually make them among the most celebrated Christian martyrs in Africa.



Above: The Canonisation
Source: Uganda Martyrs Shrine Organisation

Sainthood and Canonisation In 1964, Pope Paul VI formally canonised the 22 Catholic martyrs, recognising them as saints of the Roman Catholic Church. During his visit to Uganda in 1969, Pope Paul VI celebrated Mass at the site of their martyrdom. Their story has since become central to Catholic devotion in Uganda and across Africa.

Anglican provinces recognise and commemorate exemplary Christians through their own ecclesiastical processes and liturgical calendars. The 23 Anglican martyrs of Uganda are commemorated by the Church of England with a red-letter feast on 3 June in Common Worship, its calendar of saints and holy people.

The significance of the Uganda Martyrs extends beyond the different traditions through which they are recognised. These were young African Christians who chose to maintain their faith in the face of persecution, and whose lives and deaths have become central to Christian identity in Uganda and throughout the wider African Church.

Their recognition as saints and martyrs also challenges the assumption that the history of Christian sainthood belongs primarily to Europe. Charles Lwanga and his companions are Black African saints whose lives, faith and courage are commemorated by Christian communities across the world. Their story is now part of the global history of Christianity and of the continuing presence and leadership of Black Christians within the Church.



Above: Ugandan Martyrs Basilica in Namugongo, Uganda



Use this QR code to access more information about Black History on the Diocese of Chichester site.

This exhibition acknowledges the contributions of St John the Evangelist Church Newtimber and St Mary Magdalene, Madehurst, as well as the Church Commissioners' Engagement Team for Project Spire, who have been incredibly supportive and resourceful in helping us access and interpret historical data. We would also like to express particular gratitude to the National Church, through the Archbishops' Commission for Racial Justice, for providing the funding that has made this exhibition possible. In addition, I would like to acknowledge and thank, Ngaire Digby, Revd Peter Dyson, Mira Knox, Sarah Lee, Professor Alan Lester, and Revd Martin Poole for the advice, encouragement, research, and expertise they have contributed throughout the development of this project. **Vitalis Ngwambi**