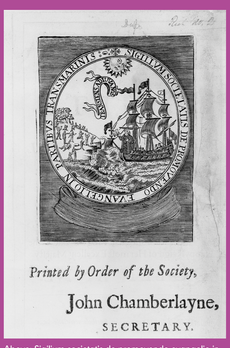
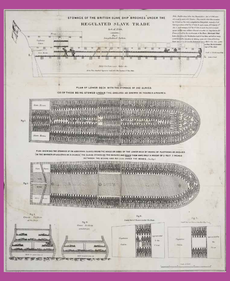
BLACK HISTORY IN CHURCH SPACES

# From reckoning to repair:
## what is Project Spire?




Above: Sigillium societatis de promovendo evangelio in partibus transmarinis.
Seal of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. Shows a minister on a ship with an open Bible in his hand; an shore native Americans say, "Transiens Adiuva Nos" [Come over and help us].
Source creator: Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (Great Britain).
Source title: 'An account of the Society for Propagating the Gospel in Foreign Parts'.
Printed by Joseph Downing, in Bartholomew Close near West Smithfield, London, 1706. Record number: 02022-1.



**Above:** Plan of the British Slave Ship Brooks, 1788
Source: Wikipedia



**Above:** Overview of the slave trade out of Africa, 1500–1900.
Source: David Eltis and David Richardson, Atlas of the Transatlantic Slave Trade(New Haven, 2010).

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

DISCLAIMER: The views and information shared in this resource reflect the perspectives of individual contributors, and should not be understood as representing the position of the Church Commissioners for England or the Church of England.

**Below:** Boarding ship
Source: Ann Ronan Picture Library / Heritage Images

**Project Spire is a reparative justice initiative which has been set up by the Church Commissioners for England to address its historic and financial investment links to the transatlantic slave trade.**

**The Church of England was an active participant in trans-Atlantic slavery, which the United Nations has described as "the gravest crime against humanity."**

## Facts about the Church of England and the Slave Trade

- The Church gave its blessing to slave trading and slave ownership. Some CofE clergy financed the Royal African Company (RAC), which trafficked more African men, women and children than any other single organisation in the history of the slave trade.
- People linked to the slave trade contributed about a third of the donations to The Church of England's endowment fund, Queen Ann's Bounty, between 1713–98.
(Source: tinyurl.com/bhics-Source1)
- Much of the Church' of England's endowment fund was invested in the South Sea Company. During the period in which the church held its securities, the company trafficked some 34,000 people including thousands of children under ten.
(Source: tinyurl.com/bhics-Source2)

## Facts about the Church of England and the Slave Plantations

- Although 12.7 million captives were trafficked from Africa to the Americas in the Christian European slave trade, most of the money was made from the plantations where they were sold. Here, they and their descendants, born into slavery, worked to produce mainly sugar, tobacco and cotton.
- The captives subjected to the 'Middle Passage' were purchased from African kingdoms but it was on the plantations that "Negroes" were codified as "property" and white Europeans as free.
- The plantations, as well as the slave "trade", are the reason that David Eltis, a leading historian of slavery states that 'by contrast' with every other form of slavery, ancient or modern, "the enslavement of Africans in the Atlantic continues to feed into deep modern social inequities"
(Source: David Eltis, *Atlantic Cataclysm: Rethinking the Atlantic Slave Trades*, Oxford University Press, 2026).

## The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG)

In addition, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) was the Church of England's missionary wing, headed by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

The SPG owned two Barbados sugar estates worked by enslaved people. It bought around 400 enslaved people to replace those enslaved people who had died due to overwork and mistreatment on these plantations.
(Source: J. Harry Bennett, Jr., 'The Problem of Slave Labor Supply at the Codrington Plantations', *The Journal of Negro History,* Oct., 1951, Vol. 36, No. 4 Oct., 1951, pp. 406–441)

For over 250 years the Anglican doctrine justified the capture and enslavement of Africans in the Atlantic plantation economy.

The SPG declared publicly that: 'it cannot condemn the practice of keeping Slaves as unlawful, finding the contrary very plainly implied in the precepts given by the Apostle'.
(Source: C. Evans, *Slavery's Long Goodbye: Capitalism, Nationalism and Christianity in the Age of British Emancipation,* Liverpool University Press, 2026)

The SPG's society's slave plantations generated the equivalent of £630 million over a period of 126 years.
(Source: J. Harry Bennett, Jr., *The Problem of Slave Labor Supply*)

**Until 1732 the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel branded its captives on the chest with a hot iron to form the word 'Society'.**

(Source: Desirée Baptiste and Jon Ungoed-Thomas, Beatings, brandings, suicides: life on plantations owned by Church of England missionary arm,
*The Observer,* 25 May, 2024,
tinyurl.com/bhics-Source3)

The Head of the SPG was the Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Secker who wrote in 1760:

***'I have long wondered and lamented that the negroes in our plantations decrease and new supplies become necessary, continuously. Surely this proceeds from some defect, both of humanity and good policy. But we must take things as they are at present'***

(Source: Desirée Baptiste and Jon Ungoed-Thomas, *Beatings, brandings, suicides*)

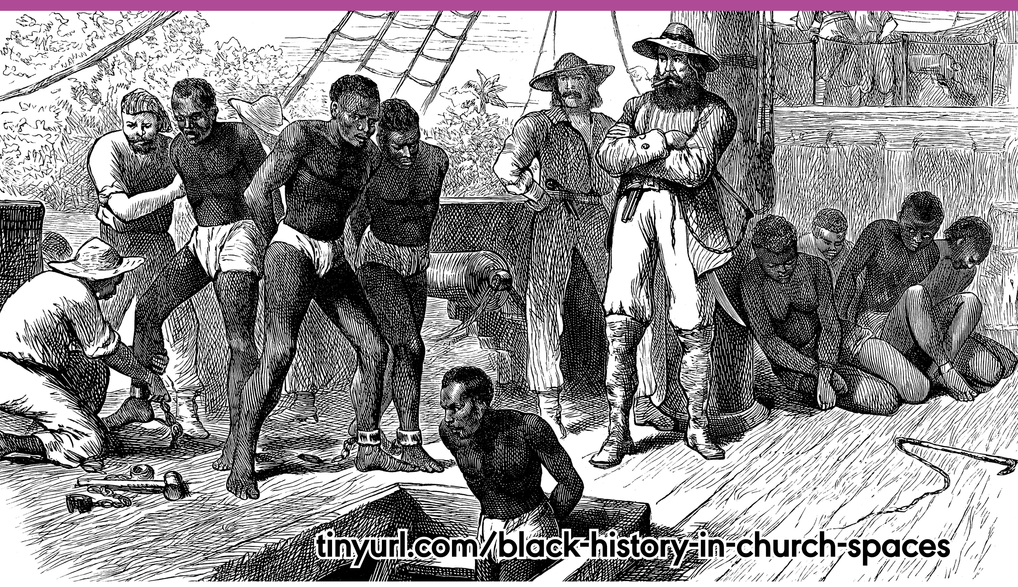
## Compensation for the slavers not the enslaved

**Upon the abolition of slavery in 1833, 96 members of church of England clergy still owned hundreds of enslaved people.**

**The British government paid them the equivalent of £46 million in compensation for the loss of their human 'property'. The SPG was paid £8,558 (around £1m today) for the loss of its own captives (source: UCL Legacies of British Slavery database).**

**In order to compensate the slave-owners, the government took out loans that were only finally paid off in full in 2015. "This means that, over the centuries, descendants of the enslaved contributed to paying off the debt that had been created to compensate their enslavers."**
**(Source: Bank of England, tinyurl.com/bhics-Source4).**

**NOTHING was paid as compensation to those people who had been enslaved or their descendants.**



**tinyurl.com/black-history-in-church-spaces**

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This exhibition acknowledges the contributions of St John the Evangelist Church Newtimber, St Mary Magdalene, Madehurst and St Mary's Church, Slindon 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**