

Episcopal Church to apologize for slavery: Service will be at church founded by former slave

News in the [September 9, 2008](#) issue

Continuing its efforts to address a practice some members call “a stain on the church,” the Episcopal Church will hold a “Day of Repentance” to publicly apologize for its involvement in the slave trade.

The ceremony, mandated by a 2006 resolution at the church’s General Convention, will take place October 3-4 in Philadelphia.

“We hope to set a model for other denominations about how to face this dark, tragic part of our history because we believe that only when you repent can you move on,” said Jayne Oasin, program officer for the church’s Anti-Racism and Gender Equality program.

In recent years, Episcopalians have attempted to come to grips with their church’s complicity in the “peculiar institution” of slavery.

After previous unsuccessful attempts, delegates to the 2006 convention overwhelmingly passed a resolution acknowledging the “deep and lasting injury which the institution of slavery and its aftermath have inflicted on society and on the church.”

That same year, delegates passed a resolution supporting efforts by Representative John Conyers (D., Mich.) to create a special commission for the study of reparations, although they did not explicitly endorse such payments.

Although the transatlantic slave trade was outlawed in the United States in 1808 and slavery was prohibited at the end of the Civil War, some church members have long felt that the church continues to benefit materially from its involvement.

Many of the denomination's older churches were funded in part by profits from the slave trade, and the nation's most famous Episcopalian, George Washington, was a slave owner.

Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori will conduct the service at the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas, which was founded by a former slave in 1792. The event will also feature discussions on the role of race in present-day society. -

Religion News Service