

**Diocese of New Jersey Reparations Commission
Report to the 240th Diocesan Convention**

Co-Chairs: Canon Barbie Okamoto Bach, Canon Annette Buchanan

Current Members:

Mr. Vernon Anthony, Ms. Alice Barnes-Vasser,
Mr. Willie Coleman, Mr. Jonathan Gloster,
Ms. Clare Gutwein, Dr. Patrick Milas,
Mr. Joe Rodriguez, Mr. Wesley Rowell,
The Rev. Scott Russell, The Rev. Clive Sang, Dcn.,
The Rev. Beth Rauen Sciaino,
The Rev. Sharon Sutton, The Rev. Jack Zamboni,
The Rt. Rev. Sally French

Research Historian: Dr. Jolyon Pruszinski

Members who have rotated off in 2023:

The Rt. Rev. William “Chip” Stokes,
The Rev. Joanne Epply-Schmidt,
The Rev. Ryan Paetzold, The Rev. Francisco Pozo,
The Rev. Megan Thomas

The goal of the Reparations Commission is to:

- Develop, facilitate, and monitor a diocesan-wide process for Reparations, Reckoning and Racial Equity to repair the breach and harm created by the enslavement of African descendant peoples and communities in New Jersey.
- Address harm created by the actions and inactions of the Episcopal Church: its congregations, institutions, networks, congregants, and lay and ordained leaders, both within the church and the public square.

The Reparations Commission of the Diocese of New Jersey currently uses this definition of reparations from the United Church of Christ:

Reparations is the process to remember, repair, restore, reconcile and make amends for wrongs that can never be singularly reducible to monetary terms. The process of reparations is a historical reckoning involving acknowledgement that an offense against humanity was committed and that the victims have not received justice that is due them.

This coming year, the Reparations Commission anticipates writing a definition of reparations rooted in the Episcopal/Anglican tradition. The co-chairs and research historian presented talks about reparations in congregations around the diocese. The Commission intends to further develop a Speakers Bureau.

Within the Commission, books, articles, and other resources are regularly shared for members’ continuing education. Members seek to stay informed about reparations efforts nationally and internationally. A book discussion was held on *Damaged Heritage* by J. Chester Johnson.

The Commission continues to lead and be a core part of “NJ Faith Allies for a Reparations Task Force: Say the Word,” in partnership with the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice (NJISJ) whose goal is to urge the State Legislature to pass bills [A938/S398](#) (now A602) to establish a NJ Reparations Task Force. NJ Faith Allies have organized to persuade municipal and county governments to pass resolutions in support of this statewide task force. For the 240th Diocesan Convention, the Reparations Commission proposes a resolution encouraging Episcopalians to ask their local governments to pass resolutions in support of a statewide task force studying the history of slavery in NJ and the need to repair this legacy of slavery. New York passed similar legislation in 2023, which was signed in to law by Gov. Hochul in December.

The Reparations Commission organized two reparations themed worship services in 2023. On March 25, a Liturgy of “Stations of Reparations” was held at St. Peter’s, Freehold, highlighting five colonial era congregations who shared narratives from their congregational histories in relation to slavery. The five were St. Peter’s, Freehold; Trinity & St. Philip’s Cathedral, Newark (formerly in the Diocese of NJ); Christ, New Brunswick; Trinity, Princeton; and Christ, Shrewsbury. A reception was held following the service which allowed for further conversation about slavery in NJ in relation to the Anglican/Episcopal Church.

On May 7, "Till Earth and Heaven Ring," an Evening Prayer liturgy co-sponsored by the Reparations Commission and the Anti-Racism Commission was held honoring the ministry of The Rt. Rev. William "Chip" Stokes before his retirement. The preacher was The Rev. Dr. Darrell Armstrong, Pastor of Shiloh Baptist Church, Trenton, a longtime advocate for reparations and close colleague of Bishop Stokes.

In 2023, the Commission's research historian, Dr. Jolyon Pruszinski, shifted focus from the antebellum era to post-Civil war era with a focus on historically Black congregations and treatment of, ministry of, and ministry to African Americans in the diocese. He continues to gather oral histories from parishioners. Research is ongoing in the diocesan archives thanks to the assistance of The Rev. Canon Richard Wrede, diocesan archivist. Research and resources are posted on the Diocese of New Jersey's Racial Justice Review Blog: <https://dionj-racialjusticereview.blogspot.com>. Dr. Pruszinski presented at Howard University in the Afterlives of Slavery Conference, submitting a chapter for the accompanying book. He presented at Princeton Theological Seminary in the course Critical Race Theory As Theological Challenge. In addition to news-oriented blog entries, Dr. Pruszinski completed the following history blog entries:

"Rev. Thomas Thompson's 'The African Trade' Tract in Defense of Slavery (1772)."

"Rev. Thomas Haliday's 'more comfortable subsistence': Early NJ Priests and Slavery."

"Rev. John Holbrooke's Salem County, NJ Anglican Slavery Audit of 1727."

"Interview with Kathleen Montgomery Edwards (1924-2000) of Trinity Church, Princeton."

"Rev. John Sharpe's Account of the 1712 New York City Slave Revolt."

"George Keith's Anti-Slavery Sermon of 1693."

"Sourland Region African-Americans who left the Episcopal Church."

"Jacob Van Wickle (1770-1854): Middlesex County Judge, Notorious Enslaver, and Respected Episcopalian Lay Leader."

"A History of Trinity & St. Philip's Cathedral: Slavery, Racism, and Renewal in "God's House"."

"Bishop Doane's 1854 Reparations Mandate."

"Rev. James C. Ward (1777-1834), the First African American Clergyman in the Diocese of NJ."

"Support for the American Colonization Society (ACS) in the Diocese of New Jersey."

"The Rt. Rev. Samuel Seabury (1729-1796) – First American Bishop, New Jersey Enslaver."

"Review: *The Anglican Church in New Jersey*, by Nelson R. Burr (1954)."

"Early African Mission Giving (Foreign) in the Diocese of New Jersey (1835-1865)."

On Sept. 23, 2023, the Commission held a retreat to recommit to this work. The retreat featured guest speaker Jean-Pierre Brutus, NJISJ Senior Counsel, Economic Justice Program. Commission members serve on one of three working groups: Finance, History, Education and Engagement. During the fall retreat each working group identified action items for the coming year.

NJISJ established a Reparations Council in 2023, www.njreparationscouncil.org. The Reparations Council's public sessions are also posted on our Diocese of NJ racial justice review blog.

The Reparations and Anti-Racism Commissions participated in Province II of The Episcopal Church's online Slave Trade Lament and Repentance for Ash Wednesday 2024. Each of the 13 dioceses of Province II submitted a video station. This service can be found on the Province II website: www.province2.org.

A Liturgy of Stations of Reparations is planned for March 16, 2024, at 3 pm at St. Augustine's, Asbury Park. All are encouraged to attend. The Reparations Commission is grateful for the Rt. Rev. Sally French's support for our on-going work. If you have questions about the Reparations Commission or would like to schedule a speaker about reparations, please contact the co-chairs.

Respectfully submitted,

Co-Chairs, Canon Barbie Okamoto Bach and Canon Annette Buchanan,
and The Rev. Beth Rauen Sciaino, Secretary