



EMANCIPATION DAY *in the* ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA

AN INTRODUCTION

IN JUNE 2025, the General Synod of The Anglican Church of Canada adopted Resolution C-002, formally designating the last Sunday in July as Emancipation Sunday.

The General Synod resolution also called on Canadian Anglicans to actively support initiatives that address anti-Black racism, both within our ecclesial structures and in society at large. Dioceses were encouraged by the General Synod to engage in dialogue with Black Anglican communities to ensure that this observance is meaningful and impactful. The resources provided here are offered in response to that Resolution, to assist parishes, groups, individuals, and other worshipping communities within our church to celebrate Emancipation Day well, lifting up the experiences, voices, histories, and leadership of Black Anglicans in Canada.

Emancipation Day marks the anniversary

of the Slavery Abolition Act which came into effect August 1, 1834, freeing approximately 800,000 enslaved people in British colonies, including Canada. For over 180 years, Black communities across Canada have celebrated Emancipation Day every August 1st with church services, parades, outdoor festivities, protests, speeches, entertainment, and more, seeing an opportunity for celebration and a time for reflection on the struggle for freedom and justice, past and present. Official recognition of Emancipation Day by the Government of Canada happened following a unanimous vote in the House of Commons in March 2021. The designated day is meant to celebrate the strength and perseverance of Black and Indigenous people while also challenging individual and institutional racism. On this day, Canadians are invited to reflect, educate, and engage in the ongoing fight against prejudice and discrimination.



The Anglican Church of Canada

A Statement by Prime Minister Carney on Emancipation Day August 1, 2025

“On this day in 1834, the Slavery Abolition Act came into effect across the British Empire, marking the beginning of emancipation for hundreds of thousands of African slaves and their descendants. Many journeyed north, following the Underground Railroad, to find freedom in Canada. The enslavement of African people remains a despicable injustice in history, and its impacts reverberate across generations.

Today, we honour Black communities in Canada and across the world. In doing so, we also commit ourselves – as citizens and as a country – to build a stronger future where dignity and humanity for all are not aspirational ideals but enduring principles.”

<https://www.pm.gc.ca/en/news/statements/2025/08/01/statement-prime-minister-carney-emancipation-day>

Language Matters

Language matters. Describing people who lived in slavery as “enslaved” rather than as “slaves” emphasizes their humanity and the fact that servitude was a condition forced on them. Describing those who proactively fought for their liberty as “freedom seekers” emphasizes their agency, while describing them as “fugitives” or “runaways” assumes the point of view of those who profited from their labour and criminalizes the universal human instinct to be free. Referring to those who enslaved others as “enslavers” emphasizes that these individuals made a choice to hold others in captivity, while identifying them as “masters” or “owners” implies legitimate authority or ownership and reduces the enslaved to property.

Further Background to Emancipation Day

The Transatlantic Slave Trade forcibly displaced millions of African people, subjecting them to unimaginable suffering. While legal emancipation in the British Empire began with the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833, the legacy of enslavement persists in the systemic racism, discrimination, and marginalization that Black people continue to face in Canada and beyond.

The Anglican Church has a complex history in relation to slavery. While some Anglicans advocated for abolition, others were complicit in the structures of oppression. The Anglican Church of Canada has acknowledged its past complicity in racist systems and has taken steps toward justice and reconciliation. On June 8, 2020, our Bishops wrote in a statement, *“The Anglican Church of Canada has committed itself to confronting racism in its own life and to acknowledging the place of racism and colonialism in our own nation. That commitment*



The Anglican Church of Canada

needs to be renewed daily". The statement concludes, *"we re-commit ourselves and our Dioceses to confront the sin of racism in all its forms and the patterns of silence and self-congratulation, which have silenced the experiences of people of colour, First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples of this land."* The Church also endorsed the United Nations-sponsored "International Decade for People of African Descent (2015-2024)."

History notwithstanding, Black Anglicans have been making their contributions to the life and ministry of the Anglican Church of Canada as far and as much as they were allowed. In his 1992 study, "Ministry in a Multicultural Society," Dr. Romney Moseley examined the Anglican Church of Canada's engagement with cultural diversity and identified several key issues:

1. **Cultural Identity and Integration:** Moseley emphasized the importance of recognizing and affirming the cultural identities of all members. He advocated for integrating diverse cultural expressions within the church's worship and community life to foster inclusivity.
2. **Leadership Representation:** He highlighted the underrepresentation of minority groups in leadership positions within the church. Moseley recommended proactive measures to ensure leadership reflects the church's diverse membership.
3. **Theological Reflection:** Moseley called for deeper theological engagement with multiculturalism, encouraging the church to develop theological perspectives that embrace cultural diversity as central to its mission.
4. **Policy Development on Racism and Multiculturalism:** He urged the church to adopt clear policies addressing racism and promoting multiculturalism, reflecting a commitment to justice and equality.

These insights and recommendations were later published in *No Longer Strangers: Ministry in a Multicultural Society*, serving as a foundational document for the Church's Multicultural Policy (1992). This document was a catalyst for the work of the Black Anglicans Coordinating Committee which, for over 25 years, was a prophetic voice in the church and community advocating for the full inclusion of Black Anglicans in the life of our church. It has now been succeeded by the Black Anglicans of Canada, a national organization, from coast to coast to coast, whose *"mission is to increase the participation, representation, empowerment, and belongingness of Black People in lay and ordained leadership roles in the full life of the Anglican Church of Canada, and to develop partnerships with Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC) and other oppressed peoples"*.

Many churches and civic organizations around the world have recognized Emancipation Day on August 1st as a time to remember and reflect on this history. We believe that as part of its ongoing work of reconciliation and inclusion and to give life to the aspirations of our



The Anglican Church of Canada

Bishops, the General Synod's act to dedicate a the Last Sunday in July as Emancipation Sunday will help to engage the whole Church in prayer, reflection, repentance, and renewed commitment to racial justice.

Biblical and Theological Basis

The Scriptures call us to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God (Micah 6:8). Jesus proclaims release to the captives and sets the oppressed free (Luke 4:18). The Apostle Paul reminds us that in Christ, there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free (Galatians 3:28), calling us to dismantle the barriers that separate us from one another.

At the heart of this petition is the Reign of God, which calls for justice, liberation, and the restoration of human dignity. The Reign of God is not merely a distant hope but a present reality that we are called to live into, embodying Christ's mission to bring good news to the poor and freedom to the oppressed (Luke 4:18-19). By designating Emancipation Sunday, the Anglican Church of Canada aligns itself with God's vision of a reconciled world where all people, regardless of race or background, are affirmed as bearers of the divine image and called to participate fully in the life of the Church.

We end with the words of our former Primate, The Most Reverend Linda Nicholls, "*As Anglicans, we are committed to the Marks of Mission including 'To seek to transform unjust structures of society.'* Emancipation Day calls us all to action. We must act to address the realities of racism, discrimination, and exclusion in our parishes, in our communities, and in our country. As a Church, we look forward to the recommendations of the Dismantling Racism Task Force, calling us to specific action to move along our journey to true emancipation for all." (A Reflection in July 2022)

The establishment of Emancipation Sunday is a significant step in the Anglican Church of Canada's ongoing journey toward justice, healing, and reconciliation. It provides a sacred space for remembrance, repentance, and renewal, affirming the dignity of Black Anglicans and recommitting the Church to the work of racial justice.

June, 2026



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