



JOB POSTING FOR THE POSITION OF DIRECTOR OF THE SLAVERY AND ITS LEGACIES PROJECT AT ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH, LAFAYETTE SQUARE, WASHINGTON, DC

Introduction

Founded in 1815 and located just a stone's throw from the White House, St. John's Episcopal Church, Lafayette Square, Washington, DC is undertaking a project to research, document, and understand our connections to slavery and its legacies.

Background

St. John's is widely known as the "church of the Presidents" because every President since James Madison has attended at least one service, usually during his time in office. For example, during the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln used to walk over from the White House, alone, on occasional Sundays to attend evening services. A plaque hangs in the back of the church above the pew in which he regularly sat, forever designating it, "Lincoln's Pew." In 1933, a prayer service was held at St. John's on the morning of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's first inauguration, beginning a tradition to which most Presidents have adhered ever since.

The church was designed by "the second architect of the Capitol," Benjamin Henry Latrobe, and our bell was cast by Paul Revere's son, Joseph.

Like many other historic churches and institutions, St. John's history is entwined with that of slavery. Enslavers were among our founders, benefactors, and parishioners. Enslaved people were likely among the church's builders.

Set against this dark past, the Reverend William Hawley, only the second Rector in our history, baptized African Americans, enslaved and free, and officiated at their weddings. The weddings were held in his home, with his wife and children serving as witnesses. On, for example, January 11, 1828, he presided over the wedding of a "colored" woman, Emmeline Matthews, and a slave, William Prates. The very next wedding he performed was that of then-President John Quincy Adams' son, John.

After the Civil War, St. John's helped to found an African American congregation, St. Mary's, in Washington's Foggy Bottom neighborhood.

In August 1963, then-Rector John Harper organized a special worship service for those who had traveled from far and wide to participate in the March on Washington, a pivotal moment in the history of the civil rights movement.

In recent decades, St. John's has counted among our most prominent parishioners African Americans who played a major role in the nation's history as pioneering government officials, lawyers, business leaders, and physicians. Among the church's most active ministries for more than 20 years is befriending and supporting Kwasa College, an independent, non-profit Anglican school for pre-primary and primary age children in Springs,

South Africa, and St. John's is a key supporter of the Bishop Walker School for Boys, a private independent school offering full tuition support for African American boys in Washington, DC.

Job Description

We are seeking a skilled researcher to organize and lead, from inception to completion, a project focused on St. John's history related to slavery and its legacies. The successful candidate will have strong project management skills, as well as expertise in archival research and writing. Current graduate students in the field of history, postdoctoral fellows, and independent historians will be considered, with preference given to those with a background in the study of slavery. Familiarity with church archives is a plus.

The Director will be responsible for researching, planning, and drafting a book, intended for popular consumption, to document our history as it relates to slavery and its legacies. The primary focus will be the period from the church's founding through the Civil War and Reconstruction. We also intend to highlight notable developments from Reconstruction to the present day. The research product must have historical integrity and reflect the moral and theological context in which it takes place.

Principal duties:

- Develop a project proposal, with a timeline for completion, in consultation with the church;
- Conduct archival research focused on St. John's own extensive archives and, with their permission, those of the neighboring White House Historical Association, the Diocese of Washington and area dioceses, the Virginia Theological Seminary, the National Episcopal Church, local and national news archives, and other publicly available resources;
- Draft book chapters based on the archival findings and revise as needed in consultation with the church; and
- Prepare the manuscript for publication (i.e., copyediting, etc.) and interact with the publisher in connection therewith.

Anticipated timeline: We estimate that it will take up to 18 months to complete the research and writing.

Total Compensation: \$50,000-\$75,000, based on experience and project scope.

To apply: Interested candidates should submit to Lisa Koehler at lisa.koehler@stjohns-dc.org, no later than May 20, 2025, and with the caption, "Legacy of Slavery Project:" (i) a CV; (ii) the names and contact information of three references; (iii) two writing samples; and (iv) a 1–2-page statement of interest detailing their relevant experience and expertise and rationale for applying.