



Kingston's Old Dutch Church apologizes for racism

By **Michael Novinson**

Times Herald-Record

May 30, 2011 - 2:00 AM

KINGSTON — One of the city's landmark churches has apologized for centuries of racism within the congregation.

"(We) acknowledge with deep regret our history of dehumanizing racism that allowed for the enslavement and subsequent segregation of our sisters and brothers of African descent," wrote the Rev. Kenneth Walsh of the Uptown Old Dutch Church.

[See full article text](#)

"Through wrong interpretation of Scripture and theological reflection, we, with the whole Reformed Church in America, proclaim that our contribution to racism and bigotry has been sinful and contrary to God's eternal will of grace."

The Old Dutch Church dates to 1659 and because of its age is the only continuously active Kingston church whose ancestral members once owned slaves.

Church elders adopted the reconciliation statement Tuesday, and Walsh will read it at rededication on Sunday of a Civil War-era African-American burial ground.

Rebecca Martin, executive director of the Kingston Land Trust, has helped plan the rededication.

She suggested that the church issue an apology when members offered to assist in the ceremony.

"We were the established white church where doctors and lawyers attended," Walsh said.

During the Jim Crow era, Walsh said, the Old Dutch Church had a second chapel on Washington Avenue for racial minorities and the poor.

Full integration of the historic church at the corner of Wall and Main streets didn't occur until after World War II.

"This is the dirty history we're trying to acknowledge," Walsh said.

The church now has an African-American elder and three African-American members.

The written apology helped free Walsh from an added burden — his ancestors had arrived on this continent on the Mayflower and once owned slaves themselves.

"God is colorblind and we should be, too," he said.

Martin hopes the gesture will be a catalyst for more faith-based interracial dialogue.

"This sort of reconciliation statement will bring churches together," she said.

"They need one another, too, because the congregations are dwindling."

mnovinson@th-record.com



Popular Today

Police charge 3 in assault at Middletown parking lot



Unique high school opens in Esopus



Death Notices



Vaccination still a choice parents can make



Bow hunting for deer opens in area, earlier than usual

Fallsburg man faces felony charge after domestic dispute



Manager of Swan lake convience store stops burglar



Latest Photo Galleries



home

search

Copyright © 2012 [Hudson Valley Media Group](#), a subsidiary of Dow Jones Local Media Group. All Rights Reserved.
[Copyright](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms & Conditions](#)