

Quick Guide...

Stained Glass: Maintenance

Prepared by the Committee on Church Art and Architecture's Stained Glass Group

The church windows are an integral part of the building fabric and are key to keeping the building wind and watertight. Traditional windows often have leaded small pane panels, possibly decorative stained glass, or may be timber sash and casement windows with clear glass. Weather conditions have a considerable impact on their performance and condition and when they start to age, the maintenance and repair methods are an important responsibility, particularly for an historic building.

Looking after stained glass windows appropriately will prevent unnecessary damage.

use water unless on the advice of a specialist. In the case of windows with damaged and fragile paint, do not touch them at all - cleaning should only be undertaken by a stained glass specialist.

If windows are significantly dirty or for any reason cannot be cleaned as above, advice must be sought from a specialist.

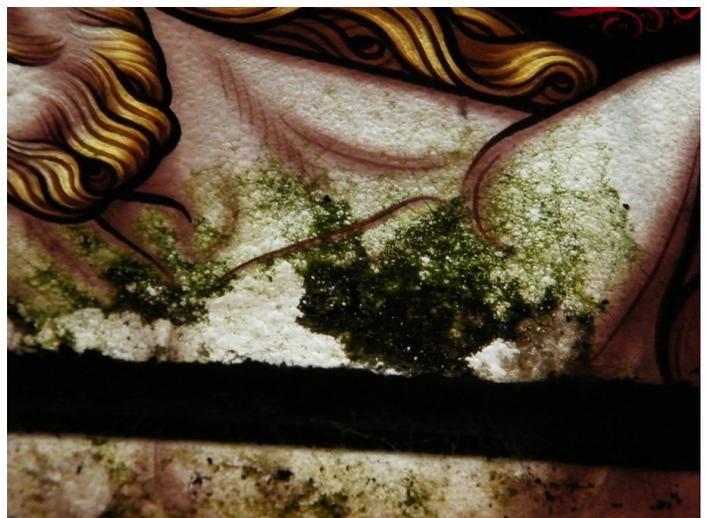
Condensation

Significant and irreparable damage can be caused by condensation on the surface of the glass – especially painted glass. Steps should be taken to ensure sufficient ventilation is provided.



Cleaning

Do not wash leaded or stained glass windows. Keep them free of dust, cobwebs etc. by brushing gently with a soft brush internally and externally as necessary. Never scrub or use any cleaning products. On painted glass, do not even



Repair

Stained glass windows should be repaired by a specialist in the event of any structural failure. Lead has a lifespan of around 150 years. After this time it is beginning to thin and weaken and depending on various factors including the design of the window and exposure to weather, many windows will require re-leading or repair.



Signs that repair is needed can be any of the following: Windows beginning to bow in or out from the perpendicular; cracks and fissures in the lead (usually alongside solder joints); a rattling sound when windows are gently tapped; glass cracking due to the collapse of the window.



Keep an eye on the condition of supporting bars. If these are very rusty (and especially if such rust is or could be causing damage to surrounding stonework) then they should be replaced with stainless steel bars by a specialist.

Damage caused by accident or vandalism should be repaired by a specialist as speedily as possible.

Advice is available from the Committee on Church Art and Architecture.

Whom to Contact

Anyone wishing to contact the Committee should complete an enquiry form which can be found on the Resourcing Mission website (www.resourcingmission.org.uk/resources/carta) and email it to: mandd@churchofscotland.org.uk. Alternatively, you can telephone 0131 225 5722 and ask to speak to someone in the CARTA office.

CARTA Quick Guides

Other Quick Guides include advice on lighting, audio visual, stained glass and communion ware. These can be found on the Resourcing Mission website (www.resourcingmission.org.uk/resources/quick-guides).

About the Author

Emma Butler-Cole Aiken is a self-employed stained glass artist, setting up her current studio in 1994. Emma's qualifications are BA (Hons) Stained Glass Design 1988, Associate of the British Society of Master Glass Painters since 2002. Emma has created over 50 commissioned works and exhibits regularly.

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