

NEWSLETTER

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Methodist Modern
+ Art Collection

FRIENDS OF THE METHODIST MODERN ART COLLECTION



*New Management Committee members
Reports of Recent Exhibitions and Events
New Immersive Experience at 3Gen
Looking ahead to 2024*

EDITORIAL

A lot has happened since the last issue of the Newsletter. We have recruited four new members of the Management Committee who have kindly volunteered to share their time and expertise. We have also presented the first immersive interpretation of one of our works (see front cover).

Ann Sumner pays tribute to Ian Baker on page 3. I would like wholeheartedly to endorse what she says and to take this opportunity to thank Ian for his invaluable help in producing this, and previous, Newsletters.

Katharine Farnham-Dear

Art Collection Management Committee Members

Prof. Ann Sumner (Chair), Sarah Allard, Ian Baker (Secretary, Friends Group), Katharine Farnham-Dear, Emily Fuggle, Rebecca Gibbs, the Revd Catherine Hutton, the Revd Graham Kent, David Maddock, David McEvoy, Corinne Miller (Vice-Chair), Peter Shears, Helen Stanton. In attendance: Jo Hibbard, Director of Engagement, and Olivia Thelkeld, Heritage & Collections officer.

Patrons of the Friends of the Methodist Modern Art Collection

The President of Conference, the Revd Gill Newton, The Very Revd Nick Bury, Phil Allison of Cultureshock Media, Lord Leslie Griffiths of Bury Port

Administrator – Liz Millard

Phone: 020 7467 5214
email: artcollection@methodistchurch.org.uk
www.methodist.org.uk/artcollection

Ian Baker

Secretary to the Friends of the Collection
Montrose, Brockhill Road, Colwall, Herefordshire, WR13 6EX
Phone: 01684 540477
email: mmacfriends@btinternet.com

Katharine Farnham-Dear

Newsletter Editor
Phone: 07908 843589
email: KatharineFD@aol.com

Produced by Cultureshock Media
Art Director: Alfonso Iacurci
www.cultureshockmedia.co.uk

Front Cover:

Eularia Clarke's *The Five Thousand* re-presented as an immersive installation, 3Gen - NEC Birmingham (Photo: Peter Shears)

NEW MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The Management Committee are delighted to welcome four new members and one new colleague from the Connexiaonal Team



DAVID MADDOCK New Committee Member and Secretary of the Friends

David has retired from teaching after 27 years as Head of Art and Art History at Leicester Grammar School and now pursues his own practice and research. His work may be viewed online, as can details of his book, *Roger Fry, Clive Bell and American Modernism*, published in 2020, and available in both print and electronic form.

As a long-standing member of Christchurch Clarendon Park Baptist and Methodist Ecumenical Church, David first became aware of the Collection when it came to Leicester in 2019 for the *Wondering Soul* exhibition. Quite apart from the quality of the works, he loves the variety and breadth of the Collection. He believes the arts can serve a spiritual function in our secular society and the Collection in particular has an indispensable role as testimony to Christian experience.

David will be stepping into the shoes of Ian Baker as Secretary of the Friends of the Collection.



EMILY FUGGLE New Committee Member

Emily graduated with a MA in History of Art (modern art) from the Courtauld Institute of Art (Distinction) and a MA in Cultural Heritage Studies from UCL (Distinction). She is now a freelance curator, working on the management of museum collections and the curation, development and delivery of exhibitions. She is also a PhD student, funded by the London Arts and Humanities Partnership, at the Ben Uri Gallery and Museum and Queen Mary, University of London. She is researching the women of Ben Uri. Emily has worked in a number of curatorial and exhibitions positions at museums in the UK and USA. She began her career as a curator at the Imperial War Museum, specialising in the history of the Holocaust and working on 'Whose Remembrance?' - a research project exploring the experiences of people in the British Empire during the two World Wars. Emily has also worked as director of the Huguenot Museum in Kent telling the story of Britain's first refugees. In 2016, Emily relocated to the US, where she managed exhibitions at the Jewish Museum in New York City including the delivery of new galleries showcasing their collection. In her subsequent role,

Friends of the Methodist Modern Art Collection

as Collections Programme Manager at the Science Museum, Emily led the team of curators working on the museum's temporary exhibitions. Most recently, Emily worked as Curator of London South Bank University's collection of modern art by the painter David Bomberg and his students there in the 1940s and 1950s. Emily holds Associateship (AMA) and is also a Mentor for the Museums Association.

Emily's interest in the history of collections of modern art and religious heritage meant that she was excited to learn more about the Collection and the vision behind its creation, and to contribute to its future. Emily is passionate about sharing art with broad audiences and using her museum experience to support venues in their ambition to use the Collection with their communities. Emily will lead the Exhibitions and Planning Working Sub-Group.

PETER SHEARS
New Committee Member

Peter is an English teacher in a Catholic comprehensive school and a Lay Reader at St Anne's Anglican Church in Lewes, where he has led art-based Lent courses and serves on the PCC. He is a trustee of the Lewes Passion Play which has involved him in script writing, marketing, financial planning and mission planning. In 2022 he was awarded an MA in Christianity & the



Olivia Thelkeld and Peter Shears with Eularia Clarke's *The Five Thousand* at 3Gen



Arts from King's College, London. Studying for this gave him new insights into the relationship between art and faith. He sees becoming a member of the Management Committee as a way of putting his MA to practical use. He joins the Management Committee to develop relationships with schools and programming for young people. He will work with Corinne Miller on 3Gen, and with Ann Summer on the relationships with MIST (the Methodist Independent Schools Trust), MAST (the Methodist Academies and Schools Trust), Woodhouse Grove and Kingswood schools. He took an active part in 3Gen and writes about it on page 11.

HELEN STANTON
New Committee Member

Helen Stanton is a theologian and painter and, in a small way, a collector. A lay woman, she has spent about half her life training people for ordination - mostly in the ecumenical settings of The Queen's Foundation, Birmingham, and the Cambridge Theological Foundation. There she worked with others to develop a course in the visual arts and practical theology. Helen is especially drawn to works of abstract expressionism, and from the global south and diverse communities in the UK. She currently works as Warden of Holland House, an ecumenical retreat house in Worcestershire.

Helen has considerable fundraising experience and will be joining the Management Committee to take on the role of Convenor of the Governance and Fundraising Working Sub-Group, to provide interpretation text, and update the Mission and Interpretation Strategy. She will also provide practical exhibition support. Helen does not like photos of herself.

OLIVIA THELKELD
The new Heritage & Collections Officer on the Connexional Team working with the Management Committee

Olivia is an arts and heritage professional, originally from Mossley (Greater Manchester). She has lived in London for the past five years, having relocated to undertake a History of Art MA at UCL. She has worked in a number of different galleries and museums, starting at Gallery Oldham and more recently at The Museum of Brands, The British Museum and The National Gallery, London. Olivia has worked as a curator, exhibitions manager, digital project manager and marketing officer. She describes herself as a 'jack of all trades' who is always learning. She hopes to lend her experience and enthusiasm to furthering the work of the Management Committee and widening access to the Collection.

A view from the Chair

Professor Ann Sumner



As Katharine says, a great deal has happened since the last Newsletter. We advertised to fill vacant roles on the Management Committee and were pleased to have good responses and be able to make four excellent appointments which have been endorsed by the Mission Committee and agreed at Council level. We heartily

welcome Emily, David, Peter and Helen. Full details about them and their roles can be found on pages 2 and 3. We are also co-opting David McEvoy to help write new artist biographies for the online gallery (see back cover). In addition, we were delighted that our new Heritage & Collections Officer, Olivia Threlkeld, took up her post in March. She has already made a valuable contribution, particularly to exhibition delivery, and helped update our Forward Plan. We are pleased to have 20% of Olivia's time; she focuses on Methodist Heritage for her main role (see page 3).

The groundbreaking inter-faith exhibition at Victoria Methodist Church Bristol *Articles of Faith - Where our Paths Meet*, with its vibrant events programme (see page 7), and the smaller, reflective exhibition at John Wesley's New Room Bristol *Death to Life: Image, Expression and Symbolism* (see page 8), both closed immediately after Easter. I found myself back in the area by mid-April helping the Revd Katy Thomas hang key pictures which had moved to nearby Kingswood School, Bath, ready for the *Transforming Lives* exhibition. 2023 was a significant year for the school, celebrating 275 years of Methodist education, and the exhibition was planned to coincide with the International Methodist Schools conference on the theme: *Transforming Lives*. I was delighted to assist in organising the well-attended private view, but sadly a bad bout of Covid prevented me attending the conference itself. You can read all about the conference, and the success of the exhibition and other events engaging beyond the school, in Katy's report (see page 9). The connections between the Collection and Kingswood are strong. I am an alumna, attending the school for the sixth form in the 1970s, and I sent both my daughters. Our founder, John Morel Gibbs, sent three of his sons including our former Chair John Gibbs, and the Collection was housed there in the 1960s and early 1970s. It was very nice for me to be back and to see the continuing enthusiasm of the staff and students, especially Katy who worked so hard on this project. I particularly enjoyed leading a Year 12 Assembly.

It was at Kingswood that I was inspired to pursue a career in museums, by my History of Art teacher Philippa Bishop, who sadly died earlier this year.

A good deal of my time in early summer was spent organising the Committee's Annual Away Day, held in June at the impressive Methodist Central Hall in London. It was so good to meet in person again and in such special surroundings. Since then, things have been particularly busy. I have been exploring the potential for the Collection to be displayed as part of *Bradford 2025* when the city will celebrate being City of Culture. It is an exciting prospect, and we very much hope it will come to fruition, building on the inter-faith, multicultural work in Bristol. Planning meetings and visits have also been taking place for the 2024 exhibitions in Welwyn Garden City and Eastbourne (see back page and pages 12 and 13) and, potentially, in Leicester. We know you will be looking forward to seeing the Collection next year.

We have been delighted to welcome some new Friends who have joined in recent months, which brings me to the fact that, sadly, our Secretary of the Friends, Ian Baker, will be standing down in November after six excellent and fruitful years in post. He is a supportive and much cherished colleague on the Committee, and we will miss him very much. I want most especially to pay tribute to his enthusiasm for the role of Secretary, nurturing Friends' relationships, alerting you to events, and generously sharing his organisational administrative strengths and financial acumen. Newly appointed Committee member, David Maddock, will be taking over as Secretary of the Friends. He has been having some in-depth hand-over meetings with Ian to ensure a smooth transition. I know you will all join me in welcoming David as Secretary and in wishing Ian the very best for the future.

Over the summer and during the early autumn our Vice Chair Corinne, Peter and Olivia were extremely busy with the organisation of 3Gen which took place at Birmingham's NEC in late October. I am thrilled to report that the programme of events was a great success, especially the new immersive interpretation of one of our most popular works, Eularia Clarke's *The Five Thousand* (see page 11).

Finally, just to say that you should now have received a copy of our combined annual reports for the three years ending August 2023. We hope you found this interesting as we remember an extraordinary period for us all and a significant time in the Collection's history which included celebrating our 60th anniversary. I have been working on this over the summer months, supported by Katharine. I would like to thank her, Corinne Miller and Liz Millard. In future, we will return to an annual publication.

Sarah Allard

In Focus

My interest in Christian art began during my undergraduate degree in History of Art and English Literature at the University of Birmingham. In my final year, I wrote my undergraduate dissertation on a scheme of nineteenth century frescoes in the village church of Highnam, Gloucestershire. The artist was Thomas Gambier Parry (1812-1888), Victorian collector, polymath and father of the great English composer Sir Charles Hubert Parry. Thomas Gambier Parry devised his own hugely successful fresco medium which was able to withstand the damp English climate. He used it to paint the beautiful large-scale murals at Highnam, and also in his designs at Gloucester and Ely Cathedrals.

Gambier Parry's twice great nephew, Tom Fenton, had inherited his diaries and still lived nearby in the Rectory. Introduced through relations who lived in the village, as part of my research I was able to spend several days working in Tom's study, surrounded by beautiful furniture and art, and reading Parry's original diaries. I was fascinated by his frequent references to conversations and meetings with nineteenth century creative icons that I had so recently studied; John Ruskin, Frederic Lord Leighton and Ford Madox Brown.

The time I spent at Highnam was significant for me academically, but also spiritually. Having grown up with a strong faith, I had drifted away during my undergraduate

studies. Attending church in Highnam with my aunt and uncle, surrounded by the intensity of Gambier Parry's frescoes and the unfamiliar Anglo-Catholic liturgy, I was convinced again of God's redeeming power expressed not only through his word, but in the tangibility of art, poetry and landscape. I saw that God's presence throughout history can be communicated powerfully through human creativity, and in particular through visual art.

The following year, I was able to spend time teaching and curating at the wonderful Barber Institute of Fine Arts in Birmingham, and the year after that completed an MA in Museum Studies at University of Leicester, my current workplace. On arriving in Leicester, still inspired by my experience at Highnam, I headed straight for the chaplaincy where I asked where I could find a 'high church' locally. The staff there were quite bemused by this request! Very soon after that, I discovered Holy Trinity Leicester, a lively, inclusive, evangelical, but most definitely not 'high', church community. Nearly twenty-five years later, it is still my church family and place of worship.

On completing the MA, I took up the role of Keeper of Fine Art at Derby Museum and Art Gallery, where for many years I had the privilege of caring for and curating works by Joseph Wright of Derby. Wright of Derby is not known as a religious artist, but his scientific and landscape paintings, infused with light and a sense of wonder, sit squarely in the tradition of British romantic visionary painting. This connects Wright to other favourite eighteenth and nineteenth century artists like Samuel Palmer, JMW Turner, William Blake, and later still to artists represented in the Methodist Modern Art Collection including Eularia Clarke, David Jones and of course, Norman Adams, whose *Christ's Entry into Jerusalem* is my choice.

Sarah Allard is a member of the Management Committee



Thomas Gambier Parry
*Chancel Arch, Holy Innocents
Highnam* (detail) (Photo:
Sarah Allard)



Sarah Allard's Choice



Christ's Entry into Jerusalem by Norman Adams © TMCP Sarah Allard's choice from the Collection

On encountering the Methodist Modern Art Collection for the first time when it travelled to my home city of Leicester in 2019, it was Adam's *Christ's Entry into Jerusalem* that kept me gazing longest. Hanging in Leicester Cathedral, the watercolour glowed with colour, giving the impression of sun shining through stained glass. These jewel-like colours are typical of Adam's work and can also be seen in his other watercolour in the Collection, *Behold the Man*. In *Christ's Entry into Jerusalem* the sense of looking through a window is further enhanced by the device used around the edge of the painting: a muted, layered border which helps to draw the eye inwards and to ground the busy composition within.

Norman Adams admired European artists working in the energetic expressionist tradition, from Vincent Van Gogh through to Emil Nolde and Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, pioneers of the German Expressionist movement 'Die Brücke' (The Bridge). Describing himself as 'a compulsive believer', Adams chose subjects which were rich in both Christian and secular symbolism and ambiguity. On being commissioned for this piece he said 'I would like to do this very much ... It is a wonderful subject'.

Christ's entry into Jerusalem as King, as described in the Gospels, was a joyful, exultant, but also a chaotic and confusing event. There were cloaks in the road, people shouting, onlookers asking what was happening, and of course the events that followed in the temple, where Jesus drove out the moneychangers and turned over the tables of those selling doves. Adam's *Christ's Entry into Jerusalem* perfectly sums up this climatic moment and also makes us a participant in it. On

approaching the painting, I found it difficult, if not impossible, to take in the whole composition with a single glance. I needed to examine, to question, at times even to guess at what might be happening. Are the curved overlapping shapes in the upper half of the painting linked arms or banners? Of the glowing yellow circles, which are halos, which are sunflowers, and which is the sun itself? Is the man looking out of the window Zacchaeus? Who are the mysterious dark figures in the foreground?

The celebration depicted in the painting is exuberant and chaotic. The all-important central figure of Christ on the donkey, accompanied by a foal, is so luminous as to be almost lost in the intense glare. Natural elements - flowers, vegetation, sky - are layered and tessellated with buildings, animals and figures. There is a sense of danger too. The flags are celebratory, but may have tribal overtones. The sinister hooded figures hint at the turn of events to come. The success of this composition is founded on Adams' mastery at evoking intense human experience. In this, as in so many of the works of art in the Methodist Modern Art Collection, the painting communicates beyond the gospel story to wider human experience. I think we all know something of that heady mix of joy, togetherness and awe found in a celebratory crowd, whether that's during Christian worship, at a music festival or even a sports game.

Reports of Exhibitions and Events

EXHIBITION: ARTICLES OF FAITH - WHERE OUR PATHS MEET

Victoria Methodist Church, Bristol hosted an exhibition of 29 works from the Collection alongside artefacts from other faith traditions from 20 February to 8 April 2023.

Lent 2023 was a special time in the history of Victoria Methodist Church. The exhibition had been delayed due to Covid, so our Creative Arts Group had plenty of time to plan. We planned big to fulfil our vision of sharing the Gospel through encouraging lifelong learning and engaging with and through media and the creative arts. Almost everyone in the church was involved.

Our minister, the Revd Richard Sharples, had previous experience of hosting an exhibition but more importantly he had a passion for art and a vision for this particular exhibition to be based on values of partnership and inclusion. The Christian art would be exhibited alongside artefacts from the homes and worship places of other faiths to encourage the viewer to consider them together - "in conversation". The idea led to our strapline: "Where our Paths Meet." We had contacts from three other faiths – the Bristol Hindu Temple, a nearby Hebrew (Orthodox) Synagogue and the Muslim Chaplain and students at University of Bristol's Interfaith Chaplaincy. Planning together strengthened the partnerships. We hope that the friendships we formed will continue as a legacy of the exhibition. The selection and generous loans of artefacts enhanced the exhibition. A group of Hindu women made a beautiful rangoli from rose petals to welcome our visitors. Entries in the Visitors Book were very positive about the faith groups working together.

At Victoria we have a tradition of working in partnership with our neighbours the Royal West of England Academy (RWA). They kindly lent us two members of staff to hang the pictures from the Collection and to display artefacts on plinths they lent to us. Their skills and experience were invaluable to us, and we enjoyed working with them. By the opening day the sanctuary looked beautiful.

The South Gloucestershire and Stroud School of Art, which adjoins the RWA, was also involved. Students came with their lecturer to sketch. They use our premises for classes and feel at home in the inclusive atmosphere of Vic'. The University of Bristol's Music Department is across the road and uses Vic' for concerts and practice. They performed two special concerts to fit in with our themes.

One of our aims was to involve children and young people. We contacted local schools and organisations offering a competition with prizes funded by grants and donations. Four primary schools and three secondary schools participated. A student from the art college was on the judging panel. The school children's art was displayed in the large hall used by



The sanctuary of Victoria Methodist Church hosting the exhibition

the college students, and some of the competitors stayed for a workshop after the prize giving. We hope to maintain our links with the schools.

The main exhibition in the sanctuary attracted around 2,000 visitors - 1,400 during formal opening hours and 1,000 attending associated events, or meetings that we hosted but did not organise. We distributed programmes, used Facebook for video clips and weekly updates, displayed sails and large posters outside the church and used Eventbrite for bookings. Word of mouth and onsite advertising were the most effective. Stewarding was very important: there were twenty-four stewards working in twos (threes at busy times) and we aimed to welcome each visitor individually. There were many significant conversations. On Saturdays we also offered refreshments. Entry to the exhibition was free, but we invited donations. The stall selling literature about the Collection did well and made us a modest profit.

The paintings were arranged in clusters, with the art-boards forming alcoves in which related artefacts were displayed. For example, tableware used in religious festivals was displayed in the 'Hospitality cluster' near to works such as Eularia

Clarke's *The Five Thousand*. The eight themes were Hospitality, Compassion and Service, Text and Story, Suffering, Life and Death, Mystery and Relationship, Hope, Justice and Peace. We used text and literature from the Methodist Modern Art Collection (including some in large print), and the Revd Richard wrote a shorter Reflective Guide. There was a lot to see, and people took a surprisingly long time looking around, with some also visiting the young people's art on Saturdays.

Some of the associated events took place outside opening hours but most were in the gallery space. Four keynote speakers were arranged jointly with the Ecumenical Lent Conversation team and their events were well attended. There was a dialogue between two members of the Gibbs family whose father/grandfather, John Morel Gibbs, had founded the Collection, two guided meditations on selected works led by the Revd Richard, concerts by University musicians, and an evening by Performance poet Harry Baker and friends, all of which catered for different audiences. Our interfaith partners along with the Revd Richard facilitated three sessions on Sharing Sacred Texts, comparing themes in the Koran, the Torah and the Bible. Workshops on Arabic Calligraphy and Jewish storytelling included sessions for children and complemented a Children's Craft workshop. Former Management Committee member, Sarah Middleton, talked about the collection and existing member, Rebecca Gibbs, hosted an In Conversation event with Collection artist Clive Hicks-Jenkins.

One evening event, "An Indian Experience" began with a Hindu blessing, followed by a meal. We enjoyed dancing displays by children and adults, and the modelling of saris from different regions. It was lovely to see young people both performing and in the audience. The event, attended mainly by members of the Hindu and Vic' communities (as numbers were limited) was an opportunity to spend an evening with the new friends we had made.

The final event on Good Friday was "At the Foot of the Cross", an evening of dramatic readings and music directed and performed by the Vic' community and friends. It was a wonderfully uplifting event, which left us proud to belong to the Vic' community, feeling hopeful and believing that all the hard work had been worthwhile.

Jane Stacey
Victoria Methodist Church

EXHIBITION: THE DEATH TO LIFE: IMAGE, EXPRESSION & SYMBOLISM

This small exhibition was on display at John Wesley's New Room in Bristol from 18 February – 8 April 2023.

"I never imagined art would engage me at a spiritual level." was the response of one of our volunteers following their first introduction to the Collection. When John Wesley's New Room first accepted the invitation to showcase four works from the Collection, we never imagined how powerfully we could communicate through modern art. Our vision for the exhibition was to dedicate a small temporary gallery as a space for reflection during the period of Lent. Each of the four paintings we highlighted depicted the crucifixion either pictorially or explicitly. The exhibition invited visitors to examine each piece and explore Biblical evidence about what took place. We used an interactive magnetic board and asked visitors to choose the words that best described their response to the paintings. Popular choices included 'Wonder', 'Thankful' and 'Reflective'.


Crucifixion as a Roman method of execution was brutal, undignified and tortuous. For Christians, the death and resurrection of Jesus holds life-changing meaning. They believe that through the cross, Jesus died in their place for their sin, and that, by trusting in what he has done for them and not by their own merits, they can receive eternal life and union with a loving God. The cross remains a powerful symbol of grace, hope, and life for millions of people worldwide. Yet the subject of the cross has often been sanitised and is widely contentious, from the Gospel authors urging readers to respond to it, to those abusing its message for selfish gain. Whatever belief, faith or meaning you draw from the cross, these pieces of art showed us something raw, stark and poignant.


Death to Life: Image, Expression & Symbolism

Highlights from the Methodist Modern Art Collection

18 February – 8 April,
10am-4pm

John Wesley's New Room

 JOHN WESLEY'S
NEW ROOM



Events which accompanied the exhibition included a private view where guests from both faith and arts backgrounds, including Friends, supporters and partners could enjoy the displays and benefit from networking opportunities. In addition to this, a special morning was dedicated to the presentation of the exhibition to volunteers. As part of our What's On programme, we were delighted to host Professor Ann Sumner to give a talk on the history of the Collection. Our regular Friday lunchtime Communion service also added another point during each week to stop and reflect on how themes of faith within art can generate a spiritual response.

Over 400 people visited the gallery during of the exhibition. We were proud to celebrate and engage with significant pieces from the Collection in a meaningful and memorable way.

Kate Rogers

Co-Director – Collections

John Wesley's New Room, Bristol

EXHIBITION: TRANSFORMING LIVES

This year Kingswood School is celebrating 275 years of life transforming education rooted in the love, faith and values of our founder John Wesley and the Gospel of Jesus Christ that inspired him. We are deeply grateful to Ann Sumner and the Management Committee of the Methodist Modern Art Collection for enabling us to host this exhibition as part of our special anniversary.

The carefully selected art reflected key stories from the life of Jesus that continue to transform lives across the generations, as well as exploring the themes of service, diversity and inclusion that are at the heart of Kingswood today. Guides were created with reflections to accompany the art on the theme of Transforming Lives.

Seven artworks were displayed in the Cusworth Room and four paper and water colours in the adjoining corridor. The Cusworth Room is one of the busiest rooms in school being booked for every hour of the day for Senior Management meetings, staff training, interview panels, waiting area for candidates, student lunches with the headmaster, small group Governor meetings and much more.

We were very fortunate to have two excellent senior Estates Staff who prepared the room, removing existing art and redecorating. They hung the art, supervised by Ann, and took it down, supervised by Olivia Threlkeld. They also moved the incredibly heavy crates. Ann worked with us before the day, measuring the room and designing a plan of where each piece

would go. This was slightly adjusted on the day when we saw the pieces next to each other.

The exhibition launched with private viewing on Tuesday 18 April. The 30 guests included the Headmaster, Deputy-head, Head of Art, School Archivist, alumni, local clergy, two Deputy Lord Lieutenants (one of whom was an alumnus of the school), art dealers and those with connections to local museums and galleries. Ann gave a short talk, as did I.

The exhibition deliberately coincided with the International IAMSCU (International Association of Methodist Schools, Colleges and Universities) Conference also on the theme of Transforming Lives. On Saturday 29 April, 250 delegates spent a day at Kingswood and viewed the exhibition. It was a wonderful opportunity to highlight the Collection to people from Methodist Schools and Churches in the Americas, Asia and Africa. It was particularly poignant when, after talking about the *Nativity Polyptych* by Francis Hoyland, three gentlemen remained standing there for some time. I discovered that they were from the region depicted in the piece, referencing the outbreak of war in 1960 known as the Congo Crisis.

On Wednesday 17 May Ann gave a fascinating talk to 50 guests including many local people who had not been to the school before. Bob William's report on page 10 goes into more detail. The next day Ann returned to Chapel for the Sixth Form Service, where she shared a reflection on Eularia Clarke's *The Five Thousand*.

During two School Services the Headmaster interviewed me about four of the artworks that were shown on a large screen. In Chapel services across the term, I took the opportunity to show individual pieces, linking them to a theme. All but two pieces were shown in some form to all 860 students.

Saturday 24 June was our Association Day, and the exhibition was included in the tour for returning alumni. Ann was part of one of the groups and able to give them a brief overview.

25 Boarders came to view the art in two groups. They were given six questions to answer based on colour, styles, challenge and meaning, and chose their favourite pieces.

A group from St Magdalene's Church visited on 10 July and after a brief talk about each work, they had time to spend contemplating them as well as an accompanying display of student work. Later in July a local contemplative art group, having heard from others, came and spent an hour with the works. They enjoyed discussing their reflections.

The exhibition was advertised in local churches and through School newsletters and social media, and we hosted a number of privately arranged visits.

Barbara Easton, Head of MAST and a Trustee of MIST and former Vice-President of Conference and Patron of the Friends, Andrew Gordon-Brown, Head of the Senior School & Principal of the Kingswood Foundation, Prof. Ann Sumner, Chair of the Management Committee and School Chaplain, the Revd Katy Thomas. (Photo: Bob Williams)



EVENT: 'TRANSFORMING LIVES': ANN SUMNER'S INTERPRETIVE TALK ON THE COLLECTION AT KINGSWOOD SCHOOL CHAPEL ON 17 MAY, 2023

'Every picture tells a story': In the case of the Collection, absolutely true! Over the course of this absorbing talk, Ann Sumner delivered a potted history of the Collection over its first six decades, together with a forensic, but never over-laboured, analysis of fifteen selected paintings, drawings and sculptures, the majority drawn from the core of the works showing in Kingswood's Cusworth Room at the time. In particular, Ann helped give her audience of around 50 context to the fascinating origins of the Collection in the early 1960s during a

We invited everyone to post a comment on their favourite works. Both adult visitors and students did so. In addition, I set the A Level Art students a piece of homework, given by their teacher as an option. In it I mentioned the fact that art critic Richard Cork had done his first art exhibition critique of the Collection when it was housed at Kingswood. This resulted in highly accomplished pieces from four 16/17-year-olds.

Articles about the exhibition were published in the School Newsletter, the Old Kingswoodian Association Magazine, our 275 Newsletter and on our social media. It was also referred to in the Methodist Recorder and by Methodist Church digital news.

I have very much enjoyed having the Collection at Kingswood and it has been much appreciated by visitors and caught the eye of those who have used the room in which it was housed. The banners remained up the whole time so a lot of people will have learnt about the Collection.

A calculated guess based on use of the room and external visits suggests that upwards of 2,000 people saw and engaged with the art in some way during these three months.

Sincere thanks, on behalf of Kingswood School, to Ann Sumner for her incredible hard work and to all who enabled the exhibition to take place.

Rev Katy Thomas
Chaplain Kingswood School

revival in contemporary religious painting in post-war Britain. Well versed in public speaking as she is, Ann knows the value of throwing in a relevant anecdote to emphasise a point!

Treasured works by Graham Sutherland, Ceri Richards, Elisabeth Frink, Maggi Hambling, Jyoti Sahi and sculptor Frank Roper, among others, were considered to the accompaniment of projected images. It was certainly an invitation to exercise our imaginations and learn more about the richness of God's being.

What better venue than the beautiful chapel at Kingswood School to hear about the always fascinating history of the Collection? Kingswood's Bath campus on Lansdown actually provided a valuable first permanent home for the Collection for some seven years from 1965. This followed its very first touring exhibition in which some 107,000 visitors saw the works at one or more of thirty different locations including many of the most prestigious galleries of England and Wales. It was this exhibition that effectively launched the Collection, nationally, with 'touring' as its *raison d'être*. Ann emphasised how the Collection continues to tour today, resulting in some imaginative engagement with audiences – such as the 2019 'Picnic in the Garden' at Leicester Cathedral inspired by Eularia Clarke's *The Five Thousand*.

The evening, hosted by School Chaplain, the Revd Katy Thomas, concluded with an invitation to everyone present to view the original works on display. Lively discussions and conversations took place as many folk encountered the works for the first time and others were pleased to re-engage again after the Bath Abbey show in 2016. It was good to see a number of our Friends present at the event, as well as guests from various churches across the city.

Bob Williams
Former Secretary to the Friends of the Methodist Modern Art Collection

EXHIBITION: EULARIA CLARKE'S THE FIVE THOUSAND - IMMERSIVE AND FOR REAL! AT 3GEN 2023

'I felt like I was a part of the painting. It was an incredible experience.' These words, recorded in our visitors' book, express a sentiment shared by many of the 2,000 or so adults, teenagers and young children who visited our immersive presentation of *The Five Thousand* at this year's 3Gen, held in Birmingham's NEC from 6 to 8 October.

The paintings chosen for 3Gen this year were Eularia Clarke's *The Five Thousand* and *Storm Over the Lake*. Months of creative and imaginative discussions between PixelLux, PH Productions, Management Committee representatives, Eularia Clarke's family and members of the 3Gen leadership team culminated in the creation of a wonderful immersive experience. *The Five Thousand* was projected onto the floor and walls in a specially built structure so visitors could sit or stand surrounded by Clarke's figures. A soundscape of babies crying, people chatting and seagulls calling, together with subtle animation of some of the figures meant that many of our visitors shared the view of one boy who said, 'I can say I was actually there!'. Many found the experience deeply calming. One of the first, a young girl, told us, 'This will be my safe space for the weekend', and we found children returning to spend long periods of time gazing at the images from the comfort of the colourful bean bags scattered across the floor.

3Generate, the Methodist Church's Children and Youth Assembly, and the Management Committee for the Methodist Modern Art Collection developed the immersive art space together. The aim was to engage children and young people in a 3D-art experience that was centred on conversations about God, community, sharing and food. The space can be taken on tour to schools or used in churches to engage local communities. The initial development used funds allocated by the Church to engage and equip children and young people to be disciples now.

The original paintings were positioned by the exit to the immersive experience, so that visitors would experience the installation and then view the originals. They were mounted on temporary walls with information about the artist and the Collection. A QR code gave visitors access to the full Collection online. We noticed how the experience of being surrounded by the colour and movement of the digital artwork enhanced our visitors' engagement with the original *the Five Thousand*. Our teenage visitors often studied details in the painting which they might have missed without first having visited the installation. 'I noticed that the red...under the Bible on the altar looks like blood coming from the words of communion,' wrote one, '[this was] quite a revelation'. The experience led both adults and children to intriguing and original insights into the spiritual and theological elements of Clarke's work. Many found the installation enhanced a reading of the painting which saw God as present in community, in diversity and in sharing - all themes



Banner on the outside of the immersive experience (Photo: Corinne Miller)

developed and explored elsewhere at 3Gen. Other immersive installations currently offering this sort of experience tend to present lots of images simultaneously, whereas ours focussed on the one painting and invited visitors to pause, reflect, and engage with the original artwork

Children were encouraged to record their responses on coloured bunting; 'Togetherness itself is a miracle', said one. 'I am part of the picture', said another, 'Jesus feeds me as much as he fed people years ago'.

Peter, taking part in his first event as a member of the Management Committee, led three well-attended workshops. These involved exploring the ways Clarke's painting responds to the Gospel narrative. They enabled both adults and children to learn more about Clarke whilst giving them time to reflect on the painting itself.

One of our visitors was a Methodist Minister who had himself preached on Canvey Island, the setting of the picture. Many visitors spoke of how greatly they valued the Collection. We heard reports of our posters being used in sermons and reflections, and the experience of seeing the immersive installation led to interesting discussions concerning which other works from the Collection might work well in this format.

In the words of one visitor, 'It was amazing to be immersed in the picture a great expression of God's presence in the everyday.'

*Peter Shears,
Member of the Management Committee*



Forthcoming Exhibitions

DEEPENING THE MYSTERY – UNEXPECTED TREASURES OF ART 1 MARCH – 7 APRIL 2024

Focolare Centre for Unity, 69 Parkway, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire, AL8 6JG

First of all, let me say a few words about Focolare for those unfamiliar with the name! Focolare was one of the many ecclesial movements born out of the horrors of World War II. It started in Trent, Northern Italy with Chiara Lubich and her first companions dedicating their lives to Jesus' prayer 'Father, may they all be one' (John 17: 21-24). The evangelical life of this small group of Roman Catholic girls soon spread beyond Trent, then beyond Italy and all over the world. It also spread beyond the Roman Catholic church to most Christian denominations.

In Welwyn Garden City, the Focolare movement is fortunate to have its own ecumenical conference centre. It is a harmonious and vibrant space hosting meetings for faith groups as well as local secular organisations. Next year, it will host an exhibition of the Methodist Modern Art Collection.

I first encountered the Collection in the late 1990s in Woking, when I was the Religious Education Adviser in Surrey. I was asked to involve Surrey primary and secondary schools, through visits to the exhibition and workshops with a local artist in residence. It was a huge success, so when the opportunity came to host an exhibition at the Focolare Centre, we welcomed it with open arms. This was set to take place in

2020 as part of Welwyn Garden City's centenary celebrations. However, Covid struck, and everything came to a halt.

Well, here we are now, and the exhibition will be held during Lent and Easter 2024. On one level, it may prove useful to have had more time to prepare. It certainly is a huge project and there is still much to do over the next few months.

During the last year, some of the organising committee have been able to visit the wonderful exhibitions in Bewdley and Bristol. This has been very useful, particularly meeting the organisers and chatting with them about their experiences. The group in Bewdley were delighted that staging the event had brought the local churches together. Both groups were emphatic in the message: 'Don't try and do too much!' - useful advice!

Having the exhibition in Welwyn will be an opportunity to open the doors to the general public, whatever their beliefs. Alongside the exhibition, there will be weekly lectures and a community café. There will be a particular focus on engaging with schools and church communities with workshops and retreats.

During the exhibition, we would like to create an atmosphere of contemplation – hence the title 'Deepening the mystery'. We hope to do this through allowing each exhibit its own space. We are fortunate in having two large conference rooms to house the artworks. We intend to have benches allowing visitors to sit and absorb each picture, perhaps accompanied by a piece of music and appropriate readings. Please pray that we are able to create something worthy of these wonderful works of art.

A program of events is being organised in dialogue with the exhibition. Please contact me for further details on art2024@focolare.org.uk or on Facebook Art 2024 at WGC.

Note: The Focolare Centre for Unity is situated on 'Parkway', the main boulevard of Welwyn Garden City, an 8 minute walk from the train station and town centre. There is a small car park at the Centre which includes disabled parking. This quickly fills up so visitors are encouraged to use the ample parking in town at the station and the Howard Centre multi-storey car park.

Paul Gateshill



NEW VISION 19 MAY – 13 JUNE 2024

Emmanuel Church, Upperton Road, Eastbourne, BN21 1LQ
www.emmanueleastbourne.org.uk

Emmanuel Church - Exterior



What do you do with four church buildings, each 120-150 years old and in significant or even alarming disrepair? The immediate and understandable reaction would simply be to see difficulties far beyond any resolution. Not so in Eastbourne! The four congregations (two Methodist, two URC) met and prayed together and decided a major rethink was needed if we were to continue to be God's church in the 21st Century. The result was a fresh perspective, a 'New Vision' that would take years to come to fruition. The decision was taken to merge the four congregations, sell three buildings, demolish one, and build church and community space fit for the the next 100 or so years.

In September 2023 Emmanuel Church worshipped together for the first time in the new premises and a new chapter of church life has begun. Our first year will be full of worship, events and celebrations to give thanks for what has been and to step forward into the future, culminating in an exhibition to be held in May and June 2024 of the Methodist Modern Art Collection.

It did not take too long to decide upon *New Vision* as a title and theme for the exhibition – it just seemed to fit wonderfully well – capturing both the reimagining of the future for the church and the new perspective that the Collection offers. Some of the images we have chosen for the exhibition offer subtle challenges to the viewer, for example, Richard Bavin's *The Empty Tomb* is a rare example of art taking you inside the tomb on Easter Sunday. Some of them are far more provocative – I am genuinely looking forward to the reaction to the *Pink Crucifixion* by Craigie Aitchison! If the aim is

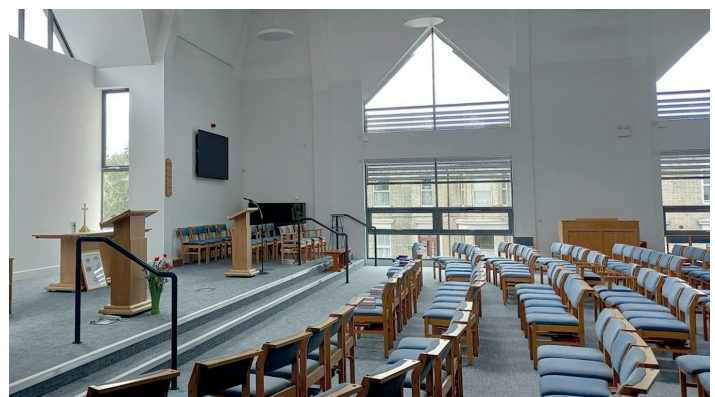
to celebrate and achieve a 'new vision' one surely must be prepared for people's perspectives to be different to one's own. Indeed, the Emmanuel scheme was nothing if not one that brought together differing traditions and views: honouring them without being burdened by them; hearing them without becoming homogenised and bland. As far back as 1972 John Berger recognised, "When a painting is put to use, its meaning is either modified or totally changed" (*Ways of Seeing* by John Berger, 1972, London: Penguin Books). That's surely one of our aims in Eastbourne: to allow the exhibition to create new feelings, ideas and theological insights within people, as a result of seeing these images in a brand new setting.

How does one settle on a hero piece for such an exhibition? A case certainly could be made for either of the images already mentioned, *The Empty Tomb* or *Pink Crucifixion*; I initially wondered about *The Five Thousand* by Eularia Clarke, in which the church is depicted not as new premises or pews, but as a picnic. Now there's a challenge for a congregation not to become too static and trapped inside a new building!

Instead, it was John Brokenshire's *Untitled – Pentecost* which was chosen, capturing the movement and light of God's Spirit in motion; not easy to define and perhaps not even immediately recognisable, but present, active, and catching our attention. A *New Vision* indeed! We look forward to welcoming all visitors to the exhibition in Eastbourne next year, hopefully a time of preconceptions challenged and new possibilities seen.

Rev. Paul Tabraham

Emmanuel Church - Interior



Elsewhere in the Art World

THE NEW FAITH MUSEUM

Former member of the Management Committee, Lucy Newman-Cleave, reports

The Faith Museum recently opened its doors to the public after a long period of planning and gestation. It is part of the wider restoration and redevelopment of The Auckland Project, which has been made possible with a £12.4m grant from The National Lottery Heritage Fund. I worked as curatorial consultant to The Faith Museum from 2019 – 2022 and so it was fascinating to attend the opening and to see the ideas we had worked out on paper in realised form.

The museum is housed in a 14th-century wing of Auckland Castle and in a 21st-century extension by Níall McLaughlin Architects. The displays bring together 250 objects from public and private collections across England, Scotland and Wales which give testament to the ways in which faith has shaped the lives of individuals and communities - and the course of British history - from the time of our earliest ancestors to the present day. Of particular interest to Friends of the Methodist Modern Art Collection will be the upper floor galleries which bring together works by ten contemporary British artists and their personal responses to faith. These include Roger Wagner, Mat Collishaw, The Singh Twins and the late Khadija Saye who died in the Grenfell Tower fire.

The challenge of defining the nature and impact of something as intangible as 'faith' is a foundation of the museum. As a curatorial team, we were clear that it is not possible to tell one definitive story of faith in the British Isles. Nor did we want to adopt a 'comparative religion' approach that risked being reductive. Instead, we developed a 'chrono-thematic' approach, in which objects are grounded by a visual timeline of historic events that runs through the displays, and sometimes grouped together around themes or questions that were urgent at a particular point in time. Each object suggests or reveals something of the faith and beliefs of the person or community to which it belonged. We also tried to include a diverse range of voices of people of faith from across the ages, allowing these voices to define what faith is and how it is expressed.

The Faith Museum is building its own permanent collection and, in the meantime, many items are on loan from partner museums including The British Museum, The Jewish Museum, The Ashmolean Museum, The Bowes Museum, The Imperial War Museum, National



Installation at the Faith Museum © The Auckland Project



Museums of Scotland, The Salvation Army and the National Museum of Football.

There are several objects that bear witness to the emergence of British Methodism. These include a wooden pulpit made around 1760 for a chapel in Teesdale which was built by its congregation of miners, who also donated money to buy the land and stone. John Wesley himself visited the chapel and preached from this pulpit.

Other highlights include the 13th-century Bodleian Bowl, an early example of evidence of Jewish communities in Britain, and an altar hanging made from fragments of embroidered blue velvet that is thought to have been assembled after 1600 from garments worn by pre-Reformation priests, to preserve remnants of the Catholic faith.

Programming will be a central part of the museum going forward, with events, talks and workshops enabling yet more stories to be told and more perspectives to be explored. As such, this opening phase feels very much like a conversation starter, inviting visitors to the museum to consider the relevance of faith in the 21st century, and in particular what it means to them. It will be interesting to visit again over the coming years to see how the collection, the displays and the conversation evolve.

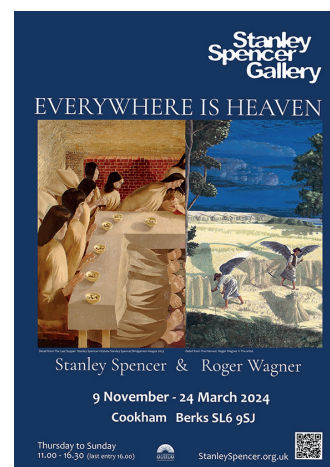
Lucy Newman-Cleave
Curatorial Consultant, The Faith Museum

EVERYWHERE IS HEAVEN – STANLEY SPENCER & ROGER WAGNER

Readers may be interested in a new exhibition opening in November at the Stanley Spencer Gallery, High Street, Cookham, SL6 9SJ.

This exhibition will be the gallery's first collaboration with a living artist, Roger Wagner, who has been deeply inspired by Stanley Spencer's paintings. Both artists have been described as 'visionary geniuses', each seeking to evoke the mystical in everyday experience.

The title of the exhibition references Spencer's own words about his painting, *John Donne arriving in Heaven*, (on loan for this exhibition), and his description of the four figures facing in all directions because 'everywhere is heaven so to speak'.



VATICAN ANNIVERSARY

The Collection celebrated its sixtieth anniversary last year. This year, the Vatican celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the inauguration of its collection of Modern Art. To mark the occasion, His Holiness Pope Francis gave an address to artists in the Sistine Chapel on 23 June. Friends of our Collection may be interested to read this address which was published in full on the Vatican's website vatican.va.

His Holiness noted that "the Church has always had a relationship with artists that can be described as both natural and special. A natural friendship, because artists take seriously the richness of human existence, of our lives and the life of the world, including its contradictions and its tragic aspects.... Artists remind us that the dimension in which we move, even unconsciously, is always that of the Spirit. Your art is like a sail swelling with the wind of the Spirit and propelling us forward. The Church's friendship with the arts is thus something quite natural. Yet, at the same time, it is also a special friendship, especially if we think of the many periods of history that we have traveled together and which are part of the patrimony of everyone, whether believers or non-believers. Mindful of this, let us look forward to a new season of rich fruits in our own time, born of a climate of listening, freedom and respect. People need those fruits, those special fruits."

FORTHCOMING TOURING PROGRAMME

2024

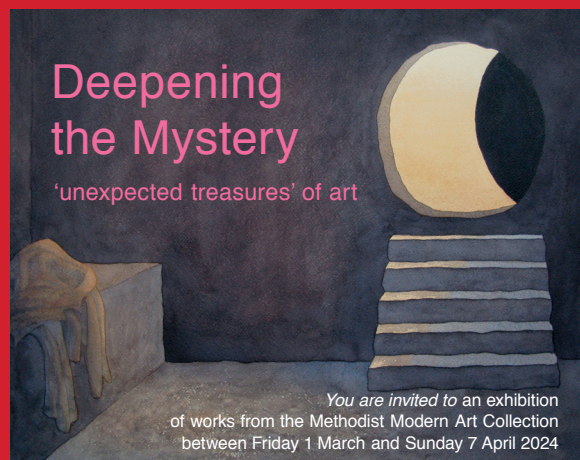
Deepening the Mystery unexpected treasures of art

Welwyn Garden City
1 March to 7 April 2024
Focolare Centre for Unity,
69 Parkway, Welwyn Garden City,
AL8 6JG

Website: www.focolare.org
Contact: art2024@focolare.org.uk
Also Facebook: Art 2024 at WGC

New Vision

Eastbourne
19 May – 13 June 2024
Emmanuel Church,
Upperton Road, Eastbourne,
BN21 1LQ
Website: www.emmanueleastbourne.org.uk



Deepening
the Mystery

'unexpected treasures' of art

You are invited to an exhibition
of works from the Methodist Modern Art Collection
between Friday 1 March and Sunday 7 April 2024

Focolare Centre for Unity

69 Parkway, Welwyn Garden City AL8 6JG

The Methodist Modern Art Collection

'... one of the art world's unexpected treasures, including some of the most powerful and arresting religious art of the 20th and 21st centuries.'

Tim Marlow, Chief Executive and Director of the Design Museum, London,
and former Artistic Director of the Royal Academy

The Collection includes exhibits by key figures of 20th and 21st century British art (such as Graham Sutherland, Elisabeth Frink), as well as works by international artists. The exhibition will include a programme of workshops and lectures for all ages.

For more information, see Facebook: Art 2024 at WGC
or contact art2024@focolare.org.uk

'The Empty Tomb' by Richard Bavin. Image from the Methodist Modern Art Collection
© Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes.

ONLINE GALLERY NEWS

As well as touring, the Collection is, of course, available online via the Methodist Church's website <https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/life-and-faith/the-methodist-modern-art-collection/browse-the-collection/>. We can now share some exciting news about our online gallery.

We will shortly be adding fuller artist biographies, giving the context of the period in which the artists worked and of their own lived experiences. We are fortunate to have a volunteer, David McEvoy, with lots of relevant expertise, who is in the process of researching and drafting these for us, working with Ann Sumner and Katharine Farnham-Dear. The aim is that the

new biographies will be accessible, inclusive and informative, with human interest to appeal to broad audiences and ensure that any lived experiences that might have impacted the artworks are explained. Some of the artists represented in our Collection are very well known, others are less so. A number of our works are by women, by world artists, or by artists whose legacy has been lost, so it is important to give relevant information about them in particular.

We will keep readers updated on this project which we hope will deepen appreciation of our works.



EXHIBITION

Emmanuel Church, Eastbourne presents
**Methodist Modern
Art Collection**

NEW VISION

19 May 2024 - 13 June 2024
Tuesday to Sunday
11am - 4pm

Emmanuel Church

Upperton Road | Eastbourne | BN21 1LQ

The Methodist Modern Art Collection is one of Britain's most important collections of modern religious art, comprising of paintings, prints, drawings, relief and mosaics. The artists include famous names from the British art world of the last 100 years.

Following the opening of its new church building in Upperton Road; Emmanuel Church, Eastbourne is proud to be hosting an exhibition 'New Vision' featuring many pieces from this amazing collection.



Free Entry

emmanueleastbourne.org.uk | 01323 502003