

ANNUAL REPORT

*Report for the year ended
31 August 2020*



The year covered by this report was crowded with profound challenges, loss and grief as the covid pandemic tore through the world. Many of us felt as desperate, frightened and alone as the despairing people in the painting on the front cover, *Storm over the Lake* by Eularia Clarke, who seem completely overwhelmed by the storm-torn sea and only moments from death. But Clarke's vision tells us that we are never alone. The luminous and loving presence of Jesus, right at the front of the painting, gives us comfort and hope as He holds out his calming hand and begins to still the violent waters. It tells us that, however desperate and suffocating life becomes, God is always there to encourage and help us. Inspired by this message, the Management Committee tried to use the Methodist Modern Art Collection during this year to encourage and edify people struggling in a time of the darkest storms.

Cover Image:

Eularia Clarke's *Storm over the Lake*

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WHAT IS 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 OBE, Chief Executive and Director of the Design Museum, London, and former Artistic Director of the Royal Academy.

The Methodist Modern Art Collection comprises paintings, limited edition prints and reliefs. In the early 1960s Dr John Morel Gibbs, a Methodist layman and art collector, realised that many Nonconformists had little appreciation of the insights that contemporary artists could bring to the Christian story. He decided to create a collection of prime examples of such work that could be toured around the country. He did this with the help of the Revd Douglas Wollen who was a Methodist minister. The works became the core of the present Collection and include key figures from British 20th century art, such as Edward Burra, Elisabeth Frink, Patrick Heron and Graham Sutherland.

In more recent years the Collection has acquired works by artists from the world church, including Jyoti Sahi from India, Sadao Watanabe from Japan and John Muafangejo from Namibia. Still expanding, works by contemporary artists such as Craigie Aitchison, Peter Howson, Susie Hamilton, Clive Hicks-Jenkins and Maggi Hambling have been acquired, and today the Collection comprises 50 paintings, prints, drawings, relief and mosaic works. It is valued as a key resource for mission and evangelism, whether on a denominational or an ecumenical basis.

The Collection, in whole or in part, is available as a touring exhibition. It has travelled widely and has appeared in town and city galleries, cathedrals, churches and schools over the years. When not on tour, it is held in a secure storage facility.

The Methodist Church is the fourth largest Christian Church in Britain, after the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches, and the Church of Scotland. It has more than 4,004 churches and a total membership of approximately 164,000 people. World Methodism is made up of 80 Methodist, Wesleyan and related Uniting and United Churches in 138 countries. Global membership numbers some 80 million.

EXHIBITIONS OF THE COLLECTION THIS YEAR

The Collection was not physically exhibited during the year covered by this report. In accordance with recommendations of the Practice and Governance Reviews of 2018, a Rejuvenation Pause began in the summer of 2019. Further details of this are on page 8.

Towards the end of the Rejuvenation Pause in March 2020, twenty of the works were due to be exhibited at an exhibition organised by Bewdley Churches Together. However, the announcement of the first Covid-19 lockdown measures meant this had to be cancelled a few days before the planned opening. After a further postponement, it took place in March and April 2022.

The Management Committee remained committed to using the Collection as a tool for ministry and mission, and like churches across the world, they embraced digital means. When lockdown measures forced church buildings to close before Holy Week and Easter 2020, we were still able to provide some images to help Christians in lockdown to mark the festival at home. 'Paintings, Poems and Prayers for Holy Week 2020', was based around nine pictures from the Collection and a new work by Caroline Waterlow - one for each day from Palm Sunday to the Tuesday after Easter. This resource, nicknamed PPP, was circulated to the Friends and more widely.

We hoped that PPP would help personal devotion, and it did. One person said, 'This is the best devotional aid for Holy Week and Easter that I have ever, in my long life, seen. I shall be using it and recommending it... How I'd love.... to show everyone I meet (not much use these days, of course, when I don't

meet anyone!)'. Another said, 'On a daily basis this is the right amount to contemplate in analysis and faith. These are certainly very powerful images.' Others called it 'lovely', 'really helpful', 'powerful' and 'truly special'.

The art and poems clearly spoke to many people: 'I found the Good Friday picture and David Subacchi's poem, and the Sutherland painting particularly powerful among what is a striking set of images. I've also been struck by the line: 'This haunting afterglow of forgotten humanity' from 'Ecce Homo' ... - a powerful reminder that we must not allow such failing of memory of so many forms of human loss and sacrifice: Christ's, those lost in war, and indeed those lost in the current crisis.' And 'There are some wonderful pictures here, illustrative of Christianity's centuries-old ability to inspire fine art - and with fine poems to match.' And again, 'How powerful these images are, and very helpful and moving reflections and poems.'

As well as its use for personal devotion, we were delighted that clergy and others shared PPP more widely, telling us: 'This is a great resource. It's so good to have paintings and poetry, reaching parts/people our preaching/reflecting doesn't always... I've asked [our superintendent] to include it on the circuit website, and I'll forward it to everyone on email in 'my' three churches.' And, 'This excellent production can be used for personal reflection or more widely with other groups perhaps for virtual meetings supported by software such as Zoom.' And 'We have shared these with our church family. We're only too glad to have these resources to use this year - how can we

possibly cancel Easter?!’ And ‘This resource you have created is great! [I want] to use the images and some of the text in my blog that I have started by way of holding the local churches together during the pandemic.’ And again ‘Thank you so much for the wonderful art and poetry suggestions for Holy Week. I have sent it to the Ministers and a couple of House Groups and the feedback is very good.’

As an electronic resource, PPP could ‘go global’: reaching people outside the UK who might never see one of our exhibitions. A chaplain at Hong Kong Cathedral called it ‘a beautiful and thought-provoking collection of art and poetry’, and a Vice Dean at Grace Cathedral San Francisco said ‘Thank you so much for this! I’m going to share it with a number of my clergy colleagues. [we are] working hard at how to be church in the midst of all this - and how to do Holy Week in particular’. Another Californian resident said ‘Thank you for sending these exceptional works of art on the Easter story. I have never experienced anything quite like them’. Elsewhere, PPP was appreciated by the New Norcia Benedictine Community in Western Australia, and the Musical Director of the Central United Church, Brandon, Manitoba, Canada who called it a ‘remarkable set of paintings, poems and commentaries’, adding, ‘I found the paintings very thought provoking and, in some cases disturbing, and very much appreciated the marriage of the images with a poetic response and a commentary bringing context and further illumination.’

Our favourite piece of feedback though may be ‘the use of some MMAC pictures just makes me appreciate [that] it is an asset in terms of mission, outreach and touching spiritual chords. It is certainly not just an art collection.’

The Resource remains available on our website.

PPP, our online resource for Easter 2020 and beyond



STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The owner of the Collection is the Methodist Council but responsibility for its care and development is devolved to a Management Committee. The aims of this Management Committee are to care for, develop and promote the Collection, in order to encourage people to enter into conversations about God in Christ in the contemporary world and to offer material that can bring new dimensions to study, worship and spiritual life. The vision statement is: 'The Methodist Modern Art Collection – Seeing the Spiritual'.

The Management Committee normally meets three times a year. An Away Day took place at Victoria Methodist Church Bristol on 24 September 2019. Amongst various useful items was the drawing up of a risk register, not least in terms of the operational capacity of the volunteer Management Committee. After the Away Day and one meeting at Methodist Church House in January 2020, future meetings during the year were held on Zoom. Going forward the Management Committee intends to have just one in person meeting each year for their Away Day, and all other Management Committee meetings will be held on Zoom to reduce the costs and environmental impact of travelling to meetings. In addition, it is important that at least one meeting of the link members of the Committee with potential borrowers of the Collection and any related venue assessments take place 'in person'.

During the year, the Collection remained in temporary storage at Upper Heyford.

Management Committee members during the year were Ann Sumner (Chair), Ian Baker (Friends Secretary), Katharine Farnham-Dear, Ruth Gee, John Gibbs, Rebecca Gibbs, Graham Kent, Sarah Middleton, Corinne Miller, Lucy Newman Cleeve, and Simon Sorokos. John Gibbs attended his last meeting as a committee member in November 2019 and Katharine Farnham-Dear and Corinne Miller joined as new members in February 2020. Ann Sumner was on leave of absence from November 2019 for ten months and Sarah Middleton served as Interim Chair from April to August 2020.

John Gibbs, former Chair of the Management Committee, who retired this year.



As volunteers, all members contributed significantly to the work of the Collection by offering their differing professional expertise and experience over what was certainly a challenging year and compounded by the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, we were served well by Connexional Team members Jo Hibbard (Director of Engagement) and Liz Millard (Senior Administrator, Mission Department).

The retirement of John Gibbs cannot pass without paying tribute to his very significant contribution to the work of the Collection serving for over two decades as Chair of the former Managing Trustees and then of the Management Committee of the Collection. He oversaw the expansion of the Collection, fostered its value as a tool of mission and helped many people and places to realise the significance of the visual arts in spiritual matters. The Methodist Church is grateful for his distinguished service.

It was with sadness that news was received in April 2020 of the death of Revd Dr John Taylor a former President of the Methodist Conference. He was appointed a Managing Trustee of the Collection in 1998 and served for nearly ten years after which he and Margaret, his wife, continued to be generous Friends.

Two new Management Committee members were interviewed and recruited by a panel in January 2020: Katharine Farnham-Dear and Corinne Miller were then ratified by the Methodist Council in March. Katharine offers her skills and enthusiasm for creating publications about the Collection, and also a legal background.

She would shadow Bob Williams for the role of Friends Newsletter Editor, with a view to taking over the editorship from Autumn 2021. Corinne, a former Head of Culture, Arts and Heritage for Wolverhampton City Council, offers her thirty years of experience in collections care, management and interpretation. Both Katharine and Corinne are well acquainted with the Collection and keen to serve the Church.

In March 2020, new Terms of Reference for the Management Committee were agreed by the Methodist Council, based on the Governance Review led by Professor Mike Tooby in the previous budget year.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE DURING THE YEAR

Financial Position

The Methodist Church provides a budget to cover operational expenses for the Collection such as the storage and the cost of Management Committee meetings and the initial visit to possible exhibition venues. The Church also pays the insurance premium. The conservation programme was funded by a generous grant agreed in February 2019 by the Strategy and Resources Committee of the Methodist Council.

Usually, additional funds needed for conservation of the Collection, as well as for the production of new interpretative materials, etc. come from the income generated by the Management Committee from the loan fees, sale of publications and other sources. This income is held in a special fund at Methodist Church House

and a statement of the account is presented at the end of this Report. Monies obtained or donated specifically for the acquisition of new works are held in the same fund but monitored separately. No works were purchased during the year. The design costs for both the Annual Report and the Friends Newsletters are covered by the generous support of Phil Allison of Cultureshock Media. We are indebted to members of the Finance Team at Methodist Church House for their assistance with our financial affairs.

Conservation of the Collection

In accordance with recommendations of the Practice and Governance Reviews of 2018, a Rejuvenation Pause began in the summer of 2019. This enabled urgent conservation

Helen Davies, of Ruth Bubb's Studio, retouching Eularia Clarke's *Storm over the Lake*. Photo: Ruth Bubb



work to key paintings based on in-depth surveys, consolidating paint and cleaning surfaces, also re-framing and glazing where required to ensure works can safely be loaned out for exhibition and preserved for future generations. The Methodist Council agreed a substantial sum towards this programme, as well as funding for interim storage in Upper Heyford.

Conservator Ruth Bubb (and where Covid -19 lockdowns permitted, her team) conserved the majority of the artworks with works on paper conservator, Louise Vaile, working on the watercolours. Typical work on the paintings included cleaning, repairing damage to the surfaces, re-varnishing with conservation-grade varnish, and re-stretching the canvases.

Reframing the works played a major role in their conservation. More robust moulding is better able to withstand frequent packing, transportation and unpacking. Increased

frame depth and recessed rigid twin wall polycarbonate backboards are designed to reduce the most common types of damage previously done to the works. Glazing with museum quality low reflect acrylic glazing means that in low light the protective glazing is virtually invisible.

Appointment of Professional Registrars

At the beginning of the year the Management Committee recognised the significant capacity pressures facing those volunteer committee members with professional art management experience. It was felt there was a need to recruit a freelance Collection Registrar on a short term contract basis to undertake work on a number of specific areas of the Collection. These covered the completion of the conservation programme, practical aspects of cases, frames and fixings, transport arrangements, handling of works for exhibitions, review of exhibition documentation, and the adoption of the MODES Collection Management System for recording information and the location of our works. This Collection Management System is already used by the four accredited Methodist museums.

This took some months to progress in terms of securing approval, refining the job description, and sorting out the advertisement channels. The role was advertised in July 2020 via the online job portals of the UK Registrars Group and the University of Leicester Department of Museum Studies Jobs Desk and an



Helen Davis, of Ruth Bubb's Studio, retouching John Reilly's *The Feeding of the Five Thousand*.
Photo: Ruth Bubb

Advert for new posters of popular works from the Collection.

NEW! METHODIST MODERN ART COLLECTION POSTERS

Choose from **8** designs

A2 size
420mm x 594mm

Ideal as a focus for personal reflection and to stimulate conversation about what Christ and faith mean to you

Purchase your very own piece of dynamic artwork
£7.99 each plus p+p
Now available from
www.methodistpublishing.org.uk

Methodist **Modern** Art Collection

The Methodist Church

encouraging number of applications were received. Interviews took place in August and resulted in the appointment of Matassa Toffolo after the year end in September 2020. A report on their work will be provided in the Annual Report for the year ended 31 August 2021.

Resources and Publicity

The online production of 'Paintings, Poems and Prayers for Holy Week 2020' was certainly the highlight of work related to resources and publicity and as described fully on Page 4. There were two other additions during the year.

Methodist Publishing produced A2 size posters of eight of the more popular works in the Collection for purchase by individuals and for sale at exhibitions or other events. They complement the existing publications of 'Seeing the Spiritual – A Guide to the

Collection' and the 24 Postcards Booklet already in their catalogue.

The Management Committee also commissioned two large pop up display banners covering a short history and the purpose of the Collection so these important aspects of the Collection can be communicated to visitors on arrival at exhibitions. They are provided to venues in addition to their chosen works and other publicity materials.

The quality of these two new resources is excellent and they have been well received. We are very grateful to those members of the Management Committee, staff at Methodist Church House and those at Methodist Publishing involved in their production.

Friends of the Collection

There was a small ebb and flow in the number of Friends with losses arising from



New pop up display banners for future exhibitions.

changes in personal circumstances or deaths while those joining came from existing Friends making known our work to others. We were delighted that the President of Conference, Revd Dr Barbara Glasson, agreed to serve as a Patron during her term of office.

The finances remained sound and received a modest one off income boost. A

review undertaken by Ian Baker as Secretary during the home based restrictions of lockdown 1 revealed that some donations due under standing order arrangements had not been credited in recent years. Failures in the automated payment systems of some banks were the main cause and, with the help of the small number of Friends involved, these missed donations were largely recovered.

We remain extremely grateful to all who support the work of the Friends and act as ambassadors for it in wider church and community circles. Their personal approach and links are undoubtedly the most effective means of increasing the number of Friends. The Secretary is always happy to supply copies of the *Befriend the Collection* leaflet and other information such as the latest *Newsletter* to help recruitments.

In the absence of exhibitions there were no public opportunities to promote the work of the Friends except for a two part Friends event in Bristol in October 2019. It started at Victoria Methodist Church with a lecture by Ann Sumner entitled *Hope and Reconciliation represented in the Methodist Modern Art Collection* covering the impact of the two World Wars on artists and with reference to works in the Collection. Those attending then made their way to the adjacent Royal West of England Academy for a tour of their annual Open Exhibition. Most of the 30 people present were not Friends so the event served to widen the awareness of the Collection. Our thanks go to members of Victoria Methodist Church and staff of the Royal West of England Academy in helping with the arrangements and to both Ann Sumner and Rebecca Gibbs who took the lead in organising this event.

Two issues of the Newsletter were produced during the year by Bob Williams in his capacity as Newsletter Editor. Despite the absence of exhibition reports he had little difficulty filling space with news of the Collection such as the progress on the conservation programme, poems, book

reviews and details of other art related topics and events across a broad geographical area. While he led the publication process, this was in conjunction with our colleagues at CultureshockMedia. As always we value the partnership with them and particularly when Covid-19 presented some operational challenges for their business.

Relationships with other bodies

We continued our business relationship with the National Conservation Service in Upper



Michael Edmond's *The Cross over the City* was used in an online Wesley House course during lockdown. © Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes. The Methodist Church Registered Charity no. 1132208.



Jyoti Sahi's *Dalit Madonna* was used in an online Interfaith Study Event. © Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes. The Methodist Church Registered Charity no. 1132208.

Heyford to provide a temporary storage home for the Collection.

Greetings and congratulations were conveyed to ArtServe's Tenth Anniversary Festival in Swanwick Derbyshire during October 2019 by Sarah Middleton who led a workshop there, exploring how postcards and posters from the Collection can aid and inspire worship. Wesley House Cambridge hosted two further six-week sessions of the 'Drawing Closer to God' online course, featuring works from the Collection. The

second of these took place during Spring 2020 lockdown and poignant responses to *The Cross over the City* by Michael Edmonds were recorded in particular. The *Dalit Madonna* painting was part of a Zoom study event led by St Philips Interfaith Centre in Leicester in June 2020. The theme was 'Indian Christian Art', looking at inculturation and how Indian Christian artists, including Jyoti Sahi, have adapted Buddhist and Hindu iconography for their works.

PLANS FOR FUTURE PERIODS

Governance Mission Committee Group Convenor, Rebecca Gibbs, has completed an initial options paper in relation to the discussions of a new home for the Collection. The Committee will be looking at Church and non-Church bodies as potential new homes, including universities and art galleries that could provide technical and curatorial support, as the Management Committee recognises that capacity is a key issue for the volunteer body.

Until a new home is identified, approved by the Methodist Council, and made ready to receive the works (which is likely to take at least three years), contingency plans to care for the works appropriately in the interim and to continue to tour the Collection are being discussed.

It was agreed that the work on a new Collections Development Policy, a Mission and Interpretation Policy and an Exhibitions Policy should be researched and written for approval by the Methodist Council, ensuring

that the Collection met National Museum Accreditation standards in line with any potential new home partner.

Jo Hibbard approached the Coventry and Nuneaton Circuit on behalf of the Management Committee about the opportunity of lending Collection works to Coventry as part of their City of Culture programme in 2021. An exploratory meeting was agreed with the Coventry & Nuneaton Methodist Circuit and staff of Coventry Cathedral who had expressed interest in working together in this way.

Sarah Middleton

**Interim Chair from April 2020
to August 2020**

*(appointment arising from leave of absence
of the Chair between November 2019 and
August 2020)*

February 2022

METHODIST MODERN ART COLLECTION

Income and Expenditure Account

	Year ending 31 August 2019	Year ending 31 August 2020
INCOME (£)		
Sales of literature, loan fees, grants and donations	8,017.60	2,202.27
Interest	32.00	41.96
Total	8,049.60	2,244.23
EXPENDITURE		
Production of interpretative material, conservation work	12,899.29	1,013.23
Surplus (Deficit) for the year	(4,849.69)	1,231.00
Balance b/fwd - 1 Sept	22,481.16	17,631.47
Balance c/fwd - 31 Aug	17,631.47	18,862.47

For an update on the locations of future exhibitions and for information on borrowing the Collection please visit our website at www.methodist.org.uk/artcollection

or simply search
'Methodist Modern Art Collection'

Alternatively, contact the Administrator at the following address:

Liz Millard
Methodist Modern Art Collection
Methodist Church House
25 Marylebone Road
London
NW1 5JR

Email: artcollection@methodistchurch.org.uk
Tel: 020 7467 5214