

The Conservation and Cleaning of Stained Glass, Painted Glass, and Leaded Glazing



Stained glass, painted glass, and plain glazing is often admired by congregations and visitors at churches for their beauty, craftsmanship and ability to visualise biblical narratives and inspire devotion.

In England, we are fortunate to have a wealth of stained glass and historic glazing which survives from as early as the 12th century up until the present day. Due to the unique craftsmanship of each window, it is important that they are well-maintained so that they can be preserved for future generations.

Inspecting your stained and leaded glass

Inspecting your windows on a regular basis is one way your church can help preserve the historic glass and prevent decay. ChurchCare have published guidance on their [website](#) which details how you can go about doing this. The guidance is particularly useful as it draws attention to what signs you should look out for to monitor the condition of your windows. This ranges from common structural defects, environmental factors contributing to decay and problems caused by physical damage. In the event you identify a potential problem with your stained glass or leaded windows, you should aim to talk to your inspecting architect for advice, as they will be able to help you identify what has caused the damage. Depending on your architect's professional opinion, it may then be necessary to appoint an accredited stained glass conservator to repair or treat the windows.

Cleaning stained and leaded glass

Generally, stained glass, painted glass, and leaded windows do not need regular cleaning. However, overtime deposits can build up on the external and internal surfaces. This can happen due to a wide range of reasons, including environmental factors, pollutants and organic material. For instance, rainwater can carry sediment onto the glass, or organic material (such as

algae, moss, or lichens) can grow on the glass. Bird guano is also another frequent problem. In some cases, these deposits can cause considerable damage to the glass and painted decoration if left untreated. In these instances, it may be necessary to consult an accredited stained glass conservator for advice.

Due to the delicate nature of stained and leaded glass, it is essential that you do not attempt to clean it yourself. Only accredited stained conservators should clean your stained glass, painted glass, and leaded windows.

Extra caution will also need to be taken when cleaning areas within your church that are near stained and leaded glass. For instance, when in the vicinity of historic glass, you should avoid using abrasive cloths and pads, wire wool, household cleaners, chemicals, and acids because accidental contact could harm the glass. Removing cobwebs and clearing dust around windows should also be done with the utmost care to ensure that dusters do not touch the glass.

ChurchCare Conservation Grants

If your church identifies stained glass, painted glass, or plain leaded glazing that needs to be conserved, you may be interested in looking at ChurchCare's [Conservation Report Grant](#) or their [Conservation Grant](#). These grants aim to fund conservation reports and work on objects of artistic, historical, or archaeological significance.

If this is something you would be interested in and would like support from the Church Buildings Team, please get in contact with us via the Church Buildings Team email churches@cofe-worcester.org.uk.