

# St Ethelberga's Centre for Peace and Reconciliation



When the IRA detonated a huge bomb on Bishopsgate in the City of London in 1993, St Ethelberga's Church was one of the buildings which were massively damaged. After the church was rebuilt, the rear courtyard was left derelict for some time until the Director of the Centre for Reconciliation and Peace, which operates there, commissioned the creation of an additional very special meeting place within the courtyard. Design Energetics architect Jon Allen, working in association with Keith Critchlow (London) and Tarik Alireza (Jeddah), was the project architect.

The works comprise landscaping of the rear courtyard with mosaic tiles from North Africa, at the centre of which sits 'The Tent' a harmonious and elegant space inspired by Bedouin design ideals, as well as the principles of sacred (integrative) geometry. Conceived as a multi-faith meeting centre, it is sixteen-sided with a cushioned bench encircling the inside so that all are equal when seated inside.



The goat's hair inner and outer skins, made to a traditional striped design in Yeddah, are stretched over a metal frame. Stained glass windows made in York and English oak doors and gates made in London complement this. Many of the joinery timbers were specially chosen and tuned to enhance the energetics within the space. Thus the courtyard at St Ethelberga's became an energetic haven, quietly holding its beneficial resonance amongst the high-rise commercial bustle of the City of London (the Swiss-RE building or 'Gerkhin' is visible from the courtyard). It is a remarkable transformation indeed.

The new centre was formally opened in May 2006 by HRH the Prince of Wales and nine Faith leaders, with expressions of support sent by Desmond Tutu, Bill Clinton and Bono.