

Strengthening peace in the United Kingdom

St Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation and Peace

The Church of St Ethelburga the Virgin stood for six hundred years, surviving the Great Fire of London and the Blitz, before it was reduced to ruins by the Bishopsgate IRA bomb of 1993. But St Ethelburga's rose from the rubble, reconstructed as a centre for reconciliation and peace, and in 2009 it benefits from a QPSW peacemaker for the first time.

1993 saw the destruction of the building, but not the spirit, of St Ethelburga's. The Bishop of London, Richard Chartres, joined with the late Cardinal Basil Hume and other church leaders from different denominations to devise a new blueprint for the church, and the resulting vision – in the words of Cardinal Hume, of “a centre of living prayer” – came to fruition with the opening of the new centre in November 2002, eight-and-a-half years after the destruction wrought by the Bishopsgate bomb.

Its renewed mission – to find new ways of understanding faith as a resource for transforming and preventing conflict – sees St Ethelburga's host an imaginative range of workshops, seminars, training and discussion days, music, literary and art events, as well as meditation and shared worship for people of all faith backgrounds, from courses in Islamic Calligraphy to practical workshops dealing with reconciliation.

Through all these activities and more, the new Centre works to

understand and celebrate diversity and peace among religious groups, individuals, communities and organisations.

It has become a unique space right at the heart of London's busy financial district, and has built links with the businesses and organisations which surround it, in order to help employers recognise and engage positively with religious issues, as part of the Business of Faith project. It provides useful handbooks on topics such as providing prayer space in the workplace, religious diversity training, and how to support Muslim employees during Ramadan.

St Ethelburga's also acts as a space for meditation and reflection. A beautiful sixteen-sided Bedouin-inspired Tent (above) now occupies the former wasteland created behind the church by the bomb; inside, visitors are invited to come together to share their faith experiences, build dialogue, and study together. Designed by a professor of sacred geometry, the tent expresses the values



of non-violence, inclusivity and compassion at the heart of all religious traditions.

The destruction of 1993 has given way to the fulfilment of an inspiring vision of creativity, spirituality and, above all, peace.

“We can be human only together;
we can be safe and secure only together;
we can prosper only together.”

Archbishop Desmond Tutu
Message of support on the opening of St Ethelburga's, 2002

Find out more about Quaker peacemakers – visit
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