

**PRESS ENQUIRIES**

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PRESS RELEASE**GENESIS FLOATING CHURCH IS DELIVERED****10/2020**

The Diocese of London has realised its vision for the St Columba East London community, with Genesis: a new, wide-beam canal boat crowned with an innovative pop-up roof, designed by London-based architects Denizen Works. The barge, commissioned as a mobile assembly space, is moored on the River Lee Navigation alongside Here East at Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, where it will remain for three to five years before reaching other canalside communities.

Developed in close collaboration with Turks Shipyard and naval architect Tony Tucker, Genesis is conceived as a modern-day mission, developing links with growing communities living around the canal in East London over the next 25 years. Its mobility and flexibility of programme will ensure lasting benefits to the diverse neighbourhoods at key regeneration sites, which include Sweetwater, Eastwick and Hackney Wick. As well as serving as a space for a church, the barge is designed with a bespoke and adaptable interior to accommodate a wide range of community activities and services, including parent and toddler groups, pilates classes and art classes, interfaith celebrations, lunch and supper clubs, live music, employment training, support workshops and counselling.

Christened Genesis after the first book of the Bible, and alluding to a narrative of creation, the boat will initially serve the two existing parishes of St Paul Old Ford and St Mary of Eton in the Stepney Episcopal Area, with the ambition to reach new communities and bridge shifting parishes in the areas of the Diocese of London undergoing urban growth or change. Named St Columba East, this new community will be led by the Reverend Dave Pilkington, who was ordained in June 2019 and served on Genesis' predecessor, the interim vessel Elsdale II.

Denizen Works' innovative design features a kinetic roof inspired by organ bellows. It has been crafted from concertinaed, translucent sailcloth, and is lined with LED lights and powered by hydraulic rams. When fully raised, the roof will transform the barge from compact and low-lying, allowing it to pass beneath bridges, expanding into an illuminated beacon designed to capture attention and attract footfall to the mission. Operated by the touch of a button, in its raised position it increases the head height of the barge to 3.6m at its highest point, creating a dramatic interior which is accessible to all.

The floating hub is boarded midship; on one side of the entrance is the main assembly space, with services (kitchen, office and toilet) towards the rear of the barge. Inside, Denizen Works has created an elegant and seamless interior of light plywood walls and green linoleum floor. The expansive assembly space under the kinetic roof is designed to take a capacity of 40 people seated and up to 60 passengers when stationary. It has built-in Valchromat benches providing seating and storage along the perimeter of the room, and is fitted with marine-style bulkhead lights to create a cosy atmosphere. The furniture, designed by local design company Plyco, includes custom-designed plywood stools and foldable tables for use at public events and services. An altar designed by Denizen Works featuring an angled-front face like the prow of a boat has also been fabricated, and is designed to fold down into a flat

pack for easy storage.

The sail stitching used on the bellows has been applied as a motif throughout the design and is carried through to a number of interior details, including aluminium screens to the windows, the design of which is inspired by rood screens; the pattern of the tiling in the kitchen; and in the form of the legs of the bespoke furniture. The motif is repeated externally in a frieze painted by a local signwriter that wraps the face of the kinetic roof.

Designed with flexibility to accommodate an array of activities, Genesis will also be available for private hire and for use by local schools, to ensure that it is a self-sustaining asset to the communities it serves.

Murray Kerr, Denizen Works:

"The project showcases what we think our practice is best at: providing innovative and joyful design solutions by drawing on the skills of a close network of collaborators."

"As a mixed-use faith and community project, we feel the boat could be a first step in our thinking about how communities can continue to be served as they grow and move away from traditional locations and building types. Most of all, the project demonstrates what can be achieved when a brave client with an exciting brief believes in an ambitious design team."

The Bishop of London, the Rt Rev and Rt Hon Dame Sarah Mullally DBE, said:

"The delivery of the vessel marks the completion of an ambitious four-year project to create a unique resource that will inspire new and creative ministry in communities throughout East London. It is only the beginning for the vessel, Genesis, which starts its journey in the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park but will move along the canals of East London in the years to come, inspiring dynamic religious growth across this diverse and ever-changing city."

"I would like to thank all those involved in the project: from those at the Diocese who conceived of the idea, to the funders, the imaginative architects at Denizen Works, those at Turks Boatyard who worked so hard to perfect the vessel and of course, to those from the parishes of St Paul Old Ford and St Mary of Eton who have been working with the community to lay the groundwork for this special day."

The Rev Dave Pilkington said:

"The sight of Genesis on the banks of the River Lee Navigation is fantastic. With so many changes happening in Hackney Wick and Fish Island, we must constantly seek ways to help build community, so I am pleased to report that St Columba East is a community going from strength to strength. With Genesis now in situ we can look forward to the next phase of growth, now with a space to support our desire for action, reflection and contemplation."

"Despite the milestone of delivery being met, current circumstances require that we take the necessary steps to manage risk and protect people before opening our doors. We will undertake this with the careful consideration it requires."

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NOTES TO EDITORS

Location:	Here East, Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, Stratford, London E15 2GW
Area:	45m ²
Measurements:	8.5m length, 3.6m height (when kinetic roof is raised)
Construction Cost:	£650,000
Client:	Diocese of London
Architect:	Denizen Works
Naval architect:	Tucker Designs
Boatbuilder:	Turks Shipyard
Sailmakers:	Jeckells
Furniture:	Plyco
Interior fit-out:	ANR Developments
Photography:	© Gilbert McCarragher

Denizen Works is a collaborative studio based in London and Glasgow, developing projects of different scales and typologies. Since its inception in 2011, the practice has worked on a wide range of projects, from a mobile sauna in Finland to a teahouse in the foothills of Mount Everest. Current work includes a vertical gallery on the north coast of Scotland for the National Trust for Scotland; 70 homes for Brick By Brick in Croydon; and numerous new-build houses across the UK.

Denizen Works has won multiple awards, including the RIBA 2014 Stephen Lawrence Prize for House No.7, and has been published internationally. The practice was included in the Architecture Foundation book "New Architects 3", which recognises the best 100 practices established within the last decade.

denizenworks.com



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