

Congregation Beit Simchat Torah

Synagogue furniture



Luke Hughes

Furniture in Architecture

The sanctuary with rows of stacking benches and chairs radiating towards central light well, credit: Esteban Kuriel







Sole Gay Synagogue Robust at 25

Congregation Beth Simchat Torah Has Outgrown Its Home

By NARRING BRESMAN
In 1974, Jacob Goldstein, a New York-born, gay man, joined a tiny clandestine congregation in The Village Voice and was "Gay Congregation" (Friday Night Service).

Today, the group, named up at the time as the "Gay Synagogue," has moved to 14 West 11th Street, Manhattan, but what he had believed in then, he still believes in now. "I'm proud to be a Jew," he says, "and I'm proud to be a gay man."

Twenty-five years later, the group has grown to around 100 members. The first year's funds were used to rent a room in the Village Voice building, and the group has since moved to its own space.

For a quarter-century, a place to be 'openly gay and proudly Jewish.'

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AIDS & SOCIAL SECURITY

Persons with AIDS may now begin the application procedure for Social Security disability benefits through a teleclaims service. For the present, the service is available to residents of New York, New Jersey and Puerto Rico by calling one of the numbers below. After their call is answered, a few questions will be asked and within two days, a follow-up call will be made to the patient; completed forms will then be sent to the patient which will only need to be signed and mailed back to Social Security. No personal appearance by the patient at a Social Security claims office will be necessary.

If you need this assistance and live in an area not covered by these phone numbers, please call the Manhattan number for information. All numbers are in the 212 area code unless otherwise noted.

The Gay Synagogue בית שמחת תורה

High Holy Days Service

Rabbi Jacobson

Thursday, Sept 16	8 p.m.
Friday, 17	10 a.m.
Wednesday 18	10 a.m.
Wednesday 25	6 p.m.
Thursday 26	10 a.m.

348 WEST 14th ST.

No Tickets required
ALL ARE WELCOME



CONGREGATION BETH SIMCHAT TORAH
14 WEST 11TH STREET, NEW YORK, NY 10011-3001

PHONE: 212-254-1000

FAX: 212-254-1000

TELETYPE: 212-254-1000

14 WEST 11TH STREET, NEW YORK, NY 10011-3001

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151 BANK ST.



Congregation Beit Simchat Torah (CBST) is thought to be the largest LGBT+ synagogue in the world. Founded in 1973 to cater to members from across the state of New York and beyond. After 43 years, the synagogue concluded its search for a permanent home in 2016, purchasing the ground floor and basement of Cas Gilbert's iconic 1929 Midtown Manhattan building.

Set over three floors the synagogue combines worship, social and activism facilities to continue the synagogue's historic work as part of New York's LGBT+ Jewish community.

The space was renovated by New York firm Architecture Research Office (ARO), who set out to reinterpret trends in Judaism by creating a contemporary space for worship. *Luke Hughes* was commissioned to design bespoke furniture for both the sanctuary and chapel.

Cover: Exterior view of CBST Synagogue, credit: Esteban Kuriel

Opposite: Custom wallpaper depicting the first 43 years of CBST Synagogue, in the gender-neutral restrooms

Below: CBST members at the 1979 Gay Rights March on Washington, credit: CBST Synagogue

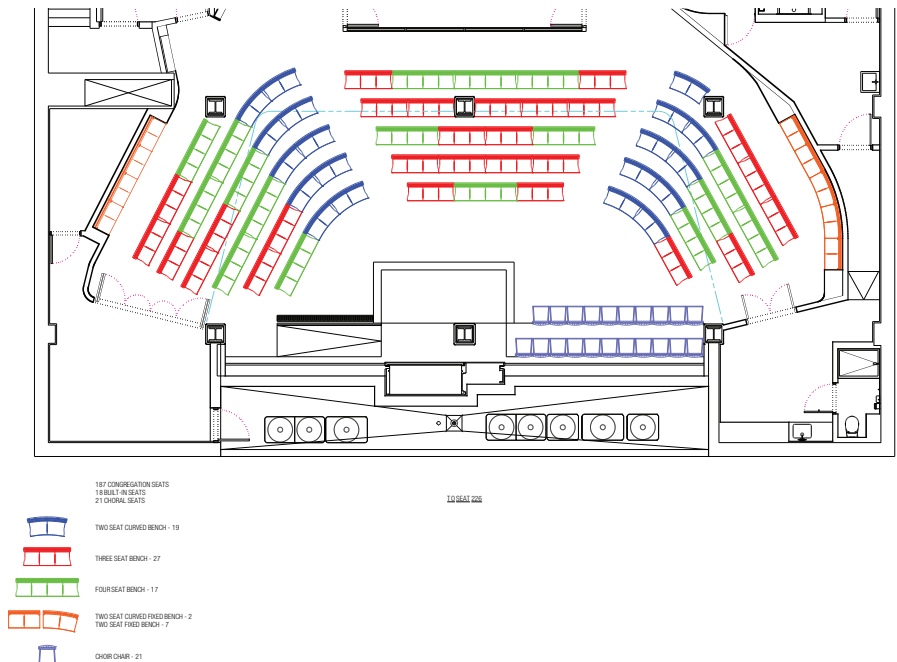


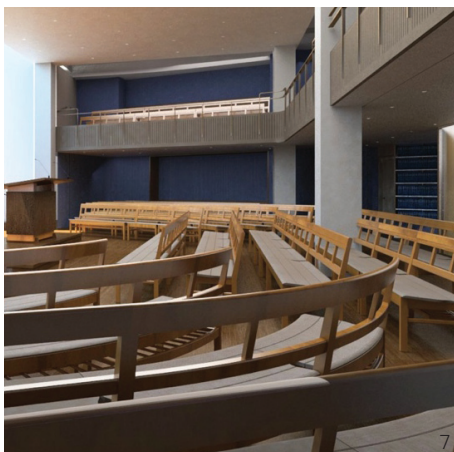
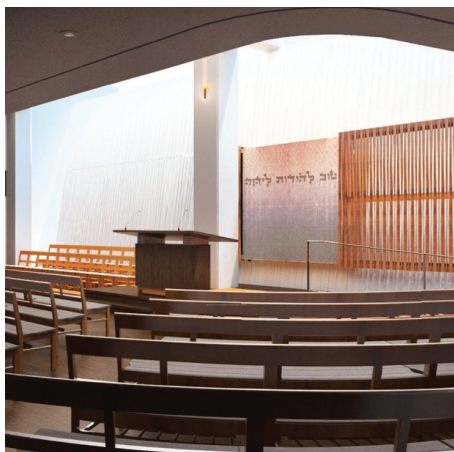
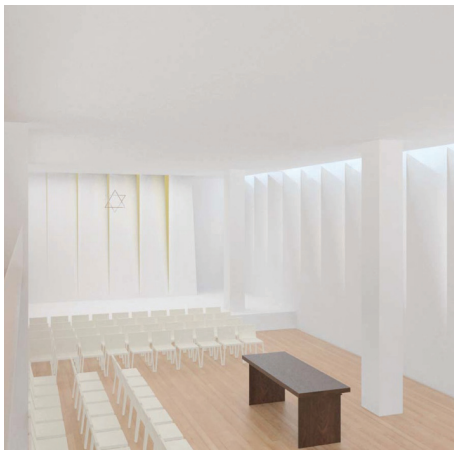
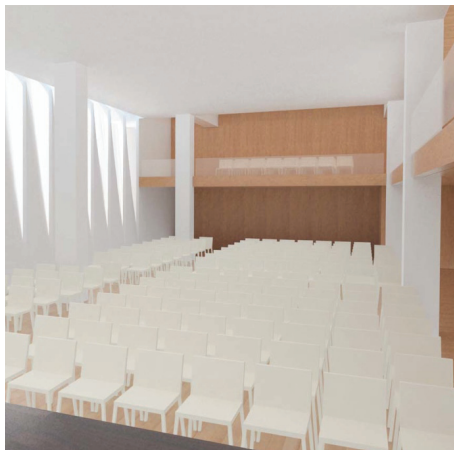
ARO's finished design undoubtedly represents CBST's core values of transparency, intimacy and flexibility. In the light-filled sanctuary where services are held, a sloping glass-fibre reinforced concrete wall slants backwards to reveal a skylight, dramatically illuminating the room and allowing congregants to observe the shifting of light and shadow.

The *Luke Hughes* team designed bespoke curved and straight benches to accommodate 299 congregants, arranged around the striking light wall and bimah to create an intimate feel. No seat is more than 35 feet away. All benches are upholstered in a velvety suede-effect fabric.

The brief required all benches to link together, and for the curved benches to stack in the same way as the traditional *Luke Hughes* straight-backed stacking pew. This allowed for a fully flexible space that can be cleared for multiple uses including dinners, Passover seders, celebrations and weddings, and emphasises community, inclusivity and accessibility. This duality of use can be seen throughout the building.

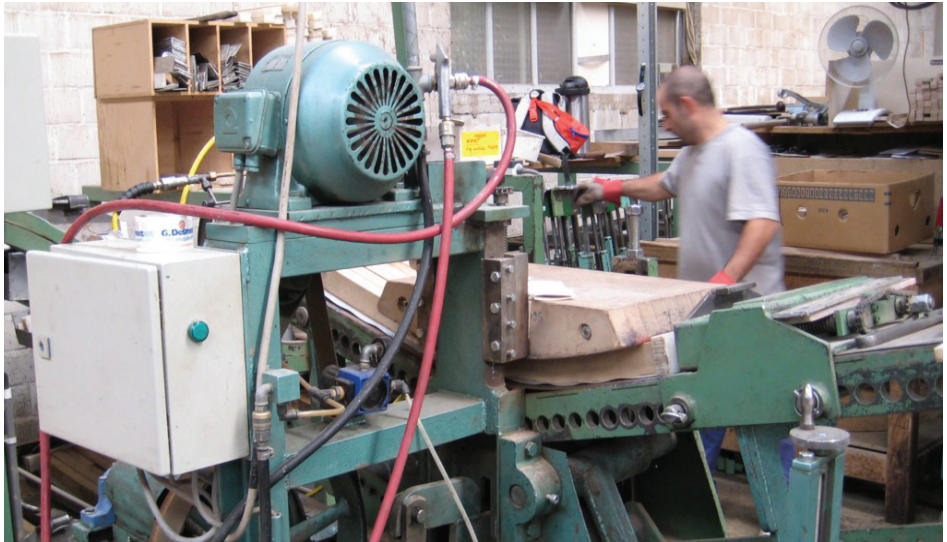
Opposite: Sanctuary design evolution
Below: Sanctuary floor plan

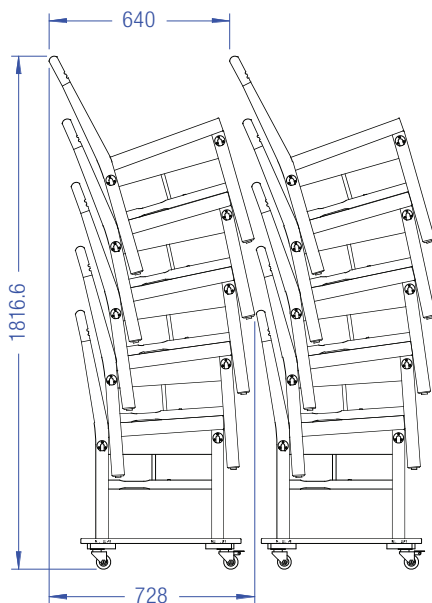
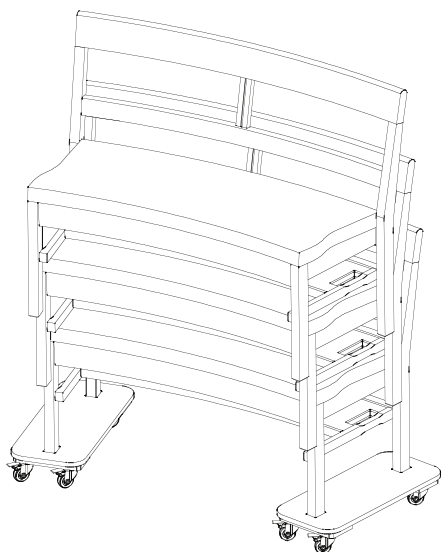




Creating curved benches in solid oak which also stacked offered a unique challenge. The solution came from a fusion of traditional steam bending techniques with digital three-dimensional design and CNC machining to produce high precision components for skilled craftsmen to assemble and finish.

Below: Steam bending in workshop





Above: Drawings showing stacked curved benches on portable trolleys

Below: Flip-up ground fixings for the benches

Flip-up ground fixings were designed for the benches, which lie flush with the floor when the benches are moved away into storage.





‘This intimacy is enhanced by subtly curved walls and a rich materials palette that includes midnight blue wallpaper and plum-colored cushions for the custom curved oak benches. Designed and fabricated in England, the seating can be stacked and rolled away so that the room can be used for dinners, including Passover seders, or other events.’

Joann Gonchar, *Architectural Record*

Opposite: Detail of straight stacking bench with under-seat shelf, credit: Esteban Kuriel

Below: View of sanctuary, credit: Esteban Kuriel



"[The pews] are made of oak, for a durability that is symbolic as well as practical; curved to bring congregants as close together as possible; stackable so that the room can be cleared for dancing; upholstered not just for comfort but also in memory of those painful metal chairs."

Justin Davidson, *New York Magazine*



'...arcs of gracefully curved burgundy velvet benches, "made by the Queen's pew maker," noted Cassell. I couldn't stop taking pictures of it - it was such a beautiful mix of rustic and elegant, geometric-mod and traditional."

Marjorie Ingall, *Tablet*

Worshippers sit on new benches in the sanctuary, credit: Esteban Kuriel



The congregation enjoys a service in the sanctuary, credit: Esteban Kuriel





R MEMORIES BE FOR A BLESSING



The chapel, which doubles as a library, accommodates up to 90 for services, Simchas, studying, teaching and meetings.

Featuring American oak panelling, the synagogue benches and chairs were stained to match.

“The question of whether pews rather than chairs are appropriate in a synagogue, [Stephen Cassell] recalls, occupied ‘probably 25 meetings.... In some ways it is radically traditional; this aligns with [the question], what does it mean as a community to share a seat?’”

Bill Millard, *The Architect's Newspaper*

Below: Lincoln Chairs in chapel, credit: Esteban Kuriel

Opposite: View of the chapel with Lincoln chairs, and Memorial Wall in background





View of the chapel with Lincoln chairs and bespoke folding table in the background, credit: Tom Arena



A bespoke variant of the *Luke Hughes* Athena folding table can be placed in the chapel for meetings, or folded up and stored in the bespoke rache behind the wall panelling when not in use.

Below: Bespoke folding table

Opposite: Lincoln chairs stacked on dolly in the chapel, credit: Esteban Kuriel

Both seen from the same view



The *Luke Hughes* stacking Lincoln Chair is used in the chapel, allowing the space to be cleared or reconfigured easily using bespoke portable trolleys. They are finished in the same fabric as the benches in the sanctuary, where they can also be used.



“I really believe that this building is an extension of CBST’s soul and will be a place for us to grow in ways we can’t imagine.”

Rabbi Sharon Kleinbaum



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

March 4, 2016

I send greetings to all those attending the dedication of your new synagogue.

No matter who we are, who we love, or what faith we practice, we all deserve a place to worship safely and freely. Our country was built on this founding ideal, and we must carry it forward by always treating one another with dignity and respect and upholding our responsibility as our brothers' and our sisters' keepers.

For over forty years, your congregation has contributed to the Jewish community in immeasurable ways—opening its doors as a house of prayer, learning, and refuge to those in need and those who are often left in the margins. Your work to unite people in a spirit of fellowship reflects the ways faith challenges us to envision the world as it should be: tolerant, accepting, and undaunted by change.

As you come together on this special occasion and recommit to the values you hold dear, I wish you all the best.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Barack Obama", with a large circular flourish on the left and a horizontal line extending to the right.

David Davis
OCTOBER 14, 2012 20 TIRREY 5773

Memorial Wall in the sanctuary, credit Tom Arena

Valerie Troyansky
DECEMBER 11, 2012 27 KIRLEY 5773

Robert Christensen
OCTOBER 20, 2012 20 CHESMAN 5768

Marcelino Nieves Heuman
APRIL 26, 1998 2 TIRREY 5778

Robert Christensen
OCTOBER 20, 2012 20 CHESMAN 5768

Ina Reznicek
OCT 13, 2014 20 W 5774

Tim Mench
DECEMBER 10, 1998 17 KIRLEY 5766

Steven Powsner
NOVEMBER 20, 1998 27 CHESMAN 5766

Steven Marsden
OCTOBER 20, 2013 7 CHESMAN 5771

יד ושם מור מרבים ומבנות
ובחומות

אתן

ישראל

ישראל 363

I WILL GIVE THEM, IN MY HOUSE
AND WITHIN MY WALLS,
A MONUMENT AND A NAME,
EVEN GREATER THAN CHILDREN.
I WILL GIVE THEM AN
EVERLASTING NAME WHICH
SHALL NOT PERISH.

In Memory of The Murdered
Victims of Nazi Atrocities

גם כי אלך



History and philosophy

Luke Hughes is an award-winning specialist furniture design company to Britain's best-loved buildings and some of the world's most powerful brands - including 5 Royal palaces, 21 international cathedrals, 54 Oxbridge colleges & 900 boardrooms. A central design principle is that in any quality building, the connection between architecture and furniture should be seamless.

Since 1990, *Luke Hughes* has focused on design for public spaces, particularly in the academic, institutional, places of worship, corporate and leisure sectors - principally for buildings with significant architectural interiors.

Company founder Luke Hughes was educated at Cambridge University before setting up a small craft workshop in the backyard of a house in Bloomsbury in 1978, and then moving to Covent Garden in 1981. The business was incorporated in 1986, and has been growing ever since.

Places of Worship projects

Cathedrals

Arundel Cathedral
Bristol Cathedral
Canterbury Cathedral
Chichester Cathedral
Derby Cathedral
Ely Cathedral
Exeter Cathedral
Hereford Cathedral
Leicester Cathedral
Newcastle Cathedral
Portsmouth Cathedral
Rochester Cathedral
Sheffield Cathedral
St Albans Cathedral
St Giles' Cathedral, Edinburgh
St Paul's Cathedral
Southwark Cathedral
Trinity Episcopal Cathedral, Columbia, USA
Trinity Episcopal Cathedral, Miami, USA
Westminster Abbey
Westminster Cathedral
Winchester Cathedral

Chapels

Benenden School Chapel
Charterhouse School Chapel
Clare College Chapel
Epsom College Chapel
Hurstpierpoint College Chapel
Kemble College Chapel
Royal Military Chapel, London
Shrewsbury School Chapel
St Peter ad Vincula, Tower of London
Shrewsbury School Chapel
Valparaiso University chapel, USA

Churches

All Saints' Church, Woodford
All Saints' Church, Carshalton
Boxgrove Priory
Church of the Holy Spirit, Southsea
Dorchester Abbey
Holy Trinity, Cuckfield
Jesuit Care Centre, Christchurch
Mucknell Abbey
Newark Song School
St Alban's Church, Romford
St Andrew Church, Holborn
St Andrew's Church, Alderton
St Andrew's Church, Feniton
St Andrew's Church, Southwark
St Andrew's Church, Stapleford
St Andrew's Church, Surbiton
St Barnabas Church, Dulwich
St Bart's Church, Wilmslow

St Catherine's Church, Burbage
St Clement Dane's Church, The Strand
St Dunstan's Church, Mayfield
St George and St Martin Church, Wye
St George's Chapel, Windsor
St George's Church, Bloomsbury
St George's Church, Bristol
St George's Church, Oakdale
St Joan of Arc Church, Highbury
St John the Baptist Church, Tisbury
St John's Church, Berwick St John
St John's Church, Blackheath
St John's Church, Notting Hill
St John's Church, Preston
St John's Church, San Francisco, USA
St John's Church, Shirley
St Joseph's Church, Hackney
St Lawrence Jewry
St Luke's Church, Chelsea
St Margaret's Church, Bethersden
St Mark's Church, Swindon
St Mary's Church, March
St Mary-le-Bow Church, Cheapside
St Mary the Less Church, Durham
St Mary the Virgin Church, Ideford
St Mary the Virgin Church, Oxford
St Mary-at-Hill Church, Billingsgate
St Mary and St Giles Church, Stony Stratford
St Mary's House, Brighton
St Mary's Church, Ealing
St Mary's Church, Easton
St Mary's Church, Fairford
St Mary's Church, Houghton-on-the-Hill
St Mary's Church, Iffley
St Mary's Church, Kempford
St Mary's Church, Shroton
St Mary's Church, Somers Town
St Mary's Church, Twickenham
St Mary's Church, Woodbridge
St Matthew's Church, Wilton, USA
St Michael and All Angels Kingsnorth
St Michael's Church, Stourport
St Paul's Church, Croxton
St Paul's Church, Mill Hill
St Peter & St Paul Church, Uppingham
St Peter Port Parish Church
The Temple Church
Valparaiso University, USA
Westbourne Grove Church

Synagogues

CBST Synagogue, New York, USA
New North London Synagogue
Park Avenue Synagogue, New York, USA
Westminster Synagogue



CONGREGATION BEIT SIMCHAT TORAH

For more information

Luke Hughes
7 Savoy Court
London
WC2R 0EX
United Kingdom

T +44 (0) 20 7404 5995
F +44 (0) 20 7405 1839
info@lukehughes.co.uk
lukehughes.co.uk
@lukehughesco

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