

# The Giving Shop



*Christmas stockings for financial donations*

## Introduction

The initial concept for The Giving Shop originated with Churches Together in Cornwall Missioner, David Smith recognising that the nativity scene is not normally seen in the 'market place.' Whilst many churches have crib scenes set up during December, they are hidden from all those who do not expressly choose to visit a church building. A nativity scene in the centre of Penzance would not only bring the heart of Christmas back to the market place it was also hoped that it would trigger conversations between children and their parents about the scenes.

## Penzance

Penzance is the most westerly major town in Cornwall and like many other Cornish towns has suffered from the decline in traditional industries such as fishing, agriculture and mining. Much employment now centres on tourism although the nearby port of Newlyn provides some employment in the fishing industry. Nevertheless, unemployment remains high as do house prices leading to significant levels of poverty.

Churches Together in Penzance Area (CTIPA) has worked effectively together for some time and has successfully set up and run a Breakfast Project (providing breakfast for homeless clients), Foodbank and Street Pastors.

## The Development Process

Discussions with the Wharfside Centre Manager, Peter Wood, identified that there would be a vacant shop over the Christmas period. The idea of a 'Welcoming Shop' soon evolved into that of a 'Giving Shop' based loosely on the concept of the Foodbank donations scheme which is run by a number of supermarkets. CTIPA decided on the projects which they would be supporting. Added to the three that they already ran (Breakfast Project, Foodbank and Street Pastors) were: Social Services Children's Department, Women's Aid, Breadline and Fishermen's Mission in Newlyn. The charities were asked to identify the sorts of gifts they would require and lists were drawn up.

## Running the Shop

Pullford Brothers who own the Wharfside Centre agreed to allow CTIPA to use the shop building rent free for the month of operation. This meant that the only costs incurred were for rates which are discounted by 80% by Cornwall Council. Volunteers staff the shop with each day being split into three shifts: 10-12, 12-2 and 2-4. Two volunteers are present at each shift and in total 80 people have been mobilised to run the shop from 26<sup>th</sup> November until 24<sup>th</sup> December.



*Volunteers staffing the shop*

## The Result

CTIPA have been overwhelmed by the support which they have received from local people. By the 24<sup>th</sup> December 3497 gifts had been given with over £2k in donations. On the last six days of the 24 days opened, the number of donations had more than doubled and continued to increase every hour.



*Shelves stacked with donated gifts*

People can choose to give from lists of suggested items. Or, if they haven't done their shopping they can choose to donate financially to one of the causes by putting money into a stocking. Others have picked a label from the Christmas tree and chosen to buy a specific present. One example was of a lady who took the label: 'for a 7 year old boy' and returned later in the day with a Hot Wheels set and the label attached.



*Christmas tree gift labels*

And if all of that were not enough; the shop is decorated with beautiful applique montages telling the nativity story with a local twist; there is a short video running with a film about the Holy Land today; and families can pick up forms to participate in the Sheep Trail for Penzance, Newlyn or Mousehole.

## The Future

When asked whether the project would take place again next year, David Smith (Secretary of Churches Together in Penzance Area) replied that he hoped that it would due to the huge success of this year. He commented: "We have seen about 500 people come through the door in twenty one days and it has been an excellent boost for the local community, not just because they are meeting together and chatting. They are also able to support local charities which may have had an impact on their own lives or the life of someone they know at the same time as supporting the local economy by buying gifts locally."

## Contact Details:



For more information, please contact David Smith on:

Email: [ses.dhs@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:ses.dhs@hotmail.co.uk)  
Telephone: 01736 719432 M:07979 856456

Alternatively, visit the Churches Together in Penzance Area website at:

<http://www.churchestogetherinpenzance.co.uk/>



**Discovering God's Kingdom.  
Growing the Church**