

Rows of pink, lime and yellow bath bombs are arranged neatly at the base of the Christmas tree in Holy Sepulchre Church in the City of London.



In the branches are traditional baubles, stars and fairy lights but also shampoo, tampons, and deodorant.

Revd Nick Mottershead, Priest in Charge, hopes the unusual display will encourage visitors and congregation to donate hygiene products over the festive season.

He has coordinated collections for the Square Mile Hygiene Bank for the past two years, providing supplies to organisations working with a range of people. These include survivors of domestic abuse and modern slavery, refugees, asylum seekers and families who struggle to make ends meet.

So far more than 12,000 kgs of items have been donated, through work place collections in the City, drop-off points at local Boots branches and City churches, orders made through online 'wish lists' and donations from companies.

Hygiene poverty is 'huge', he says, affecting people on low incomes who can barely afford basics such as food and heating, and those living in or escaping from crisis.

Since he began the work, he has also distributed small items such as nail clippers and hair dye and consignments of bath robes, luxury towels and bed linen donated from top hotels and linen companies in London.

A small gift or package of self-care items has a disproportionate effect on well-being and morale, he says. "It is often only a small amount of money and yet it gives somebody the gift of dignity. To me that is the most mind blowing and amazing aspect of this work."

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