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## Church shuns decorations to help the poor

by Nardy Baeza Bickel by Religion News Service

**GAINES TOWNSHIP, Mich.** -- Passers-by have called Redeemer Covenant Church the "church of lights" for its magnificent outdoor and indoor displays during the holidays.

But this year's decorations are all on the inside: canned goods, lining the steps leading to the altar along with large piles of hats, gloves and scarves.

The Rev. Jack Brown said as he and some congregation members planned this year's celebration at the church, spending between \$200 and \$300 on poinsettias alone just didn't seem right.

"The more we talked about it, the more we realized it wasn't responsible -- given the way the people in the church are hurting and how people in the community are hurting," he said.

One person suggested using gifts to others as the Christmas decorations. The congregation loved the idea, Brown said.

"It's really what the whole church has been doing: focusing on what happens in the community and trying to be helpful," he said.

The donations will be distributed through a community food pantry, which is supported by local churches and housed at Redeemer. Some of the food items will become part of Christmas baskets, and others will be distributed the first week of January.

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