

# Taste and See

**Christian Bookshop and Coffee Lounge serving the community of Flixton, Manchester for over 20 years.**



Taste and See  
Christian Bookshop

Thirteen years after the formation of the Maranatha Community by Dennis Wrigley (a Methodist lay preacher) and Fr. Michael Buckley (a Catholic Priest), new premises had to be found to accommodate the increasing activities of Maranatha. As the community had never had a surplus of funds, the problem was finding premises in a suitable location at an affordable price. In past years, God had always faithfully supplied all finances needed to accomplish what we had been asked to do. Sheila Wrigley, Dennis' wife, prayed and waited on the Lord to open the right door and several months later, He did just that.

A shop became vacant quite close to their home and one evening, over a cuppa with a lady from Maranatha, Sheila asked, "Do you know who owns the shop on Irlam Road?" The lady replied, "I own it, and I've been praying for years that it would be used by Christians." Sheila's heart leapt - God had certainly moved. A proposal for the new office, café and bookshop had to be put forward for approval to the Maranatha National Representatives meeting, a country-wide body of the Community which met every two months, where all decisions were made in prayer, and action was only taken after discerning God's will.

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Ten days later the facts were presented to the Maranatha National Representatives, including all the snags, and after much prayer the National Representatives gave the unanimous decision that we could go ahead with the project, and so in 1994 the lease was agreed.

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There was no shortage of help. Volunteers offered to take responsibility for the lighting, the plumbing (including central heating), the décor, the plastering, painting, sanding, making a bespoke counter, the style of shelving - the list is endless. 102 Irlam Road became a hive of activity, with the work being carried out to the accompaniment of worship songs.

It was recognised from the beginning that a sacrifice of time and money had to be made if the work was to





be completed. The Maranatha Community did not have the financial resources to fund such a venture and several individuals made interest free loans to enable the materials required to be purchased. All the money loaned was repaid within six months of the opening of the shop.

The mammoth task of purchasing the tableware, cutlery and catering equipment was alleviated when Linda, our Community Secretary came in one Monday morning and mentioned that Texas Home Stores were shutting down all their café outlets. On telephoning the local manager of Texas Home Stores he confirmed this to be the case and arrangements were made to visit him. A week of furious activity followed with telephone calls to Texas Stores all over the country and by the end of the week we had all the crockery, cutlery, kitchen utensils (including industrial microwave, soup tureen, toaster and large urn) that we needed at a fraction of the estimated cost.

We recognised that God never changes, He is always with us and is always working for us – Jehovah-Jireh, our Provider, or as *The Message* puts it 'God-Jireh - God sees to it.'

On the first day the shop opened to the public, a lady came in on her own to have a cup of coffee. She picked up a Christian magazine, which was freely available for anyone to read. Her eyes filled with tears and she asked if she could buy the magazine as a particular article had moved her and helped her with a recent bereavement. Some months later, this lady came back to the shop accompanied by her daughter and she testified that the day she came in for the first time was the beginning of a new relationship with God.

You may wonder why the name '*Taste and See*' was chosen. Sheila was awoken one night with the words 'Taste and See' on

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her lips. In the morning she was persistently aware of these three words and was relating them to the shop. Confirmation was given when we learnt that the responsorial Psalm for that week in the Catholic Church facing the shop was '*Taste and See that the Lord is good*'. It is the goodness and provision of God that has been the hallmark of all the activities that take place in the shop.

At its inception Taste & See was predominately a café and small bookshop, but recently we have expanded our range of books, gifts, CDs, DVDs and cards, impinging on the café floor space and now operate a small, cosy, friendly and comfortable coffee lounge serving homemade soups, scones and cakes as well as crumpets, teacakes, speciality coffees and teas, integrated into our thriving bookshop. One of our main aims is to offer all aspects of Christian literature and gifts at reasonable prices to our clientele. We offer churches 17.5% discount on goods purchased and reduced prices on bulk orders of Maranatha

literature. We have nearly 800 individual titles in stock and any Christian book in print can be obtained, often within a week.

Pupils from the local special educational needs school visit us on a regular basis to practice their social skills and are able to order from specially designed menu boards. Individuals come for advice on many subjects and the elderly and lonely pop in for a chat.

Amazingly, the shop is entirely staffed by volunteers, some of whom have been with us since day one, and for that we thank them mightily. They are always willing to listen and pray with customers and anyone is welcome to join in our daily prayer time at midday in our dedicated prayer room. Recently, the office staff and volunteers joined forces to redecorate the coffee lounge and bookshop area and their efforts can be seen in the accompanying photographs.

Over the years, many seeds have been sown and we may never see the fruit, but the expression in John Henry Newman's prayer, which Maranatha has proclaimed - "*we are links in a chain, a bond of connection between persons*" - is a reality in the activities at 102 Irlam Road.