

Monks Kirby – a tabernacle in a temple

Shortly before the 2008 Christmas Carol Service at St Editha's Parish Church in Monks Kirby, Warwickshire, the heating system broke down. Faced with a long cold winter the future looked bleak. For most rural Parish Churches this would be a problem but this is an old Priory Church now out of all proportion to the small village community it serves.

Even with some of the pews removed it still seats 400 people comfortably, which is probably more than the total population. The chancel towers more than fifty feet from the ground and the building is a landmark for miles around. The heating costs for this building are in the region of £85 per service. A typical congregation at the time was 12 people. For elderly people using the church and for the Toddler Service the lack of heat in this oversized parish church was an unwelcome problem. But a little creative thinking quickly turned a problem into an opportunity.

The Rector, the Revd Christine Garrod made a short term solution by erecting a large tent at the rear of the church, where there happened to be ample space. This was the inspiration for acquiring a large attractive garden pavilion which then took the place of the tent. With attractive church style windows, seating for around twenty, the addition of some tasteful carpet, a communion table, and two electric fan heaters, this tabernacle has made a comfortable home within the church for the congregation. The congregation has actually grown to around 20 as a result of this innovation.

And for the future, the church has outline permission for a more permanent development in the same area providing a kitchen, meeting room and toilets. As can be seen from the photographs there is ample space. Well done Monks Kirby for some real rural creativity. ■

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