

The new vicar of Shenstone and Stonnall will be Revd Liz Chamberlain. She makes history by becoming the first woman to be a full-time incumbent of the parish.

Here she explains about herself, her family, how she came to faith and her hopes for the future.

I'M married to Ray and we (pictured) are celebrating our 36th wedding anniversary this year, we were extremely young when we married! We have two adult daughters; Sara (31) who lives and teaches in Essex and Clair (28) who has just qualified as a Nurse and is due to start her first post at QMC Nottingham in September.

Ray took early retirement from the Fire Brigade almost 10 years ago and has worked as a Fire Risk Consultant since then, and currently he is part way through his Reader training. His brother is vicar of Baddesley Ensor and Grendon in North Warwickshire, less than 15 miles from Shenstone.



I was born in South Derbyshire into a typically working class mining family. There were no particular Christian influences on me as a child growing up, other than having a burning desire to be part of the Methodist Chapel's anniversary celebrations as traditionally girls got new dresses for these occasions.

I left school at 16 with a hand full of 'O' levels and drifted into office work, I'm of the generation when there were still office juniors and that's how my working life started out. I realised though if I wanted to 'get on' I would need some formal qualifications and so trained as an accountant when the girls started school. My last job prior to Ordination training was a financial controller for a Pharmaceutical Firm – it was a great job, fast paced and exciting, I really enjoyed it.

Around my mid-thirties I had a great sense of something missing in my life; we both had good jobs, lovely home, two cars, foreign holidays, but something was missing. We'd recently moved home because of Ray's work and one Sunday I decided I would go to Church – and that's where it all began!

The church I attended loved me, taught me and more importantly introduced me to Jesus Christ. I completed an Alpha Course and was confirmed in January 2002, Jesus filled the gaps in my life and made me complete. Then this sense 'of calling' started and over the next few years I knew without doubt that God's call on my life was to become ordained. I knew it was real because it wouldn't go away and felt so right. I trained at St John's College Nottingham and was ordained in June 2010. I've served my curacy at St Matthew's church Walsall which has been a brilliant curacy.

I saw the vacancy for Shenstone and Stonnall on the CPAS website almost 12 months ago and knew at that point 'this is the one for me'. I prayed about this post and asked God to show me a picture to help me know this is where he wanted me to be – on familiarisation day I saw the item that God told me would be here and look forward to sharing more of this story with you in the future.

I didn't realise I would be the first female incumbent in the history of the two parishes, and feel very honoured and humbled at the same time to hold this title.

My aspirations for the future are for us all to deepen our faith and discipleship, and for us to have brilliant time while we're doing that. My passion is telling people that Jesus loves them. I love social gatherings, particularly when there's food and music involved and a glass of something cold to go with it.

I am hoping that both churches will continue to strengthen their ties with the community, particularly schools. They are very much part of the communities they serve and I very much want them to remain at the heart of the communities both in Shenstone and Stonnall.

I don't have specific hobbies, but love spending time with people, walking in the Peak District and I've recently rediscovered knitting, although I'm not very good at it. One of the daring things I've done is in between leaving my job and starting Ordination Training, Ray and me gave up on grown up life and took three months out to travel the world, during that time we crawled through an ice tunnel on top of a glacier; rode a ScubaDoo in the sea under the Great Barrier Reef and lived in a hut on a Fijian beach for a fortnight.