

Hello to you all at Chelford and Lower Withington.

I have the good fortune and the blessing of being appointed as your next Priest in Charge, for which I give my heartfelt thanks to Roger and Doug, your churchwardens, and those who interviewed me some time ago.

I am very conscious that while I have been able to learn quite a lot about the parish, most of you will know nothing about me, and so to address this situation I am now writing to try to give you a short resume of my background and perhaps some of my hopes, dreams and prayers for our future together at Chelford and Lower Withington.

I was born in 1946 at Mansfield and for my sins was a keen Stags supporter. (you will have to forgive me for that). However at the age of 15 when I left school, I joined the army and served for 12 years with the 14/20 Kings Hussars, a Lancashire cavalry regiment.



It was while in the army that I met my wife Sandy, by the way she is from Enfield, Middlesex and is known to have a problem with counting birthdays, for she was born the same year as me, but seems to be convinced that she is only 29?

We have two grown sons, both working for the police, one working in Cheshire, and one in the West Midlands. We also have five grandchildren who work tirelessly ensuring that we never have the problem of spare cash to worry about.

It was also while I was in the army that I had my first contact with the Church of England and was confirmed whilst still serving. On leaving the army I joined Royal Mail and eventually they moved us to Crewe in Cheshire to help in their large mechanised sorting office. When we arrived at Crewe, we found a small rural church locally, called St Michaels Crewe Green, and we became a part of their worshipping family.

After serving as Deanery Synod representative, PCC, Treasurer and Church Warden, as well as cutting the grass and having the role of odd job man around church for many years, I felt that God was still calling me to something different, that I was not doing what God had in mind for me. So I started out on training to become a Lay Reader, after a couple of years I still had a gut feeling that I was not yet doing all that God was calling me to do. When I told my priest this, he asked me to go away and think about it, to give myself time and space for prayer and for God to speak to me. After about three months we agreed to put my name forward for the selection process for ordained ministry.

In 1999, after being selected to go forward for ordination training I joined Trinity Theological College Bristol. In July 2001 I was ordained in Derby Cathedral to the post of deacon at Bolsover, then the following year to priest as curate at Bolsover.

In April 2005 at the end of my curacy I took up my first incumbency by becoming the Rector at Brimington, Derbyshire, which is near Chesterfield.

Brimington is a parish of 12,000 souls, a large but typical Derbyshire village/town. Sandy and I have both enjoyed our time in Brimington and in the five years since we arrived, we have seen the church family grow, while all the other churches in our Deanery have shrunk. We have become a more spiritually alive church family with study groups, and much more involved in our community, which is very important to me. In that time we have also carried out £90,000 of improvements to the interior of the church building, making it more suitable and welcoming for the twenty first century.

But now is the time that we feel it is right to move on, and look to see where God is calling us to next. My prayers for our future ministry together in Chelford and Lower Withington, are that we will grow together both spiritually and numerically. I have a heart for both the ministry to the young and to the elderly, and hope to be active in the school and in the community, and I am devoted to the mission of Jesus Christ.

I also have a strong leaning towards a social ministry, of commitment and action within the local community, of showing Jesus' care and love for the poor, the lonely and the disadvantaged.

I am also a true believer in a teamwork approach to ministry, that we all have an equal part to play and that none are any more equal than others. To this end I will always encourage input to both worship and mission and ministry from all in the church family, and if you have a current role within the life of the church, then I pray that you will continue playing that role. For instance here in Brimington our services are jointly lead by a mix of both ordained and lay leaders, we have encouraged and challenged people to do the unthinkable with leadership in word and music.

There is so much more that I could write, but I think that is all for now, both Sandy and I will hold you all in our prayers as we move towards our move, and I would ask you all to pray for us.

We look forward to meeting you all and getting to know you.

Yours In Christ

Malcolm Shaw