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# Churches to be united

A NEW rector has been appointed in Finchampstead as the village's churches are being transformed into a united parish.

St Mary and St John's Church in Vicarage Close and St James' Church in Church Lane will become one parish led by The Reverend Julie Ramsbottom (pictured).



Rev Ramsbottom, 57, will officially take up the post at a service of licensing later this year after she leaves her role as rector of West Woodhay with Enborne, Hamstead Marshall, Inkpen and Combe, and priest-in-charge of Kintbury with Avington.

The parishes were previously independent and came together as a united parish under the reverend's guidance and it is hoped she will be able to achieve similar success in Finchampstead.

Norman Russell, the archdeacon of Berkshire, appointed Rev Ramsbottom to the role early this month and welcomed her to the area.

He said: "The Rev Julie Ramsbottom has been quite exceptional in her leadership of a raft of small village parishes in West Berkshire.

"Formerly independent parishes are now working together co-operatively without losing their distinctiveness and Mrs Ramsbottom has become a much loved and well respected rector across the communities she serves."

Rev Ramsbottom said she was looking forward to moving to the area with her husband of 36 years David, who is training for the ordained ministry, and daughter Catherine, who is in her final year at Durham University.

The couple also have a second daughter, Sarah, who is married and has just given birth to her first daughter Sophie.

Rev Ramsbottom said: "I am thrilled and honoured at the prospect of serving the people of Finchampstead."

St Mary and St John's Church and St James' Church already work together in a number of areas and will be joining forces to allow a better use of resources.

Area Dean The Reverend Canon David Hodgson said: "I'm delighted with the appointment of Rev Julie Ramsbottom who brings with her the experience and gifts needed to be a successful rector of two parishes which are planning to come together as one new combined parish."