



TURNING POINTS

1970

Graduates from Exeter University with a degree in Theology. Gains a PGCE in drama and divinity and teaches religious education at a school in Kent from 1971-74.

1994

After 12 years in parish ministry in Bristol and Croydon, becomes Bishop of Hull.

1998

Appointed Bishop of Liverpool. Becomes deeply involved in the city's urban regeneration, chairing its New Deal for Communities programme for four years.

2000

Inspired to look into environmental issues after speaking to teenagers at the largest schools in the Diocese of Liverpool and finding that the environment topped their list of concerns for the future.

2002

Takes the opportunity of his study leave to re-examine the Bible and look at the relationship between ecology and Christianity, leading to his book "Jesus and the Earth" in 2003.

HAS THE ENVIRONMENT
GOT A PRAYER?

When the Right Reverend James Jones speaks, it's with the cadence of a man well used to delivering the Sunday sermon at Liverpool's Anglican cathedral. His words are carefully considered and his comments well thought out.

So when he says, "I think we've got to sit up and take notice of the leading scientists who say that we are in a critical situation," it's difficult to disagree.

In his book "Jesus and the Earth" the Bishop quotes Sir Martin Reese, the Astronomer Royal, who concludes that we have only a 50-50 chance of surviving the coming century.

He may be less pessimistic for our future than some of his counterparts in the realm of science, but the Bishop is clearly concerned. We have been and continue to be, he says, profligate with our use of the Earth's resources.

"The Earth is evidently not a limitless larder," he says. "We've got to be careful how we use it, how we conserve and sustain it."

Appropriately enough in the run up to Christmas, we're meeting at an inn. Or at least, the city centre Marriott hotel in Liverpool, the city where the Right Reverend James Jones has been a dedicated and popular Bishop since 1998.

He graduated with a degree in Theology from Exeter University in 1970 and quickly went on to train as a teacher of

sponsored by the Roman Catholic and Anglican Dioceses and due to open in 2005, the faith based academy is the first to take the environment as its specialism.

In fact, it was in schools that the Bishop's interest in the environment gained momentum.

"In the millennium year 2000 I went around the whole diocese of Liverpool... I went into the biggest secondary school in every area and asked if I could meet as many 16-18 year olds as possible.

"It seemed to me that there was a generation gap; that the younger generation were much more concerned about the future of the planet than my generation. And that made me think very seriously what the Christian faith's attitude was to the environment."

Two years later, when the opportunity for study leave came along, he went back to the Bible to reread what it has to say about the environment. Out of that experience came his book "Jesus and the Earth", in which he joins calls for a radical reinterpretation of the Bible's message on our responsibility to the planet.

"We've got to recognise that we in the West consume much, much too much of the earth's resources.

"We've got to change the way that we live. And it's not just one thing; it's a completely different attitude to the earth's resources."

But how can such a dramatic shift to a more sustainable future be made?

"I think there are two approaches. One is personal lifestyle and the other is public policy. So I think that we need to encourage people on a personal level to live in a way that is more responsible."

At the same time, the Bishop has no qualms about exercising his democratic right to "call politicians to account." In a recent Guardian article he called for a change in the emphasis of taxation away from income and onto resources, in the hope of creating "businesses that use the minimum amount of resource in relation to labour."

The Bishop is a man who places the environment and social justice at the

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religious education, teaching in a school in Kent from 1971-74. After a change of direction and 12 years in parish ministry in Bristol and Croydon, he was appointed Bishop of Hull in 1994.

Arriving four years later in Liverpool, where 45% of the parishes in the Diocese of Liverpool are Urban Priority Areas, he became deeply involved in the city's regeneration.

For four years he chaired Kensington Regeneration, Liverpool's New Deal for Communities programme, and championed community led regeneration in lectures, newspaper articles and broadcasts. He also chairs the board of one of the government's new city academies. Jointly

Asked if Christianity itself has encouraged our profligacy with the idea that we have "dominion" over the environment, he addresses the issue head on.

"I think the critics have a point," he says, but only because the Bible has been misinterpreted. "If you read the whole of the Bible, then it's clear that the human family has a responsibility to care for the earth and not exploit it."

So is the end of the Earth really nigh?

"I think in the end our lifestyle is the biggest threat to the environment," says the Bishop.

heart of his concept of sustainable development for the future. "Sustainable development is about enjoying the earth's resources without jeopardising the welfare of future generations," he says.

He's fond of quoting an African proverb: "We have borrowed the present from our children."

MORE INFORMATION:

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