

Pembrokeshire churches urged to take to the lead in climate change fight

Pembrokeshire churches are being urged by aid agency Tearfund to switch to a green energy provider or install solar panels as part of a new campaign to tackle climate change.

The campaign encourages churches and their congregations to take a series of steps to cut their carbon emissions – such as walking to church instead of taking the car, turning down the thermostat by a degree and using china cups after the service rather than disposable ones and even installing a wind turbine.

Said Sharron Hardwick, Tearfund's Media Officer for Pembrokeshire, "Climate change hits the poorest people hardest. Changeable weather patterns bring devastating floods, drought, poor harvests, malnutrition, increased disease and death. But we can help by using less energy both at church and at home."

Tearfund's challenge comes as a leading climate change expert says Christians are neglecting one of the Bible's most important commandments if they fail to do their bit to tackle climate change. Sir John Houghton, former Co-Chairman of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), said Christians should take the lead in action to reduce carbon emissions. His comments come as the IPCC report that temperatures will likely increase by 1.8-4C by the end of the century.

Sir John Houghton, also former Chief Executive of the Met Office and Tearfund adviser, said: "The Bible says 'Love does no harm to its neighbour' (Romans 13:10). But climate change shows us that our energy-hungry lifestyles are harming our poorer neighbours across the world, now. The moral imperative for us to act is unquestionable and inescapable."

Tearfund's campaign, entitled '**Don't be Derek**', contrasts an average Westerner dubbed 'Derek' who puts his own convenience and comfort first, with Andrew, a farmer from Malawi, struggling to cope with the impact of climate change.

Tearfund challenge you to get involved with this campaign: 'To make it more fun, each energy-efficient action you do regularly can

earn points. You even get bonus points the more of your congregation joins in. Every church that sends back their scores by 15 November gets their very own Church climate change challenge certificate. The soon-to-be famous winners will be announced in January 2008. So why not join us? Together we can make a difference.' says Tearfund's Sharron Hardwick.

The campaign has been backed by the Bishop of Liverpool and Vice President of Tearfund, Rt Revd James Jones, who is to write to his colleagues asking them to take up Tearfund's challenge and promote it to their dioceses.

The Bishop of Liverpool, who has called for a Carbon Fast in his diocese for Lent, says: "It is the poor who are already suffering the effects of climate change. To carry on regardless of their plight is to fly in the face of God's commandments. Tragically when we in the richer countries feel the real force of climate change it will be too late to reverse the inevitable."

Tearfund is helping communities cope with the impacts of climate change in the developing world. Tadesse Dadi, a Tearfund worker in Ethiopia said: "Climate change may not yet be a problem for people in Europe, but here in Ethiopia its effects are being felt today by millions of ordinary men and women farmers. Aside from the awful drought that has devastated parts of Somalia, southern Ethiopia and northern Kenya, the impact of climate change is being faced every single year by peasant farmers in different parts of our country. These poor communities, who have contributed least to climate change, are suffering the most from its effects."

For more about 'Don't be Derek' visit www.tearfund.org/derek or call 0845 355 8355

