

JONES, ALWYN RICE (1934 - 2007), Archbishop of Wales

Name: Alwyn Rice Jones
Date of birth: 1934
Date of death: 2007
Spouse: Meriel Jones (née Thomas)
Child: Jones
Parent: John Griffith Jones
Parent: Annie Jones
Gender: Male
Occupation: Archbishop of Wales
Area of activity: Religion
Author: Ruth Gooding

Alwyn Rice Jones was born on 25 March 1934 in Capel Curig, Caernarfonshire, the only child of John Griffith Jones, a slate quarryman, and his wife Annie. Both his parents died young, and he was orphaned at the age of fourteen. He grew up in a Welsh-speaking community and Welsh remained his first language.

Jones attended Llanrwst Grammar School and then won a scholarship to read Welsh at St David's College, Lampeter, where he graduated in 1955. He went on to Fitzwilliam House, Cambridge, to study theology, gaining a BA in 1957 and an MA in 1961. He trained for the priesthood at St Michael's College, Llandaff, and was ordained deacon in 1958 and priest in 1959.

His first clerical post was as assistant curate at Llanfairisgaer in Caernarfonshire from 1958 to 1962. After this, he became secretary for the Student Christian Movement and SCM in Schools. In 1965, his mentor, Bishop Gwilym Williams, appointed him director of education for the diocese of Bangor, as well as chaplain of St Winifred's School, Llanfairfechan. Williams also made Jones his youth chaplain, warden of ordinands, examining chaplain and honorary chaplain of Bangor Cathedral.

In addition to these roles, Jones was an assistant tutor in religious education at the University College of North Wales, Bangor, joint secretary of the standing committee on theological education in Wales and a religious adviser to the Welsh committee of the Independent Broadcasting Authority. Later, in 1991, he became chair of the Religious Advisory Panel of S4C, the Welsh language channel.

Jones married Meriel Thomas in 1968 and the couple had one daughter, Nia.

In 1975, Jones moved back to parish ministry, becoming vicar of Porthmadog where he had a chance to sharpen his pastoral skills. However, it was clear that he was destined for promotion. After four years at Porthmadog, he was appointed dean of Brecon Cathedral. Together with Bishop Benjamin Vaughan, he worked hard to raise the profile of the cathedral and establish it as a place of prayer and pilgrimage.

In 1982, Jones was appointed Bishop of St Asaph. Again, he was enthusiastic about the work of the cathedral, which became the venue for all kinds of diocesan events. A supporter of ecumenism, he chaired the Commission of Covenanting Churches and sponsored a bill for Local Ecumenical Projects.

Jones was Archbishop of Wales from 1991 until his retirement in 1999. He was a gifted pastor and deeply loyal to his parishioners, bishops and fellow clergy. Because of this, he was able to introduce considerable change. The clergy of the Church in Wales governing body blocked the ordination of women to the priesthood in 1994. However, Jones, a strong supporter of women clergy, managed to resurrect the measure. When the ordination of women was eventually approved in 1996, it was backed by all six bishops and 68 per cent of the clergy. Unlike England, no clergy left the Church in Wales over the issue, due, in no small measure, to Jones's graciousness towards his opponents. Jones also guided through the legislation allowing the remarriage of divorcees in church, ending years of uncertainty.

At times, he could be controversial. A year after the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, he told his clergy that he considered too much had been made of her status, and he was content for individual clergy to decide whether prayers should be said in churches to mark the anniversary of her passing. In 1997, he called for an end to the law requiring schools to include prayer and worship in daily assemblies. He felt assemblies were not effective and that children did not necessarily understand or appreciate them.

Jones represented his church at the World Council of Churches assembly in Canberra in 1991 and at the Anglican Consultative Council in Capetown in 1993. He also served as president of the Churches Council for Britain and Ireland 1997-2000. A theological liberal, he was a committed advocate for social justice. He strongly supported the campaign for Welsh devolution, was a member of the Gorsedd of Bards and a keen attendee at the National Eisteddfod.

Jones remained in St Asaph after his retirement. He died suddenly on 12 August 2007; his funeral service was held at St Asaph Cathedral on 18 August.

Author

Ruth Gooding

Sources

The Daily Telegraph, August 16 2007, obituary

Who's who? and *Who was who?* Jones, Rt Rev. Alwyn Rice

Barry Morgan, [Obituary: THE RT REVD ALWYN RICE JONES](#), *The Church Times*, August 15 2007

Barry Morgan, obituary, *The Independent*, August 16 2007

Obituary, *The Times*, August 23 2007

Further reading

Wikipedia Article: [Alwyn Rice Jones](#)

Additional Links

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