

NICHOLAS, JAMES (1877 - 1963), Baptist minister

Name: James Nicholas
Date of birth: 1877
Date of death: 1963
Spouse: Gertrude Nicholas (née Crocker)
Parent: Mary Nicholas
Parent: Benjamin Nicholas
Gender: Male
Occupation: Baptist minister
Area of activity: Religion
Author: Benjamin George Owens

Born 12 January 1877 at y Bryn, Cwmfelinmynach, Llanwinio, Carmarthenshire, the son of Benjamin Nicholas (died 10 August 1931 aged 88) and Mary Nicholas (died 23 October 1900 aged 56). His father was a member of the Independent church at Llanboidy and his mother at the Baptist church at Ramoth, Cwmfelinmynach. It is recorded on the gravestone of his parents in Ramoth graveyard that they both came from Blaendyffryn. William Thomas, the Independent minister at Llanboidy, influenced him greatly, but he became a member at Ramoth with his mother. He was baptized, aged 16, by the minister, D.S. Davies (Dafis Login) and he delivered his first sermon in April 1898. Following nine months at the Old College School at Carmarthen, he became a student at the Presbyterian College Carmarthen 1899-1901.

He was ordained as the minister of Moreia, Tonypany on 14 October 1901. He saw a recently founded church develop into a thriving cause, designing for itself a new place of worship in 1906. He also saw the Rhondda valley roused by the Revival of 1904-05 and the growth of the Labour Movement. Like William John, the secretary of Moreia, he was one of the few who tried to avoid the estrangement and separation that occurred between these two forces: for his own reaction to the situation see the articles *O fwg Morgannwg* by O.K. ' that can be safely attributed to him in the period October 1907 - March 1908 in *Y Pwritan Newydd* (the magazine of the Baptists of south-west Wales). He was temporarily released from his pastorate in 1915 to serve with the Y.M.C.A. in France but within a year he accepted an invitation to become the minister of Castle Street church, London. He was installed there on 26 October 1916 with **David Lloyd George** presiding at the service. The next years were in many senses a memorable period in the history of the church, e.g. renovating the chapel building in 1924, sponsoring churches in distress in the Rhondda valley from 1928 onward, establishing churches in suburbs like Dagenham in 1928. A feature of his ministry lay in welcoming and succouring the host of young people who thronged to London in the years of the depression and, in his own words, ' being a friend to young Welsh people away from home ', thereby swelling the ranks of the church, by 1931, to a membership of over 1000. He was also prominent in London - Welsh circles, e.g. he was the president of the Carmarthenshire Society 1954-56. He was elevated to become the president of the Welsh section of the Baptist Union of Wales in 1952-53 and the subject of his address in Llandudno was ' Yr Uchel Alwedigaeth '. Ill-health caused him to retire in 1934 and again in 1938 after having returned to the pastorate in 1937.

He died on 10 July 1963 at his home at 122 Rivermead Court, Hurlingham, and he was cremated on 13 July at Golders Green. Memorial services were held at Moreia, Tonypany and at Castle Street on 18 July and at Ramoth, Cwmfelinmynach on 21 July 1963. He married 18 February 1936, Gertrude Thomas (née Crocker) of Epsom. She died on 9 December 1942.

Author

Benjamin George Owens

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The Biographical Index of W. W. Price, Aberdŷr

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Owens, B. G., (2001). NICHOLAS, JAMES (1877 - 1963), Baptist minister. *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*. Retrieved 12 Nov 2024, from <https://biography.wales/article/s2-NICH-JAM-1877>

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