

WILLIAM HENRY GIBBS

William Henry Gibbs was born in Grimsby, Lincolnshire in 1859 the son of Samuel Gibbs a mariner. William trained at Didsbury and entered the Wesleyan ministry in 1882.

He married Emily Frances Hill in September 1887 and together they had three sons

Very little newsprint can be found concerning the early part of his ministry. However records indicate that William was forthright in his opinions with a great sense of social responsibility whose ministry was greatly appreciated as shown in the following newspaper extracts.

CALVERT MEMORIAL CHURCH.

“On Sunday afternoon the Rev W.H. Gibbs delivered the first of a series of four special addresses to men, his subject being: “Every man in the presence of four Judges’ The world, he said, would form a general opinion, a general estimate of one’s character. Every day men were taking snap shots of their neighbours and no man could escape the judgement of his fellows. Perhaps this was a healthy state of things, since many a man was deterred from wrong-doing by the fear of the world’s judgement. Then there was the judgement of a friend, which was more likely to be correct; sometimes the world only saw the better side of men who were perfect good fellows abroad and perfect devils at home. A man’s judgement of himself was the third part of the discourse; and lastly he judgement of man by his Maker was referred to. This could not be put aside, or lightly regarded. It was inevitable, and it would be perfectly fair. There was no man who would not get proper justice, and who would not be compelled to acknowledge that it was justice. The title of the address next Sunday is: ‘He took the biggest, and got the worst’”

(Hasting 15 January 1898)

MANY HAPPY RETURNS

“The Rev William Henry Gibbs, of Hastings Wesleyan Circuit is well enough known to all Methodists in the neighbourhood, in which he has been most active ever since he came to the borough, in 1897; but he is associated with special closeness with the Calvert Memorial Chapel, where he has organised a large and flourishing Men’s Meeting, with the accessories of a good amateur orchestra and excellent choir. He was born at Great Grimsby in the year 1859, and his attachment to the local Circuit terminates this year, a fact which is a source of general regret to the Calvert congregation. He is a fluent and effective preacher, and is much in demand at anniversaries and tea meetings”

(Hastings Observer 20 January 1900)

NEW SUPERINTENDENT MINISTER

“At the beginning of next month, the Rev W.H. Gibbs will take up duty as superintendent of the Padiham Wesleyan Circuit...”

For the last four years he has been stationed at Bodmin in Cornwall, where his services have been highly esteemed, as is shown in the fact that he has been there one year above the normal term. Mr Gibbs’ name has become quite familiar in that part of Cornwall, and he is highly esteemed by large numbers there, both inside and outside his denomination. Mr Gibbs will find his new circuit a complete contrasty to his Bodmin one, which is situated in the midst of a district boasting very pretty scenery and splendid meerlands, but as will be seen he has had a deal of good experience in large and industrial towns and cities and should have a good and useful period before him at Padiham”

(Burnley News August 1913)



PADIHAM CALL TO ARMS

Dealing with the present crisis in the current number of the Padiham Wesley Circuit Magazine, The Rev W H Gibbs says:

“This war means our national existence. We entered into it to help Belgium and to keep our word. We have discovered that Germany meant more than Belgium. The Kaiser meant England. And he means England. What does England mean?.

What do the young men of Lancashire mean?. Is there any pluck left, or are they going to treat the nation as they have been treating the Church of God and the Laws and claims of God - with apathy.

May I most earnestly commend the appeal that has been made to every man within the bounds of the Circuit. Your country needs you, needs you as it never needed you before, and it needs you at once. What glorious fellows have already gone to the front.

Whilst we have wept for their suffering and their slaughter in the battle of last week, what pride we have in them for their fine spirit, coolness and stand they made against a powerful foe. Six Germans to one Britisher and they were not defeated. The old stock is not yet on the scrap heap. How many will take their place beside these brave men?.

All over the country men are joining the colours. What are the men of Padiham and district going to do?. Those who cannot go to the front can help those who do.

We can take our place in Christ’s church and unite with those who gather to pray. Prayer has already helped our soldiers at the front. We can render them a great service by our prayers. We have held Intercession Services but few men have united with us.

CALLOUS MEN

Why do not the men come? Is it because they have become callous?: Has Jesus Christ no claim on the men? I am disappointed in the response of the men since coming to Lancashire. The Lancashire men I knew in Manchester were responsive to Christ and did something for Christ and their fellows - they were not ciphers.

Will the men, young men wake up and see that life is not football, but an earnest, serious, and real thing, that calls for conscience, and heart and brain. Life is given in which to do something that needs to be done. Do not have your place simply with the empty minds, the purposeless, the aimless, the triflers, the fools, but with the wise, the earnest, the dosomething.

The Church of God has a great part to play in this war, in this land, and in its destiny. The nation is not going to get any strength from its drinking shops. The parliaments that are heard in the tap-room will not do anything to help.

Let everybody who believes in God, get to God’s House, and have his place in it, that he may secure the help of God in this our time of need” (Burnley News 23 September 1914)

MONTHLY YOUNG PEOPLE’S SERVICE

“The Rev W.H. Gibbs, the vigorous Superintendent of the Padiham Wesley Circuit, is making a strong effort to strengthen the religious sense of the town. To this end his monthly young peoples’ services have already achieved a marked degree of success. Such a service was conducted by him on Sunday when he spoke on ‘Men who have not the courage of their faith’

During the evening a solo was rendered by Mr H Pickup.

Mr Gibbs also preached in the morning. He then dealt with ‘What preaching does this age need?’ Churches, he said, had been emptied through the pulpit pandering to the demands of the people.

A preacher had no right to use his sermon for an exposition on Browning or Carlyle, but to present the Gospel” (Burnley News 24 February 1915)

THE DAYS TO COME

In his monthly pastoral letter in the Padiham Wesleyan Circuit Magazine, the Rev W.H. Gibbs writes:-

“In the immediate days we shall need the help of the House of God. The war will come closer to us. Some would say ‘as yet the war has not commenced’, and there is truth in what they say. The great armies that have been gathering not only here but in Germany, and in the countries of our Allies, will soon be in deadly conflict.

What it will mean we have no conception. It will mean to many mothers hearts of fear. Their lad will be in it. How some will be able to pass the coming days we cannot imagine, unless they have the strengthening and cheering Grace of God.

If we were to shut the houses of prayer for the next three months there are many who could not live. We shall need to pray as we have never prayed, and we shall have need to cultivate our human sympathies - for many will need our sympathy, and we may need theirs.

Think of these things! We may gather something of the days upon which we are entering when we are told that during the next month 250,000 beds have been commanded to be in readiness in our hospitals, 50,000 of them in London.

Our military and naval authorities do not imagine a walk over. We must not be thoughtless. We must weigh these things and let them make us serious and Godly, and we must enter into this great conflict. We must take our part.

It may be that God will interpose in some great surprise and even disappointment. What we want is His great purposes to be realised. What He wills is best for us. Even for God, with all its complexities, this war is a great problem, and God needs our sympathy and our devout and loyal confidence”

(Burnley News 14 April 1915)

William came to Maidenhead in August 1925 and died in June 1935