

LAKE, MORGAN ISLWYN (1925 - 2018), minister and pacifist

Name: Morgan Islwyn Lake
Date of birth: 1925
Date of death: 2018
Spouse: Gwyneth Mary Lake (née Morris)
Child: Cynfael Lake
Child: Llinos Lake
Child: Heledd Lake
Child: Dewi Meurig Lake
Child: Llŷr Lake
Parent: David Morgan Lake
Parent: Annie Jessie Lake (née Griffiths)
Gender: Male
Occupation: minister and pacifist
Area of activity: Religion
Author: Pryderi Llwyd Jones

Islwyn Lake was born on 14 March 1925 at Glasfryn, Llanwnda near Goodwick, Pembrokeshire, one of the three children of Morgan David Lake (1885-1982), headteacher, and his wife Annie Jessie (née Griffiths, 1894-1955). His grandfather on his mother's side, Ebenezer Griffiths, was one of the founder members of Ebeneser, the first Congregational chapel in the area. After primary school at Enner - where his father was headteacher - Islwyn attended Fishguard County School (1935-43) where he came under the influence of **D. J. Williams**, who was his sixth form Welsh teacher, and D. J. Bowen (1925-2017) was amongst his friends. The Rev. Irfon Samuel, the family's minister, together with D. J. Williams were early influences on him as a pacifist and a life-long member of Plaid Cymru.

He registered as a conscientious objector and joined the Friends Ambulance Unit in Belgium in 1944-5, where he was held captive by the Germans. There were reports at that time of his bravery and his non-violent response, but Islwyn rarely talked of his experiences. While at Bangor University preparing for the Christian ministry his pacifist conviction was deepened further amongst mature age students who had also been in the war and being taught by people like **Professor Gwilym Bowyer**. When Islwyn died in 2018 he was the last of that generation of ministers of the Congregationalist denomination whose vision of pacifism, reconciliation and unity defined their ministry. At university (where he graduated BA and BD 1946-53) Islwyn met Gwyneth Mary Morris (1926-2020); they were married in 1953 and had five children, Cynfael, Llinos, Heledd, Dewi and Llŷr, and many grand- and great-grandchildren.

He was ordained in 1953 and began his ministry at Treorchy 1953-63, then at Tanygrisiau, Blaenau Ffestiniog (and Manod) 1963-70; Fforest Fach, Swansea, 1970-82; and Graig, Machynlleth (with Penegoes, Aberhosan and Llanwrin) 1982-90 when he retired to Porthmadog. He was an enlightened and prophetic preacher, and always had deep pastoral concern for his people. His strong handshake reflected his warm and compassionate personality. The Fellowship of Reconciliation (Cymdeithas y Cymod) had an important role in his ministry even to the last years of his life through the local branch at Porthmadog, and he was honoured by the Fellowship for his contribution to the Peace Movement. He was Chairman of the Fellowship of Reconciliation Wales and played an important part in its history. Despite some opposition within the churches to his pacifist conviction, Islwyn was ready not only to protest against militarism in all its forms, but also to be involved in non-violent direct action.

He was editor of *Y Tyst* (the Congregationalist weekly paper), Chairman of the Department of the World Wide Mission of the Church, and became President of the Union of the Welsh Congregational Church at Porthmadog in 1991. He published numerous articles and also his address to the Union in 1991 (*'Ymateb i'r Ysbryd'*) on the theme of reconciliation and unity as a gift.

Islwyn Lake's ministry was a humble but solid and influential one, never drawing attention to himself. His was the ministry of the quiet prophet, not the loud voice.

Islwyn Lake died at Alltwen Hospital, Tremadog on 25 November 2018 at the age of 93.

Author

Pryderi Llwyd Jones

Sources

Family information

Personal acquaintance

D. Ben Rees (ed.), *Dilyn Ffordd Tangnefedd: Canmlwyddiant Cymdeithas y Cymod 1914-2014* (Lerpwl 2015)

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VIAF: 19175291

Wikidata: Q110160973

Published date: 2021-12-17

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PDF Print Cite

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APA Citation



Jones, P. Ll., (2021). LAKE, MORGAN ISLWYN (1925 - 2018), minister and pacifist. *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*. Retrieved 12 Nov 2024, from <https://biography.wales/article/s12-LAKE-ISL-1925>

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