

## WILLIAMS, JOHN JAMES (1869 - 1954), minister (Congl.) and poet

**Name:** John James Williams  
**Date of birth:** 1869  
**Date of death:** 1954  
**Spouse:** Abigail Williams (née Jenkins)  
**Spouse:** Claudia Williams (née Bevan)  
**Parent:** Elizabeth Williams  
**Parent:** William Williams  
**Gender:** Male  
**Occupation:** minister (Congl.) and poet  
**Area of activity:** Eisteddfod; Poetry; Religion  
**Author:** Evan David Jones

Born 8 October 1869 at Taigwynion, near Tal-y-bont, Cardiganshire, the eldest of the twelve children of William and Elizabeth Williams. The father was a member at Bethel (Congl.) church, Tal-y-bont, and the mother at Pen-y-garn (CM) church. He attended Pwll-glas Sunday school and it was John Oliver, his teacher, who told him the time and place to hear 'the bells of Cantre'r Gwaelod'. He had his elementary education at Rhydypennau school. Due to the lack of work in the lead mines of the district his father had to turn to the coalfields, and was in Mountain Ash for some months during 1879-80. In 1882 the whole family settled in Penrhiwceibr and became members at Carmel chapel. They moved again to Ynysyb I, and it was there at Tabernacl that the son began preaching. He worked in a coalmine before going to Pontypridd Academy under E. Dunmore Edwards. He was accepted in 1891 to the Memorial College, Brecon, spending the first year at the University College, Cardiff, where he was the best student of his class in Welsh literature and language. He was ordained at Bethania church, Abercynon, on 22 July 1895, and moved to Moriah church, Rhymney, in 1897. He accepted a call to Seilo church, Pentre, Rhondda, in 1903, succeeding [Lewis Probert](#). In 1915 he commenced his long ministry at Tabernacl, Morryston, where he stayed until his retirement in July 1944. He was one of the most popular preachers of his day and was elected chairman of the Union of Welsh Independents in 1935.

He began competing in the national eisteddfod early in the new century and won the chair twice, in 1906 at Caernarfon for an ode 'Y Lloer' (which immediately became popular because of its smooth, rhythmical lines) and in 1908 at Llangollen for an ode 'Ceiriog'. He adjudicated the chair competition for nearly a quarter of a century and was Archdruid for the period 1936-39. He wrote two scriptural plays in verse, *Ruth* (1909) and *Esther* (1911), set to music by James Davies. He wrote 'Cadair Tregaron' (1929), which appeared in *Straeon y Gilfach Ddu* (1931), in Glamorgan dialect portraying the colliers' life there. His last volume was *Y lloer a cherddi eraill* (1936). Some of his poems which were set to music became very well-known, such as 'Clychau Cantre'r Gwaelod' and 'Canu'r plant'.

He composed numerous hymns and was one of the editors of the hymns for the *Caniedydd Cynulleidfaol Newydd* (1921), and *Caniedydd newydd yr Ysgol Sul* (1930); he also assisted in preparing the *Caniedydd* (1960). It was he who edited the memorial volume to [Hedd Wyn](#) (Ellis Humphrey Evans), *Cerddi'r Bugail* (1918), and he was editor of 'Congl y Beirdd' in *Y Tyst*, 1924-37, and *Y Dysgedydd*, 1933-36. He received an honorary M.A. degree from the University of Wales in 1930.

He married (1), 1899, Claudia Bevan of Mountain Ash. She died giving birth to a son who died within a year and five months. He married (2), 1903, Abigail Jenkins of Pontlotyn, sister to the mother of [Sir Daniel Thomas Davies](#). She died 24 June 1936 when he was in Bangor passing the chairmanship of the Union to [John Dyfnallt Owen](#). He died 6 May 1954.

### Author

Evan David Jones, (1903 - 1987)

### Sources

*Y Dysgedydd*, 1954, 157, 169-85

[Trebor Lloyd Evans, *Y cathedral anghydfurfiol Cymreig* (1972) (1972), 95-122]

### Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [John James Williams](#)

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