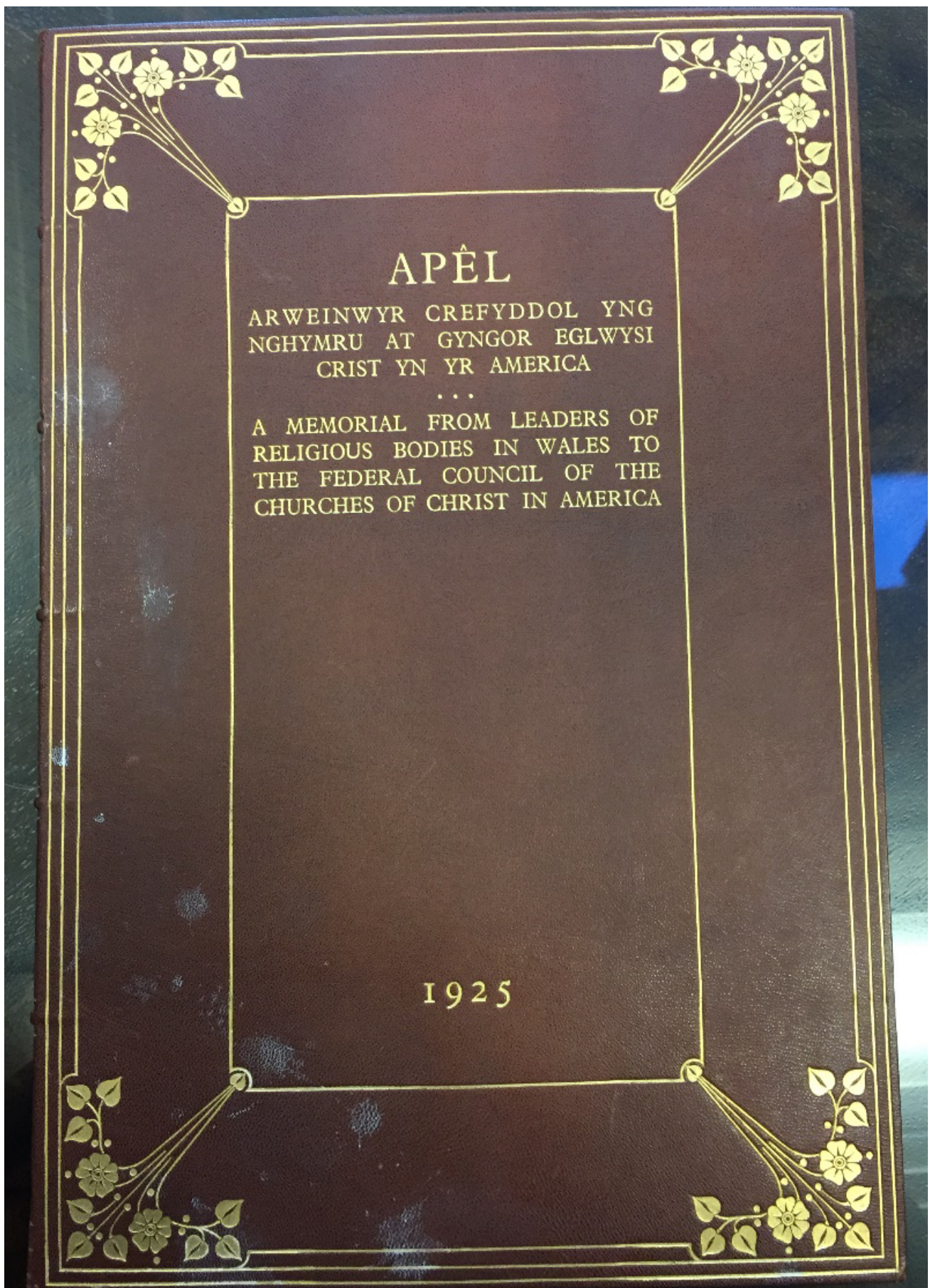


Faith into Action: the Story of the 1925 Welsh Churches Peace Appeal to America



Memorial cover displayed at the Temple of Peace Archives

The Seed of the Idea

After witnessing the success of the Welsh League of Nations Union's 1923 Women's Peace Appeal to America, Professor Charles Webster from Aberystwyth University was inspired to draw the churches in Wales and the churches in America closer together in their common effort for the furtherance of world peace. During the League's Assembly in Geneva, Prof Webster consulted with Dr. Sidney L. Gulick (Secretary of the American commission on the international justice and the Goodwill) and with Mrs Peter Hughes Griffiths (president of the Welsh National Council of the League of Nations Union). All of them agreed it was an excellent idea.

The plan

The plan was to present this peace appeal to the Federal Council of the Churches in American in December 1925. As they had less time than the women, it was not achievable to get thousands of churches to individually take part in the movement. Instead they would submit the proposal to the official representatives of the religious bodies of Wales.

How did Wales' religious bodies respond?

The response was positive, with 22 representatives signing the petition. This was a significant step for the religious bodies of Wales as it was one of the first signs of interfaith cooperation following World War One and the disestablishment of the church in Wales.

What was the impact of 'disestablishment'?

The Welsh Church Act in 1914 separated the Church of England from the Church in Wales. There had been an ongoing campaign for the Act by the Nonconformist community in Wales as they resented paying taxes to the Church of England. The nonconformist community were sponsored by the Liberal party, and they supported this idea, however, not all religious bodies were in agreement to this act. The conservative party was a stronghold for the Anglicans, and they opposed this Act.

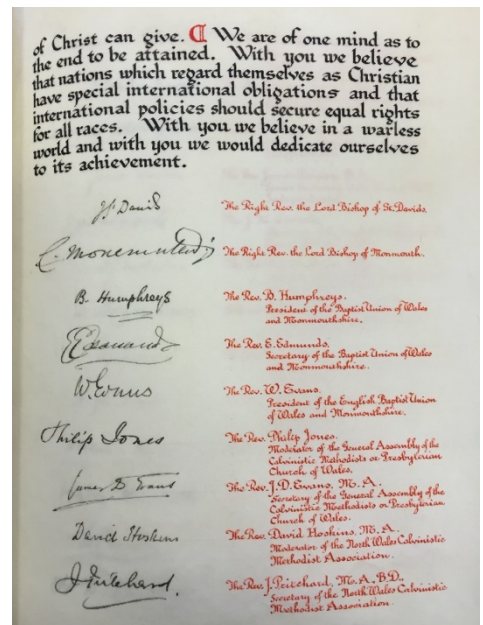
The 1925 petition to America is amongst the first signs of these religious bodies putting aside their differences and coming together to support world peace.

'Plan of action' for presenting to America:

Rev Gwilym Davies was in charge of presenting this to America. On the 25th of November 1925 he set sail across the Atlantic. After a steady journey he landed in America on the



Professor Charles Webster from Aberystwyth University at the white house in, Washington D.C. 1925.



First page of signatures in the memorial.



Reverend Gwilym Davies

3rd of December. The three-day event between the 9th and the 11th of December involved debates and discussions on how the churches should be involved in the current topics. The opinions were divided. Some people believed that churches should condemn all war. Rev Gwilym Davies was optimistic about the state of American affairs and them joining the League of Nations.

How did America view their position in international relations at this time?



When Mr David Davies visited America in 1922, he said America had 'no prospect of a pro-league organisation.' In 1925 Rev. Gwilym Davies explained how the situation was significantly different. America had a League of Nations Non-Partisan Association which was made up of committees of men and women. Gwilym Davies believed this would 'thrive and be an immense power in bringing nearer the day when America will join the League of Nations.' Whilst Gwilym Davies appears hopeful that America was nearer to joining, he did face people who had opposing views.

On the train back from his trip to Washington he engaged with an American man. He asked this man what he thought of America's relationship with foreign affairs. The American was anti joining and said, 'George Washington knew what he was about when he warned us against foreign entanglements.'

Who were the Federal Council of Churches in America?



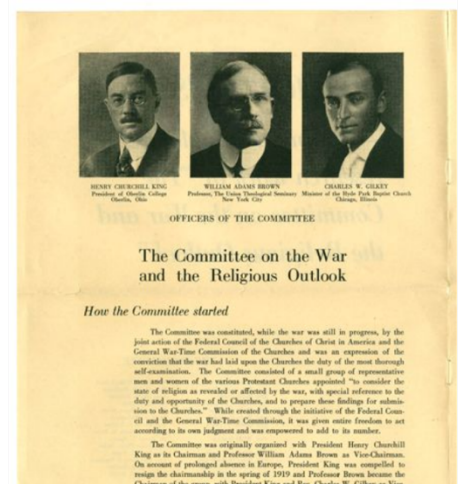
Officers and members of the Federal Council of Churches
December 21st, 1912.

In 1905 thirty protestant denominations met in New York at an Inter-church Conference on Federation. They planned to create a federation amongst the Christian churches of the United States. After asking each denomination for their approval they arranged a conference in Philadelphia in December 1908. From this conference the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America was born. The council consisted of thirty-three denominations across the United States. They aimed to meet every aspect of Christian activities from evangelism to economic issues and also race

relations. During the 1920s and 30s they expanded their work into the international arena and hoped to promote peaceful relations among the nations of the world.

The address by Rev. Gwilym Davies of Wales, on 'Entry of the US into the League of Nations'

Rev. Gwilym Davies speech started off rocky as the chairman didn't know who he was. It was only because Bishop Herman gave his approval of him that he was able to continue. The speech lasted 45 mins. He said 'it would take a World War to create the league of nations ; it would take nothing less than a word war to destroy it. As far as we could judge, it was an instrument, to which



Officers on the Committee on the War and the Religious Outlook 1918

there would be in our time, no practicable alternative, for the establishment of the Kingdom of God in international affairs.' After the speech he read out the memorial text and the list of signatures. The audience remained standing for this and broke into cheers. Dr Speer's speech in reply claimed that *'A country, which is so small and yet so great... I believe that the time will come when the prayer of this memorial from Wales will be answered and its prophecy will be fulfilled.'*



Aerial photograph of Washington in the 1920s

The rest of Rev Davies' US Visit:

He was met with warmth and kindness. He visited the white house in Washington and had the privilege of being received by the president of the United States: Hon. Calvin Coolidge. Through the kindness of the Non-Partisan Association he was also able to present at the Woodrow Wilson dinner at the Hotel Astor on the night of December 28th – one of the 500 dinners taking place in America that evening to commemorate Wilson's birthday.

Gwilym Davies' concluding thoughts on America:

He acknowledged that Mr David Davies visit in 1922 was helpful to him. He claimed how he couldn't have done it without the success of the Welsh Women's memorial. He spoke with Mrs Carrie Chapman Catt, the victorious leader of the suffrage movement and she was delighted that he had come to America if only to tell him what they thought of the 'perfectly splendid way in which Mrs Peter Hughes Griffiths, Miss Mary Ellis, and Miss Eluned Prys had represented Wales on such a historic occasion.' He said that 'if the women of Wales could realise the reputation which has been won for them, they would join once again in a crusade for the triumph of our cause with the enthusiasm which made the Memorial what it was in Wales and what it came to be on America' As he got on the boat to go home, he thought fondly of his visit to America.



Ship that Rev. Gwilym Davies sailed on to America.

What did Wales think of his visit?

The newspaper the Drych said 'This is a significant event. It shows the new spirit of adventure which has seized the Welsh nation. No one would have dreamed of such a thing years ago. The Welsh people have had a new vision of their duty and their opportunity to be of greater service to the world. This brings the people of Wales into greater world prominence and gives them a larger field in which to exercise those moral and spiritual gifts which belong to them. Certainly the Red Dragon of Wales is stretching its wings wider than ever before'.