

Middleton Guardian 1906 to 1910

25th August 1906

The Rev. A.W. Utting the new pastor of the Middleton UMFC preached his first sermon in the Sadler St church on Sunday morning.

Taking as his text *Isaiah 25, 6- And in this mountain shall the Lord of Hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things.* - the rev gentleman said that in the East the man that was poor could not get justice. In our day there was at any rate some chance for the poor man to get justice but in the east there was absolutely no chance. He was always a wronged man and he hungered not only for food but for justice as well. At the date at which the text spoke the people were also hungering for freedom. They were away from Jerusalem. They were away from the temple and from temple worship. The hunger of the exiled Jews was common to all the nations of the earth.

Everyone in our land of course thought they were free but after all he thought they were more free in name than in fact. Many people were the prisoners of circumstance. They were engaged in hard grinding toil and they could not free themselves from it. They had to do their round of toil day by day and though often they felt they could drop it they had to go on and on. That could hardly be called freedom in its fullest and deepest sense. We were all more or less the prisoners of circumstance. Some were easily pleased when things went right and depressed when things went wrong. Their feelings and happiness were at the mercy of circumstances. The free man was the man who was lord of his feelings so that good circumstances did not unduly elevate him and bad ones did not unduly depress him. Christ satisfied the hunger for justice by showing how unjust things promoted the cause of the just in the long run. The crowning injustice of the world had been the crucifixion of Christ. But what had been the result? God had overruled it for good to make men just and more men had been made just through the sacrifice of Christ than in any other way.

1st September 1906

A service of welcome to the Rev. A.W. Utting, the new pastor of the Sadler Street UMFC should have been held on Tuesday evening, but owing to the death of Mr Utting's young child which took place on Monday night, the arrangements had to be cancelled. Much sympathy is felt with Mr and Mrs Utting who have only been in the town three weeks.

But the Show must go on!!

15th September 1906

Special Services were held at Sadler Street UMFC FOR Harvest Festival....Collection in aid of Funds.... The Rev Utting opened the service and the juvenile element provided a pretty picture.Mrs Utting decorated the church for the occasion.

15th September 1906

MIDDLETON FREE METHODISTS

Welcoming the new minister

The Chairman on behalf of the trustees extended to Mr Utting a cordial welcome....He trusted that they would uphold him in his work. If a church was to succeed it was by the earnest endeavours of the workers.

He sincerely trusted that his coming among them was as a shepherd, a prophet and a lover of peace....He was one of those who believed that the success of the church did not depend altogether upon the ministry. The minister might be a deep thinker, eloquent, able to convey his thoughts to the minds of others, he might be a teacher but after all officers and workers in a church were necessary if a church was to be truly successful....On the other hand he hoped that Mr Utting would try to help them as teachers by his suggestiveness and encouragement and by the kind grasp of his hand. Still they must not expect too much of him. It was one of the easiest things in the world to criticise. Let them not forget that Mr Utting would have his human frailties and at times possibly indifferent health and might need rest and recreation.... He hoped that Mr Utting in the midst of his studies would not forget his people....

Mr Ineson spoke on behalf of the people at Herbers and said that Mr Utting had already made a good impression there.

Mr W. Dean secretary of the Sunday School assured Mr Utting of a hearty welcome and ...said that he thought a minister's work had the best results in the Sunday School and his idea was that in future ministers would look after their schools more than their churches.

The Rev A.W. Utting responding said that he drew hope from the fact that the expectations of the church were rather moderate and that there was a large circle of people in the town connected in some way with Sadler St church. He was struck with the large number of young people connected with the church and with their evident earnestness. He was much encouraged by the sympathy extended to himself and Mrs Utting already. They were extremely grateful for the kindness and sympathy extended to them during their recent bereavement by the people of Sadler St church and also by members of other denominations. The work of the church had his hearty sympathy and so far as he was able they would have his no less hearty support (Applause)

13th October 1906

In connection with the Sadler St UMFC Cricket Club, a successful entertainment followed by a potato and rabbit-pie supper was held on Saturday evening. There was in attendance over a 100 including the pastor the Rev. A.W. Utting...

29th December 1906

The Annual Congregational Tea Party and entertainment was held at the UMFC Herber on Christmas Day. About 110 sat down to a substantial tea which was followed by an interesting programme. ...The Rev A.W. Utting (Middleton) in making his first appearance at Herber at a gathering of this character gave an inspiring address to all interested in church and Sunday school work.

22nd May 1909

(Whit Walks service)...The Rev Utting opened the service and the juvenile element provided a pretty picture.

(October 1908 a daughter Olive Ethel was born, sister for Frank- which was not actually reported in this paper)

26th February 1910

MIDDLETON MORALS

Drink gambling, language and street cries

The Annual gathering of the Middleton Free Church Council was held on Thursday night at the Wesleyan School Long Street.

(After an address by the chairman...) The Rev A.W. Utting gave the secretarial address in the course of which he said:

Earlier in the year it was called to our attention that there were a great many cases of drunkenness called before the courts in Middleton and we had a suspicion that many of these cases were cases of people who had received liquor when they ought not to have had it; that there had been some illegal selling. We called the attention of the Bench of Magistrates of the fact and had a sympathetic reply from the clerk...who promised to do what he could along with others to check the evil....we are trying to do something in that way towards preventing the sale of liquor to people who have already had too much (Hear hear)

Then again report has been made to us that several of our friends have been bothered in their worship by the cries of street hawkers ice cream and other matters and we approached the Watch Committee to see whether that could be prevented...The Watch Committee promised to give the matter favourable consideration and do what they could towards stamping out the evil.

Lantern Lectures spreading Free Church principles.....fairly successful..

Attention was called to a twofold evil- the evil of bad language and the evil of gambling- and we thought that we should see what we could do by way of checking it if not actually stamping out these evils. With respect to gambling we sent a similar letter to managers of mills and workshops to try not in a coercive but in a kindly manner to try to check the evil. We called a meeting of various organisations in the town along with representatives of the Free Church Council.... and I believe through interest caused in the problem something has been accomplished in the way of checking these evils.

Then when the dis-establishment question came up, as loyal Free Churchmen, we did our best to arouse a little interest and thereby promote some support of the measure.

We have not forgotten that our work is first and foremost evangelistic and what we have to do as Free Church Council is to promote the salvation of the individual and through the individual the salvation of society. We have tried to do open air meetings alongside the Christian Endeavour Union, for the greater part of the Summer. I regret to say however these Meetings were only moderately successful and I am afraid the lack of success has to be explained more from our side than from the CEU. I hope that when the fine weather comes and we start open air meetings again, our Free Churchmen and Free Churchwomen will not be slow to take up the work of supporting these gatherings.

Some time ago the question of securing one rest day in seven for the police was brought to our notice. We were informed that the Metropolitan Police had secured this boon and it was pointed out that the police in our own district were as much in need of it as they were....We

secured the support of the Lancashire Federation of Free Church Councils ...everything possible was done...but unfortunately we were not successful. We hope to go on and by constantly pegging away we shall secure this boon for a very worthy body of men. (Hear hear)

So far as out winter's work is concerned we should have undertaken more evangelical work but for the fact that to most of us is very welcome- that our new Rector is thoroughly evangelistic: while we were negotiating the use of the co-operative hall for the winter months, we discovered that our friend had been a trifle smarter and secured it for services of his own. After that we thought it best to drop any schemes of our own as we did not want to appear in rivalry with the Rector in his good work.(Hear hear)

Our attention has been called to the fact that there are certain clauses in the Children's Act which if not actually evaded have a tendency to be. It has been pointed out that there are children in the pubs who ought not to have been there. And had the terms of the measure been strictly adhered to, and we have been trying to do something to watch the Bill so as to prevent these evils creeping in.

These are a few items to which we have devoted our attention during the twelve months and whilst of course we are not here to praise ourselves we can honestly say at any rate we have tried to do some good work for the Lord Jesus Christ and for the humanity he has redeemed with his own precious blood. (Applause)

5th March 1910

Meeting held at Middleton Junction Wesleyan School under the auspices of the Middleton Free Church Council- addressed by the Chairman....and Rev A.W. Utting.

In his capacity as delegate to the National Free Church Council held in Swansea 'a few weeks ago'.

Mr Webster presided and said that they were met that night to hear the report of their delegation and to try to stimulate Free Church men for their work. In the past they had had men who had suffered and even died for their faith and they wanted to get the men and women of today just as serious in the work of fighting against that which is wrong and making it easier in the fight. That was what the Free Church Council in Middleton stood for to strengthen and extend the Kingdom of Christ.

The Rev A.W. Utting said it was impossible for anyone to realise what the national Free Church Council really represented unless they had been to a conference. There one was reminded of what a vast force the Free Church is in the country. Delegates representing two million communicants attended the Church with ? million (sittings?)

And scholars numbering three and a half million were represented. These involved some of the best of our present English life. At Swansea there were two thousand delegates. They had a crowded time in every sense. The Welsh hospitality was a great feature and he was also much struck with the singing. Throughout the sessions they struck a high spiritual note but never got away from mundane affairs. Everybody recognised the spiritual ...of the conference was its ability to solve the problems and difficulties which face us today. There was a great interest in social questions. They recognised the work of the church was not only to win every man woman into the fellowship of the churches but that their great work was to make every city a holy city. There was also a spirit of discontent with the non conformist members of Parliament. Free Church men generally according to the feeling at (Swansea?) were not at all proud of their representatives in the House of Commons. They seem to feel that their members had not made the most of their responsibilities which would have enabled them to help not the Free Churches only they did not want that- but the cause of religion generally.

The President's address was a stirring feature but unfortunately was not as effective as it might have been because many of them could only hear it imperfectly.

He would also like to comment on the attitude of the vicar of Swansea. He showed his sympathy from the time the Council decided to meet there and not only did he make a reference to them in his sermon on the Sunday but attended in person on the Tuesday to wish them well. This was a good sign for those who desire unity between the churches. Amongst the questions discussed was the education problem and a lengthy resolution was passed on what the Council did want and what they did not want. What they did want was direct public control of all elementary education and the revival of tests for teachers, and they did not want contracting out. They had an amendment on similar lines but this was defeated. The question of the free churches and politics was also discussed and the general feeling appeared to be that the Council must concern itself in the political field. The most important paper was that of the Rev. Joseph Hocking on the alarming development of Romanism in England. Mr Hocking said that since 1851 the number of priests had risen from 963 to 4193; the churches and missions from 683 to 2157 and monasteries and convents from 70 to 1131. The surprising thing, however was the membership of the church still remained about the same. They also discussed the Brotherhood movement and decided the church should give it all the support they could. There were several pleas for greater unity amongst the Free Churches of the various towns. Prior to the Thursday session a meeting was held and Free Church Socialists league was formed to which 71 ministers and 43 laymen applied for membership. On the concluding night of the session he went to great temperance meeting and was much struck by the powerful address by Mr Philip Snowden(?). Especially his remarks on the question of personal responsibility, which Mr Snowden(?) believed in.

In concluding he thanked them for sending him as delegate and enabling him to enjoy a mental and spiritual treat, which he hoped would make him more useful to them in the free Church Council in the future.

A vote of thanks to the chairman and speaker.....closed the meeting.