

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK:(1989-1993)
Remembrance Day

In 1795, Jean Nieolaus Grou wrote, "Are not our churches full whenever public calamities overtake us and quite deserted in times of prosperity?" His observation struck home when I thought about World War II. Wars and calamities have driven people to seek spiritual refuge and encouragement. I was only a youngster when World War II started, yet the war experiences are well engrained in my memory. We lived in Amsterdam: a city which lost thousands of its citizens. Of the nearly 120,000 Jews, only 5000 returned. The holocaust was real and horrible. The city has never been the same since this tragic loss.

Thousands of other citizens died of starvation. The times were grim. My father was a prisoner of war for a while. Once he was picked up and interrogated by the Gestapo, charged with espionage. My brother, my oldest sister and I were away from home as refugees, in the northern part of the Netherlands, for more than half a year. Our parents were unable to feed and clothe us. In those days of calamities and suffering the churches in Amsterdam were full. Many, who had not darkened the door of a church for years, returned to seek solace and encouragement. The city rejoiced when the Allied bombers began their flights of mercy, when the war was nearing its end, dropping much needed parcels of food. When liberation day finally came, joy that knows no bounds.

Thanksgiving services were held. God was praised for deliverance. But memories are short. Shortly after the war my mother saw a half loaf of pure white bread in the gutter of our street. This sight shocked her. Just before liberation people had fought over a slice of bread. Church attendance dropped. Many seemed to forget God when their needs were supplied, when the evils were averted, and the blessings received.

On Remembrance Sunday, we join our fellow Canadian citizens in remembering those who gave their life for our freedom. Canadian soldiers fought valiantly to liberate Europe from the cruel and heavy hand of the oppressor. Let us not forget the high human price paid for the liberties we enjoy today. Above all continue to remember our God, Who is there not only in times of hardship, but Who is also worthy of praise and gratitude in times of peace and prosperity.

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