

# Cast Down, But Not Forsaken

## The Second World War Experience and Memory of German-Canadian Lutherans in Southwestern Ontario

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### Résumé de l'article

Nous cherchons à réévaluer l'idée que les Germano-Canadiens de l'Ontario ont été des « victimes silencieuses » pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale, en examinant les expériences et les souvenirs des congrégations luthériennes germano-canadiennes dans les comtés d'Oxford et de Waterloo. Loin de rester silencieux, les pasteurs luthériens ont adopté plusieurs stratégies pour protéger leurs ouailles contre la discrimination et l'internement qu'ils avaient subies pendant la Première Guerre mondiale. Parmi ces stratégies nous trouvons des réformes telle l'élimination dans les églises des offices en langue allemande et, après la guerre, l'adoption de symboles et autres formes de commémoration anglo-canadiennes. Ces réformes ont souvent rencontré la résistance et l'ambivalence des congrégations, ce qui a provoqué un débat sur la meilleure façon de concilier l'héritage germanique et luthérien avec le fait de participer à la guerre en bons patriotes. Certaines études ont vu dans cette situation une perte d'identité. Nous suggérons au contraire que les débats qui ont eu lieu dans ces églises luthériennes étaient précisément l'expression de l'identité composée, germano-canadienne, de cette communauté.

# Cast Down, But Not Forsaken

## The Second World War Experience and Memory of German-Canadian Lutherans in Southwestern Ontario

By Elliot Worsfold

One of the several responsibilities of Lutheran pastors during the Second World War was to conduct memorial services for members of their congregation who died while serving overseas. On 6 August 1944, the Reverend Otto Stockmann of Tavistock-Sebastopol's Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church performed one such service for a young man well-known to the congregation, Corporal Francis Weitzel. The expected attendance to Weitzel's memorial service was so great that Stockmann installed a public announcement (PA) system in the church. This proved wise, as the church hall quickly filled on the day of the service and congregants spilled out

into the church parking lot, where they listened to the service on the newly installed PA system. Speaking to his grieving congregation, Stockmann framed Weitzel's death in both militaristic and religious terms by quoting a verse from Corinthians: "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed"<sup>1</sup>

The passage quoted by Stockmann is one of the many complex German-Canadian Lutheran<sup>2</sup> interpretations of the Second World War. Previous studies on German Canadians during the world wars focus largely on internment and discrimination.<sup>3</sup> This study seeks to reassess

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<sup>1</sup> "Memorial Service For Cpl. Weitzel," *Tavistock Gazette*, 9 August 1944. I am indebted to Sherrill Calder and the Tavistock & District Historical Society for providing a complete run of the *Tavistock Gazette*.

<sup>2</sup> The three largest German-Canadian religious groups are Lutherans, Mennonites, and Catholics. Adopting a Lutheran perspective is important, as German-Canadian historiography remains divided as to whether or not historians can speak of the German-Canadian community as a homogenous group due to its religious diversity. This study therefore focuses specifically on German-Canadian Lutherans, acknowledging that German-Canadian Mennonite and Catholic groups may have their own distinct wartime experiences. See Gerhard P. Bassler, "Silent or Silenced Co-Founders of Canada? Reflections on the History of German Canadians," *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 22:1 (1990), 42.

<sup>3</sup> Angelika Sauer outlines this narrative in Angelika E. Sauer, "The 'Ideal German Canadian': Politics,

## *Abstract*

*This study seeks to reassess the notion that German-Canadians in Ontario were “silent victims” during the Second World War by exploring the wartime experience and memory of German-Canadian Lutheran congregations in Oxford and Waterloo Counties. Far from silent, Lutheran pastors initiated several strategies to ensure their congregants did not face discrimination and internment as they had during the First World War. These strategies encompassed several reforms, including eliminating German language church services and embracing English-Canadian symbols and forms of post-war commemoration. However, these reforms were often met with resistance and ambivalence by their congregations, thereby creating a conversation within the German-Canadian Lutheran community on how to reconcile its Germanic and Lutheran heritage with waging a patriotic war. While previous studies have primarily focused on identity loss, this study suggests that the debates that occurred within these Lutheran churches were representative of the community’s German-Canadian hyphenated identity.*

**Résumé:** *Nous cherchons à réévaluer l'idée que les Germano-Canadiens de l'Ontario ont été des “victimes silencieuses” pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale, en examinant les expériences et les souvenirs des congrégations luthériennes germano-canadiennes dans les comtés d'Oxford et de Waterloo. Loin de rester silencieux, les pasteurs luthériens ont adopté plusieurs stratégies pour protéger leurs ouailles contre la discrimination et l'internement qu'ils avaient subis pendant la Première Guerre mondiale. Parmi ces stratégies nous trouvons des réformes telle l'élimination dans les églises des offices en langue allemande et, après la guerre, l'adoption de symboles et autres formes de commémoration anglo-canadiennes. Ces réformes ont souvent rencontré la résistance et l'ambivalence des congrégations, ce qui a provoqué un débat sur la meilleure façon de concilier l'héritage germanique et luthérien avec le fait de participer à la guerre en bons patriotes. Certaines études ont vu dans cette situation une perte d'identité. Nous suggérons au contraire que les débats qui ont eu lieu dans ces églises luthériennes étaient précisément l'expression de l'identité composée, germano-canadienne, de cette communauté.*

the notion that the war years were solely about discrimination and identity loss by using religious records produced by German-Canadian Lutheran churches in Oxford and Waterloo Counties and the personal papers of their congregants. Exploring these sources will help answer

questions such as: To what extent did memories of the First World War influence how German-Canadians reacted to the Second World War? How did local Lutheran pastors reconcile the position of German-Canadian Lutherans in a war in which Germans were considered “the

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Academics and the Historiographical Construction of German-Canadian Identity,” in *A Chorus of Different Voices: German-Canadian Identities*, eds. Angelika E. Sauer and Matthias Zimmer (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1998), 236. For those who have contributed to this narrative see Heinz Lehmann, *The German Canadians, 1750-1937: Immigration, Settlement & Culture*, trans. Gerhard P. Bassler (St. John's, Newfoundland: Jesperson Press, 1986), 305; Gerhard P. Bassler, *The German Canadian Mosaic: Today and Yesterday: Identities, Roots and Heritage* (Ottawa: German-Canadian Congress, 1991), 61; Bassler, “Silent or Silenced Co-Founders of Canada?” 42-43; Arthur Grenke, *The German Community in Winnipeg, 1872 to 1919* (New York: AMS Press, 1991), 151.

enemy”? What strategies did Lutheran pastors employ to avoid the same type of ethnic conflict that dominated the German-Canadian experience in the First World War? Investigating these questions will move the study of Ontario’s German Canadians beyond the study of internment and will contribute to a greater understanding of ethnicity during wartime.

This article begins with a brief overview of German-Canadian Lutherans prior to the Second World War, for in many ways their wartime experiences had their origins in the First World War. Following this overview, it charts the different strategies German-Canadian Lutheran pastors employed to negotiate their congregations through the Second World War. Pastors accomplished this by embracing English-Canadian cultural norms such as the English language, a patriotic public presence, and forms of postwar commemoration. However, these reforms were often met with resistance and ambivalence by their congregations, thereby creating a conversation within the German-Canadian Lutheran community on how to reconcile its Germanic and Lutheran heritage with waging a patriotic war. By charting the complex debates and contested memories of this community, this article suggests German-Canadian Lutherans were far from silent during the

war and waged the Second World War on their own terms. While previous studies have primarily focused on identity loss, this study suggests that the debates that occurred within these Lutheran churches were representative of the community’s German-Canadian hyphenated identity.

Few historians have used sources produced by German Canadians in order to understand their wartime experiences, though this has not prevented them from making bold claims. Writing in the 1930s, German scholar Heinz Lehmann proclaimed the death of German-Canadian culture in “eastern Canada” as a result of discrimination and anti-German propaganda that occurred in Canada during the First World War.<sup>4</sup> As a German national, Lehmann defined “Germaness” based almost exclusively on language.<sup>5</sup> Subsequent historians directly exploring the war years echoed Lehmann’s lament in their own work, reiterating that English Canadians during the First World War “affected the attitude which Germans had towards themselves.”<sup>6</sup> Using records from the Department of External Affairs, historian Robert Keyserlingk concluded that German Canadians were treated more “leniently” during the Second World War because the department recognized that not all German citizens agreed with Hitler and the Nazis.<sup>7</sup> Bar-

<sup>4</sup> Lehmann, *The German Canadians*, 75. Writing with an emphasis on western Canada, Lehmann classifies eastern Canada as the provinces east of Manitoba.

<sup>5</sup> Lehmann, *The German Canadians*, 66, 75-77.

<sup>6</sup> Grenke, *The German Community in Winnipeg*, 151; Bassler, *The German Canadian Mosaic*, 61. Patricia P. McKegney, *The Kaiser’s Bust: A Study in War-time Propaganda in Berlin, Ontario 1914-1918* (St. Jacobs, Ontario: Bamberg Press, 1991), 196; John English and Kenneth McLaughlin, *Kitchener: An Illustrated History* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1983), 130.

<sup>7</sup> Robert H. Keyserlingk, “The Canadian Government’s Attitude Toward Germans and German Ca-

bara Lorenzkowski ably expanded on Keyserlingk's initial findings by using discourse analysis to demonstrate how the Canadian government had preconceived notions of "dangerous" and "disloyal" Germans during the initial phase of internment.<sup>8</sup>

Though these studies are useful in unearthing the discriminatory attitudes of wartime Canada, they do little to understand how German-Canadians experienced the war internally. Recently, Canadian and American historians have challenged the notion that the First World War acted as a destructive landmark for Germans in North America.<sup>9</sup> Canadian scholars have yet to extend this approach to the Second World War and often discuss the war tangentially rather than overtly. As such, this study channels its efforts in directly exploring how German Canadians during the Second World War experienced the war internally.

In her article on the challenges facing German-Canadian historiography, historian Angelika E. Sauer notes that if scholars are to move beyond the "image of German Canadians as permanent victims" historians must locate instances of agency. The tendency to describe German-Canadians as victims often results

from scholars prescribing ideal traits or actions onto their subjects. This is most notably the case in discussions relating to the German language, as speaking English is often misunderstood as becoming "more Canadian" and "less German". Sauer notes that this, in turn, has created a strong filiopietistic tradition in the historiography.<sup>10</sup> Lorenzkowski's recent scholarship on the German language in Waterloo County ably addresses Sauer's concerns by not victimizing her subjects. Lorenzkowski shows how "ordinary" German Canadians actively chose to speak a mixture of German and English in public, despite the protest of ethnic elites. Rather than lamenting their "failure" to maintain certain linguistic traditions, she notes that this new form of language is instead representative of the fluidity of identity and language. In this sense, she does not argue that the German-Canadian identity is a compromise or a loss, but rather that the hyphen denotes a space of cultural interaction.<sup>11</sup> This article shares Lorenzkowski's definition and supports the view that a German-Canadian identity can manifest itself not only in language, but also through religion, awareness of heritage, and in public as well as private spaces.

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nadians in World War II," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 16:1 (1984), 18.

<sup>8</sup> Barbara Lorenzkowski, "'Spies,' 'Saboteurs,' and 'Subversives': German-Canadian Internees and the Wartime Discourse at the Canadian Homefront, 1939-1945," in *A Chorus of Different Voices: German-Canadian Identities*, eds. Angelika E. Sauer and Matthias Zimmer (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1998), 178.

<sup>9</sup> Russell A. Kazal, *Becoming Old Stock: The Paradox of German-American Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Barbara Lorenzkowski, *Sounds of Ethnicity: Listening to German North America, 1850-1914* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2010).

<sup>10</sup> Sauer, 228, 232, 237-238; Grit Liebscher and Jennifer Dailey-O'Cain, "Canadian German: Identity in Language," in *German Diasporic Experiences: Identity, Migration, and Loss*, ed. Mathias Schulze et al. (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2008), 74.

<sup>11</sup> Barbara Lorenzkowski, *Sounds of Ethnicity*, 214.

Recent developments in the field of memory studies offer a further way in which to stop victimizing German Canadians and devote more time to uncovering their voices. Scholars such as Hans Werner and Alexander Freund have capably completed this task with studies that reveal a better understanding of how postwar German immigrants built new communities, remembered their Nazi past, and confronted their own memories of Nazi aggression.<sup>12</sup> Their methods can similarly be applied to Ontario's century old German-Canadian population that experienced the war in Canada. In order to do so, John Bodnar's understanding of public memory as a combination of both "official" and "vernacular" culture is particularly useful. Official culture, most often supported by business and political leaders, focuses on commemorative acts conveying patriotism and national unity whereas vernacular culture, articulated by "ordinary" people, generally finds expression through the promotion of local interests, important ancestors, and pioneers of the community. The final commemorative act, be it war memorial or centennial celebration, often represents a compromise between official and ver-

naacular groups.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, studying the war memorials in Oxford and Waterloo Counties offers another way in which to gauge how German Canadians operated under the pressures of patriotic English-Canada's "official culture" while still describing the German-Canadian "vernacular culture" of the Second World War.

In order to describe the German-Canadian wartime experience in greater detail, this paper utilizes records produced by three German Lutheran congregations: Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church located in Oxford County's Tavistock-Sebastopol, St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church and St. James Evangelical Lutheran Church in Waterloo County's Kitchener and Elmira. All three churches act as appropriate case studies as they were representative of Ontario's old, established, German-Canadian communities.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, Trinity and St. Peter's make particularly suitable case studies as the pastors who led them during the First World War were still there in the Second World War, providing a continuous link between the two wars and offering a way to assess whether the established conclusion of "cultural demise" holds weight. St. James had a different pastor during each

<sup>12</sup> Alexander Freund, "Troubling Memories in Nation-Building: World War II—Memories and Germans' Interethnic Encounters in Canada After 1945," *Histoire sociale/Social History* 39/77 (2006); Hans Werner, *Imagined Homes: Soviet German Immigrants in Two Cities* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2007); Hans Werner, *The Constructed Mennonite: History, Memory, and the Second World War* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2013).

<sup>13</sup> John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 13-15.

<sup>14</sup> The 1941 census states that out of approximately the 104,000 Lutherans living in Ontario, 22,000 were located in Waterloo and Oxford Counties. As of 1941, Trinity (est. 1838), St. James (est. 1850), and St. Peter's (est. 1863) had 567, 519, and 1,899 baptized members respectively. These statistics have been gathered from the 1941 Census and the Statistical Report of the Canada Synod attached to the 1942 synod convention minutes held at Wilfrid Laurier University Archives (hereafter WLUA).

war, and therefore acts as an appropriate counterpoint.

### *German-Canadian Lutherans and the First World War*

Unlike the Anglican and Presbyterian churches in Canada that had a formal connection with England and Scotland, Lutheranism's relationship with Germany is cultural rather than political. As Lutheranism has its origin in the German states, its religious texts are predominately recorded in German, which effectively became the language of the church. As a result, the majority of Canada's Lutherans during the First World War were of German heritage, with Lutheran and German identities often reinforcing one another.<sup>15</sup> It was this relationship with German culture that brought many German-Canadian Lutherans under suspicions of disloyalty during the First World War. English-Canadian nationalists expressed particular concern over how frequently Lutherans spoke German in their churches, claiming that pastors often hid pro-German sentiments within their weekly sermons. Fears that German Canadians would sabotage the Canadian war effort motivated both members of the public and the government to support the internment of approximately 2,000 German-Canadians

throughout the war.<sup>16</sup>

Suspicion was quickly elevated to fact in the hysteria of wartime, and St. Peter's pastor, the Reverend Herman Sperling, was accused of sending private donations to Germany to support its war effort. No evidence was ever found to suggest this rumour was true though this did not prevent pro-war groups from harassing Sperling in the streets and calling for his internment.<sup>17</sup> Trinity's pastor, the Reverend Otto Stockmann, in Tavistock-Sebastopol was not as fortunate. The local Member of Parliament (MP) had him arrested and interned in late 1918 on the grounds that he had preached to a large body of "Germans" in the language of "the enemy".<sup>18</sup> Released in August 1919 on the condition that he preach in English more often, Stockmann returned home and was reinstated as Trinity's pastor. Upon his return, Stockmann told his congregation he would try to "forget" his internment experience.<sup>19</sup>

Stockmann's desire to "forget" his wartime experience was common among German-Canadian ethnic leaders in Waterloo County after the First World War. Historian Geoffrey Hayes has described how postwar hostility to German culture proved problematic to Waterloo County's German-Canadian leaders who, just several years prior to the war, often cel-

<sup>15</sup> Lehmann, *The German Canadians*, 77.

<sup>16</sup> Bassler, *The German Canadian Mosaic*, 62.

<sup>17</sup> W.H. Heick, "The Lutherans of Waterloo County during World War I," *Waterloo Historical Society* 50 (1962), 24-25.

<sup>18</sup> The local MP provided these reasons for Stockmann's internment after Trinity's congregants demanded to know why their pastor was interned. "Dr. M. Steele's Report on Rev. Stockman (sic) Case," *Tavistock Gazette*, 3 January 1919.

<sup>19</sup> "Personal and Local," *Tavistock Gazette*, 4 September 1919.

ebred the county's German identity. In response to the war, Waterloo County's German-Canadian leaders, such as Waterloo Historical Society president William H. Breithaupt, constructed a new identity through literature, local histories, and public monuments that emphasized the area's German pioneers, loyalty, and nationalism.<sup>20</sup> Far from an isolated event, ethnic groups in the United States similarly commemorated pioneers as a part of their "vernacular culture". In fact, pioneers were the most common image used by "ordinary" Americans in their commemorative acts.<sup>21</sup> However, the image of the pioneer had different connotations in mid-twentieth-century Ontario than in the United States. Canadians favoured the image of a pioneer, specifically loyalist pioneers, as nation builders.<sup>22</sup> Pioneers were therefore a part of Ontario's "official culture" rather than a vernacular expression. By constructing a pioneer narrative similar to those found in English-Canadian communities, Breithaupt expressed a form of ethnic pride that English-Canadian society found acceptable.

Canada's Lutheran churches also refocused their priorities during the in-

terwar years. Lutheran leaders became less interested in international issues and more concerned with domestic issues such as temperance.<sup>23</sup> This is partly due to immigration restrictions shortly after the First World War that barred German immigrants from Canada until 1923.<sup>24</sup> This proved particularly problematic for Canada's Lutheran churches, as they traditionally obtained their pastors from seminaries located in Germany. Fortunately, by the end of the war, the Lutheran seminary in Waterloo (established 1911) had trained a sufficient number of Lutheran pastors to prevent large gaps in Lutheran leadership from occurring. This helps explain the shift towards national issues, and why anti-German Lutheran sentiment was less publicly pronounced during the Second World War.<sup>25</sup>

Despite the new emphasis on Canadian issues, Lutheran churches still acted as traditional German spaces throughout the interwar years. After the war, Stockmann kept his promise and preached one English language sermon a month, while the rest remained in German.<sup>26</sup> His wartime experience therefore did not deter him from maintaining German as the primary language of the church.

<sup>20</sup> Geoffrey Hayes, "From Berlin to the Trek of the Conestoga: A Revisionist Approach to Waterloo County's German Identity," *Ontario History* Vol. 91:2 (Autumn 1999), 131-32, 145.

<sup>21</sup> Bodnar, *Remaking America*, 16.

<sup>22</sup> For the importance of the idea of "The Loyalist" in Ontario see Norman Knowles, *Inventing Loyalists: The Ontario Loyalist Tradition and the Creation of Usable Pasts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

<sup>23</sup> Clifford E. Nelson, *The Lutherans in North America* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 415, 418.

<sup>24</sup> Bassler, *The German Canadian Mosaic*, 47.

<sup>25</sup> English and McLaughlin, *Kitchener*, 167.

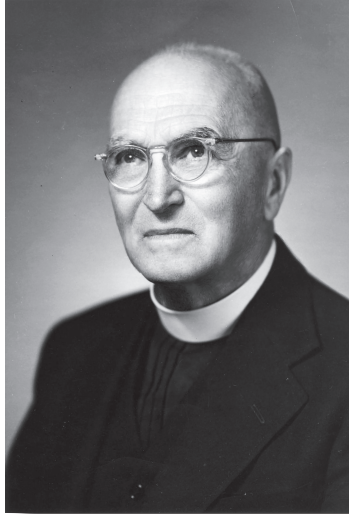
<sup>26</sup> Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church Archives, Congregational Meeting Minutes, 1 January 1920.



The same was true of St. Peter's and St. James. Pastors still conducted their weekly sermons and religious ceremonies, such as communion and confirmation, largely in German. Perhaps more significantly, Sunday schools were also offered in German, giving congregants an opportunity for their children to speak and learn the language. While the First World War left its mark on these communities, Lutheran churches were still preserved as "German spaces" and as institutions of German identity. It was largely in these churches that the German-Canadian identity would be further shaped and debated when Canada went once more to war in 1939.

### *The German-Canadian Lutheran Response to War*

German-Canadian groups in Waterloo County greeted the Second World War with apprehension and uncertainty. C.H. Little, a professor at the Lutheran seminary in Waterloo and a member of St. Peter's, expressed particular concern that the same discrimination that occurred during the First World War would strike once again. Writing to his mother, Little confessed his worry that



*Carroll Herman Little (1872-1958) Lutheran minister, and professor and administrator at the Evangelical Lutheran Seminary and Waterloo College and acting president 1918-1920, 1929-1931, and 1942-1944. (Wilfrid Laurier University Archives)*

the government would impose conscription and his sons would become "cannon fodder" overseas. Yet he did not wish to speak ill of the war, fearing that he would be placed in a "concentration camp" once "censorship of all letters" occurred.<sup>27</sup> Fear of internment and discrimination also motivated Carl Klinck, Little's colleague at the seminary and a member of St. James in Elmira, to comment on the war. Unlike Little, Klinck took a more combative approach and rallied against the "falsehood, perpetuated since the Great War by... mistakenly patriotic enthusiasts, that Lutheranism and Pro-Germanism (now known as Nazism) are synonymous."<sup>28</sup> To dismiss this public misconception, Klinck noted that only 6% of German Canadians in the Ontario area were actually born in Germany, with the remainder being born in Canada. Even the 6% minority was not cause for concern, as most of this group were "old people" who came to Canada as "youthful pioneers," long before Hitler rose to power.<sup>29</sup> Much like Breithaupt,

<sup>27</sup> WLUA, Carroll Herman Little fonds (hereafter CLF), Carroll Little to Mother, 17 September 1939; WLUA, CLF, Little to Mother, 27 August 1939.

<sup>28</sup> WLUA, Carl Klinck fonds (hereafter CKF), Klinck Papers, 2.1.3 Waterloo College and the Nazi issue, 1.

<sup>29</sup> WLUA, CKF, Klinck Papers, 2.1.3 Waterloo College and the Nazi issue, 2-3.

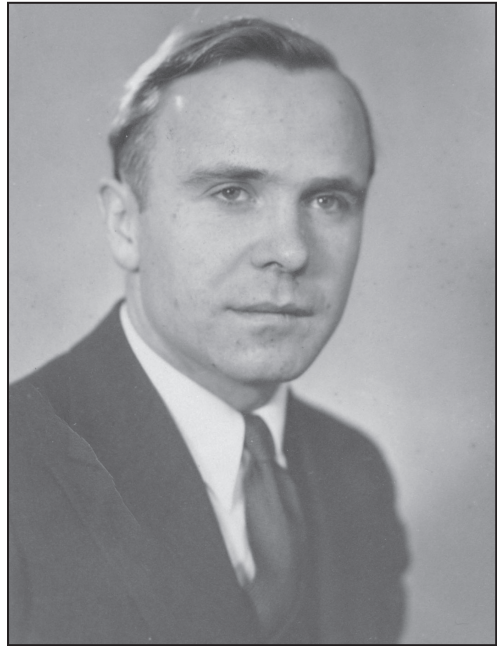
*Right: Carl Klinck, dean of Waterloo College. (Wilfrid Laurier University Archives)*

Klinck capitalized on the “pioneer myth” in order to demonstrate loyalty and the indigenous nature of German-Canadian Lutheranism in Canada.

Little and Klinck seem to offer two polarized responses to the German-Canadian Lutheran strategy of successful negotiation through the Second World War. However, both men were congregants and could vocalize their views without it impacting others. On the other hand, pastors at Trinity, St. Peter’s, and St. James, were charged with ensuring that hundreds of their congregants did not once again suffer discrimination and internment. Their reaction to war therefore fell in between the two extremes offered by Little and Klinck, not completely ignoring the war, but not being quite as combative as Klinck. As a result, they downplayed the Germanic heritage of their congregations while still actively participating in the war effort by integrating English-Canadian culture and symbols into their churches.

### *Language Reforms*

**I**n the opening stages of the war, the three pastors suspended the use of German in their churches. Owing to the “unsettled condition” in Europe, Sperling held an emergency church council meeting at St. Peter’s to discuss the im-



plications another war might have on his congregation. After a full debate, the church council agreed to suspend German language sermons and instruction in their Sunday school shortly after Britain declared war on Germany. Likewise, Stockmann also converted Trinity’s religious services to English in order to avoid “possible offence or provocation” from the outside community.<sup>30</sup> The Reverend Lloyd Kalbfleisch, the pastor at St. James in Elmira, was more uncertain, perhaps because he had been a student at a Lutheran seminary during the First World War, and had not experienced the same level of discrimination as Sperling and Stockmann. A younger and more in-

<sup>30</sup> WLUA, Eastern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada fonds (hereafter ESF), LM10 Kitchener St. Peter’s Evangelical Lutheran Church (hereafter St. Peter’s), reel 15, Church Meeting Minutes, 6 September 1939; WLUA, ESF, LM20 Sebastopol-Tavistock Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church (hereafter Trinity), reel 4, Church Council Minutes, 2 May 1940.

experienced pastor, Kalbfleisch took his cues from his elders and told his church council that “several churches have discontinued German services” and wished to know if St. James should follow their example. Church council members Josiah Schmidt and A. Bowman offered their support to the hesitant pastor, and subsequently passed a resolution suspending German language services at St. James for the remainder of the war.<sup>31</sup>

Stockmann also experienced some anxiety over suspending German language services, although his uncertainty was based on concern for his congregation rather than inexperience. He was concerned that congregants would be discouraged from attending sermons at Trinity if they were not conducted in German. In a public announcement, Stockmann recognized that the transition to English was not ideal and pleaded with congregants to remain loyal and dedicated to the church during this “difficult time.”<sup>32</sup> The possibility of losing congregants was a real threat but pastors considered language reforms a necessary precaution to avoid arousing public suspicions of disloyalty. Sperling and Stockmann were both subject to public attack during the previous war over their commitment to preaching in German and took no chances in encountering the same criticism once again.

The elimination of German language services at the three congregations did

not occur without protest from their congregants. By March 1940, members of St. Peter’s congregation formally organized resistance to Sperling’s decision to switch entirely to English language services. Led by congregant John Schell, the protestors circulated a petition to gauge if the congregation still desired to worship in German. Schell and his supporters requested that the church council offer at least one or two German sermons a month, and at least one German language communion per year. Schell also wrote to the church council detailing his demands and requested to meet personally with them to express his opposition to Sperling’s language reforms. St. Peter’s church council proved hesitant to meet with a congregant who so vocally opposed its wartime actions and therefore rejected his offer. Instead, they wrote to Schell reminding him of the reasons German language services were suspended. Though the council did not risk association with someone as vocal as Schell, they organized a committee to meet with the more moderate members of the congregation who signed Schell’s petition to reinforce the importance of not speaking German while Canada was at war.<sup>33</sup>

Schell’s convictions did not waver in the following months and he continued to campaign at St. Peter’s congregational meetings. In a May 1940 meeting, Schell once again outlined his stance on reintroducing German language services and

<sup>31</sup> WLUA, ESF, LM7 Elmira St. James Evangelical Lutheran Church (hereafter St. James), reel 1, Church Council Minutes, 17 September 1939.

<sup>32</sup> WLUA, ESF, LM20 Trinity, reel 4, Church Council Minutes, 2 May 1940.

<sup>33</sup> WLUA, ESF, LM10 St. Peter’s, reel 15, Church Council Minutes, 25 March 1940.

asked that the church council reconsider their earlier decision. Schell's second effort occurred at an inopportune time, as in the previous week the Nazis had successfully invaded northern Europe fueling English-Canada's fears that Canada was subject to internal threats. The danger of "fifth columnists," citizens who willingly collaborated with the Nazis against their own countries, played on English-Canadian fears that German-Canadians were actually loyal to Germany.<sup>34</sup> Given these fears, the church council proved even less likely to grant Schell's wishes than before. Still, the congregation debated Schell's demands and only stopped when they received a phone call notifying them that Sperling had died due to complications during kidney surgery. The unfortunate omen was interpreted as sufficient grounds to end the meeting and table other discussions for future review.<sup>35</sup> For the remainder of the year, St. Peter's church council remained preoccupied with finding a suitable replacement for Sperling and had little time to address the concerns of individual congregants. International affairs coupled with internal church concerns ultimately ended Schell's efforts to bring the German language back to St. Peter's.

Although Schell's campaign did not succeed, Trinity's congregation did enjoy one small victory. Trinity's church records suggest that several members of the con-

gregation approached Stockmann during the winter of 1940 in attempts to reinstate German language services. Specifically, they wished to create an exception for a German language Easter service. While the exact number is not detailed, enough congregants approached Stockmann that he felt it necessary to explain publicly why Trinity needed to maintain its language policy. At the January 1941 congregational meeting, members of the congregation voted on the issue of a German language Easter service. A record 43 members attended the meeting, when typically the average attendance hovered around 20-25.<sup>36</sup> The resolution to hold an Easter service in German received overwhelming support from the congregation and was subsequently passed by the church council.

However, the vote was not entirely unanimous and it did not have the total support of the congregation. Out of the 43 members present, four voted against the resolution. Stockmann recorded those names and, tellingly, the abstainers were members of prominent families in the church who had close ties to the church council.<sup>37</sup> As Stockmann and the church council had originally suspended use of the German language, it seems as though the family members of the church council supported their initial decision. The congregation received its wish at Easter in 1943, with Stockmann conducting a

<sup>34</sup> Keyserlingk, "The Canadian Government's Attitude Toward Germans and German Canadians in World War II," 17.

<sup>35</sup> WLUA, ESF, LM10 St. Peter's, reel 13, Church Meeting Minutes, 6 May 1940; WLUA, ESF, 5.0.6 Pastors: Biographical Information, Herman A. Sperling.

<sup>36</sup> WLUA, ESF, Trinity, file 3.48.5.1, Congregational Meeting Minutes, 1 January 1941.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

morning Easter service in German and another service later that day in English for those who were not comfortable attending it in German.<sup>38</sup> This division between church council and congregants is highly reminiscent of St. Peter's church council's unwillingness to even publicly associate itself with Schell. In the minds of Trinity's more elite members, the risk of appearing and speaking German was not one worth taking. While Trinity's vote appears to have had the general support of the congregation, there still remained a split between the congregation and its pastor and church council.

St. James's church council also proved instrumental in ensuring that English remained the language of the church throughout the duration of the war. During a public meeting open to the congregation in July 1940, the congregation discussed the possibility of including German language services while scheduling next year's sermons. At this juncture, church council members Schmidt and Bowman intervened and passed a resolution reaffirming that the church would continue worshipping in English, just as they had decided with Kalbfleisch at the beginning of the war.<sup>39</sup> The possibility of speaking German was once again brought up the following year in May 1941, this time in regards to conducting a German communion service. Once more the church council upheld its mandate and "thought it best to omit [the] service" and hold the ceremony in English.<sup>40</sup>

The debate over language in these three congregations sheds greater light on the relationship between Lutheranism and the German ethnic identity. Congregants at all three churches petitioned primarily for the opportunity to speak German on days with a specific religious importance or at important religious rituals, such as at Easter or confirmation ceremonies. This debate reiterates the degree to which the church evolved into an important German space during the interwar years and saw the German and Lutheran identities of congregants as two halves of a single mold. While Lorenzkowski's scholarship ably describes how German gradually fell from public use in Waterloo County, this trend did not occur within Lutheran churches. In fact, rather than treating the switch to English with ambivalence as German Canadians did in the public sphere, congregants fought vigorously to maintain it in their churches. This difference reveals a key aspect of the development of the German language in Ontario. As its mixed public use indicates, the German language in Ontario in the 1940s had largely lost its practical use. Instead, the German language was now imbedded with religious and cultural importance. The spirited protests within these three Lutheran churches remains a testament to the cultural significance congregants placed on speaking the language of their ancestors during times of religious importance. To speak German at church contained more

<sup>38</sup> WLUA, ESF, LM20 Trinity, reel 4, Church Council Minutes, 29 March 1943.

<sup>39</sup> WLUA, ESF, LM7 St. James, reel 1, Congregational Meeting Minutes, 7 July 1940.

<sup>40</sup> WLUA, ESF, LM7 St. James, reel 1, Church Council Minutes, 11 May 1941.

than religious meaning, it also provided an opportunity to practice and commune with one's ethnic identity. While language in the public sphere was fluid and allowed for change, congregants resisted language reforms that violated their perception of the church as a German space during the Second World War.

### *Creating Patriotic Space*

Although language reforms were an important consequence of the war in the minds of both pastors and congregants, it was only one strategy pastors employed to help Lutheran churches demonstrate their loyalty to Canada. Pastors also adopted English-Canadian symbols and customs. Prior to the Second World War, Lutheran congregations commonly displayed German language signs on their church grounds, and few had Canadian or British flags as neighbouring Anglican churches often did. Soon after the Second World War began, St. Peter's church council recommended and subsequently passed a resolution to purchase a Canadian flag and raise it on the church grounds. Likewise, the Ladies Aid Society at Trinity donated a portion of its funds for the church to purchase a flag of their own. Stockmann held a small dedication ceremony for the raising of the new flag in March 1940. In Kitchener, St. Peter's church council also took the initiative of

ordering a new sign for the church. Prior to this decision, the sign was inscribed with the name of the church in German only. The new sign now bore the name of the church not in German, but exclusively in English.<sup>41</sup>

As exemplified by alterations to St. Peter's and Trinity's church grounds, public appearances became increasingly important to Lutheran congregations during the Second World War. The significance of a patriotic presence in the public sphere is obvious, as St. Peter's went so far as to reschedule their weekly sermon so as to not conflict with the 1939 Remembrance Day ceremony. The church council also advised the congregation to take part in the civic ceremony that was held at the cenotaph in Kitchener. The church council at St. James went one step further, with Bowman suggesting in June 1940 that St. James allow the Red Cross to host a fundraising garden party on its church grounds.<sup>42</sup>

One of the clearest ways to demonstrate loyalty and involvement in the war effort was the procurement of an honour roll. A form of commemoration popularized by English-Canada during the First World War, honour rolls listed the names of all those who served or died fighting overseas.<sup>43</sup> Acquiring an honour roll was particularly easy throughout the Second World War, as the Department

<sup>41</sup> WLUA, ESF, LM10 St. Peter's, reel 15, Church Meeting Minutes, 24 June 1940; WLUA, ESF, Canada Synod Convention Minutes, June 1940, 22; WLUA, ESF, LM10 St. Peter's, reel 15, Church Meeting Minutes, 14 November 1941.

<sup>42</sup> WLUA, ESF, LM10 St. Peter's, reel 15, Church Meeting Minutes, 8 November 1940; WLUA, ESF, LM7 St. James, reel 1, Church Council Minutes, 9 June 1940.

<sup>43</sup> Jonathan F. Vance, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning and the First World War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997), 116.

of National Defence [DND] advertised that schools, businesses, churches, and other organizations could all submit a request to obtain a free pre-made roll. In September 1942, Trinity's church council submitted a request for an honour roll so that the church council could list the members of their congregation currently serving in the Canadian Army. Once obtained and updated, they hung it on the entrance of the church, with all those who entered able to clearly see the sacrifice of their fellow congregants.<sup>44</sup> Ordered from the DND rather than designed by the congregation, Trinity's honour roll made frequent use of British imagery, featuring several Union Jacks and lions adorned with golden crowns. According to an advertisement produced by the DND, these symbols were meant to convey the "authentic heraldic [of] the historic majesty of the British Empire."<sup>45</sup> The advertisement further noted that symbols from England, Scotland, Ireland, and French-Canada were included in the design. Obviously absent from the honour roll, however, were symbols of Canada's non-"charter" groups who also participated in the war effort.

It is readily understandable why Trinity's church council believed it beneficial for their church to secure an honour roll. When hung prominently, it promoted publicly the memory of the congregation's soldiers. Like in other churches,

cities, and businesses, it could be used as a form of "boosterism" to demonstrate to rivals the church's level of patriotism and sacrifice during the war.<sup>46</sup> An honour roll allowed Stockmann and Trinity's council to show that their congregation was active in the war effort and therefore loyal to Canada. This fit well with Stockmann's desire to convert Trinity into a patriotic space, but it seems not to have resonated with the congregation at large. Though no formal protest to hanging the honour roll in the church was recorded, congregants greeted it with ambivalence. After July 1944, the honour roll was not kept up to date and was eventually removed from the church once the war ended. This treatment is in contrast to many other Canadian churches throughout the country, which to this day continue displaying their honour rolls, or have had them cast in bronze. Though intended to signify the congregation's dedication to the war effort, its eventual neglect instead reflects the disconnect that existed between pastor and congregant throughout the war.

During the First World War, Lutheran pastors were criticized for not upholding English-Canadian norms such as singing "God Save the King" and saluting the Union Jack.<sup>47</sup> Not only did the pastors directly address these issues during the Second World War by ordering English flags and signs, they further affiliated

<sup>44</sup> WLUA, ESF, LM20 Trinity, reel 4, Church Council Minutes, 28 September 1942.

<sup>45</sup> WLUA, CKF, 1.6 Honour roll of Waterloo College and Seminary.

<sup>46</sup> Vance, *Death So Noble*, 119.

<sup>47</sup> The most well-known instance of this was the Reverend C.R. Tappert of St. Matthews in Berlin/Kitchener. See Geoffrey Hayes, *Waterloo County: An Illustrated History* (Kitchener, ON: Waterloo Historical Society, 1997), 121.

themselves with the outside community by attending Remembrance Day ceremonies and hosting patriotic fundraisers. By transforming Lutheran churches into patriotic spaces, pastors could dispel rumours like those that had circulated during the First World War that Lutherans held secret “pro-German” meetings at their churches. Further still, by using the same patriotic symbols and customs as English-Canada, German-Canadian Lutherans avoided accusations of disloyalty while simultaneously highlighting their own dedication to the war effort in readily understandable ways. This is particularly true for the Reverends Sperling and Stockmann, who exercised a degree of self-regulation by adopting English-Canada’s patriotic symbols and societal norms. They took no chances risking internment once again.

### *Commemoration and Memory*

Rising casualties became increasingly common as Canada became more involved in overseas operations in Italy and Normandy in 1943-1944. These losses were acutely felt at the local level and groups across Canada initiated acts of commemoration to pay respect to their war dead. German-Canadian Lutherans also participated in this process to give voice to both their grief and pride in their contributions to the war effort. In March of 1945, Trinity’s church council passed a resolution to plant three maple trees in

the churchyard, one for each of Trinity’s soldiers killed in action. The trees were later complemented by a plaque erected on Stockmann’s initiative bearing the inscription “These trees were planted in loving memory of Clarence Kalbfleisch, Francis Weitzel [and] Alfred Kingsley who gave their all for king and country 1939-1945.”<sup>48</sup> Far from unique, similar inscriptions emphasizing the same values can be found on war memorials across Canada.<sup>49</sup> At first glance, this commemorative act suggests that German-Canadians understood the war in similar terms as English-Canada, stressing patriotism and dedication to “King and country” above all else. However, this conclusion does little to acknowledge the complexity of the German-Canadian response to the war. There are several other ways to glean meaning from a monument aside from simply reading its inscription.

Further meaning can be extracted from Trinity’s war memorial through a spatial analysis of the monument. Trinity’s church cemetery groups its headstones and burial plots by different decades. Given that all three soldiers died in the 1940s, the obvious place for the war memorial was in the 1940s section of the church cemetery. However, the church council decided that it should be placed in the “old cemetery” where the pioneers and founding members of the church were buried.<sup>50</sup> The association between war dead and German pioneers once

<sup>48</sup> WLUA, ESF, LM20 Trinity, reel 4, Church Council Minutes, 19 March 1945; WLUA, ESF, LM20 Trinity, reel 4, Church Council Minutes, 31 May 1948.

<sup>49</sup> Vance, *Death So Noble*, 162.

<sup>50</sup> WLUA, ESF, LM20 Trinity, reel 4, Church Council Minutes, 19 March 1945.



again conforms to the model emphasized by Breithaupt and Klinck. By placing its war memorial with its pioneers, Trinity seems to have been creating a landscape of loyalty that recognized the contributions of their church to the creation and maintenance of Canada. The language used on the plaque and the selection of Canadian maple trees further enhanced the loyalty motif. Perhaps more personally, the placement of the memorial is indicative of the status the congregation granted their three dead soldiers.

Trinity's "old cemetery" is located at the front of the churchyard, directly beside the entrance to the church, and is viewable from the road running south into Tavistock's town core. In contrast, the 1940 burials are located further behind the church, largely hidden from public view. Much like the honour roll, the placement of the war memorial suggests it was to be publicly viewed to ensure that the memory of these three congregants remained in popular consciousness. A number of Canada's ethnic groups interpreted military service as the clearest way to demonstrate loyalty. To die during battle, then, and the sacrifice of blood, was seen as the highest proclamation of one's dedication to Canada.<sup>51</sup> Seen by all who passed, the war memorial showed that Trinity's loy-

alty could not be questioned; they too had served, and they too had sacrificed.

Despite the public nature of the war memorial, it remained very much a personal product of Stockmann. The trees planted in memory of the three soldiers were, tellingly, maples and not oak, the tree most commonly associated with Germany and German culture.<sup>52</sup> In planting the trees in the churchyard, Stockmann was quite literally connecting the memory of the three soldiers with the church itself, and with their Lutheran, German, and Canadian identities.

While the location of the memorial provides insight into the value placed on the three fallen soldiers, memories of one of the soldiers, Francis Weitzel, the second name on the plaque, reveal a more controversial story. Weitzel was born in Tavistock in 1921 and was orphaned at a young age. Sympathetic to his situation, the community offered Weitzel odd farming jobs to help sustain him financially through his teenage years. Much like other Lutheran youth in the community, he attended Trinity while growing up and likely learned to speak German as a result of Stockmann's Sunday school instruction.<sup>53</sup> It is perhaps unsurprising that Weitzel enlisted with the Canadian Army after the outbreak of the war. Steady work, three meals a day, and daily

<sup>51</sup> Frances Swyripa, "The Politics of Redress: The Contemporary Ukrainian-Canadian Campaign," in *Enemies Within: Italian and Other Internees in Canada and Abroad*, ed. Franca Iacovetta, Roberto Perin, and Angelo Principe (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 359.

<sup>52</sup> In contrast, German-Canadians in Waterloo County commemorated events with oak trees prior to the First World War. Lorenzkowski, *Sounds of Ethnicity*, 140.

<sup>53</sup> Biographical information on Weitzel has been compiled from Weitzel's "Year of the Veteran" file located at the Tavistock & District Historical Society; Library and Archives Canada, RG24, volume 27306, Francis Weitzel Attestation Papers.

*Soldiers of the Highland Light Infantry of Canada having breakfast, Buron, France, 9 July 1944. (Library and Archives Canada)*

pay would have given him a new level of security and wealth.<sup>54</sup>

Weitzel enlisted with the Highland Light Infantry of Canada, a regiment raised in Waterloo County, and took part in the invasion of Normandy on 6 June 1944. His first real engagement, and that of his regiment, occurred



on 8 July when they were tasked with liberating the French village of Buron. The regiment engaged in heavy fighting throughout the day and Weitzel's company was tied down in the village. Though already wounded, Weitzel seized the initiative and led his section towards an orchard on the village outskirts, the company's final objective. Members of his section were wounded or killed shortly upon entering the orchard, leaving Weitzel to carry on alone. Popular memory and the recollections of veterans claim that Weitzel, firing a Bren gun from his hip, proceeded to singlehandedly neutralize two German machine-gun posts. When the rest of his company reached the orchard later that day, they found the area more or

less secured, but also Weitzel's dead body, sprayed with bullets.<sup>55</sup> As they believed he took the final objective alone, Weitzel's regiment saw fit to nominate him for the Victoria Cross, the highest award that a Commonwealth soldier could receive for bravery on the battlefield. Weitzel was rejected for the award on the grounds of insufficient witnesses but the regiment dismissed the official record, emphasizing that the final objective had been cleared when they reached Weitzel's position.<sup>56</sup>

Weitzel's regiment was not the only group left unsatisfied with the official record. Rumours continue to circulate in present day Tavistock that Weitzel was denied the Victoria Cross not because there were insufficient witnesses, but rather be-

<sup>54</sup> Weitzel is quoted discussing his financial security in "Gallant Action of Cpl. Francis Weitzel Wins Praise of H.L.I. of C. Regiment," *Tavistock Gazette*, 19 July 1944.

<sup>55</sup> J. Alan Snowie, *Bloody Buron: Normandy—08 July 1944* (Erin, Ontario: Boston Mills Press, 1984), 67-68.

<sup>56</sup> Snowie, *Bloody Buron*, 92.

cause of his German heritage. Weitzel's rejection is labeled a "political" decision.<sup>57</sup> Whether true or not, the rumours reveal more about the German-Canadian identity than about Weitzel's sacrifice overseas. The importance of his death to Trinity and the community is demonstrated by the large attendance at his memorial service, and the fact it received front-page coverage in the *Tavistock Gazette*. In contrast, Trinity's other two fallen soldiers received scant mention.<sup>58</sup> The resonance Weitzel's death had in the community is very similar to Bodnar's conception of "vernacular culture," where important family members are most prominently remembered among "ordinary" people. It is telling that, in the public mind, the British did not slight Weitzel because he was a colonial Canadian, but because he was "German." In the case of Weitzel's Victoria Cross, war did not diminish the German-Canadian identity, but actually served to heighten it.

The Victoria Cross controversy is not reflected in Trinity's war memorial. Instead, Stockmann constructed a "public memory" of the Second World War that aligned with English-Canada's official memory of the conflict, allowing those who view the memorial to leave with positive images of patriotism, loyalty, and

German-Canadian contributions to the war effort, rather than ethnic discrimination. Trinity's memorial is a clear example that ethnic Canadian forms of commemoration cannot always be taken at face value. Though Stockmann used the language and symbols of English Canada, the placement of the memorial suggests that he was more concerned with demonstrating Trinity's loyal and patriotic involvement in the war. This, coupled with Weitzel's Victoria Cross controversy, indicates that German-Canadians had their own distinct memories of the war, even if they were hidden from public view.

Unlike Trinity, St. Peter's and St. James did not order honour rolls or erect memorials for their war dead. Though St. Peter's did make note of the congregation's total casualty rate near the end of the war, no formal process of commemoration was ever initiated.<sup>59</sup> This lack of commemoration highlights a portion of the German-Canadian wartime memory that is different than that of Trinity's. St. Peter's lack of commemoration is reminiscent of Little's restrained attitude towards the war. In a letter to his mother, Little expressed how upset the idea of war made him, but he chose not to vocalize his fears in case they were interpreted as signs of disloyalty. Little ended his discussion of the war by

<sup>57</sup> William Powell, *Oxford Heroes: Lost But Not Forgotten* (n.s., 2010); "The farmhand at war: Remembering the greatest hero of bloody Buron," *The Record*, 11 November 2010; "Veteran challenges nation," *Tavistock Gazette*, November 2005; Snowie, 92.

<sup>58</sup> Clarence Kalbfleisch was a farmer from Tavistock and died at the Battle of Ortona on Christmas, 1943. Alfred Kingsley was a clerical worker from Kitchener and married a member of Trinity's congregation. He died on 7 October 1944. Although Kalbfleisch's family encountered financial difficulties as a result of his death, the dominant popular memory surrounding these three soldiers focuses primarily on Weitzel.

<sup>59</sup> WLUA, ESF, LM10 St. Peter's, reel 13, Church Meeting Minutes, 29 January 1945.

stating that in Waterloo County, “silence is golden.”<sup>60</sup> Like Little, both St. James and St. Peter’s chose not to draw further attention to their congregations by commemorating the war. However, after the war ended, their councils did offer other strategies to heal the divisions war caused in their congregations.

Their pastors and church councils slowly reintroduced German language services in their churches. Stockmann be-

gan preaching predominantly in German again in January 1946 and the other congregations followed suit, largely emboldened by the influx of post-war German immigrants who also desired to worship in German.<sup>61</sup> The war did not deter these Lutheran churches from maintaining and continuing their role as important German spaces.

### *Conclusion*

The church records used in this study readily give voice to the strategies pastors Sperling, Stockmann, and Kalbfleisch used to negotiate their congregations through the Second World War. Motivated by their memories of the First

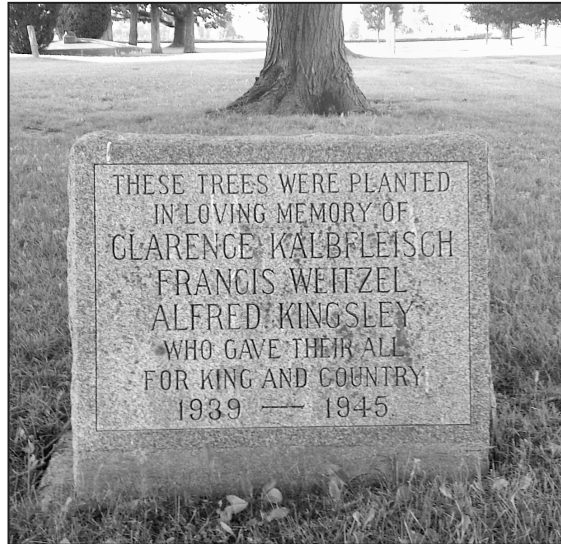
World War, these pastors demonstrated a degree of self-regulation by suspending the German language and conforming to Eng-

lish-Canadian symbols, public rituals, and forms of commemoration.

German-Canadian Lutheran pastors exercised control over their own fates through these initiatives and took a leading role in demonstrating their loyalty and dedication to the Canadian war

effort. They were not passive victims over whom the federal government exercised sole authority, but were rather the primary agents in their wartime experience. While Keyserlingk is partially correct in concluding German-Canadians were treated more “leniently” during the Second World War as a result of a new government perspective, he did not fully appreciate that this was also true because German-Canadians gave the government very little reason to suspect them of disloyalty. Though their reforms were at times controversial, German-Canadian Lutheran pastors waged the Second World War on their own terms.

German-Canadian Lutheran con-



*Trinity's memorial stone for Clarence Kalbfleisch, Francis Weitzel and Alfred Kingsley. Photo by the author.*

<sup>60</sup> WLUA, CLF, Little to Mother, 23 July 1939.

<sup>61</sup> Trinity's church council did not switch back to German with complete confidence. They decided

gregants did not remain silent throughout the war and also voiced their opposition to the reforms implemented by their pastors. Their desire to continue worshipping in German, and to maintain memories of the war no matter how controversial, suggests that an ethnic and cultural German consciousness was still present among these three congregations. By voicing their opposition to the English-Canadian practices supported by their pastors, these congregations asserted their ethnic German identity. They resisted or ignored attempts by their pastors to downplay their German heritage. A close study of these three churches demonstrates that they still expressed an interest in their German heritage, even in the dangers of wartime.

It is unsurprising that a culture of silence and victimization is often associated with the German-Canadian wartime experience. German-Canadian reactions to the war occurred predominantly within Lutheran churches, not in the public sphere. To date, historians have relied on sources produced outside the community, and have missed these expressions of agency. Since Trinity used English-Canadian forms of commemoration, and the memory of Weitzel was discussed privately, it is perhaps understandable that the German-Canadian memory has also gone relatively unexplored. By looking at the placement of and motive behind Trinity's memorial, it becomes increas-

ingly obvious that German-Canadian Lutherans had their own understanding of and reasons for commemorating the Second World War. They did not just imitate Canadian culture; they gave voice to both Lutheran achievement and loyalty. Furthermore, the lack of commemoration at St. Peter's and St. James adds diversity to the community's memory. Victimhood and internment does not accurately reflect the variety and complexity of the German-Canadian Lutheran experience and memory of the Second World War.

Identities are constantly in flux. This was certainly true of the German-Canadians associated with Trinity, St. Peter's, and St. James during the Second World War. Within church walls, they debated and actively supported their German-Canadian identity by resisting language reforms and by voicing alternative memories to the war, at the same time their pastors modeled their actions after those of patriotic English-Canada. As a result, the Second World War created a conversation between pastor and congregant as to what it meant to be Lutheran, Canadian, and German. Perhaps the passage quoted by Stockmann at Weitzel's memorial service is a more accurate description of the German-Canadian wartime experience than the old pastor even realized – "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed."

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to withdraw advertisements about their weekly sermons from the *Tavistock Gazette* at the same time so as to not attract greater attention. See WLUA, ESF, LM20 Trinity, reel 4, Church Council Minutes, 24 September 1945; WLUA, ESF, LM20 Trinity, reel 4, Church Council Minutes, 26 November 1945; Sauer, 236; Bassler, *The German Canadian Mosaic*, 14.