

World War II

(written by Ian Stevenson)

The Rev. Dr. John Logan-Vencta, minister of St Giles, had First World War experience with the Highland Brigade in the Imperial Army, following which he became associated with the Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa, first as a combatant officer and later as a chaplain (a role he served for 28 years during war and peace). Less than a year following, Canada declared war on September 10th, 1939.

The minister followed his regiment to the United Kingdom, there to become Principal Chaplain with the Canadian Central Mediterranean Force under Generals Alexander and Montgomery of the Eighth Army until his return, about March 1946 following the end of the war.

Meanwhile with the pulpit occupied by various ministers under the interim moderator appointed by the Presbytery of Ottawa, the congregation saw many of its able bodied young men and women taken into uniform. Many prayer services were held at that time.

On the Home Front, it was full steam ahead for the war efforts. The Canadian Girls in Training donated, packed and dispatched many boxes of food and clothing to evacuated missionaries living in Britain.

A War Service Committee was organized for the purpose of knitting and sewing for the local branch of the Red Cross Society. Tea was served, a collection of 10 cents per member provided money for wool and other supplies. Gifts of money came from members and adherents. At the end of the first year 506 knitted articles, 337 pieces of sewing, blankets, quilts and afghans were donated to the Red Cross. Forty-five boxes were packed, each containing a sweater or socks, handkerchiefs, cigarettes, chocolates and gum, and mailed as Christmas gifts to St Giles men, eighteen going to Iceland and Britain. This excellent project was successfully maintained until hostilities ceased. Also communication between St Giles and her young men and women in the armed forces was maintained throughout the war years.

The Young People's Society supplied, oxo cubes and khaki handkerchiefs to the minister for distribution among the troops in North Africa and Italy. The Guild had a Wednesday afternoon group to sew and knit woollen articles. A night group knitted 227 articles, 3 quilts, 313 handkerchiefs and sent 48 boxes to men and women of the armed forces overseas and contributed regularly through the duration of the war. All this despite war time rationing and shortages.

It should be recorded, that the beloved nurse/missionary to be, Pauline Brown, served in the navy and was stationed in Canada during the war.

Following the end of the war, a Roll of Honour was commissioned in bronze listing the names of the fallen and those who served. It was unveiled by his Excellency the Governor General, Viscount Alexander of Tunis and Dedicated by the minister in 1947. It can be viewed in the North East corner of the church.