



SPIRITUAL STRENGTH

Unsplash John Arano

“We will not hide them from their descendants; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done. He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our ancestors to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children.”

Psalm 78:4–6, NIV

I love old churches. There are 28,000 religious spaces across Canada, with over 9,000 of these set to close in the next few years (CBC.ca). This can apply to rural areas that are no longer inhabited or which have shrinking congregations that don't have that next generation to carry on with the building. I know the Church is not the building, but these buildings represent the faith that our country was founded upon. The buildings represent a place to gather and share our faith together as a church family. The modern world has experienced an unmatched season of not being able to gather physically. As a result, church services are going up online.

As I write this, our world is in the middle of a pandemic and it has me looking back to seasons of crisis in our history. In the Second World War, people gathered in Canada's churches to try to understand the war. “United

Church of Canada minister Gordon Spence Maxwell preached that the Second World War, much like any war, tested the core values of society. War not only challenged the economic and social resources of a country but also the spiritual strength of its population.”¹ We are really finding out what we are made of these days. With the kids out of school, the markets weak, and so many of our simple, daily pleasures halted, we are finding out what is really important.

I found the research regarding faith in the pulpits during 1939–1945 very interesting. “Early in the war, a short article in *The Globe and Mail* declared that ‘war will predominate tomorrow again in the subjects of sermons preached from the pulpits of Toronto.’ Indeed, nominally secular papers regularly included articles about religious congregations and their activities. They also included articles that attempted to reach out to the public and provide lessons about the war.”² We're not exactly in a war, but the extreme measures that have had to be taken to fight COVID-19 have us feeling like we can start to relate to those times. But this time, instead of listening to the radio to hear of the latest victory of the Allied Forces, we turn on our computer or TV to hear what our health care professionals can tell us, with society hoping that science is winning this war and finding a vaccine. As Christians, our spiritual strength is being tested.

When I think of our young people growing up in this time, they will be looking to our online and digital platforms for that strength. So many churches, big and small, have gone to the Internet to post sermons, programs for youth, prayer services, and sets of worship music. There are so many videos to upload and watch. **I believe that what will carry the day are the messages from their shepherds—their pastors, spiritual mentors, and worship leaders. Relationship is key when passing on spiritual truths.** Phone calls, text messages, and Facetime calls are all so important in keeping connected to our spheres of influence in these days.

During this difficult season, may we not miss the opportunity to lead (by example) a generation of youth to the things that are really important in light of eternity. In the Second World War, people looked to the pulpits across Canada to use the Bible to explain their situation and to find help through those defining moments of history. Interest in spiritual things skyrocketed at that time. In this crisis, the pulpit isn't what we face from a seat in the congregation; it's an online platform, and some are using digital technology. Yet, we hope for the same kind of reaction—revival! When this is over, may our church buildings be full, and may the next generation be able to give testimony of the wonderful things the Lord has done.

Source: 1, 2: <https://wartimecanada.ca>.

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