

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2025

New Church Canadian

A Bi-Monthly Newsletter of the General
Church in Canada



TRADITIONS, FLEXIBILITY AND SPIRITUAL GROWTH

By Rev Mark Allais

Human beings are naturally drawn to tradition. Whether it shapes our worship, daily customs, or social interactions, tradition offers comfort, security, and a sense of shared meaning. Rituals provide familiar touchstones in an ever-changing world and can serve as a powerful introduction to religious life and faith. In themselves, these traditions and rituals are not harmful; as spiritual tools, they orient our minds to higher things and introduce newcomers to the church and the Lord. However, the Lord warns that traditions become spiritually dangerous when they are clung to for their own sake, replacing the living call to spiritual regeneration and charity. The inclination to maintain the status quo, seeking stability through unchanging external forms, is a sign of the proprium at work: the self-centered nature that resists genuine spiritual change.

We will explore these intertwined themes, the proper use and danger of tradition, the nature of the proprium, and the essential flexibility of true spiritual love.

The Proprium and the Tendency to Maintain the Status Quo

The New Church understanding of the “proprrium” is central to this discussion. The proprium is the inherited self, which is centered on self-love and love of the world. It resists spiritual change and

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prefers what is familiar and externally affirming. The 'proprium' is signified by what is man's own, which is nothing but evil (Arcana Coelestia 154). This inherited tendency seeks security in the status quo, relying on outward traditions, routines, and the approval of others to maintain a sense of righteousness or worth.

The Lord's teachings highlight the necessity of inward change—regeneration. “Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). The Writings clarify that this is not a one-time event but an ongoing process by which the Lord creates a new will and understanding within us (True Christian Religion 586). Thus, the human desire to avoid change is not spiritually neutral; it must be addressed in the work of regeneration.

The Uses—and Perils—of Tradition and Ritual

Traditions and rituals serve important uses in spiritual life. They are particularly valuable for introducing those new to faith, or children, to the order, beauty, and meaning of worship (Arcana Coelestia 7263). Externals are needed at the beginning because the deeper things of self-examination and repentance take time to grow within a person.

Yet, as one's spiritual life matures, the use of tradition must shift. The crucial distinction is between means and ends. Traditions and rituals are means to an end: they should support our journey toward inward spiritual development, not become ends in themselves.

When tradition becomes rigid and unquestioned, it fosters a spiritual inertia—a reluctance to examine our inner lives or receive new truth from the Lord. This is the “trap” that tradition, when misused, sets for the proprium:

Inherited and Unquestioned Belief: People often follow traditions simply because they are handed down, believing them to be holy or the only way, without examining whether they serve a spiritual purpose (Heaven and Hell 455). Attachment to external forms can block the openness needed for regeneration and keep us in a state of self-justification.

External Focus: Traditions can draw attention to outward acts, rituals, or customs rather than to the inward change of heart. The Lord criticized the religious leaders of His day for this very reason: “This people honours Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me” (Matthew 15:8).

Human Authority over Divine Truth: Traditions are man-made and when placed above the living message of the Lord or the internal sense of His Word, become barriers rather than supports. “You make the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition” (Matthew 15:6; see also Arcana Coelestia 3427).

Resistance to the Lord's Leading: History and the Word show that clinging to tradition can blind people to the Lord's ongoing guidance and call to a new life (see parables and prophecies throughout the Gospels).

While traditions can serve as a reminder and provide an opportunity to return to the Lord through His Word, they must never be an excuse to remain unchallenged in our status quo or as a substitute for the real work of self-examination, repentance, and renewal.

The Trap of the Proprium in Tradition

When we need traditions to remain unchanged, when the prospect of change threatens our sense of value, comfort, identity or security, it is a clear sign that the proprium is active. This is not always obvious to us and can be outside of our awareness. The proprium, after all, seeks its meaning in external things: reputation, routine, being “right,” or standing with a group (Arcana Coelestia 215).

Such attachment to fixed things signals an opportunity for spiritual work. Rituals and traditions, necessary and useful at first, become traps when a person relies on them for self-justification, identity, or as a means of avoiding spiritual effort. The Writings articulate this dynamic powerfully: the love of self and the world tempts people to measure piety and holiness by external actions or forms rather than by the affections of charity (love for the neighbour) and faith (Heaven and Hell 481; True Christian Religion 403). The Lord, meanwhile, is always calling us to deeper things: “The kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:21).



Continuing to rely on external forms for spiritual validation can make it even harder for the Lord’s life to enter. The path of regeneration requires a

willingness to let go of old forms that satisfy the proprium. When we come to see that they don’t serve the great good, we seek instead the living presence of the Lord in our minds and hearts (Arcana Coelestia 3993).

Charity, Flexibility, and the True Use of Ritual

Spiritual love, or charity, is inherently flexible. A person whose motivation is true charity is “led by the Lord”, which is an internal leading and desires above all else to serve the good of others (True Christian Religion 407). Charity is not self-interested, and so it does not grasp for the security of custom or external things; instead, it is marked by an internal openness—a willingness to change, adapt, and be led to what is useful for others and for the Lord’s kingdom.

The Writings say, “All external worship must be formed from internal things, and all charity has regard for use” (Arcana Coelestia 1618). Spiritual love takes on its form from wisdom; it adapts to meet the unique needs of the moment rather than insisting on rigid consistency. The truly charitable person does not cling to rituals or traditions out of a need for personal comfort, but uses them or lets them go according to their value in serving others and the Lord.

When we find ourselves becoming anxious, fearful, or defensive about changing traditions, it is

the proprium at work. The attachment becomes a signpost, a gentle indication that deeper spiritual effort and reflection are needed. As we progress in regeneration, we become increasingly ready to loosen our grasp on externals, trusting the Lord and seeking the good of others.

Fear and Protection: Marks of the Proprium

One defining feature of the proprium is the feeling of fear, fear of change, fear of losing distinction or comfort, fear of the unknown. This protective attitude toward traditions and rituals arises not from love for the Lord or charity toward the neighbour, but from the self. The proprium

Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

John 3:3

seeks to maintain its status and comfort, resisting the flexible, adaptive nature of true spiritual love (Arcana Coelestia 141,150,210).

The Writings clarify that those in genuine charity do not put their trust in themselves, but in the Lord. Nor do they set their heart on rituals as such, but on the uses to which they are applied. The more our trust is in the Lord, the less emotionally invested we are

in outward forms for their own sake, and the more willing we are to adapt for the sake of ministering to others.

Adapting Rituals and Traditions for the Sake of Others

A person in true charity asks: How can I apply what I have learned, including rituals and traditions, to serve others? How can I be a useful vessel for the Lord's love in this situation? The answer will often look different in various contexts, and what is most needed is spiritual flexibility, a willingness to reshape or let go of externals in service of deeper functions (True Christian Religion 435; Charity 158).

This openness is not aimless or without order. The Lord establishes a grand pattern in the Word and the life of the church. But it is always order in service of regeneration and charity, not for the sake of structure itself. In this spirit, the Apostle Paul wrote: "I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some" (1 Corinthians 9:22)—a posture of humility and adaptation guided by a higher purpose.

Spiritual Indicators: Assessing Our State

When we notice ourselves tightly holding onto tradition, desiring the status quo, or fearing change, we can use this as a spiritual indicator. It is a sign that the proprium is present and that there is work to be done in turning anew toward the Lord. The movement from external to internal, from reliance on dead forms to a living trust in the Lord, is the path of genuine spiritual freedom.

True flexibility is the fruit of charity; it is the spiritual strength to put aside our comfort for the sake of another's good and the wisdom to discern when traditions are serving the Lord's work and when they are not. Traditions can continue to be valuable, but only as long as they serve as vehicles for love and wisdom, leading us and others to a living faith and charity.

Choosing the Living Way

New Church doctrine teaches that traditions and rituals are valuable as supports and introductions to faith, but must never become the basis for our spiritual identity or security. When we need tradition to remain unchanged, or feel fear and defensiveness about its loss, it is a sign that the proprium is seeking comfort in externals, rather than trusting the Lord and seeking to serve others.

Spiritual love is inherently flexible: it is rooted in trust in the Lord, animated by a desire to serve others, and guided by humility that adapts to every spiritual need. When this love rules, traditions and rituals become dynamic tools, employed or laid aside as the Lord leads, always with the good of others as the goal.

The journey from external observance to internal charity is one of continual spiritual growth, a never-ending path of letting go, trusting, adapting, and loving anew. It is the path of the New Church: always making room for the Lord to make all things new, in us and around us.

Come to the Olivet New Church Youth Weekend!

Reconnect with your old friends and meet new ones!

Theme: Defense against the “Dark Arts”
aka The Nature of Evil

Dates: Friday, October 3-5, 2025

Time: Friday 5 p.m. – Sunday 1 p.m.

Address: Olivet New Church

(279 Burnhamthorpe Road, Etobicoke, Ontario)



Highlights include:

- Doctrinal Class and Discussion
- Go Karting Outing
- Fun and Games
- In house movie related to the theme
- BBQ dinner

Cost of Weekend: \$50.00 CAD/USD

Age group: Grades 7-12

Contact Person: Rev. Todd Beiswenger

Phone: 437-345-8955 (Todd's cell),

416-239-3054 (Olivet Church)

Email: pastor@olivetnewchurch.org



Group picture taken at Somerset Youth Weekend, May 2025

Please join us for a fun-filled weekend event at the Olivet New Church!

15 Reasons Why We Should Attend Church Services Regularly - From the Heavenly Doctrines

By Rev Mike Gladish

1. If we have an internal state of worship we will need and seek opportunities to express that affection in external forms of worship [AC 1618].
2. If we don't have an internal state of worship external forms of worship can stimulate this in us [AC 1618].
3. External worship helps us maintain a sphere of holiness so that internals can flow in [AC 1618].
4. Important knowledge and insight are brought to our attention in worship services [AC 1618].
5. The Lord Himself leads and teaches by means of the Word, and doctrine and preaching from the Word [DP 154].
6. The Lord requires external worship of us, not for His sake but for our sakes, because the humility in worship is necessary to receive good from Him [AC 5957].
7. One of the signs of charity is participation in external worship [Ch. 173, 177].
8. What is said of heaven applies to the church on earth [AC 10131], and so affirmative participation in the primary use of the church prepares you for heaven.
9. Our affirmative attendance at worship services is an encouragement to others who in any way identify with or relate to us [HH 205-206].
10. Just as the happiness of heaven grows with an increase of the numbers of angels, so the happiness of worship grows with an increase of people who attend – “and each individual is so to speak a focal point of all” [AC 549].
11. Just as the perfection of heaven grows with an increase of the numbers of angels [HH 56] so the perfection of the worship grows with an increase of people who attend.
12. Just as the perfection of heaven grows with the variety of people who enter [HH 71] so the perfection of worship grows with the variety of people who attend.



13. Just as angels wish to communicate their own blessedness and happiness to others [AC 2872, 10723], so it is blessedness and happiness for church members to do this in worship. We don't come just to benefit ourselves but to benefit others [HH 268, 556].

14. It is a law of Providence that we should not be compelled by external means to believe and love the things of religion but that we should compel ourselves to do so [DP 129].

15. One of the signs that sins are forgiven is a feeling of pleasure in worshiping God for His sake [NJHD 167], i.e., not just for what we can get out of it.

Rev. Mike Gladish has shared this article in response to Rev. Jim Cooper's list of 15 items from the last issue. Rev. Mike Gladish challenges our NCC readers to also try to come up with their own list of 15 concepts!

THE BLESSING OF DEAFNESS

By Jay James

I started going deaf at age 14. My parents didn't help me, I don't know why. I started wearing hearing aids at 14 – they weren't much help. My condition was not genetic. By the time I turned 16 the concern was that a possible speech defect might be permanent, even if my hearing was corrected. I graduated from high school. I went to work.

There were no doctors in Canada or the States that were able to help me, but in Sweden there was a physician who could help. So I went to Sweden at age 19. I went by ship and train to Stockholm to the doctor there. He was surprised to meet me and said he would be able to help. He operated on both ears and restored my hearing. I asked the cost. He said no cost. Which was amazing. When I asked him why there was no cost, the doctor said that I had a big cost to get to Sweden and to get back home, and I was appreciative of getting my hearing back. He said that someday I should repay it to other deaf people in my lifetime. I said I would.

Back home in British Columbia, two years later, I needed more operations. This time there was a doctor able to help me in Los Angeles, so I went there. I had two ear surgeries. It was all good. My hearing was restored again. This time it lasted for over 40 years.

I was an insurance agent, however in 1967 I formed a non-profit to help the deaf and hearing-impaired at home and worldwide. I found out that Fiji didn't have ear surgeons, so I went there and their government allowed me to bring doctors in. Back in Vancouver, BC, I recruited volunteer doctors to go to Fiji and provide free ear surgeries. I was the volunteer administrator. I also registered a non-profit in the States in 1978 to recruit American ear doctors for services to the expanding developing countries in need. I also recruited volunteer ear doctors from Sweden and they were instrumental in our work in Africa.

We started in Fiji. Over a 5 year period we operated, free of charge, on over 2000 patients and restored their hearing. Then we proceeded to do the same in 11 other developing countries for over 50 years.

OPEN THE DOOR

By Rev Mark Allais

In a world that is increasingly divisive and angry with its neighbours, it is essential to turn back to something higher, something unchanging, so we can regain our bearings and strive to move forward in a healthier direction.



When moving forward in new ways or pursuing spiritual growth, it's helpful to consider what progress looks like and to have ideas prepared for comparison. Here are some points to reflect on regarding where the Lord may want to lead you in healthier directions and what He is leading you away from. This applies equally to something as relevant as politics or to things within the church. First, how to recognise what the path of spiritual growth looks like:

1. A Broadening Perspective (Wider View, Less Exclusive):

Spiritual growth involves a deeper understanding and love for others, enabling us to see from a higher, more inclusive perspective. In the Bible, this is captured in Jesus' command to love our neighbour as ourselves (Matthew 22:39). The Writings explain that as our understanding is enlightened by genuine truths, we recognize the common humanity and spiritual potential in all people, rather than holding to narrow or exclusive ways of thinking. This is described as an expansion of the mind, moving from personal concerns to a more universal love (Heaven and Hell 268, Divine Love and Wisdom 47).

2. A More Flexible Approach (Adaptable, Less Controlling, Less Fixed):

True spiritual growth brings humility and a willingness to be led by the Lord, rather than insisting on our way. This is seen in the idea of becoming "like little children"—trusting, open, and adaptable (Matthew 18:3-4). The Writings emphasize that spiritual people are guided more by principles of good and truth than by rigid rules or self-will. This flexibility comes from trusting in divine guidance and recognising our limitations (Divine Providence 321).

3. An Acceptance of Difference (Less Defensive; Trust in the Lord, Less Anxious/Stressed):

When we truly trust in the Lord's providence, we are less threatened by differences and more accepting of others' journeys. Defensive reactions and anxiety decrease as our inner state is grounded in faith and love. The Bible says, "do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing" (Matthew 6:25). The Writings explain that as spirituality grows, fears and anxieties lessen because we trust the Lord governs all things for good (Arcana Coelestia 8478, Divine Providence 157).

To better understand why these are part of spiritual growth, let's examine the opposite: a self-centred starting point for all of us.

1. Narrow Perspective (Exclusive, Self-Centered View):

Instead of a broad, inclusive outlook, selfishness narrows our view. The selfish proprium in us judges based on personal interests, often focusing only on our circle, race, religion, or nation, excluding others not like ourselves. This is seen in the biblical example of the Pharisees, who prided themselves on exclusivity and scorned those they considered "outside" (Luke 18:11). The Writings note that when the self dominates, love for self and the world blinds us to the reality of others' humanity (Heaven and Hell 562, Arcana Coelestia 3413).

2. Rigid, Controlling Approach (Unyielding, Needing to Dominate):

The selfish approach seeks to impose one's will, resists flexibility, and becomes anxious about losing control. Instead of being led by higher principles or divine guidance, the focus is on maintaining power and asserting opinions. The Lord warns against this when speaking of the scribes and Pharisees who "bind heavy burdens and lay them on men's shoulders," unwilling to change or listen (Matthew 23:4). The Writings describe this as the "proprium" or selfhood that clings stubbornly to its ideas (Divine Providence 317, Arcana Coelestia 987).

3. Defensive and Anxious (Rejecting Differences, Lacking Trust in the Lord):

Selfishness leads to defensiveness, fear, and resentment of differences. Rather than trusting the Lord's providence, the selfish proprium becomes anxious, sees others as threats or competitors, and defends its position aggressively. The parable of the unforgiving servant (Matthew 18:23-35) illustrates this attitude: he cannot accept or forgive others. The Writings explain that we are governed by fears and the desire to control outcomes, not by faith in the Lord (Arcana Coelestia 8478, New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine 124).

These are the very qualities spiritual growth seeks to leave behind, as the Lord leads us toward greater love, humility, and peace (Matthew 5:43-48, Divine Love and Wisdom 47).

To recognize spiritual growth in yourself, look for a widening, more loving perspective; an increased humility and adaptability; and a peaceful acceptance of differences rooted in trust in the Lord. These characteristics are outward signs of an inner transformation, where love for the Lord and the neighbour takes precedence over self and the world (True Christian Religion 399).

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Lindsay,

Wow! You have done an awesome job with your first issue of the New Church Canadian! I love the new, fresh and clean lines of the layout. At the same time, you have maintained the essence of the publication, bringing us an abundance of doctrinal stimulation including items for different age groups, reports on the activities, business and history of the church, particularly across Canada but including important information about the General Church at large! I look forward to seeing how you keep growing the NCC in the future! Thanks for keeping this use alive and well!

Warmest Wishes,
Sandy Kuhl

Thank you for all your kind words of support, Sandy! It means so much to me that you approve of what I am doing with the NCC.

-Lindsay

NOTES FROM THE EVP

By Rev. James P. Cooper

Calendar Items

Welcome back from summer and the start of the new school year! We wish you all the best of luck and happiness as we go forward with our busy schedules once again.

The Rt. Rev. David Lindrooth is now the Bishop responsible for Canada. We can expect that he will be visiting the various church centres in Canada as his calendar allows. He is very much looking forward to his visits to meet us, and to get himself up to speed on how we do things in Canada.

The Board of the GCIC will have its next meeting at 11:00 am Toronto time on Saturday, September 13.

Carmel Church in Kitchener will switch back to 11:00 am every Sunday when school Starts. See their website for additional programs being offered. www.carmelnewchurch.org

Olivet Church in Toronto continues to have their regularly scheduled services at 10:30 am every Sunday. www.olivetnewchurch.org

Services will be held on the dates listed below at 11:00 am at the church in Dawson Creek, B.C., and at 4:30 pm in Grande Prairie, AB (at various locations – check with Michael Cowley).

- September 14, and 28
- October 12, and 26
- November 9, and 23

The Cascadia group, www.cascadianewchurch.org, will be meeting in various locations on the following dates.

- September 7 – Virtual service
- September 21 – Live service from Vancouver by Rev. Cooper
- October 5 – Virtual service by Rev. Nathan Cole
- October 19 – Live service from Portland by Rev. TJ Jackson
- November 2 – Virtual service
- November 16 – Live service from Vancouver by Rev. Cooper

List of ministers serving Canada

- Rt. Rev. David Lindrooth (David.Lindrooth@newchurch.org)
- Rev. Mark Allais (Pastor@carmelnewchurch.org)
- Rev. Todd Beiswenger (Pastor@olivetnewchurch.org)
- Rev. Michael Cowley (Revmichaelcowley@gmail.com)
- Rev. James Cooper (retired) (Rev.james.cooper@gmail.com)



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**Editorial Deadline for the
November - December 2025 Issue:
October 24, 2025**

Comments, letters and articles are welcome!

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General Church in Canada Worship Services



Carmel New Church
Kitchener, ON
11 AM Sunday
in person & online



Dawson Creek New Church
Dawson Creek, BC



Olivet New Church
Etobicoke, ON
10:30 AM Sunday
in person & online



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