

**I speak to you in the name of Our Creator, Jesus Christ, Our Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit, Our Comforter. Amen.**

**Please be seated.**

**In the world of live theatre, the musical has always held a place of endearment in my heart. For many years, I was involved with our local high school's drama department as a lighting consultant and tech. From this beginning, I became involved in community musicals led by a group of church music directors and choristers of every faith tradition. Oh, we had so much fun. And for me, this was a happy place to be.**

### **Begin music**

**One year, our high school drama teacher, Gordon Davis, decided to mount a production of one of the most loved musicals of that day, Fiddler On The Roof. I have always loved the opening monologue which Tavia speaks from his barn. The sounds of a fiddler can be heard in the distance and this leads Tavia to break into song , and this what we hear.**

**Music 1:13**

**Every culture has their own traditions. But let's not get ahead of ourselves here. First, we need to think about what culture is and what identifies our culture as being something which is our own.**

**So, what is culture?**

Well, culture can be described as the patterns of behaviour by a group of persons are identified. And culture may include things like these:

- 1) what kinds of food we like to eat
- 2) the language and possibly the dialect we speak
- 3) the sports we enjoy and sports in which we often take part
- 4) the styles of music we enjoy. And as I said earlier, I love musicals!
- 5) the beliefs we hold – who is God for us? Where is the Divine to be found? Does the Creator dwell among us? How do we know? These are all good questions to which we each have our own answers.
- 6) and so our list can go on and on and on.

So, what than is “tradition”?

Tradition and culture often go hand-in-hand. Tradition is often seen as being how our culture is expressed in our daily lives. The dictionaries I checked, all seemed to agree, “tradition” is the transmission of customs or beliefs from one generation to the next. Sounds an awful lot like culture, doesn’t it. Think about it, Canada has some unique sayings and actions, like for example “EH”. “EH” sets us apart from our neighbours to the south, the same people who don’t understand why we are always saying “sorry” for what we say or do. Oh, don’t get me

wrong here, we do share many mannerisms, sayings, and actions with people from the USA, but we are Canadian and we shall remain as such as long as we hold this place called Canada, as our homeland. And in spite of what some recently elected persons might wish, I am Canadian, and I am proud of that fact. And I am not about to become part anything other country than Canada.

So what then is “tradition”? Tradition is often said to be how we take routines, beliefs and ways of celebrating within our culture and use these to express our cultural ideas. Traditions can include some or all of the following:

- 1) Foods – what is a Canadian food you love? I love burgers and I love potato salad, and because of my German heritage, I love pigtails and smoked pork chops. Sorry! They may be an acquired taste. And then there is beer! There are so many good Canadian Craft beers. And there are so many foods we love here in Canada that are truly Canadian.
- 2) How we celebrate events and holidays, that’s another one, right? Think about it, what does your family enjoy at Christmas dinner? Turkey? Ham? What else? Or are you adventurous and go for exotic specialities or seafood instead of turkey? That’s all Canadian, isn’t it? And these things set us apart from other cultures.

- 3) What gifts we give and receive – like for birthdays, celebrations, weddings, anniversaries and more?**
- 4) How we incorporate prayer into our daily routine. Now this has become a point of contention even in Canada today. In many places, prayers is no longer permitted during gatherings. Why? Every denomination has its own pattern for prayer. Yet we all still pray to some higher power by whatever name we wish to call the Creator. We worship the One who gives us life, and we do this in our own way, don't we?**
- 5) How we celebrate Christmas, Easter, Halloween and even Canada Day. How do we decorate the Christmas tree, and when does the tree go up, and when does it come down, every year? In many homes, this can be a family tradition passed on from one generation to the next and is unique to every family.**
  
- 6) What are our special treats and foods that we enjoy. For example, I loved my grandmother's chocolate brownies, and no one has been able to duplicate them. Although some have come close. What about you? What things hold a special place in your family? What about in your own heart?**

**And tradition is not unique to our cultural settings. Tradition also forms a key component of our Religion. And in fact, it is tradition which we employ to pass our beliefs from one generation to the next.**

**You see, religion and tradition are two things which are often intertwined. Yet they have very distinct attributes from each other. Religion is a system. It is a system of beliefs and practices based on our worship of some higher power or deity. And religion often involves some organized institution such as the Christian Church, or for that matter any faith which believes in the Creator. Also, in every faith, we have some form of sacred texts, and we have various rituals which are shared by the faithful and passed from one generation to the next.**

**We use these traditions to express or communicate our willingness to be part of our system of faith. In the Christian Church, we use the traditions we have been given to express our willingness to be called followers of Jesus Christ. Though I personally have never seen Jesus Christ, I believe because I have faith. And it is this expression of our traditions which allows us to share in the mystery of faith that has been found in the saving power of Christ for these past two thousand years.**

**In our gospel reading appointed for today, Mary and Joseph abide by the traditions of their Jewish faith. They bring Jesus, as a baby, a baby probably ten days to two weeks of age to the temple for presentation. They bring with them an offering of two pigeons or two turtle doves, yet another tradition. Here they meet Simeon, a devout man who recognizes the significance of this child. Simeon prophesies about Jesus' role in the salvation of all humankind. And Prophecy itself, has been a tradition of Judaism from the earliest times. So, it is no surprise that Simeon tells Mary of the pain she will feel later, as she witnesses Jesus' ministry and then at his death.**

**There are other points within this gospel reading where you can find more examples of tradition and how those traditions are expressed. I will leave these for you to discover.**

**But now, I want to move from the gospel text to something which affects all of us who call ourselves "Anglicans".**

**So what is our Anglican tradition in Canada, today? And who are we as "Anglicans"?**

**We are a diverse community of faithful who worship in many manners and expressions. From our diocesan web site we find this – "The Anglican Church of Canada is an independent, self-governing church in communion with the other 44 churches of the world-wide Anglican communion. [Our Canadian Anglican Church] includes roughly 500,000 members in nearly 1500**

parishes, and like Canada [itself] [we have] become culturally diverse. On any given Sunday, the tradition of sharing in prayer and the Eucharist is expressed in many languages, including Inuktitut, French, English, Spanish, Cree, and more, [and in many different styles of worship such as we are experiencing here this morning].

As a partner in the world-wide Anglican communion, and part of God's universal Church, we proclaim and celebrate the Gospel of Jesus Christ in worship and action. We value our heritage of biblical faith, reason, liturgy, tradition, Bishops and synods, and in the rich variety of our life in our community of faith."

It goes on to say this, "We acknowledge that God is calling us to greater diversity of membership, wider participation in ministry and leadership, better stewardship of God's creation, and a stronger resolve in challenging attitudes and structures that cause injustice. Guided by the Holy Spirit, we commit ourselves to respond to this call in love and service, and also to more fully live the life of Christ."

Tradition – we have our history and tradition as the Anglican Church here in Canada. We also have our traditions here at All Saints, and sometime in the future, we may share more traditions back at St Mary's Fulford Harbour when we are able to worship again within that space. Yet, one thing we need to

**remember is this – our history and our traditions are there to inform our future, but not to dictate where we go as a parish, who we become, nor how we worship and how we respond to God’s call for us to be people of faith in new and wonderful ways.**

**And this is why the Spirit of God is here to lead us. We can not do this all on our own.**

**Amen**