



(A four-part series explaining what church different means to some of our members and friends)

What is Church Different? Part One

- Caring, welcoming community of people with open minds and open hearts.
- Worshiping God and nurturing creativity and spirituality through song and dance, visual arts and poetry, jazz and classical sacred music, meditative silence and drama
- Welcoming those who have more questions than answers about their faith
- Justice-seeking, peace-making, creation caring, mission-involved and community-serving
- Offering four very different styles of worship each week to meet differing needs and personal preferences
- Welcoming people of all walks of life, various racial/ethnic identities, with wide variety of opinions on Christian faith and issues of the day
- Nurturing creativity and spirituality through artistic expression
- A soul-restoring wooded setting with nature trail, labyrinth walk, meditative memorial garden, astronomer-guided star gazing, fire pit, picnics on the grounds, and new playground and Noah's ark for children
- Mid-day, mid-week programming offered to the larger community with art classes, Yoga, Tai Chi, bridge, spiritual life explorations, and much more
- Being innovative, experimental, risk-taking
- What we are not: stuffy, stodgy, staid, or boring

By Robert Chesnut

What is Church Different – Part Two

I grew up in a small church. It was a traditional church. It was a Sunday only church. After moving and attending various bigger churches, I came to the Kirk -- another small church. This small church, however, is different. This church, while still part of the Presbyterian Church USA, allows for new and different ways of thinking. It's ok to ask questions -- seek answers -- challenge the status quo.



This church is a bustling place. The doors don't close after one service and Sunday school on Sunday. Instead three services happen on Sundays. Weekdays and some evenings are filled with different kinds of programs and services. There is something for everyone.

This church is more than just a building with a sanctuary, offices, and classrooms. The peaceful tree-filled hillside, which includes a labyrinth, outdoor sanctuary, and nature trail, has a spiritual feel. But it's a place for fun too with playground, fire-pit, and gaga pit. This church has become my home -- an extension of my family and the place I want to be. It fills my mind, body, and spirit.

I love Gayton Kirk – Church Different.

By Lois Fay

What is Church Different – Part Three

Gayton Kirk is different than any other church I have experienced. I grew up in a country Baptist church and was recently on staff as a minister at a contemporary Baptist church. We've been part of several churches across denominations over the years as well.

Many churches have a focus on "buildings, bodies, and budgets." Some worship the printed Bible over the living God. Others put a high value on programming that becomes self-focused. Plenty are places where being "different" is uncomfortable.



It's a place where respect is valued, and where open discussions about scripture are safe and thoughtfully guided. It's a church where we are invited to ask questions and offer differing viewpoints, and where these discussions are led with both kindness and Biblical knowledge.

dif-fer-ent /'dif(ə)rənt/ *adjective* *synonyms:* diverse, eclectic, colorful, distinctive, unconventional, rare

By Stacy Deyerle

What is Church Different – Part Four

The Kirk -- like many other churches -- has buildings, grounds, and organizational connections to a group of churches (i.e., Presbyterian USA). It offers sacraments that are common to other protestant churches (but done in a Presbyterian way). Some other churches are open to all people, at least nominally. But the Gayton Kirk is truly open to all people of any race, gender, or sexual preference. It promotes and encourages the spiritual life of congregants and visitors with traditional and unusual approaches. For instance, it has four different services: Celtic Worship (a learned critique of scripture), 11AM Sunday Worship (sermon, scripture, sacred music), Jazz Vespers (poetry, art, scripture, jazz), and Taize (prayer, "chant" singing, silence).

The Kirk benefits from the spiritual insights of other faiths like Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, etc.

The Kirk is interested in but not judgmental about congregants' and visitors' differing interpretations of scripture and what God's will requires.



Questions and concerns about human nature, race, sexuality, gender, and even politics are explored in a civil and respectful manner. This is done sometimes in services but also in venues like book club, Theology-on-Tap, Faith and Film Series, Short Stories and Essays Group, 3 Penny Theater, and various Bible/study classes.

Each person is their own "priest". Each is much encouraged to be a part of the Kirk community and to collectively support Christian ideals by sharing and service to others.

By John Barnett