

Resource 4.3



Comparing churches

Christine and Nathan are chatting at a charity coffee morning held by their local churches at a nearby café.



Hi Nathan. I'm Christine. I go to the Catholic church just down the road. I heard that you go to the Baptist church near the park. I thought it would be fun to talk about our different churches.

Good to meet you, Christine. I'd love to talk about our churches. I've always wondered what your church is like. Our Baptist church is a very old and traditional building ... it looks really different from your church, which is so modern.



Yes, even though we are quite a traditional church, the building is modern, so it looks quite different from people's idea of a traditional church. We have colourful stained-glass windows with pictures from the Bible and stories of some saints too. There's a special table at the front called an altar. This is the main focus during the Mass, where we celebrate Holy Communion. We Catholics believe that the bread and wine become the real body and blood of Jesus.

Wow. That's so interesting! Our church is cosy and friendly. Inside it's pretty plain. We avoid decorations as we don't want anything to distract us from the Word of God – we concentrate on the Bible. We sing songs of praise – some sound like rock songs with electric guitars and keyboard – and our pastor explains the Bible to us. We worship in the church every Sunday. I know Catholics celebrate Holy Communion every Sunday. We only have Holy Communion once a month. We don't believe the bread and wine actually change. For us, they simply help us to remember Jesus and what he did for us.



In our church you'll see confessional boxes. We can talk to our priest privately about times we've done something wrong, and he can help us to say sorry to God and God can forgive us, through the priest.

That's quite different from our church. We believe that we should talk directly to God to ask for forgiveness and guidance. We have pastors and preachers who help us understand the Word of God, but they don't communicate with God for us.



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Comparing churches (continued)

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Yes, I think that is a big difference. We pray to the saints and Mary, Jesus' mother, to ask them to ask God to help us. Baptist Christians don't do this, do they? I guess I wouldn't see pictures and statues of saints and Mary at your church, like we have at St Teilo's, would I?

No, you wouldn't. We believe that we can and should communicate with God directly. Although we're both Christians, we do have some beliefs and ways of doing things that are very different.



Another big difference between our churches, I think, is what happens with baptism. We have a baptismal pool at our church. We don't baptise babies – you have to be old enough to decide for yourself that you want to be baptised. We only have baptism celebrations a few times a year, mostly at Easter. We have a pool because the person being baptised goes fully under the water – this is how the Bible tells us Jesus was baptised by his cousin, John the Baptist.



Well, I can see how that makes sense, but this is so different from my church, where babies are baptised all year round. We think it is important to baptise a baby as soon as possible to bring them fully into the Catholic community. We have a baptismal font, not a whole pool. The baby doesn't go under the water – they have the water poured on their head by the priest.

We are all part of the worldwide Christian family ... even if we disagree on some things, we're still friends. And we're still united in our love of Jesus and doing our best to live like him as much as we can. Let's keep talking and learning from one another.



I agree! But there are things that I think both our churches share in common ... even if we worship differently, these are just different ways of giving thanks and showing love towards God. And our churches do whatever they can to help those in need too. Just as Jesus taught us to do.