

Another spiritual game in town

By [Hardy Kim](#)

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I am lucky enough to serve a church, in Chicago, where people are excited about coming to worship. I teach new member classes, in which many people cite worship as the thing that has really drawn them to want to get better connected with the church.

Our church worships according to a very structured, and very traditional, Presbyterian liturgy—we don't go in for all the modern niceties of one-on-one interaction during the worship hour, or the razzle-dazzle of modern instruments and multimedia presentations. And the music, beautifully and faithfully prepared choral renditions accompanied by a grand organ, is hardly what you would call contemporary (though more recent anthems from American and international communities are regularly included). It's not just older people who rave about worship, the liturgy, the music, and the intellectual preaching, either. All these things connect with younger people as well.

Still, even as I sit in worship and appreciate all these things, even as I greet the new people who come inquiring about membership, I am aware that there is a whole life outside the church that is going on in Chicago on Sundays. This life is full of amazing and diverse opportunities. It is vibrant, and far from soul-less.

In fact, unlike other clergy-people who are quick to dismiss those who claim to find spirituality outside the church, I'll readily acknowledge that there are many events outside Sunday worship where people can get the best of spiritual enrichment, expressions of joyfulness, and an awareness of God's presence through stimulation of the senses or intellect. They can even get a good dose of community and the

chance to serve others.

So when the scriptures present a story of Jerusalem's top religious leaders heading out into the wilderness to question John the Baptist, I see more than just a showdown between competing theological viewpoints. Perhaps the temple leaders recognize that there's another game in town, and they want to see what they are up against. Maybe they want to see whether there is something to it, something they could learn from.

Maybe that's what we all should be doing.