

World religions assignment



From talking to people and attending the worship services, this was an experience I won't forget. This World Religions class has taught me many things and gave me a new perspective towards the many religions, but this interactive assignment brought what we learned in our textbooks into my life. What makes this so significant to me is that I really saw how welcoming this community is. I called each place that I went to and told them my assignment and what I had to do. I asked them what I should wear, what is the best time to appear at worship to get the full experience, and the things I would refrain from so I do not disrespect anyone.

My first trip was to The Muslim Community Church. A buddy of mine is Muslim so I took advantage and I asked him to join me. We walked in and I was greeted by the Arabic greeting "Salaam Alkali" which means "peace be upon you." The answer, if the violators would like to use it, is "Wa' al-kalis-as-salaam", which means "peace be upon you too". Shoes are removed as you enter inside the mosque and placed in the shoe racks provided. What did surprise me was there are no symbols, icons, candles, incense, etc. in a mosque. You will not see any images of living things there. It's the opposite of an Orthodox church.

If you're a Christian, don't expect any pews. This mosque had none because people need room to pray. There are seats along the walls for the elderly and disabled. Ritual prayers must be done five times a day. Men and women are seated separately. The prayers are recited in the Arabic language, and consist of verses from the Quran. One thing that I was told was never walk in front of kneeling worshipers. There may be a few praying worshipers no

matter what time you visit a mosque. Never walk in front of them as this is very disrespectful, remain behind and at a distance.

Islam religion calls for peace and love among people regardless their religions, cultures, colors, or genders. The word ‘ Islam’ means submission to God. The word is an Arabic word and its root is ‘ Sell’ or ‘ Salami’ that means peace. There are lots of Quern verses as well as prophet Muhammad sayings that command Muslims to maintain kindness and love contacts and relations with non Muslims. Second, was The Greek Orthodox Church. What brought my interest there was because my heritage is Greek. At mass there was a lot of standing and singing.

Some parishes have a lot of their liturgy in a language other than English, this one did not. Priests are addressed as Father and deacons are addressed as Father Deacon. On the phone I was told that Orthodox are only permitted to receive the sacraments at an Orthodox church. After mass I talked with some of the staff, and a history listen is what I received. The Church’s origins lie in the Ancient Christian church, and maintain many traditions practiced In the Ancient Church. Among these traditions are the uses of Incense, Liturgical Worship, Priesthood, making the sign of the cross.

The Church, unlike the Catholic Church, has no Bishopric head, such as a Pope, and holds the belief that Christ is the head of the Church. The Church is governed by a committee of Bishops, however, and one central Bishop, called the Patriarch, who is first among equals. The Church Is notable In Its worship of the Virgin Mary and the Saints In Its Divine Liturgy or “ Mass” form of worship on Sundays. Next was the Unitarian-universalism Church.

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Order of Service and greets new visitors. There is a table with several pamphlets and other reading materials. They encourage visitors to stop at the welcome table to get a name tag, and fill out a visitor's card and pick up a visitor's packet. The service begins with the lighting of a chalice, the primary symbol of Unitarian Universalism and a reading. The service is conducted by a minister. In order to help members and friends recognize and welcome our visitors, they set aside time during the service for visitors to stand and introduce themselves as they feel comfortable.

Unitarian Universality believe that the divine can be found in all people and in many faiths. Unitarian Universality draw inspiration from a variety of other faith traditions. What I thought was interesting was that many Unitarian Universalism churches celebrate observances associated with other religious traditions, including Buddhist-style meditation groups, Jewish Seder, Yon Kipper and Passover dinners, after meals (marking the breaking of Ramadan fast for Muslims), and Christmas Eve/Winter Solstice services. Many Unitarian Universality consider themselves humanists.

Lastly, I departed to Temple Beth-EL. My girlfriend picked this one out seeing as she is Jewish. They were really welcoming and said we're always welcome to visit. When I contacted them, the synagogue office asked if I wanted to get someone to sit with me during a service; they can be a little confusing. The office recommended going to a Friday evening Sabbath service for your first visit; they're very up-beat and interactive. It was my first time wearing a

yarmulke! I was wished “ Shabby Shalom” by everyone; you can say the same thing in return, and it just means that you are wishing them a peaceful Sabbath.

Also, I stayed for the “ ones” afterward; it was just refreshments. “ Ones” means “ Joy and it’s a time when they chat with each other, meet new people, and generally discuss what’s going on with us. I saw a “ token” Sabbath meal, the blessing of the bread and wine at the beginning of the ones; by having both those things present, it is in fact a meal from the point of Judaism, even if there were nothing else to eat. Drink and eat when others do after the blessings. After this two week adventure around my community I can honestly say my experience was unforgettable.

The media portray certain religions in particular ways according to the information provided, if there are major topics against certain religions then stereotypes and discrimination is pushed against the religion. An example of this would be 1st September 2001, which led to hysteria that all Islamic people are terrorists, because the act committed was done for ‘ god’. What this assignment did for me was become conscious of the real world, that your neighbor that’s Muslim or whatever religion wants the same thing as you, and that is peace!