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Student perspectives on worship services from Instructor Jennifer Garvin-Sanchez's Religious Studies 108 Human Spirituality undergraduate course at Virginia Commonwealth University.

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All Nation's Church of God

by John Hill

For my first field trip I decided to attend a Christian Pentecostal church. The name of the church is All Nation's Church of God and it is located in 5200 Fillmore Ave. Alexandria, Va. I visited this church this past Sunday the 27th of September at 11 AM. The name of the presiding officials, or head pastors of this church were Pastor Tony Addinall and Pastor Emily Addinall.

This little Church didn't look like much from the outside, especially because of the size of it. It looked more like a small house. Besides that, the front lawn was very nice, very well taken care off and even though it looked like a small house, you could tell it was a church by the signs in the front. As I was coming inside, the church looked beautiful with semi green carpet and a tall ceiling.

Off the bat, I felt really welcomed in a sense that one of the "church clerks" opened the door and gave me a great welcome with a big smile. This initially turned my mood around, since I was up earlier than usual on a Sunday morning, and as I coming in many people looked at me, some serious faces, some smiles, but overall I felt the welcoming environment.

As I looked around, I noticed a lot of diversity. I noticed a lot of African American people, many Latino people, and some Asian people (Filipino descent), and some Caucasian. I really enjoyed being around many different types of people, because I could tell that everybody had an

open mind and it seemed like no one was judging anyone else.

Being there felt self-explanatory since the band was singing and playing worship songs. So I just sat in an empty seat, and started listening to the music and really getting the feel for it all. Overall, I did feel comfortable with the people around me, because they were already in their own atmosphere and singing along to the loud to the music.

Right when I walked through the doors, I noticed the loud uplifting, "Praise and Worships," songs being played. I really enjoyed this part of the service the most, because everybody was in their own atmosphere and it made me feel closer to the place and the people around me. The tone in the beginning was very uplifting, however there came a point when the band slowed down the music and the woman singing started speaking really softly and telling the crowd uplifting words, for example at one point she kept mentioning that God loves us, and that he's a merciful God. In a sense, this few moments made me feel really good about my worries and everything that I was observing and feeling. Throughout this part of the service, I noticed everybody else with their eyes closed and praying. I imitated them, and just started meditating about my overall lifestyle and just the current worries that I carry on with me. I ended up really enjoying this part of the service because I felt some kind of spiritual healing since I felt better afterwards.

I started feeling happy, and the whole atmosphere really took me by surprise, especially when dealing with my worries.

As the slow music kept playing, the main pastor, Pastor Addinall went to the center of the small stage and started praying over all the people that were at the service and started just saying, "Praise God, Praise Jesus."

After a few more minutes of open prayer, the pastor transitioned into his actual sermon and started talking about tithes and offerings. This next section of the service was more predictable, because Pastor Tony Addinall started speaking scriptures that were in the Bible about how important sowing a small seed is. Eventually this small seed will grow into something big and the blessings will start coming down onto us and the people around us. I really enjoyed that Pastor Tony Addinall spoke very bold and very sure in everything. He seemed determined and really could transfer that energy onto the audience.

After speaking about tithes and offerings, actual small pouches were being passed around for people to put money in. I saw this as a great symbol of giving and receiving back. This made me feel comfortable to a certain extent, or at least comfortable enough to put some money into the small pouch. After the offering part of the service, Pastor Addinall started talking about the Love of God, and how it's within us, and through us, and to other people. In the end, I figured that if we show love to others like the love of God, then there is no reason to wrong each other.

The overall message, was very symbolic of many different stories I have heard in the past. Do nice to others, and you will get no wrong in

life. Essentially, it made me think of Karma and how whatever you do, you get back. I found this to be pretty coincidental, and also noticed that many different religions share the same values and ideals but in the end they just have a different name for their stories and traditions. In addition to this, every religion can also be very unique, because from my experience I felt a higher sense of being in peace than I've had at many other places, so I ended up really enjoying my time at this Church. •

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