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# Pine Street Baptist Church:

## “My Experience of Pine Street Baptist Church”

by Amy Parks

**M**y first impression of Pine Street Baptist Church was how involved and caring they were to reach out to the Oregon Hill community. This is my first semester attending VCU and I recently moved to this community. In August, the church held an open invite cook out. There, I was able to learn more about the church, and meet the members. They were all cordial, and I could tell they loved serving others. They not only provided everyone with delicious food, but also donated school supplies to anyone that was in need. I, along with my boyfriend, really appreciated this gesture. After the lovely time spent at the cookout, I knew I wanted to see more of Pine Street Baptist Church.

Located right down the street of my house, 400s Pine Street in Richmond, VA, Pine Street Baptist stands tall and has been for the past 160 years. As I walked in on Sunday morning, September 26, 2015, for the 11 'o clock worship service, I was kindly greeted by two older gentlemen. They made my boyfriend and I feel right at home with their jokes and welcoming attitudes. They handed us a brochure with the service details, and directed us to sign the guest book.

When I made my way into the sanctuary my jaw dropped in awe. The entire front wall consisted of giant sized organs. It is quite a grand sight. There is a balcony above the stage overlooking the sanctuary. Above the floor seating, is a balcony allowing for an aerial view of the

sermon. My boyfriend and I sat amongst the floor seating in the middle, near the aisle, down the center of the sanctuary. We got there right on time. Therefore, no one was able to greet us before it began.

However, there was a fellowship break after the first couple of songs. We felt very invited with the many warm smiles coming our way. It was certainly a friendly crowd. The majority of the folks deemed to be over sixty. It was a loyal group of members. It seemed as though, many of them have been attending since they were children.

During the fellowship time, I realized that making people feel welcomed is the mission of this church body. A comical video was shown before the sermon began with how a first time church guest may feel. The guest was over exaggeratedly anxious, and so was the member. In the end, they became friends. We were greeted by numerous people, all wanting to learn about us. Even after the sermon, as we were shuffling out, the pastor, Dr. Phillip Turner, managed to catch our names and made nice conversation with us both.

As for the worship time, all the songs were played on a disc with the lyrics displayed on a screen in the front. The crowd wasn't very involved in the singing aspect of the sermon. Nevertheless, I did not sing, either. However, to conclude the sermon the last song played, and the crowd seemed to be more involved.

I noted someone to raise a hand toward the ceiling. However, the overall feel for the worship time was reserved.

After the worship, a chaplain came forth to the pulpit and prayed aloud for the offering. The offering was conducted by sending around a plate that people pass along to others next them. This is an opportunity for the members to give their tithes. The money collected goes to many different causes—the food bank, the missions, the salary for certain staff members, and other community services.

The brochure I received in the beginning was complete with all the Bible verses used during the sermon. There was also an interactive portion of the sermon. The brochure had specific Biblical lines for the women to say aloud and lines for the men to respond back. This had the members become more involved with the sermon. At the end of the sermon, Phillips dismissed us with a prayer for us to go in peace. I walked out of Pine Street Baptist Church feeling spiritually refreshed. •

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