

Church Visit and Reflection Paper

A Paper Presented to:
Dr. Nathaniel B. Perez

by
Tiffany L. Smith

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Reflections

On February 19, 2023 and February 26, 2023, I visited Grace Church in Orlando, Florida. It is a non-denominational church with three locations. Since I am deployed to Florida for work, this is the church I visited based on the leading of the Holy Spirit.

When I arrived at the church on my first visit, the people greeted me and were very friendly. They have a nice-sized greeting area with refreshments and several greeters. Of the 7-8 greeters, about five were White, one was Hispanic and one was Black.

I did feel a little odd being in the minority. The people, however, seemed happy that I had joined them and that eased my feelings a bit. One of the White greeters, a woman, actually took a few moments to tell me about the church's history, and the Hispanic woman commented about the good Biblical teaching at the church.

Although I didn't feel too bad about being in the minority, I was, however, concerned about what people might be thinking about my wearing a mask. Of the 700-800 people at the service, I was the only person wearing a mask (from what I could see). I was more concerned about the mask issue than the fact that there were so few Black people there.

Also, Grace Church has communion at each service. They use the thin wafers, and each person goes through a line, gets a wafer and dips it into the grape juice. I was uneasy about this, but since there was no double dipping, I thought it would be o.k. I was still uneasy though, because I thought people would accidentally touch more than the wafer they were taking (which I did). Even though I was concerned about COVID-19, I decided to just trust God and take the communion.

When I visited the church for the first time, I attended the 8 a.m. service. The music was contemporary worship music, and the pastor, Senior Pastor Mike Adkins, was a good Biblical

teacher. He is currently teaching a series on the kingdom using the parables of Matthew as his text.

On the second time that I visited Grace Church, I attended the 11 a.m. service because I wanted to see the baptism being held immediately after the service. The baptism was held outside under a pavilion and resembled a cookout. It was very festive. I nearly cried, because it was beautiful to see so many people getting baptized. There were women, men, boys, girls, Black, White and Hispanic who were baptized. The ages varied.

Answers to Questions

In terms of how I felt about being in the minority at this church, I was somewhat uncomfortable at first, but the genuineness of the people helped ease that. I really was more concerned about the mask. I think what may have contributed to this was the fact that I was in Florida, and couldn't help but think about how COVID-19 has played out politically during the pandemic.

I was made to be aware of my differences, because there were so many White people at the services. Of the hundreds of people there, I would estimate that 98% were White. There were a few other people there that I could identify with in terms of race, but I was not sitting by them. I honestly think that we were all concentrating on our worship.

What I have learned about reconciliation from this experience is that sometimes, our political views or stances can make us feel odd in a church—especially if those views are different from the church's. In this case, I suspect that the church is pretty much over COVID-19 and may have been wondering why I was still wearing a mask. I must say, however, they were very welcoming nevertheless.