

Davins Manasse

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SOC147NOS

02 April, 2023

Church Visit

This assignment was exciting. Going to a church to investigate and learn about the people and their culture is familiar because I love meeting new people. I visited Peniel Church of God last Sunday in Elizabeth, New Jersey. This church was founded in 2008 by the father of the current pastor, but it was later transferred to him in 2010. They've encountered a lot of difficulties in their ministry. They've also had a lot of betrayals which cause them to be careful in how they operate. Peniel's vision is to educate the world for Christ. They focus on creating a safe space for the youth to flourish and evolve in the Haitian-American community.

We often say that the youth are living the church, but it's the opposite for Peniel. They have a lot of young people joining their church and have a lot of them operating in ministry. They're working on providing scholarships for college students. They believe in empowering young adults and sending them out to influence the world's system. The pastor is pretty cool. He's enthusiastic and easy to talk to. His wife is a sweetheart and very welcoming.

Regarding the role of religion in people's lives, things are different. The church is filled with Haitians, so Haitian culture plays an enormous role in their faith. They uphold their traditions but emphasize the leading of the Holy Spirit in the way they lead the congregation and in their decisions. In what ways were you challenged or surprised? One of the things that

surprised me was how the order of the service went. It was shorter than expected. Haitians often say their churches end late, but the service was quick, sweet, and straight to the point. I truly enjoyed the enthusiastic message from the pastor.

The faith tradition or denomination of this ministry is the Church of God. However, they're not as orthodox as they should believe in the evolution of culture due to their deeper insight into God's word. There are things they don't make a big deal about anymore, such as wearing pants, earrings, and odd things to church folk. Some aspect of their beliefs distinguishing them from other faith traditions is that they take communion every first Sunday of the month. To be a minister in their church, they must be baptized in water.

This faith tradition cares about economic disparity, race, ethnicity, racial tensions, and the exploitation of women. They believe in an equal and orderly society. They do not support the exploitation of women. Instead, they encourage and empower them to go out and influence the world with their expertise. Some of their women are heading ministries and are contributing to the impact. This ministry's role in the community is being the spiritual covering intercession and giving the youth a place to flourish and keep them out of the streets. Its presence impacts people by being able to trust this ministry with their kids. They have a place to express their gift and have the necessary discipleship for growth and development.

Overall this was indeed a unique and unforgettable experience. Knowing the ins and outs of the church and what it stands for is truly inspiring. They also have a kids ministry, and they are adorable and awesome. They love their class and are eager to learn. It made me reminisce about Sunday school as a child. I was one of those kids who had a lot of intriguing questions.

That place brought back many memories. One of my favorite verse I learned was Psalm 103:13,
“As a father has compassion on his children so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him;