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Site Visit Paper

As a Religious Program Specialist (RP) in the Navy Reserve, assisting chaplains of different faith traditions both within and outside of Christianity is of primary importance to the job requirements. Having set up multiple Protestant services and Roman Catholic Masses, described below is the setting up and participation of both a Protestant and Roman Catholic Mass that took place consecutively aboard Chapel of Hope, NAVSTA Newport, RI.

Things to know about the Chapel: Chapel of Hope is an old church building that is used by various faith groups and primarily serves officer candidates in the Navy; however, civilians with base access can attend any service. The sanctuary has tan/cream walls and ceiling with dark brown molding. The carpet is gray, and the seats are wooden with green upholstered cushioning. The lighting is mellow. There is also a working organ.

Because the space is shared the differences between the denominational/faith services depend on how they are set up (e.g., icons, crucifix, prayer rugs, Schulchan with Bimah and Ark, etc.) The space can hold over 200 people and both services were packed. The AC was not working when attended so other than a few ceiling fans to cool the congregation, it was at times a warm and uncomfortable experience.

Things to know about Chaplains and Volunteers: To be a chaplain in United States Navy the chaplain must be ordained with a faith group recognized by the Department of Defense (DoD). For the two services attended The Protestant chaplain was an ordained pastor with *The Missionary Church* and the priests were *Roman Catholic*. Given the nature of training rotations

at Officer Candidate School, volunteers are constantly changing with each graduating class leaving a small core staff to keep continuity of services going at Chapel of Hope.

First Service – Contemporary Protestant: The contemporary Protestant service took place at 10:00am and lasted approximately 50 minutes. The denomination was led by a *Missional Church* pastor. Taken from the Missional Church website ([Planting Churches and Making Disciples — The Missionary Church \(mcusa.org\)](#))

The Missionary Church has a rich theological heritage that serves as a launching pad for aggressive outreach. While our message from the Bible is unchangeable, our methods of communication must change to reach every culture for Christ.

Early leaders had a commitment to the position that the Scriptures were to be the source of doctrine and life. In addition to this commitment to be a biblical church, the theological perspective of the Missionary Church recognizes the contribution of John Wesley's emphasis on "the warmed heart"; A. B. Simpson's fourfold emphasis on Jesus Christ as Savior, Sanctifier, Healer and Coming King; the Anabaptist concepts of community and brotherhood; and the evangelical emphases of the lost estate of mankind and redemption through Jesus Christ.

The Missionary Church is a unique blend of the thought and life of a people who have sought to build their church according to the Scriptures with an appreciation for their historical roots.

The set up of the service consisted of an Altar with white linen, Cross, Holy Bible and Holy Bible Stand, Candlesticks with Candlestick Stands, Offering Plates, and the Communion Cup and Bread Trays. A Pulpit was also used.

The worship team was made up of volunteer Officer Candidates and staff opening the service with popular musical worship. People freely sang the lyrics on the projection screen and some people raised their hands, others swayed their bodies in place, and others were reserved in their movement. When the musical worship was finished several volunteers gave announcements and times for future volunteer/outreach opportunities aboard NAVSTA Newport and in the local community. The chaplain then greeted the congregation and gave a call and response reading. The chaplain then invited everyone to greet each other.

The chaplain was very talkative and despite wearing a formal uniform he conveyed an informal attitude in his mannerisms and speech. About 10 minutes of his initial talk was directed towards the candidates, encouraging them not to be discouraged as they continued training to become Naval Officers.

The sermon the chaplain gave was about confusion and God being in the midst of confusion. Perhaps the candidates were confused about their decision to go through the rigors of training or leaving behind a lucrative career to serve their country. There was no altar call or any indication from the pastor that the congregants were expected to do anything or respond in anyway. The sermon ended and was immediately followed by more encouraging words and popular worship music. Communion was served in individual small cups with wafers and another call and response reading was said. The pastor gave the benediction and dismissed the congregation.

One thing that was off putting was the way the collection of the offering was administered. The pastor joked “whether you give money or not doesn’t matter. I still get paid by the Navy anyway.” That statement seemed to dismiss the purpose of offering money as a form of sacrifice and not simply as a way of “paying the pastor.” A good teaching moment was lost.

Once the service ended the people stayed in the reception area enjoying coffee and donuts. It seemed like a typical protestant service. The RPs broke down the Protestant ecclesiastical items, wiped down all the chairs, vacuumed the sanctuary, and began preparing for the Roman Catholic Mass.

Second Service – Roman Catholic Mass: The Roman Catholic Mass took place the same day at 12:00pm. The service lasted approximately 1 hour. Taken from chapter 3 *Religious*

Advisement from Religious Program Specialist (RP) – NAVEDTRA 14227B, Roman Catholic

Mass consists of the following:

3.4.4.1 Worship Requirements The sacraments of the church are of utmost importance to Roman Catholics. The church teaches that Jesus Christ directly instituted the seven sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Matrimony. An individual can receive three of the sacraments – Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders – only once. The most sacred and solemn function of the church is the Mass. This is the commemoration, continuation, and consummation of the Sacrifice of the Cross.

3.4.4.2 Worship Services The Roman Catholic faith tradition celebrates the Mass as its central worship service. The two principal parts of the Mass are the Liturgy of the Word and the Eucharistic Liturgy. The Mass, utilizing the Latin rite, consists of:

- The Liturgy of the Word
- The Liturgy of the Eucharist

Communicants at the Liturgy of the Eucharist may receive either bread or wine or both. Once the bread and wine are consecrated (made holy), they are believed to be the actual body and blood of Jesus Christ and must be handled with extreme reverence. The Mass, as well as the other rites and sacraments of the Catholic Church, is prescribed in its worship forms. All Roman Catholics are obligated to attend mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation.

When preparing the Roman Catholic Mass the following ecclesiastical items are set out in the sanctuary: altar and altar linen, the altar parament (color according to the liturgical calendar), the corporal (small white linen used to catch crumbs that fall from the large host when broken by the chaplain), the crucifix, candlesticks and candlestick holders, and the Roman Missal (special book of prayers) and missal stand. There was also a pulpit with Pulpit Parament (color matches altar parament). The Lectern with Lectern Parament and Lectionary (book of Holy Scripture and readings).

The more elaborate set of ecclesiastical items set out was the Chalace Assembly. The Chalice Assembly consists of a) Chalice, b) Purificator (wipes out chalice), c) Paten (covers chalice and holds the large communion host), d) Large Communion Host (the bread the priest will use for Holy Communion), e) Pall, and f) Chalice Veil. These items were set on the credence table. The credence table also holds the Cruets (small containers containing consecrated wine and water), the Ciborium (metal container containing consecrated bread used in Holy

Communion), Lavabo Dish (bowl filled with water for priest to dip fingers in before and after handling host), Finger Towel to dry hands, and Offering Plates.

The most important thing to know with regards to the host and wine is that once a priest consecrates these items, they are now considered the literal body and blood of Christ. This is why crumbs are not brushed into a dustpan, but they are caught with the corporal, and they are either dropped on dirt ground (burial) or placed in a special box that holds uneaten host. Any remaining wine also must be poured directly onto dirt ground and not poured down a sink or drain. If there are remaining small hosts the priest may eat them. Once these items were set up the Roman Catholic Mass was ready to commence.

There were 3 priests leading the service when attended. 2 volunteers were also selected from the congregation to help with collecting the offering. The lead priest greeted with a call and response from the Roman Missal. The priest then bowed before the altar and kissed it with the others. Recalling the service, attention seemed to be given to the collection of the offering, the reading from the Lectionary and the Eucharist.

The offering was unique as it was described as giving “sacrifice” to God. All the offerings were brought before the altar and prayed over in a way that was different from a typical C&MA service, and certainly different from the protestant service that took place earlier in the morning. The reading from the Lectionary was from Matthew. From observation, everyone in the congregation was invested in the reading and participated in speaking, standing, and being physically involved with what the priests were doing.

The focal point was the Eucharist as the wine and host were distributed by priests (wine from the chalice and host by the hand). This was more intimate than the individual communion

cups and wafers from the protestant service. More call and response prayers were said, and the lead priest gave the benediction.

The feeling of this service compared to the protestant service was peaceful and filled with love. The people seemed to sincerely enjoy each other's company and the camaraderie was palpable. The RPs set up coffee and donuts for the officer candidates and discussions about Mass and other things relating to Christ and Navy life was vibrant. While the officer candidates enjoyed fellowship the RPs cleaned the sanctuary and disposed of any remaining wine and bread in the appropriate manner. The priests returned their vestments to the ecclesiastical locker room.

Conclusion: While the Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA) is the denomination that is abided by, even among C&MA churches there is a lot of variation on what is practiced. There are common ordinances and beliefs, but there are unique contexts and communities being served. If this is true about the C&MA (and it is accepted), there should be no surprise other denominations have their unique traditions in how they express devotion and connection with God and others.

What was interesting about this site visit was the historical connection *The Missionary Church* has with the C&MA. The Missionary Church explicitly states that it drew inspiration from A.B. Simpson's four-fold gospel in how it constructed its theology. Perhaps this is why the protestant service felt closer to what would be experienced at a typical C&MA church, though the call and response aspects of the protestant service were unique.

Something else that was positive during the site visit was the Catholic community. There is something to be said about the oneness Catholics have with each other. Perhaps this is because historically Catholics have more exposure to doctrine (Catechism) and tend to have generational

legacies (e.g., infant baptisms and Catholic heritage), whatever it is they all felt like knew who they were in community. This is something every church should strive for.

Given the nature of RP work in the Navy, a great appreciation for how faith is practiced and encouraged in the lives of Sailors is probably greater than those who are not regularly exposed to the different traditions of Christianity. This exposure allows for a C&MA pastor to see how God is working not just among different denominations, but also how He is working in the specific context of the Sea Services. To have a Roman Catholic priest, a Missionary Church pastor, and a Rabbi working together on the same base in the same building is unusual in most faith contexts, but this is normal in the world of military chaplaincy. This type of ecumenical work both strengthens one's own doctrinal beliefs while making them less hostile towards others.