

The Church Visit

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Sunni Rizvi Jamia Masjid

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Abstract

For the church visit assignment, I chose The Sunni Rizvi Jamia Masjid and interviewed the imam of that masjid. I chose a mosque because I'm more familiar with Islam as a Muslim than any other religions. Also, there were some questions that I was required to answer from my own perspective, that a mosque visit would made it easier for me to answer them. I choose to visit Sunni Rizvi Jamia Masjid (mosque) and interviewed the Imam of this masjid (mosque). I learned many things about the impact of religion in American society that was new for me. I learned about the impact of the religion for a better living environment in the society. I also learned that Islam is accepted in American societies, against what I believed before this interview.

Keywords: Religions, Islam, Masjid, Imam, Sunni, Shia.

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1: How did this ministry begin? How did it come to be placed in this community? Does the history of this ministry influence the goals of the ministry today? What is the mission of the ministry?

The Sunni Rizvi Jamia Masjid is located in 294 and 298 Grove Street, Jersey City, New Jersey. The Imam of this masjid (I missed his name in the voice recorder) has come to the United State in 1978 from Pakistan and has worked as an Imam in different places of New York And New Jersey. He said, “once 25 years ago I passed the current location of the Masjid and I saw that this place was closed, and in this place, there was written sons of Israel because it was a Jewish worship place.” At that time, he was the imam of a masjid in New York at the GMC foundation NY.

“In the July 1908 GMC foundation started working. More people were coming for worship at GMC and the foundation decided to buy more places for worship. That is how the GMC foundation bought the building in 1999-2000”. It’s been 24-25 years that this masjid is officially working. So, this building was first from Jewish doing their worship and later it become a masjid. The mission of this masjid in the beginning was to provide a worship place for Muslims. Because in the community there is no other Muslim worship center the mission of this ministry is to provide a place for five times daily worship, teaching Quran and Islamic lessons for Muslim children, and to take some religious events. This masjid provides services for both Shia and Sunni Muslims of the community.

2: What is the faith tradition or denomination of this ministry? What are some aspects of their beliefs that distinguish them from other faith traditions? If a Christian Church, is it Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, or Protestant? If Protestant, what denomination and what makes it different from any other?

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The faith tradition of this Masjid is Islam and particularly they practice Sunni sect Islam, but Shia Muslims are also welcomed to the masjid. Because masjids are the worship place of Muslims and the Islam is very different than Christian, orthodox, Roman Catholics or Protestants. The difference is all practically and have different teachings, book, prayer times, and rituals.

3: What role does this ministry play in the community currently? How are people impacted by its presence?

Currently this Masjid is the only masjid serving Muslims with their prayers, religion teachings, Jumma (Friday) prayers and many other religious services, in the community. Muslim people in the community are coming to this masjid for offering daily prayers, five times a day. Muslims are coming for offering congregational prayer once a week, every Friday. Families sends their children to this mosque to be teach Quran and other Islamic lessons, daily. Even in the community if a Muslim have some problems and need help the masjid would provide help with that problem.

4: How do the beliefs of this ministry impact their perspective on the needs of their community? What does their faith say about their responsibility to their community?

The imam said that we all are from one father and mother, Adam and Eve (peace be upon them) and the believe of this mosque impacted their perspective on having a peaceful community. They believe that every person and every religion should be accepted equally in a society. Their faith makes them to take this responsibility to bring all Muslims of the community under one roof if those people are Arabs, Pakistani, Indian or from any other places. Their aim is that there should be no discrimination about people regarding their color, gender, and their countries, in the community.

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5: What does this faith tradition have to say about economic disparity, race, ethnicity, racial tensions, and the exploitation of women? Victimization of sexual minorities? What perspectives derived from the tradition specifically are used to answer these questions?

As the Islam is the religion of peace. There is no difference between people in Islam, except those who are more religious and have more spirituality. There is no difference in race, and ethnicity in Islam. The Imam of the masjid gave me examples from the time of the prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The first Mu'azzin of Islam named Bilal, was from a different ethnic than other Arabs. Before the Islam for Arabs having a girl was shame on a family and they buried their baby girls right after the birth. This act of the Arabs was called infanticide prohibited by Islam. People from different ethnics, different colors, men, women, Shia, Suni and another sect of Islam are welcomed to this masjid.

6: What are the student's faith traditions or lack thereof? What sequence of events led to the student being involved with this tradition or lack of one?

My faith is Islam and I'm a Muslim because I born in a Muslim family and country.

7: What are the basics of the student's beliefs? How do those beliefs inform students about economic disparity, race, ethnicity, and racial tension? Using their faith traditions, how do students evaluate the exploitation of women and victimization of sexual minorities?

I believe on humanity more than believing in what religion, a person practice, because I know that all religions have the same root and all religions' aim is one that is the worship of one God. Islam has taught me about economy, economy inequality and how to stand against it. For instance, Allah has ordered Muslims to not take usury from people, I mean usury is prohibited in Islam. Receiving and paying doubled interest is deemed to be a major sin in Islam. Riba is forbidden.

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Every Muslim have to pay charity for the poor members of the society. Charity (Zakat) is the fourth pillar of Islam and is the most important one. There is no difference between human being. I have been taught by Quran and Hadith that there is no difference between people by their race, ethnicity, color... the only thing that important is that we are all human being, and all human being should have the same right in the society. Islam have seen women equal to men and there are the orders of Allah in the Quran that are against women exploitation.

8: Based on the student's faith tradition, what is their responsibility to their community?

My responsibility based on my faith tradition is that I should apply the words of God in my life and in the community. My responsibility shouldn't be only me and my family I also should be mindful of other people as well. I should behave in a way to bring equality between every member of the society even it harms me. I should see every person in the society only as human being separate from their race, religion, ethnic, color or any other worldly differences because in the end every single person is important to Allah. Everyone is equal to Allah, and I must go with the orders of God.

1: I learned about the history of the Masjid, when it started to work, why in this community. I learned about the aims of this masjid in the beginning and what is its aims now. How much this masjid has achieved its goals from the beginning to now.

2: I learned that religion has an important role in the daily life of people in Americans society. Beside the roles that a society may have, religions can teach people more than any other subjects and lessons. Religions has a great role to help people reduce discrimination, exploitation, racism, and many other negative aspects from their lives and help them to raise positive aspects.

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3: With this interview I was surprised that every religion can practice easily in the American society. As a Muslim I thought I would not have the freedom as much as other religions have but it surprised me that Islam is being practiced widely in the community. It also surprised me that this mosque still has some signs from Jewish people and the building is the same as it was a Jewish worship place. Before the interview I had noticed some signs that are not related to Islam in the building of the masjid but after the interview I learned why. And I learned that actual meaning of acceptance in a community.

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References

Interview with the Imam of the Sunni Rizvi Jamia Masjid