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Into to Religion

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Third site visit report

As a member of a Pentecostal Church we hold our beliefs in high regard as most people in different religions do. But, I am also interested in other religions and eager to learn about what they believe. The third site visit report was the most interesting to me. I chose the Islamic Center in Cleveland. There were about 75 people in attendance. I have to say that this one was the only one where I felt nervous to be in somewhere so different. I had also heard so many things over the years about the people associated with this religion, that I was nervous to go there and to be a woman. This service was set up more like a class where they discussed things about their religion. It was open to the public and everyone was able to ask questions while there. The man who was leading the conversation wore a white covered head piece with a brown and white robe. The women who were there all had their heads covered, and I did feel very out of place.

The building was beautiful, stained glass windows, a big circle at the top of the building, and inside beautiful, but sort of plain. That may be hard to imagine, but somehow the plainness of the building still overcame with beauty. I noticed walking into the community room, there were long hallways that were mostly carpeted. When I asked a woman who was leading us about them she told me they use them to pray. The men and women are on different schedules and they were not “allowed” to pray together. She also said they were not allowed to have any images of “Allah” or “God” because it could alter what he was trying to show you in reality, if

you had a man-made image. I did find it very hard to follow along, but there are some things I took away from the service.

The first thing I learned from this was that, from what I understand, they still follow God. They referred to God as Allah. In their view, God sends people to the world who are prophets. These people are sent as sort of messengers for the people to listen to and follow to grow and lead with God. The people kept talking about SWAS, and this was confusing to me. So, I was glad to hear someone as the question of what this was. Come to find out it was a prophet named Muhammad who they say was one of the messengers sent from God. They mentioned they this man was the last of the prophets to be sent from God. When asked why they used the abbreviation this was stated, “sallallahu alayhi wa salaam” (I copied this from the text as I did not understand them saying it). This saying means, May God’s blessings and peace be with him. They talked about the book of sayings from Muhammad (SWAS), and called it the Hadith. It was interesting hearing them talk about how to be Islamic. Following the Sunnath, a practice they follow, meant feeling what you are and what you are doing, not just doing the motions of what is expected. Silent approvals were mentioned quite a bit, but, to be honest, I am still confused on what this meant.

It was interesting to be there, but, as I said very hard to follow around. I was not the only non-Islamic person there. I found out that the service I was at was for people who were new into the faith. Or people who were just considering being Islamic, this is why the question and answer part of this was able to be. At a normal service they stated it was not like this and I thought that was great that I was able to join in and have questions answered. The message I got out of all of this was, to be kind to others and follow their God with no outside notions of what is supposed to be and not to be. Also, that the notion of what God looks like can only be shown to you and not

through a man-made picture. I would be interested in looking into this service more, but I do not ever seeing myself converting to the Islamic traditions.