SITE VISIT GUIDELINES
TO PLACES OF WORSHIP

Dr. Suzanne Watts Henderson, Queens University of Charlotte (Charlotte, NC)

hendersons@queens.edu

Used with Permission

In 2015, Dr. Suzanne Henderson participated in a Teaching Interfaith Understanding faculty development seminar, run in partnership between the Council of Independent Colleges and Interfaith Youth Core, and generously funded by the Henry Luce Foundation. For information on future seminars, and to access more resources created by seminar alumni, visit https://www.ifyc.org/content/ifyc-cic-resources.

ABOUT THIS ASSIGNMENT

The following handout was developed by Dr. Suzanne Watts Henderson for use in her “Religion in a Global Context Course” course at Queens University of Charlotte (Charlotte, NC) to help students engage with interfaith themes. Students are given this handout before planning a site visit to a local place of worship.

SITE VISIT GUIDELINES

As you prepare to visit a worship site, please take note of the following “best practices:”

1. CALL FIRST! Explain what you are doing and ask if you may come for a visit. Some worship services are not open to people who are not members of the faith. Some are only for men or only for women. Some are at a different site than the main worship space. Some prefer to have you meet one of their representatives when you visit.

2. Find out what will be expected of you. Will you need to plan on removing shoes or covering your hair? Will you be expected to sing or speak? Do you need to sit in a particular part of the worship space?

3. Do your research. Learn as much as you can about the religious tradition you are observing, and the particular event you are attending. The more you know ahead of time, the less confusing or surprising certain elements of the experience will be.

4. BE ON TIME. It is disruptive, and it reflects poorly on you, on non-members of their faith, and on the University if you are late to the service.

5. Talk to people. Ask to speak to the worship leader, if you can, or chat with other members of the
community. Ask questions. If there is a social event before or after the service, go to it. Have a doughnut. Take the opportunity to learn more about the experience. Ask questions about anything you don’t understand. Listen more than you talk.

6. Participate, don’t simply observe. If everyone stands (or sits or kneels), you should, too. (This doesn’t mean you’re subscribing to the featured religion; it simply implies respect.)

7. Do not take pictures unless someone has given you explicit permission to do so.

8. Enjoy yourself! Take the opportunity to experience something new.