

Pluralism Project and Andover Newton Theological School Co-Host Interfaith  
Leadership Seminar, June 2012 | Site Visits

Student Reflection: Pentecostal Tabernacle



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Nancy Rottman is a Master of Divinity student at Andover Newton Theological School whose primary interest is in Interfaith Engagement and Leadership.

*Nancy was taken by surprise at the extravagant welcome and spirited worship she encountered at Pentecostal Tabernacle in Cambridge. As a participant observer she wrestles here with one aspect of the Christian tradition previously unfamiliar to her: prophetic giftings.*

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After the sermon, Pastor Ward invited anyone who desired to come forward for prophetic giftings. Many people took part and this portion of the service lasted nearly an hour. Just as Rev. Dr. Mary Luti mentioned today during our class discussion, I found myself thinking through many of the questions/hurdles that she did. Is this real? Are these people having authentic experiences? And in my complete ignorance not even recognizing that Pastor Ward and others were speaking in tongues. In my defense, I am exhausted and had just spent the previous two days hearing other languages being spoken in worship. I did initially have the sense that these prophetic giftings were rather like fortune telling or psychic readings. Ask the right questions and stick to the general and you can say something relevant to just about anyone. However, when I found the tears welling up in my eyes and curiosity but not the guts to see what she would say to me, I began to let go of my doubt and judgment and just observe Pastor Ward. Whether her visions/insights into people's lives were "correct" or not, she took the time to establish a deeply personal connection with each individual. Through the laying on of her hands, the anointing with oil (mostly on hands), and the intensity and yet warmth of her eye contact, she had a unique and individual experience with each seeker. I realized that she changed her tone of voice, volume, and intensity with each person, meeting them where they were in that moment...

Over the decade our family has worshipped at First Church Nashua, we have had many conversations and worked very hard at being a welcoming church. I would characterize PT as offering extravagant welcome! I would imagine many people would be turned off by or at least ambivalent about worship at PT, but they would still be welcomed if they came through the doors, and sometimes that is enough to bring someone back again.