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“To Live in Hearts We Leave Behind is Not to Die.” Remembrance Sunday at Pusey House, Oxford University, A Review of Worship at Oxford University

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, religious participation by students of all faiths at Universities in the United Kingdom has seen a steady increase in attendance. This brief essay is a case study of worship by members of the University Community at Pusey House at the University of Oxford, which reflects the trend. On a crisp fall, November day, the twenty-third Sunday after Trinity (8th of November 2015) I had the opportunity to attend services at Pusey House, Oxford on Remembrance Sunday while on sabbatical at The University of Oxford (St. Stephen's House).

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At time of its founding in 1884, the purpose of Pusey House was to provide, "a home of sacred learning and a rallying point of the Christian faith", charged with doing "something to arrest the further decay of faith in Oxford". Over the years, it has served as a spiritual and academic home for students and faculty at Oxford who adhere to an Anglo-Catholic interpretation of the Church of England or who are drawn to the worship or community life of the House. Today, Pusey House is known as the "House of Piety and Learning" and is an Anglo-Catholic chaplaincy center. It exists to promote theological study alongside the life of prayer and worship anchored in community life associated with Oxford University.

The architecture of Pusey House is Gothic Revival Tradition of the late 19th century. Upon entering the Gothic structure of Pusey House on St. Giles street, one is greeted by a smiling Sacristan in academic robes. As one enters the chapel, one immediately realizes that this is the heart of Anglo-Catholicism in England with artifacts that Edward Bouverie Pusey owned on display. The chapel is bright and airy with sunlight illuminating the chapel through set strategically designed windows. Chairs are organized to hold approximately 100 people for a service. The dress of the congregation that Sunday ranged from sweaters and jeans to traditional English tweed and school ties as well as students wearing their academic robes

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in undress fashion (robes only, no hoods or tams), also the necktie and bowties with Pusey House colors are proudly worn by those men whose identity closely with the House.

On Remembrance Sunday, the Chapel at Pusey House was full. Among the Oxford students who attended service that Sunday, there seemed to be an even division of American's, British students and European students. Students represented a majority of Oxford's 38 colleges and six Private & Independent Halls. Academically. The student congregation reflected numerous disciplines offered at Oxford at the undergraduate and graduate levels as well as recent and not so recent graduates and members of the community, faculty and staff from Oxford University who reside nearby. The age range of the congregation ranged from teenagers to the elderly. On other Sundays during the term, the chapel at Pusey House has a healthy congregation, following the trend of other chapels at Oxford which having seen an increase in attendance in recent years by members of the university community.

Among the Americans who attended services at Pusey House, were largely students who were attending Oxford University on study (learning) abroad programs from various colleges and universities (public and private) from all over the United States. Also, there were a number of American graduate students and their spouses who are studying at Oxford for graduate degrees. Interestingly, many of the Americans who were attending services were active in the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA). The dominations of other Americans attending services were Episcopalian, Latter-Day Saint (Mormons), Russian Orthodox and Presbyterians. Several Americans mentioned to me that at Pusey House they had found an academic and spiritual home during their time in Oxford as well as a community of liked minded academics. Pusey House is an active place, during the academic terms where lectures, workshops, social events and retreats are held. During the summer of 2016 Pusey House hosted an academic theological conference with attendees from around the world, and which was supported by the Faculty of Religion and Theology at Oxford and St. Cross College.

On Remembrance Sunday, the service begins ten minutes early (10:50am) to celebrate the fallen, the choir of students begins with Howells (Mass in the Dorian Mode) followed by *For the Fallen*. A trumpeter then plays *The Last Post* followed by two minutes of silence where to congregation remains standing. One realizes at this very moment all over the United Kingdom that similar services are being held at war memorials and churches. Following the two minutes of silence Reveille is sounded. Followed by a closing prayer, the service opens with a rousing hymn of *God Save the Queen* (All three verses are sung) with lead by the Thurifer (following the Clergy) and then the Crucifer and the Acolytes following behind.

As the service progresses, the lessons are read by students from Oxford University (both British and American), Psalms are sung and the Sermon is given in a very academic but understandable and meaningfully manner with emphasis on the true meaning of this day. The offertory Hymn is again rousing, *Church's One Foundation* and the recessional is *O God our help in ages past*. After the recessional, the clergy return to perform the Angelus.

After the service, drinks are served in a room used for academic lectures and there is a good deal of social and academic networking. Families and students return to their receptive colleges for Sunday lunch.

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