

## January 15 Adult Spiritual Growth Class Synopsis

### **Let There Be Light: A Study of FPC Stained-Glass Windows – The Huguenots Suffering For Their Faith**

First Presbyterian Church has been blessed with parishioner memorial gifts of 15 beautiful stained-glass windows over the years, as summarized in the wonderful guide put together by Virginia Wiley in 1990, as part of the 175 year anniversary celebration of the church. The window of focus is the suffering of the Huguenots for their faith, located in the right back side of the sanctuary, facing the pulpit, and framed in the lower medallion.

In the window, we see a moving pictorial of a Huguenot suffering for his faith by burning at the stake as two companions, possibly family, and a guard look on. Standing out is the immeasurable peace and prayerful reference to the Prince of Peace exhibited by the three Huguenots. The scene is bordered with gold oak leaves signifying God's eternal strength and glory. We see the blending of the gold oak leaves into red oak leaves, seen as the flames themselves, signifying God's strength and presence that knows no bounds even in the midst of the fire. We are reminded of Daniel 7:10: *A river of fire was flowing, coming out of His presence.* The stake to which the Huguenot is bound is not an expected charred-black color but green, symbolizing the gift of eternal life that God gives to each of us in faith. The Huguenots are each dressed in gold tunics, representing the fulfillment of their life's purpose, i.e., to glorify God. The guard is shown with a halberd and scourge, possibly signifying both the political and religious elements of the Huguenots' punishment, respectively. The Protestant Huguenots were a political threat given the social and economic power of the nobility, educated, prominent professionals in trades, medicine and crafts and military officers, who followed the teachings of John Calvin. The French Calvinists, as with all Protestant Reformists, were seen as a religious threat to the Catholic church and considered heretics, deserving of death.

French Calvinists adopted the Huguenot name around 1560, but the first Huguenot church was created five years earlier in a private home in Paris. The origin of the name Huguenot is unknown but believed to have been derived from combining phrases in German and Flemish that described their practice of home worship. By 1562, there were two million Huguenots in France (10% of the population) with more than 2,000 churches.

In January 1562, Catherine de' Medici, the Queen Regent of France, issued the Edict of St. Germain, which recognized the right of Huguenots to practice their religion, though with limits. Huguenots were not permitted to practice within towns or at night, and in an effort to sate fears of rebellion, they were not allowed to be armed. Catherine, who was also Queen of France from 1547-1559 and the mother of three French kings, Francis II, Charles IX and Henry III, greatly influenced French Huguenot policies for more than 40 years. While initially favoring toleration, she abruptly changed to policies of severe persecution and purging of the Huguenots.

The Edict of Germain was quickly followed by the Massacre of Vassy on March 1, 1562, which sparked decades of violence known as the French Wars of Religion. More than 300 Huguenots holding religious services in a barn outside the town wall of Vassy, France, were attacked by troops under the command of Francis, Duke of Guise, and uncle to Mary Queen of Scots. More than 60 Huguenots were killed and more than 100 wounded at Vassy. The battling continued into February of 1563 when Francis was assassinated by a Huguenot during a siege on Orleans and an unstable truce was agreed upon.

The most infamous Catholic purge of the Huguenots was the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre on August 23, 1572. Murders of 70,000 Huguenots across France took place under the direction of Catherine de Medici, with the pretense of a truce in the wedding of her daughter Margaret to Huguenot and Henry of Navarre (future Henry IV of France). The wedding was meant to bring together the conflicting Catholic House of Guise and the Protestant House of Bourbon. For three days of violence, officials recruited Catholic citizens into militia groups that hunted down Huguenot citizens, indulging not only in murder but gruesome torture, mutilation and desecration of the dead. Violence and murder spread to 12 French cities over a two month period, leading to the first wave of Huguenot departures from France to England, Germany and the Netherlands.

Violence such as the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre became the norm, as civilian bloodshed and military battles dragged on until the Edict of Nantes in April 1598, issued by Henry IV, which ended the civil war and granted Huguenots their demanded civil rights. Henry IV was greatly influenced by his family's matriarchs. Marguerite d'Angoulême was queen of Navarre, the wife of King Henry II of Navarre, and the grandmother of King Henry IV of France, whom scholars have called "the first modern woman," was an early supporter of reform in the Catholic Church. She influenced her brother, Francis I, to be lenient with the Huguenots. Marguerite's daughter, Jeanne d'Albret, queen of Navarre and Henry IV's mother, was one of the most powerful political women of 16th-century Europe. Along with Elizabeth I of England and Catherine de' Medici in France, Jeanne d'Albret played a leading role in the religious and political conflicts that marked the second half of the 16th century. Jeanne was brought up in a religiously liberal and intellectual atmosphere. She was strong-willed and consistently followed her own course, declaring Calvinism the official religion of her kingdom after publicly embracing the teachings of John Calvin on Christmas Day 1560. This conversion made her the highest-ranking Protestant in France, while defying the demands of her second husband, Antoine de Bourbon, that she return to Catholicism. By supporting the Reformation and establishing Navarre as a haven for Huguenots, Jeanne increased the tensions that erupted in the French Wars of Religion. She initially supported the Protestant side financially and politically and, in the third war, took an active role as propagandist, figurehead, leader, and negotiated the peace twice in 1563 and 1570. She also, reluctantly agreed to the marriage of her Protestant son Henry to the Catholic Margaret of Valois, daughter of King Henry II of France and Catherine de 'Medici, in the interests of national unity.

Another influential connection to Marguerite d'Angoulême was Renée de France, a woman to note from the French Protestant Reformation because of her piety, hospitality and generosity to those who were in danger because of their faith. She was raised by Marguerite d'Angoulême, being orphaned at age five after the deaths of her father, King Louis XII of France, and mother, Anne de Bretagne. At 18 years old, Renée became the Duchess of Ferrara in 1534 until the death of her husband, Ercole II d'Este, grandson of Pope Alexander VI, in 1559. Their marriage proved to be a mismatch due to their cultural inclinations and religion. Her husband was a staunch Catholic, while Renée followed the ideas of Martin Luther and John Calvin. She gained knowledge in Protestant theology while she was part of Marguerite's circles, where she met with many reformers, humanists, and evangelicals.

In 1536, John Calvin visited the Duchy of Ferrara under the name Charles d'Esperville, likely as a religious refugee, and was accepted with warmth by the Protestant believers at Renée's court. Calvin befriended Renée and became her personal secretary for 6 months, causing her to be more inclined to Protestantism. After his departure, they maintained personal correspondence until Calvin's death in 1564.

Renée was instrumental in the spread of Protestantism, financing Venetian printers in the production of Bibles and other religious books, not only in Italian but in other languages. In 1540, Renée received a villa in Consandolo as a gift, where she built a large library of Reformed books and treatises, hosted whomever she wished and enjoyed the preaching of Protestant ministers. Renée participated in the Eucharist in the Protestant manner together with her daughters and fellow believers in 1550. Her husband, the Duke of Ferrara, followed with the public accusation of heresy against her. Renée was arrested and all of her personal possessions were confiscated unless she recanted. Renée did not relent until her two daughters were taken away from her. Although she recanted, she refused to attend Catholic worship.

After her husband's death in 1559, their son, Alfonso II d'Este, the new Duke of Ferrara was compelled by Pope Pius IV to exile his mother to France because of her Calvinist creed. Renée resided at Château de Montargis, located in north-central France, and continued to worship the Protestant faith. In later years, during the Wars of Religion in France, Renée's castle became a place of refuge for the Protestants and any who needed assistance regardless of faith. Renée's Protestant faith remained unwavering. In her last 10 years, John Calvin corresponded with Renée more often, and he praised her in his letters to other Protestants. Calvin remained her friend and mentor until the end of his life, and in one of his last letters to her, he reminded her that her trials and tribulations did not sway her *'from a right and pure profession of Christianity.'* Passing in June 1574, because of her faith, Renée was not buried with the Valois royals at Saint-Denis but at Montargis, without pomp and even a tombstone.

Following the Edict of Nantes, the Huguenots subsequently used their freedom to organize against the French crown, gaining political power, amassing loyal forces and forging separate diplomatic relationships with other countries.

When King Louis XIV ascended the French throne in 1643, persecution of the Huguenots began again, escalating to the point that he directed troops to seize Huguenot homes and force them to convert to Catholicism, a practice known as the Dragonades. In 1685, Louis XIV enacted the Edict of Fontainebleau, which replaced the Edict of Nante and made Protestantism illegal. Practice of the "heretical" religion was forbidden and Huguenots were ordered to renounce their faith and join the Catholic Church. They were denied exit from France under pain of death. Louis XIV hired 300,000 troops to hunt the heretics down and confiscate their property. This revocation caused France to lose half a million of its best citizens.

Persecution finally relaxed during the latter years of the reign of Louis XV (~1764 onward), especially among discreet members of the upper classes. In practice, the stringent policies outlawing Protestants was opposed by the Jansenists. Jansensim was a theological movement within Catholicism at the time, primarily active in the Kingdom of France, that emphasized original sin, human depravity, the necessity of divine grace, and predestination. It was declared a heresy by the Catholic Church with Jesuits aligning them with Calvinist leanings.

It was not until November 7, 1787 with the Edict of Versailles, issued by King Louis XVI, that the Huguenots toleration was re-instated. Roman Catholicism continued as the state religion of the Kingdom of France but relief was offered to non-Catholic worshippers: Calvinist Huguenots, Lutherans and Jews alike. Considering the long-standing dominance of the state religion, restrictions were still placed on non-Catholics around the country such at workplace and educational settings to avoid

misrepresenting the kingdom. The Edict of Versailles did not proclaim freedom of religion across France, which would occur only by the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen of 1789.

The departure of the Huguenots was a disaster for France, costing the nation much of its cultural and economic influence. In some French cities, the mass exodus meant losing half the working population. Huguenots were particularly prolific in the textile industry and considered reliable workers in many fields. They were also an educated group, with the ability to read and write. Many European countries in addition to Russia and South Africa, welcomed them and benefited from their arrival. The most significant population ended up in the Netherlands with Amsterdam receiving the most Huguenot transplants.

Some Huguenots had emigrated far earlier than the mass movement in the 17th century to North America, but many met with misfortune. In 1564, Norman Huguenots settled in Florida in an area that is now Jacksonville, but were slaughtered by Spanish troops following an altercation with the French navy. Beginning in 1624, Huguenots began to arrive en masse in the New York and New Jersey area. In 1628, some moved into what would become Bushwick, Brooklyn. Others moved to New Rochelle and New Paltz, New York, as well as Staten Island. By the time of the exodus beginning in 1685, Huguenot communities sprang up in Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Virginia and South Carolina. Often, the Huguenot settlers would assimilate with existing Protestant groups, particularly Presbyterians, given the Calvinist teachings. A wealth of Huguenot ancestry grew in the American colonies. The father of Paul Revere, Apollo Rivoire, was a Huguenot, and George Washington was descended from a Huguenot named Nicolas Martiau.

In retrospect, the Huguenots truly lived the Apostle Paul's words of Christian encouragement and perspective:

**2 Corinthians 4:8-9, 16-18**

*We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.*

*Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.*

A song to reflect and pray on:

[Fernando Ortega I Need Thee Every Hour With Lyrics - Bing video](#)

## Looking ahead – Sunday January 22

Second window from rear on right side facing pulpit (upper medallion) – Christ on the Cross.