

January 29 Adult Spiritual Growth Class Synopsis

Let There Be Light: A Study of FPC Stained-Glass Windows – Williams Carey Father of Modern Missions

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 William Carey, the “father of modern missions”, located in the second window from the right back side of the sanctuary, facing the pulpit, and framed in the lower medallion.

The window shows William Carey working at his shoe cobbler table with a map of the world in the background that he crafted out of leather scraps in his shop, which was a product of his vision and zeal for Christian world mission as a young man. His blue shirt and scarlet pants symbolize the hope and trust he placed in God throughout his mission work and the personal suffering and hardship that he endured in his faithful service. The scene is bordered with gold oak leaves signifying God’s eternal strength and glory that became evident in and through Carey’s devotion and service to his Lord. Below his work table is a small library of books, which would likely include language texts of Latin and Greek, which he self-taught by ages 10 and 14, in addition to Hebrew, Italian, Dutch and French, in which he became fluent by the age of 20. Carey, a shoemaker by trade was a modest, self-educated and gifted man of languages, who grew up in the Anglican Church in England in the late 1700’s and became a Baptist minister at the age of 24 with a vision and deep devotion for Christian world mission. He led the formation of the Baptist Missionary in 1792, comprised of 12 small churches encouraged by Carey’s words: “Expect great things from God, attempt great things for God.” Carey became the first Christian missionary to India in 1793 and faithfully served the rest of his life for more than 40 years at great personal risk and suffering of he and his family. Near the end of his ministry Carey humbly spoke, “You have been speaking about William Carey. When I am gone, say nothing about William Carey-speak only about Willam Carey’s Savior.”

Carey was born in Northhamptonshire, England in 1761, the son of a weaver with minimal means of education. Early in his childhood he showed an exceptional gift and interest in language, which was self-taught, becoming fluent in six different languages as a teen. Apprenticed to a shoemaker, he joined the Dissenters, influenced by a fellow apprentice John Warr, after growing up in the Anglican church. While attending Congregationalist meetings with his friend, Carey came under deep conviction of his sin and need for Christ. He would eventually come to put his complete trust in Christ crucified. The Dissenters were congregationalists, who benefited from the religious tolerance that existed in England since the early 1700’s, and who had a view for Evangelism to which Carey was drawn and which the Anglican church lacked at the time.

During these years, Carey painstakingly searched the Scriptures in order to establish his faith on the Word of God alone. His careful study of Scripture led him to reject the practice of infant-baptism, which was practiced by both the Church of England and Congregationalists.

In 1781 at 20 years old, William Carey married Dorothy Plackett, the sister-in-law of his employer, Thomas Olds. She was uneducated and was reluctantly accepting of Carey’s future mission endeavors. In 1783, Carey joined the Strict (Particular) Baptists, a Calvinist group that distinguished themselves in the belief that baptism should only be performed as a professing adult, not as an infant.

Two years later Carey was ordained as a minister and preached every other Sunday at a small Baptist church in Leicester while continuing to work at the shoe repair shop. Carey became greatly influenced by the works of Jonathan Edwards, Congregationalist pastor and theologian, and David Brainerd, Presbyterian pastor, both of whom were missionaries to the Native Americans, and by Captain James Cook's journal of his first voyage around the world. Carey came to the ardent belief that the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20 to make disciples of all nations, was intended not only for Jesus's immediate disciples but for all of God's people in the present.

In 1792, Carey would offer two contributions that served as a catalyst for the establishment of the Baptist Missionary Society. Carey published a book titled, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians, to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathen*. This work was divided into five sections that (1) discussed the theological implications of Matthew 28:19-20; (2) outlined the history of missions since the days of the apostles; (3) surveyed the state of the world in Carey's day; (4) answered various objections to sending out missionaries; and (5) indicated the immediate practical steps which could be taken, namely the establishment of a missionary society. Also in 1792, Carey preached a sermon based on Isaiah 54:2-3 at his local associational meeting, often called the "Deathless Sermon." In Isaiah, the prophet spoke of what is to become for God's people :

² *"Enlarge the place of your tent, stretch your tent curtains wide, do not hold back; lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes.* ³ *For you will spread out to the right and to the left; your descendants will dispossess nations and settle in their desolate cities.*

In his sermon, Carey shared that our call as Christians is to make room for more and more people to hear the Good News and to choose to belong to Christ. He called upon his hearers to trust in a great God and attempt great things for Him from which was born the quote: "Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God."

In October of 1792, Carey along with his friends Andrew Fuller, John Ryland (who baptized Carey) and John Sutcliff formed the *Particular Baptist Society for the Propagation of the Gospel Amongst the Heathen* (later known as the Baptist Missionary Society and today as BMS World Mission). Their commitment to missions flowed from their theological commitment to an evangelical Calvinism nurtured through the writings of the Great Awakening preacher Jonathan Edwards.

In April of 1793, Carey and his family along with fellow missionary Dr. Thomas set sail from England to Calcutta as the first missionaries of the fledgling society. They were waylaid by the British East India Company rules. British East India Company thought that the Reformed Christian teaching would not be good for business. Recall that one of emphases of the Reformation was placing reverence on all work being done in God's name, elevating the value of all doing so, which was contrary to the treatment of those working in India as part of the tea trade. Carey and his group changed to a Danish ship and arrived in India in December of 1793.

Carey and Thomas had grossly underestimated what it would cost and mean to live in India, and Carey's early years there were miserable. Thomas deserted the mission setting up a medical practice in Calcutta with all of the funds designated for the first two years. Carey was forced to move his family repeatedly for employment. Illness racked the family with his son dying of dysentery and his wife lost her mind to mental illness and eventually died. Loneliness and regret set in: "I am in a strange land," he wrote, "no Christian friend, a large family, and nothing to supply their wants. This is indeed the valley of the shadow

of death to me," Carey wrote, though characteristically added, "But I rejoice that I am here notwithstanding; and God is here."

Carey spent the first six years learning and translating the Bible into Bengali. He preached everywhere, but had no converts to the Christian faith. People listened; they loved the message, but refused to break caste. In October 1799, he was invited to locate in a Danish settlement in Serampore near Calcutta, which allowed him to preach legally. Carey was joined by William Ward, a printer, and Joshua and Hanna Marshman, teachers. Mission finances increased considerably as Ward began securing government printing contracts. The Marshman's opened schools for children, and Carey began teaching at Fort William College in Calcutta. In December 1800, after seven years of missionary labor, Carey baptized his first convert, Krishna Pal, and two months later, he published his first Bengali New Testament. With this and subsequent editions, Carey and his colleagues laid the foundation for the study of modern Bengali, which up to this time had been an "unsettled dialect." Krishna Pal's daughter eventually married a man above her caste in 1802, helping to break down the caste system.

In India, Carey witnessed a rigid caste system, worship of thousands of petty gods, radical asceticism, infant sacrifice in the Ganges River, and suttee (widow burning). Carey worked the rest of his life to eliminate infant sacrifice and suttee, a self-sacrifice of a widow by throwing herself on her husband's funeral pyre. He studied Bhramin texts to get and use Indian priestly arguments to eliminate these horrendous practices. He was the first man to stand against the ruthless murders and widespread oppression of women. Women in India were being crushed through polygamy, female infanticide, child marriage, widow burning, euthanasia, and forced illiteracy—all sanctioned by religion. Carey opened schools for girls. When widows converted to Christianity, he arranged marriages for them. It was his persistent, 25-year battle against widow burning that finally led to the formal banning of this horrible religious practice.

He was the first to campaign for humane treatment of India's leprosy victims (who were part of the Untouchable caste) because he believed that Jesus' love extends to leprosy patients, so they should be cared for. Before then, lepers were often buried or burned alive because of the belief that a violent death purified the body on its way to reincarnation into a new healthy existence.

Carey and the Marshman's founded Serampore College in 1818, a divinity school for Indians that was supported by the King of Denmark in a gift of a large house and grounds adjoining the college premises. Today the college offers theological and liberal arts education for some 2,500 students.

Carey founded the Agri Horticultural Society in 1820. He carried out a systematic survey of agriculture and campaigned for agriculture reform given his great interest in botany. He introduced the Linnean system of plant organizations and published the first science texts in India. He did this because he believed that nature is declared "good" by its Creator; it is not maya (illusion) to be shunned, as Hindus believe, but a subject worthy of human study.

Carey established the first newspaper ever printed in any Oriental language, because he believed that "above all forms of truth and faith, Christianity seeks free discussion." His English-language journal, *Friend of India*, was the force that gave birth to the social-reform movement in India in the first half of the nineteenth century. He also introduced the idea of savings banks to India to fight the all-pervasive social evil of usury (the lending of money at excessive interest). He believed that God, being righteous, hated this practice which made investment, industry, commerce, and economic development impossible.

In his lifetime Carey, as a gifted linguist, was able to see his mission print and distribute the entire Bible or in parts in 44 different languages and dialects. He transformed the Bengali language, previously considered “fit for only demons and women,” into the foremost literary language of India. He wrote gospel ballads in Bengali to bring the Hindu love of music to the service of his Lord.

William Carey was a pioneer of the modern Christian missionary movement, a movement that has since reached every corner of the world. Although a man of simple origins, he used his God-given genius and every available means to serve his Lord and illumine the dark corners of India with the light of the truth. In his words, we are reminded of our Christian call: “To belong to Jesus is to embrace the nations with Him.”

In expecting great things from God, the Apostle Paul reminds us of what we sometimes forget:

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. (Ephesians 3:20-21)

In attempting to do great things for God, the Psalmist encourages us when we may become fearful and holding back:

Commit everything to the Lord. Trust him and he will keep you. (Psalm 37:5)

A song to reflect and pray on:

[\(14\) What If I Gave Everything - Casting Crowns - with Lyrics - YouTube](#)

Looking ahead – Sunday February 5

Second window from altar on right side facing altar (Upper Medallion) – The Resurrection of Jesus Christ