Compass Life Adult Sunday School

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**“Commission Possible: Connecting the World to Worship Christ”**

1. **The Church of St Nicholas. A Church that Fellowshipped**

The Church of St Nicholas is the oldest church in Berlin at nearly  years. It was originally a Roman Catholic Church and was built between 1220 and 1230. It burned to the ground in 1380, was rebuilt with a second tower from 1380-1470. The church architecture is considered and differs significantly from what it looks like today. It became a Lutheran church in 1539 in the midst of the Reformation. The church effectively ceased to exist on in 1938 when it was turned over to the government and used as a concert hall and museum. It was all but completely destroyed during bombing by  during World War II. Because it was on the communist held east side of Berlin it was left vacant and dormant, continuing to collapse losing its vaults and northern pillars in 1949. Then in 1981 it was rebuilt with authorization of the East German Democratic Republic Authorities so that what we see today is largely a reconstruction using old designs and plans. Today it is used mainly as a and for occasional concerts.

From 1691 – 1705 Philip Spener spent a term as Provost at St Nicholas. Spener was best known as the father of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. He was born in the middle of the 30 year war, grew up in Alsace, and was educated in Philosophy, Philology and Theology in Strassburg. He continued his studies in Basel, Tubingen and Geneva and became acquainted with. He served as an assistant preacher in Strassburg and was later called to be a Senior Pastor at Frankfurt am Main.

He worked to raise the level of religious life at St Nicholas, emphasizing the training of youth using a catechism and establishing the practice of confirmation. Most importantly for us he used small groups meeting in homes to aid in a program of spiritual reformation. He cultivated the Christian Walk of his congregants by studying the Bible and engaging in discussions of the .

While Provost at St Nicholas, he was a key leader in the Pietist movement and was instrumental in leading the electorate to open the University of Halle, hospitals, orphanages, and schools for the poor. His leadership clearly equipped the local congregation to do great things.

What makes St Nicholas part of our Commission Possible series is that through Spener it is considered to be the birth of what we know today as.

1. **Plymouth Church, Brooklyn – A Church that Worshipped**

Plymouth Church at nearly years old is located at 57 Orange Street in Brooklyn Heights, New York City. It was built in 1849-1850. It was originally founded in 1847 by 21 transplanted New Englanders. It started out as a Congregationalist Church and was the 3rd Congregationalist church to be founded in Brooklyn. The site was actually purchased from the First Presbyterian Church which had used the original building since 1822 and moved because they needed more space. The church architecture is described as “” with Italianate and colonial motifs. It was designed by Joseph C Wells who was later one of the founders of the American Institute of Architects. The interior layout of the church differed from traditional churches in that it was designed more like an auditorium or theater with pews arranged in an  before the pulpit instead of in straight line rows on either side of a center aisle. This design concept was adopted throughout the second half of the 19th century through today. In 1866 the church installed a pipe organ replacing the original church organ which at that time was the largest organ in the United States and was expanded further in 1937.

Stained glass windows were installed in 1907-1909 and are unique in that they do not display any . Instead they focus on the history of democracy in England and the United States, with a particular emphasis on the influence of Puritans, Pilgrims and Congregational Church.

The church’s first Pastor was Henry Ward Beecher – His sister was Harriet Beecher Stowe – who authored “Uncle Tom’s Cabin” and is credited by some as laying the groundwork for the Civil War. The church served as in important station of the through which slaves were secretly transported to Canada. It was known as the “Grand Central Depot”. Slaves were hidden in the tunnel like basement under the church sanctuary.

One of the church’s iconic members started out life in a way that one would not guess would lead to a rich wealth of Worship Hymns and songs well known even today – .

She was born in 1820 in the village of Brewster about 50 miles from New York City. Her ancestry traced back to the Puritans and was a descendent of “Mayflower Families”. She was also a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution. At six weeks old she caught a cold and developed inflammation of the eyes. Mustard poultices were applied to treat the discharges – she became blind. Her father died when she was six months old, leaving her to be raised by her mother and maternal grandmother. These women grounded her in Christian principles, helping her to memorize long passages from the Bible. At the age of ten she memorized  chapters of the Bible each week. By the age of 15 she had memorized the , the Pentateuch, the Book of Proverbs, the Song of Solomon and many of the Psalms.

At age eight (1828) she wrote her first poem which described her condition. She later stated: “It seemed intended by the blessed providence of God that I should be blind all my life, and I thank Him for the dispensation. If perfectly earthly sight were offered to me tomorrow I would not accept it. I might not have sung hymns to the praise of God if I had been distracted by the beautiful and interesting things about me".

She was a longtime member of the Sixth Avenue Bible Baptist Church in Brooklyn New York and served as a Baptist Missionary, deaconess, and lay preacher.

She attended many churches in the area eventually landing in Plymouth Church where she found herself pastored by Henry Ward Beecher who was considered, among many other things, an innovator of church music. She met and was influenced by many hymn writers and collaborated with most of them. She wrote both secular and sacred songs and was influenced and inspired by Stephen Foster, George Root, and many others.

She is considered “the most prolific of all nineteenth century American song writers”. She wrote almost  hymns and had many of them published with scores of nom de plumes so as to not overwhelm publishers with a single author of the hymns she had written. She set a goal of winning a people to Christ through her hymns. Whenever she wrote a hymn she prayed it would bring women and men to Christ, and kept careful records of those reported to have been saved through her hymns. Her process was to never undertake a hymn without first asking the good Lord to be her inspiration. She could often compose 6 or 7 hymns a  and composed them entirely in her mind, working on as many as hymns at a time before dictating them to an amanuensis.

**Worship:**

We Worship to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

We Worship because \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

We Worship because He is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

What is your Commission? Is it Possible? Will You seek to make it so?