



First  
Presbyterian  
Church  
of Waynesboro, Virginia

# The Columns *Online*

February 8, 2023 | Waynesboro, Virginia | *a newsletter supplement*

## **PC(USA) administrators respond to public outcry after “text of terror” is selected for Hebrew exegesis exam**

*by Dartinia Hull | Presbyterian Outlook*

On January 2, the Presbyteries’ Cooperative Committee on Examinations for Candidates (PCC) announced on its Facebook page that the passage of Scripture for the upcoming Hebrew exegesis exam would come from the book of Judges. When minister of Word and Sacrament candidates began taking the exegesis exam at 3 p.m. EST on January 28, 2023, they found that the Scripture selection was Judges 19, also known as “The Levite’s Concubine.”



The exegesis exam is an intense look at a piece of Scripture selected by the PCC. Those taking the exam must offer an interpretation of the text with reference to the original Hebrew or Greek as well as develop a teaching application: a Sunday school outline or sermon. (Passages alternate between the Old and New Testament annually.) Candidates are not allowed to discuss the exam during the test period of just under five days.

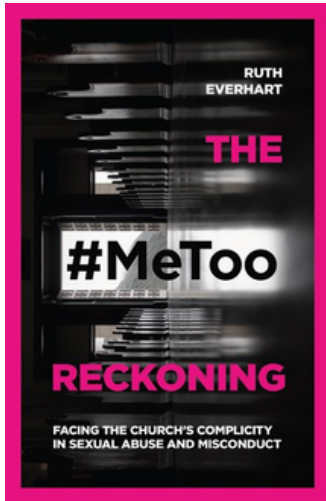
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## Hebrew exegesis exam, continued

According to the PC(USA)'s website, the exegesis exam "shall assess the candidate's ability to interpret an assigned passage of Scripture by demonstrating attention to the original language of the text, an understanding of the text's historical context, and an ability to relate the text effectively to the contemporary life of the church in the world."

By late afternoon on Thursday, comments on Preparing for Presbyterian Ministry's Facebook page, which is public, overwhelmingly showed support for sensitivity to those taking and reading the test and called for apologies. A small handful of responders backed the PCC's decision, saying difficult topics must be discussed.

A portion of a statement that the PCC provided for media outlets, including the Outlook, read:



"The Presbyterians' Cooperative Committee on Examinations for Candidates (PCC) has clearly laid out its thinking and process in the document that was distributed to those who raised concerns. It has reviewed other concerns raised and has addressed its processes and thinking behind its decision to move forward with this scripture. The committee has also offered opportunities for the candidates who could not complete the exam to be enrolled in the spring exam without registration fees."

Judges 19 describes Israel's wickedness in the days before Saul is anointed King. In an echo of Lot's experience in Sodom, a man forces his concubine into the hands of a violent mob to save himself. She is gang raped and abused through the night, and dies. The Levite dismembers her corpse and sends it to the tribes of Israel, sparking a bloody civil war. This text is not part of the Common Lectionary, and it likely is seldom preached, wrote Ruth Everhart, a well-known pastor and speaker, and a survivor of sexual assault. In her blog published Friday, Everhart discusses writing her third book, *The #MeToo Reckoning: Facing the Church's Complicity in Sexual Abuse and Conduct*, and considering – but deciding against – using Judges 19 as she wove historical and contemporary stories of sexual abuse within the context of church.

"But as I worked with the material," she writes, "I decided it was simply too horrible to include. Readers would already be wrestling with difficult, graphic material. I couldn't ask them to confront gang rape and dismemberment."

"I drew a line."

Timothy Cargal is the associate director for ministry leadership development with the Office of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). In this role, he helps to oversee the administering of the ordination exams. In an email to the Outlook, he explained that because "the ministry context and work product for the exegesis exam is not always focused on a congregational sermon. It is not uncommon for the scriptural passages used in the exams to be non-lectionary texts."

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## Hebrew exegesis exam, continued

“The ministry context and work product for the exegesis exam is not always focused on a congregational sermon. It is not uncommon for the scriptural passages used in the exams to be non-lectionary texts,” writes Timothy Cargal.

Those taking the test were given the option of opting out, which is not an unheard-occurrence, Cargal continued. However, opting out could present the issue of revealing trauma that some would wish to remain private. Members of the PCC, which has an annual meeting planned in March, will join a meeting of the Association of Mid Council Leaders at 4 p.m. on Wednesday, Feb. 8, via Zoom to discuss this issue.



Cargal.

### Worship This Week:

**Psalm 119: 1-8**

**Matthew 5: 21-37**

**Sermon: Reconciled**



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# Music Notes for February 12

This week, the closing hymn will be *In Christ There Is No East or West*. The text was written by John Oxenham, the pen name for William Arthur Dunkerley (1852-1941). Dunkerley wrote hymns, novels, poetry and, as a journalist under the pseudonym Julian Ross, articles for various publications. Under the name Oxenham, Dunkerley wrote hymns in several languages, including Tagalog, Arabic, Portuguese and Spanish.

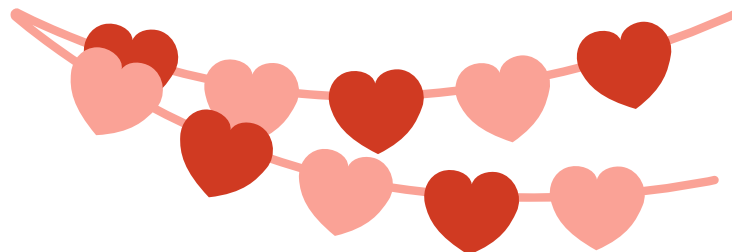
The musical setting of *In Christ There Is No East or West* was originally an Irish tune. Henry Thacker Burleigh, also known as Harry T. Burleigh (1866-1949), set Oxenham's text to the melody and enhanced its harmonies for the 1940 Episcopal Hymnal.



—Harry T. Burleigh, a Negro about twenty-six years old, who has a remarkable fine voice, a graduate from a high school and an accomplished stenographer, is appointed baritone soloist in St. George's Protestant Episcopal Church, New York. It is the first known instance of a Negro being admitted to a vested choir of a white parish.—Ex.

Burleigh served as the baritone soloist for St. George's Episcopal Church in New York City for 52 years. While singing at St. George's, Burleigh arranged *In Christ There Is No East Or West* and named it MCKEE, after the rector of St. George's, Elmer M. McKee. The hymn is one of hundreds set by Burleigh, including *Deep River*.

Burleigh received a scholarship to study at the National Conservatory in New York City. Antonín Dvořák became its director in 1892, and he soon became acquainted with Burleigh. Dvořák was inspired by Burleigh's singing, particularly of spirituals, inspired by their "great and noble" quality, which then inspired Dvořák's own compositions. Burleigh, in turn, assisted Dvořák in a variety of ways, including copying the Czech composer's Symphony no. 9, *From the New World*.





# This Week in History.



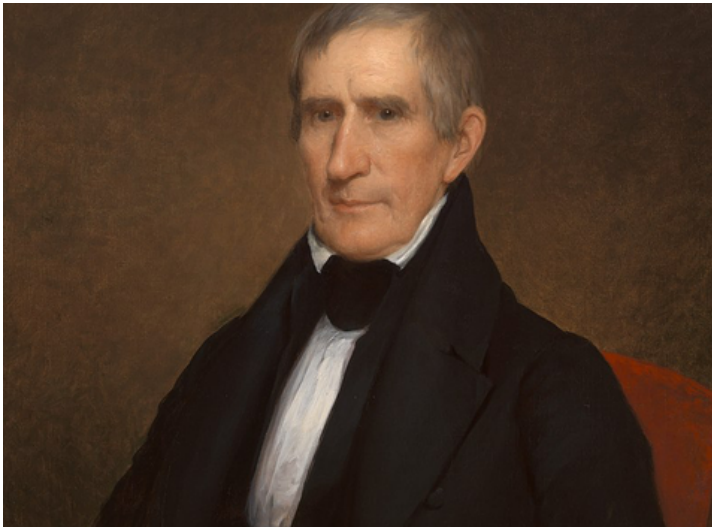
The Mexican Revolution culminates in the ratification of the *Constitución Política de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos*. This constitution is the first in the world to set out social rights, including free, mandatory, secular education; land reform; and labor rights.

**February 5, 1917**



American social critic and novelist Sinclair Lewis is born in Sauk Center, Minnesota. He received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1930. His works include; *Main Street*, *Babbitt*, and *It Can't Happen Here*.

**February 7, 1885**



William Henry Harrison is born on Berkeley Plantation, Charles City County, Virginia. As a military officer, he was active in the subjugation of native tribes in the Northwest Territory. As a major general in the War of 1812, he was victorious at the Battle of the Thames in Upper Canada. After winning the 1840 Presidential election, his inauguration would be on a cold, wet March 4, 1841. Eschewing overcoat and hat, he would ride on horseback to the ceremony, and deliver a two hour inaugural address. 32 days later, he will die of pneumonia.

**February 9, 1773**



George Herman Ruth is born in Baltimore, Maryland. As a pitcher with the Boston Red Sox, Ruth's record would be 94-46, with 2.28 Earned Run Average and 29 consecutive scoreless innings. As an outfielder for the New York Yankees, he held or shared 60 Major League records. He hit 714 home runs on his career.

**February 6, 1895**



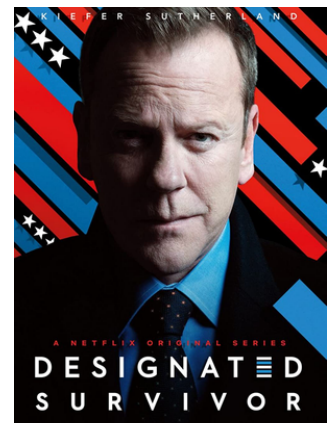
Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots, is beheaded after 19 years as a prisoner of Queen Elizabeth I. A Catholic, Mary opposed the Protestant Reformation in England, and was convicted of complicity in a plot to assassinate Elizabeth.

**February 8, 1587**



The 25th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution is ratified, clarifying the procedures for presidential succession in case of disability, and providing TV and movies with a convenient plot twist.

**February 10, 1967**



Anti-Apartheid Activist Nelson Mandela is released from prison after serving 27 years of a life sentence. In April 1994, he would be elected president of South Africa in the nation's first all-race elections.

**February 11, 1990**