



First
Presbyterian
Church
of Waynesboro, Virginia

The Columns *Online*

March 22, 2023 | Waynesboro, Virginia | *a newsletter supplement*

PC(USA) leadership apologizes for harm caused by ordination exam

In their annual meeting, the Presbyteries' Cooperative Committee on Examinations acknowledges the impact of using Judges 19 for the January 2023 exegesis exam.

By Lucinda Isaacs | Presbyterian Outlook- March 17, 2023

Louisville, KY — The Presbyteries' Cooperative Committee on Examinations for Candidates (PCC) issued an apology on Tuesday morning for the harm caused by their choice of Scripture for the 2023 winter exegesis exam while maintaining that their decision was defensible.



A public outcry in early February brought wide attention to the selection of Judges 19:1-30 for the exegesis exam, which is one step in a series used to determine a candidate's readiness for ministry. The story in Judges 19, often called Levite's Concubine, is known for its sexual violence and trauma.

In the statement, the PCC said, "We believed that our decision was defensible; however, we acknowledge that it caused harm. Therefore, we offer our apology. We are sorry. We ask for your forgiveness."

continued

EXAM, continued

PCC moderator Robert Lowry first presented a statement of apology drafted by the executive committee which confessed that the “exam became a stumbling block for some of our candidates and exam readers” and offered prayer to those injured by the text.

In response, PCC member Kimberly Briggs quickly called for a “full and unreserved apology,” making a substitute motion to rewrite the proposed statement.



Moderator Robert Lowry (right) and Timothy Cargal, Associate Director for Ministry Leadership Development with the Office of the General Assembly . Screenshot by Lucinda Isaacs.

In the resulting apology, the committee acknowledged that the choice of Judges 19 was “for many” a “breach of trust.” The revised statement committed to partnering with the church to move from “this place of anger, pain, and frustration into a grace-filled space.”

Additionally, the revised statement acknowledged that their choice of Scripture left candidates and exam readers “feeling fearful, traumatized, and perhaps even victimized.”

The PCC spent the majority of its time discussing the language of the revised apology, preventing them from addressing the executive committee’s proposal to add language to the registration process to include a statement that would offer guidance if an exam question elicits a trauma response from a candidate. This action will be considered during the Thursday afternoon public plenary.

The PCC received written correspondence from various organizations and individuals regarding their Scripture selection for the exam. The Advocacy Committee for Women and Gender Justice wrote, *The reality is, this situation has inadvertently caused spiritual and emotional violence to test takers, survivors, those following along, and subsequently test readers. It has increased the potential for discrimination within the test tasking process, particularly with the traditionally marginalized groups.*

The Officers of the Association of Mid Council Leaders submitted a letter to the PCC stating: “*Some have maintained that the decision to use Judges 19 was right because we are now more able to talk about difficult things, and that it is important for this passage to be ‘put before the church.’ This passage was not, however, put before the church; it was put before individual theological students who wrestled with it over and over through the course of several days, and who thought that it was against the exam honor code to reach out for emotional support.*” Written correspondence also came from organizations such as the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy, the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary, the Association of Mid Council Leaders and Committees on the Preparation of Ministry from multiple presbyteries.

Worship This Week:

John 11: 1-11

John 11: 12-45

Sermon: Take away the stone!

calvin and hobbes



OUR WORSHIP CHANNELS

click on the logos





LENT 2023

3/29: The Parable of the Talents
(Matthew 25: 14-30)

3/01

LENTEN SERIES: THE PARABLES
BROWN BAG LUNCH

3/29



4/06

MAUNDY THURSDAY SERVICE
SIMPLE MEAL & COMMUNION

ALL EVENTS ARE AT NOON.



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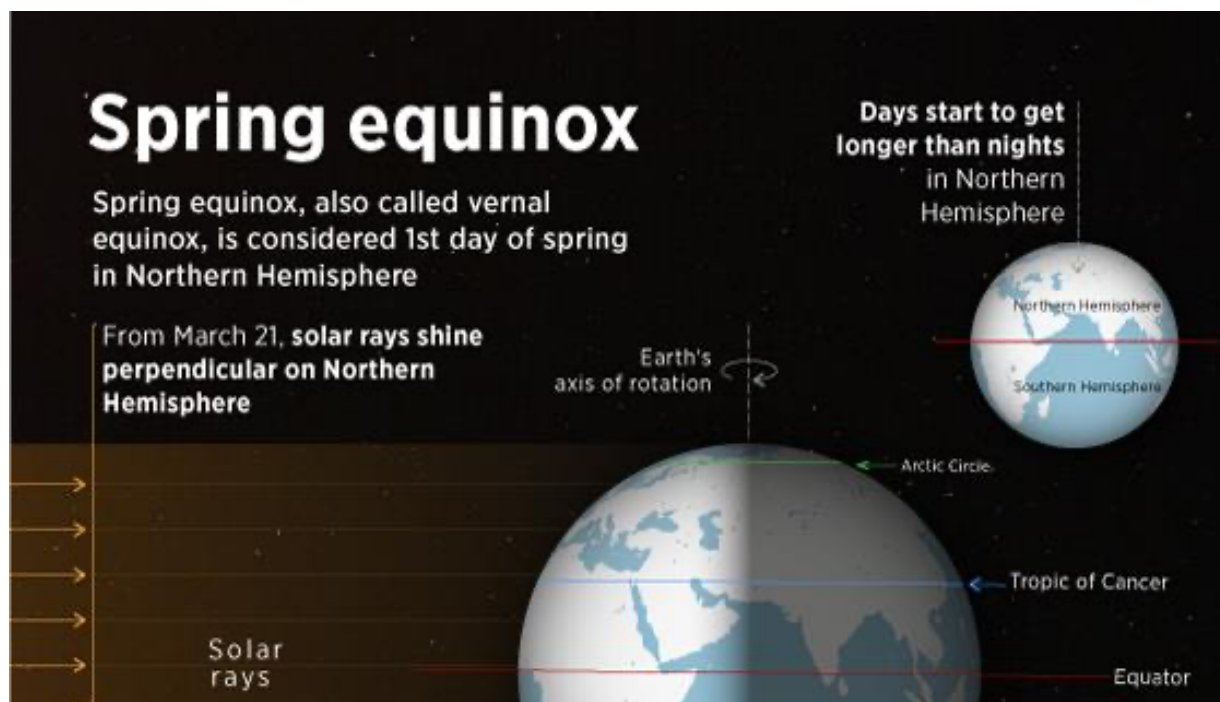
Music Notes for March 26

This Sunday, we will sing two beloved hymns for the fifth week of Lent. The opening hymn, *Breathe on Me, Breath of God*, was privately published in 1878 and publicly published eight years later. Theologian Edwin Hatch (1835-1885) wrote the text, which has been set to various tunes, the most famous being TRENTHAM, composed by Robert Jackson (1840-1914). He originally wrote the music for the hymn *O Perfect Life of Love*. Jackson named the hymn for the village Trentham in Staffordshire, England, which is close to the town where he was born.

The closing hymn is the *Hymn of Promise*, with both text and music by Natalie Sleeth (1930-1992). The native of Evanston, IL, wrote over 180 pieces for churches and schools, with many published by Choristers Guild and Hope Publishing. Sleeth wrote Hymn of Promise in early 1985, originally as a choral anthem before adapting it as a hymn. She said that, while she was writing the piece, she was ... pondering the death of a friend (life and death, death and resurrection), pondering winter and spring (seeming opposites), and a T. S. Eliot poem which had the phrase, 'In our end is our beginning.' (*Four Quartets*) These seemingly contradictory pairs led to the thesis of the song and the hopeful message that out of one will come the other whenever God chooses to bring that about."



Sleeth.



This Week in History.



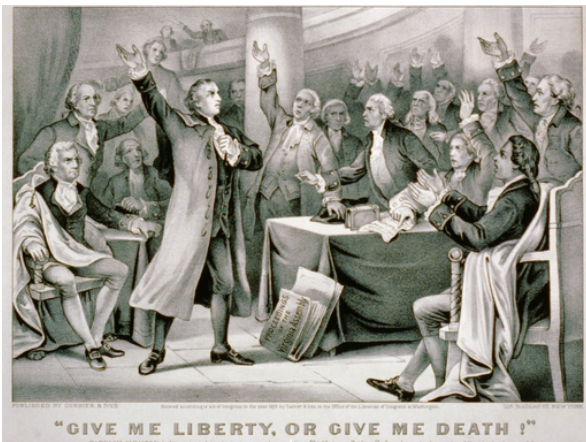
The United States launches its second attack against Iraq with aerial strikes against military sites, followed by an invasion of southern Iraq by U.S. and British ground troops. The troops made rapid progress northward and conquered the country's capital, Baghdad, just 21 days later, ending the rule of Saddam Hussein, and beginning an occupation that would last until 2011.

March 19, 2003



Organist and prolific composer Johann Sebastian Bach is born in Eisenach, Germany. His best known works include *The Brandenburg Concertos* for orchestra, *The Well-Tempered Clavier* for keyboard, the *St. John* and *St. Matthew Passions*, and the *Mass in B Minor*.

March 21, 1685



In an incendiary speech before the Second Virginia convention, Patrick Henry presents a proposal to organize volunteer companies of cavalry or infantry in every Virginia county for the Continental Army. His speech is said to have concluded with these words: "I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty, or give me death!"

March 23, 1775



The Tokyo subway system is attacked by members of the doomsday cult *Aum Shinrikyo* during rush hour. In five coordinated attacks, they released Sarin gas on three lines of the Tokyo Metro, killing 13, severely injuring 50 (some of whom later died), and causing temporary vision problems for nearly 1,000 others.

March 20, 1995



Patrick Sean Pettit is born in Pittsburgh, PA. Due on March 17, his maternal grandfather threatened to quit speaking to his daughter if she named her son 'Patrick'; instead, that son waited 5 days to come into the world.

March 22, 1963



President Franklin D. Roosevelt signs into law the Tydings-McDuffie Act, providing for Philippine independence after a 10-year transitional period of Commonwealth government. The Philippine Islands would celebrate their independence on July 4, 1946.

March 24, 1934