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IWU to Celebrate Legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. with Speakers, Events

Jan. 11, 2023

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. — Illinois Wesleyan University will honor the legacy of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. with a series of events beginning Monday, Jan. 16.

While there are no classes on Jan. 16, the campus will remain open as faculty, staff and students have the opportunity to participate in several events and workshops for a day of education, celebration and reflection.

“This year, the Intercultural Fluency Committee set out to include works of the campus community, as well as outside the campus community. The goal was to align the

University’s intellectual theme, which led to the theme of MLK week; ‘The Power of Our Place.’ We desire for faculty, staff and students to understand the power in which they process as individuals and how it can consistently connect to equality and equity,” said Prince Robertson, dean of students for inclusion and advocacy.

At 5 p.m., the 33rd Annual Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. National Holiday Gospel Festival will return with an in-person celebration in Westbrook Auditorium of Presser Hall. This event is open to the public. The festival was founded in 1991 by the late Corine Sims and her husband, the Rev. James Sims, with Illinois Wesleyan and the United Community Gospel Singers as co-founders. The festival was presented virtually in 2021 and 2022.

On Wednesday, Jan. 18 at 11 a.m. in Hansen Student Center, the campus community will hear from guest speaker Menah Pratt-Clarke, vice president of strategic affairs and diversity and full professor of education at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State

University. Pratt-Clarke will give an address with the theme, “Filling Places and Spaces with Our Voices.” This event is open to the public.

Pratt-Clarke is a founding member of the Pratt Music Foundation, which provides scholarships for lessons at Illinois Wesleyan University’s Music Preparatory Program. Her mother, Mildred Pratt, was one of the founders and champions of the Bloomington-Normal Black History Project.

The week’s events are sponsored by Illinois Wesleyan’s Intercultural Fluency Committee, the Dean of Students Office, Office of the President, Office of the Provost and the Office of Diversity and Inclusion.

By Julia Perez



Performers sing during the 2020 Annual Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. National Holiday Gospel Festival.



Menah Pratt-Clarke, vice president of strategic affairs and diversity and full professor of education at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, will be a guest speaker during the week of celebration and education.