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Media Contacts:

Dan Curran for UM Global Ministries - 770-658-9586 (cell) - DanCurran@CurranPR.com

Marcy Heinz of UMC GBGM – 404-274-0072 (cell) - MHeinz@umcmmission.org

## **MEDIA ADVISORY**

### **Sacred Native American Lands to be Returned to Wyandotte Nation by United Methodists**

#### ***Entrusted to United Methodist Missionary Agency 176 Years Ago, Rare Occurrence of Sacred Land & Spaces being Returned to Nation Slated to Take Place at September 2019 Ceremony***

**Atlanta, Ga. (August 2019)** – Seeking to return sacred lands they have held in trust for 176 years, leaders of The United Methodist Church and the Wyandotte Nation will hold a ceremony this September during which lands held by the agency will be formally returned to the Wyandotte Nation of Oklahoma. A rare occurrence in United States history, the event will include local dignitaries and leaders of Wyandotte Nation of Oklahoma and the Wyandot Nation of Kansas.

In 1843, the Wyandotte tribe deeded the land to the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, forerunner of today's United Methodist Global Ministries, in order to protect its sanctity when the federal government forced the tribe off their last reservation in the state of Ohio.

"It will be a historic day for the Wyandotte Nation," said Chief Billy Friend of the Wyandotte Nation of Oklahoma. "One hundred seventy-six years ago we left the mission church in the Methodists' hands to take care of it for us until we came back. That time has come.

"We have a deep appreciation for the local community and the Records and History Committee of the John Stewart United Methodist Church that have taken care of this church for so long," continued Friend. "Now we look forward to working together with these people in preserving and maintaining this historic landmark."

"For over 200 years, the people called Methodists have had a unique bond with members of the Wyandotte tribes," said Thomas Kemper, general secretary (chief executive) of United Methodist Global Ministries, the worldwide mission agency of the denomination. "John Stewart, our first-ever missionary, launched a historic friendship with them in 1816. Since 1843, we have served as stewards of this sacred land and these historic spaces. Now, it is time to return these lands to the Wyandotte people so they can continue the generations-long tradition of honoring our collective heritage."

**Who:** Speakers scheduled to appear include:

- Chief Billy Friend, Wyandotte Nation of Oklahoma
- Chief Janith English, Wyandot Nation of Kansas
- Grand Chief Ted Roll, head of the Wyandotte of Anderdon Nation (Michigan)
- Bishop Gregory V. Palmer, West Ohio Annual Conference, The United Methodist Church
- Bishop Tracy S. Malone, East Ohio Annual Conference, The United Methodist Church
- Bishop Hee-Soo Jung, Board president, Global Ministries, The United Methodist Church
- Thomas Kemper, General Secretary, Global Ministries, The United Methodist Church
- Fred Day, General Secretary, General Commission on Archives and History, The United Methodist Church

- Mayor Scott D. Washburn, Upper Sandusky, Ohio

**What:** “A Remembrance of Our Shared History: The Wyandotte/Wyandot and the People Called Methodists.” The return of sacred lands and spaces.

**When:** Saturday, September 21, 2019 at 1 p.m.  
Procession to burial grounds and mission church to follow.

**Where:** John Stewart United Methodist Church, 130 W Johnson Street, Upper Sandusky, Ohio 43351

**Why:**

- The return of lands to Native Americans is a rare occurrence.
- The Wyandot Indian Mission is one of 49 United Methodist Heritage Landmarks, the most sacred places in global United Methodism.
- John Stewart, the first U.S. Methodist missionary, is credited with launching a historic friendship with members of the Wyandotte peoples in 1819. He established the Wyandot Indian Mission, located in Upper Sandusky, Ohio. Stewart’s work and example inspired the formation of the Methodist Missionary Society in 1820, the forerunner to today’s General Board of Global Ministries.
- The return of the land coincides with Methodism’s bicentennial of mission, recognizing in 2019 the 200th anniversary of the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church now known as Global Ministries.

Event information is available at [umcmmission.org/return](http://umcmmission.org/return).

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### **About the Global Ministries of The United Methodist Church**

Global Ministries is the worldwide mission agency of The United Methodist Church. Founded in 1819, Global Ministries today supports more than 300 missionaries in 60 countries, including the United States. It has personnel, projects and partners in a total of 136 countries. Learn more about Global Ministries by visiting [www.umcmmission.org](http://www.umcmmission.org) or follow [www.facebook.com/GlobalMinistries](https://www.facebook.com/GlobalMinistries) and [www.Twitter.com/UMCMission](https://www.Twitter.com/UMCMission).