



*Sister City Association of Bloomington-Normal*

Vladimir  
Canterbury

# Communicator



It is a pleasure and an honor to return as President of the Vladimir Canterbury Sister City Association of Bloomington-Normal. I look forward to ensuring that our three cities retain the close ties we have come to expect despite the present challenging political situation. We believe that the friendships that unite us are stronger than the politics and war that separate us. Ricki Garret, President and CEO of Sister Cities International, wrote that “In a time of increased conflict and political discord, it is even more important to build bridges across the world through friendships and collaborations between our country and others.” If you have ideas for how you would like to be involved in promoting friendships and collaborations, I would love to hear from you.

Together we are a stronger and more effective organization. Your help is especially needed to help with our sister city gardens, special events, hosting, and computer needs. I hope that you continue to support our efforts to build bridges across the world by renewing your membership in the Vladimir Canterbury Sister City Association of

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Bloomington-Normal. See the membership tear-off form below. Your membership dues are vital to all we do.

In late April, we will welcome Professor George Conyne as our guest in Bloomington-Normal. Prof. Conyne will be our featured speaker at the William L White International Forum which will take place on May 5 with a celebratory dinner at Bloomington Country Club. See below for your invitation and for more information about Bill White and George Conyne.

There will be other opportunities to meet and chat with George Conyne while he is here. Perhaps you'd like to join Professor Conyne and others on a sightseeing trip to Springfield or get together for an informal lunch or dinner or a tour of Bloomington-Normal.

During the pandemic, Margaret Ann Hayden started a series of Zoom lectures for our 3-way partnership with Canterbury and Vladimir. I am pleased to continue the series with Zoom Lectures that I hope you will find interesting. See details later in this newsletter.

I look forward to reconnecting with you at the William L. White Forum and please send me an email at [elainec@umich.edu](mailto:elainec@umich.edu) if you would like to discuss any other items.

## DR. WILLIAM L. WHITE



Dr. William Luther White, shown above, was the Illinois Wesleyan University chaplain. During the University's January Short Term in 1970 he led a group of students to the Soviet Union.

Because of his concern about the mutual ignorance and hostility between the United States and the USSR, he led several more groups of students and community members to that country and made presentations to church and community groups. His support for international co-operation was evident in his board leadership roles for the McLean County Association for the United Nations, and his service on the local board for Vietnamese Resettlement.

Dr. White became actively involved with two national organizations that were attempting to promote better relationships between the USA and the USSR. He served on the advisory board, and as a board trustee, for the Citizen Exchange Council in New York City.

He was on the executive committee of C.A.R.E.E., Christians Associated for Relationships with Eastern Europe, and served several terms as their secretary and editor of their newsletter. At Illinois Wesleyan University, Dr. White began to incorporate his Russian experiences into some course offerings. As the University moved toward considering a minor in Russo-Soviet Studies, he was asked to serve as convener for the faculty's initial Russo-Soviet Studies Team.

In 1988 when a community group, led by Dr. Joseph L. Grabill, wanted to establish a sister city relationship in the Soviet Union, they turned to Dr. White's expertise to organize and lead this search. He led a group of twenty-two Bloomington-Normal citizens as they met with officials in Orel, Chernigov and Vladimir to explore a sister city relationship. That trip resulted in the selection of Vladimir and its status as an official Sister City of Bloomington Normal. Dr. White helped launch the Association's newsletter in January 1989 and, through the years, served on many of its committees.

In 2005, as Program chairperson, Dr. White initiated the Fall Forum. These Forums included speakers, panel discussions, and even a Russian movie on adoption followed by local families sharing their adoption experiences. In 2017 following his death and to honor his legacy, the Association renamed the Fall Forum as the William L. White International Forum. The Covid-19 pandemic put all Forum presentations on hold.

Given Dr. White's early participation on the board of the McLean County Association for the United Nations, he would be pleased to know that in May 2024 the Forum will be renewed, with historian George Conyne, presenting a program on Adlai Stevenson, a former US Ambassador to the United Nations.

## George Conyne - William L.White Forum Speaker

George Conyne was born, raised and attended the public schools of Bucks County, Pennsylvania. He earned his undergraduate degree in History with English literature and the History of Religion minors at Haverford College in 1979 and his law degree at Tulane University in 1982. He went to England and earned a Ph.D. at Cambridge in 1989. Since then he has taught American History, American Studies and British history in English universities, principally at the University of Kent in Canterbury. He retired in 2018 and has been active on the Committee that oversees the sister city ties that Canterbury has with Bloomington-Normal and Vladimir. Dr. Conyne will be talking about Adlai Stevenson's World View at the William L. White Forum on May 5th at Bloomington Country Club.

### **Sister City Gardens**

The Vladimir Sister City garden is starting to flourish as we head further into spring. The garden is located behind the berm off Vernon Ave at the Constitution Trail entrance off Angela Drive. At the present time blue Siberian Squill and Daffodils are blooming with other flowers waiting their turn. Bob Hathway and Orly Edge recently did some spring garden prep by pruning the Russian type Linden tree and harvesting tall Switchgrass that provided some beauty over the winter.

While visiting the Russian Garden, walk along the Trail about 65 yds. to the East where you will see the new Canterbury Garden and the sign which shows the location of three English native type trees: English Oak, Horse Chestnut, and Copper Beech.

There is need for additional workers to do garden work, especially in the summer. Please contact Orlyn Edge ([edge@ilstu.edu](mailto:edge@ilstu.edu)) if you are interested in maintaining the garden.

## Host Family Solicitation

The VCSCA is seeking a host family for a high school foreign exchange student. Since we are unable to host a student from Russia, we would like to sponsor a student from another European country. The student would be sponsored by the State Department through a program called FLEX (Future Leaders Exchange). The State Department handles background checks, testing, insurance, and funding. This is a very competitive merit-based scholarship program, and the students are required to have a high level of English. The family is able to choose the country and sex of the student.

The program is for the 2024- 25 school year. Normal Community is unable to accept more foreign exchange students, but Normal West and Bloomington still have openings. If you are interested, please contact Carol Kerestes at [cdkeres@ilstu.edu](mailto:cdkeres@ilstu.edu).

## 2024 Sister City Zoom Lecture Series

*Canterbury Through the Eyes of Olga Zolotova* presented by Irina Lapshina

*Adlai Stevenson - the USSR, the UK and the USA 1945-1965* presented by George Conyne

*Evergreen Cemetery Walk: burial customs, cemetery history, and architecture* presented by Candace Summers of the McLean County Museum of History

*Florence Price: Her life and music* presented by Jake Woollen, Illinois Symphony Orchestra Associate Conductor and Conductor of the Illinois Symphony Youth Orchestra.

VCSCA has a new website!

Stay in the know at:

**www.vcsistercitybn.org**

and follow us on Facebook at:  
**@vcsistercitybn**

**FACEBOOK Link:**

<https://www.facebook.com/vcsistercitybn>

#### MEMBERSHIP FORM

Is Your Membership Up to Date? If you have not sent in your 2023 membership, please use the form below.

#### MEMBERSHIP LEVELS:

CHAUCER LEVEL / STUDENT	\$15 - 39
TOLSTOY LEVEL / FRIEND	\$40 - 99
SHAKESPEARE LEVEL / PATRON	\$100 - 199
CHEKOV LEVEL / BENEFACTOR	\$200 - 499
BOLSHOI LEVEL / CORPORATE	\$500 - 999
GOLDEN RING / LIFE MEMBER	\$1000

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY/STATE/ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

Return completed form with check payable to:

Vladimir/Canterbury Association  
P. O. Box 1262  
Bloomington, IL 61702



#### Please Join Us for the **William White International Forum**

Sponsored by the Vladimir Canterbury Sister City Association

May 5 Sunday 5:30 pm, Bloomington Country Club

Speaker George Conyne from the Three Towns Association, Canterbury, UK

Topic: *Adlai Stevenson & His World View*

3 Course dinner with choice of chicken or salmon entrée

No charge to members/non members \$53.20

Reservations to Carol Benson by April 25th

Email: [benson@ilstu.edu](mailto:benson@ilstu.edu) or text: 309.287.0527