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**Public is invited to Dr. Bernice Johnson Reagon lectures, UMM choral performance**

*Summary:*

(April 19, 2005)-The University of Minnesota, Morris extends an invitation to area residents to attend two public lectures by renowned historian, scholar and composer Dr. Bernice Johnson Reagon.

Dr. Reagon will join UMM April 26-May 3 as the inaugural holder of UMM's first Distinguished Visiting Professorship in the Liberal Arts.

The first lecture, "I Decided to Stand": Selected Notes from the 40 Year Journal of a Freedom Singer," will be given at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, April 26, in the Black Box Theatre of Humanities Fine Arts on the Morris campus. Dr. Reagon will construct a journey using song fragments to share her experiences and lessons from 40 years of activism beginning with the Civil Rights Movement. The lecture will be followed by a reception in the HFA Gallery.

A second lecture, "Lessons in Living: The African American Spiritual Tradition," will be given at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, April 28, at the First Lutheran Church, Morris. Dr. Reagon will look at that body of song and singing repertoire called spirituals created by African Americans when they were slaves as a way to understand surviving, resisting and moving beyond American slavery.

In addition, Dr. Reagon will be the guest conductor during a performance by UMM's combined choirs, under the direction of Dr. Kenneth Hodgson. The performance, which will feature Dr. Reagon's compositions, will be held at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, May 3, at Assumption Church, Morris.

Dr. Reagon, a professor emerita of American University and curator emerita of the Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of American History, is also a composer and song leader in the 19th century Southwest Georgia choral tradition. She founded the Grammy award-winning African American female a cappella ensemble Sweet Honey In the Rock in 1973.

There is no charge to attend either of the public lectures or the choral performance.

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