

Learning from other faiths can offer eternal benefits

BY NANCY SUNDSTROM
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Many wars and political conflicts have been initiated in the name of religion, which is why learning about different faiths other than our own has been viewed as a way to build understanding and unity. But there are other reasons, including personal ones, for people to seek information about other religions.

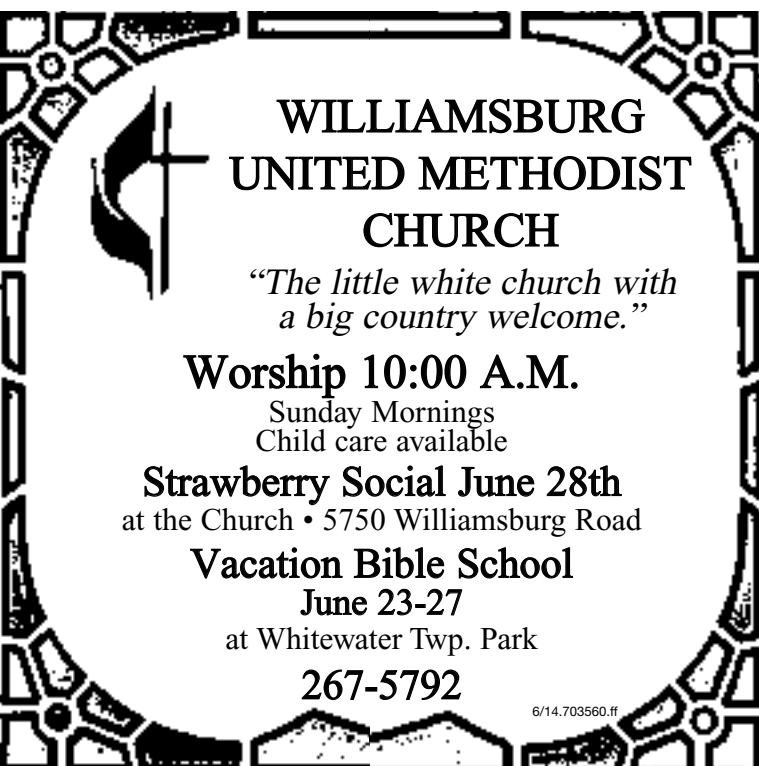
David Terrell, professor of Humanities at Northwestern Michigan College in Traverse City has taught classes in world religions for more than 30 years. He says that most of his students have pursued the subject because of a genuine desire to enhance their spiritual development. "There are very significant differences in the major world religions," said Terrell. "And there certainly is the element

of academic interest, but I think I've been fortunate in seeing many people who come seeking and searching beyond the world of secular materialism, which makes learning very much a personal quest." Terrell recalls one example of that from early in his teaching career, when a man enrolled in one of his world religion classes. A while later, after the student displayed prowess with Latin, he

revealed that he was a Catholic priest from St. Francis in Traverse City. "When I learned he was a priest, I was naturally quite curious about why he'd taken the class," said Terrell. "There were several reasons why, but I believe he realized that the study of others, and in this case the study of other religions, can help a person in the way that they function and enhance their own religious

beliefs. "Buddhism, for example, has subtle, sophisticated philosophies and you can use those instructions anywhere. Judaism has a wonderful sense of a what it takes to be a full human being. I don't think there's a religion I know about where there isn't a lesson of some benefit that can be learned." Reverend Robert Zagore, the Senior Pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in Traverse City, grew up in a Roman Catholic family and became a Lutheran in college. It was there that he had his first experience with the formal and informal study of other religions.

Zagore said that like many other young adults, he was searching for answers at that time about different religious groups and sought to understand their doctrines. Along the way, he had conversations with ministers, priests, a rabbi and other religious officials. He started with the belief that there really is a God, and began asking the question "How do you know you're worshipping the true God?" After two years of that search, he became a Lutheran. "In my case, the first motivation is that I didn't want to



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