



The Memorial Ministry for Indigent Persons commemorates the lives of indigent babies, children and adults who are buried each year in mass graves in Cook County, Illinois. The Ministry's Mission Statement reads, in part...

*"...to provide awareness and education to the general public regarding individuals who have been buried in a potter's field and to commemorate these lives through a worship celebration that gives glory to God as Creator and recognition to the sacredness of all human life."*

W. EARL LEWIS, the Ministry's founder, was a doorman working in Chicago in 1981 when he learned about the mass burials. Inspired by the need to raise public awareness of this situation, Mr. Lewis labored from 1984 to 1986 to set up a network to establish an Annual Interfaith Memorial Service for the indigent, giving the community an opportunity to act as a "surrogate family" to those who died poor and without any family or friends to claim their bodies or mark their passing.

Working with the Cook County's Coroner's Office and the United Methodist Church at the Chicago Temple, the Memorial Observance was launched on May 1, 1986. Within a short time memorial observances in Waukegan and New York followed. Over the years, there have been observances at churches and chapels around Cook County, paying tribute to the lives of approximately 7,000 babies, children and adults, many of whom were buried with their identity known only to God.