**A** **HOUSE RESOLUTION**

TO RECOGNIZE AND HONOR OLD LEXINGTON BAPTIST CHURCH FOR A MEANINGFUL IMPACT ON ITS COMMUNITY AND TO CONGRATULATE THE CONGREGATION UPON THE CELEBRATION OF ITS TWO HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY.

Whereas, the members of the House of Representatives of the State of South Carolina are pleased to learn that Old Lexington Baptist Church began its bicentennial celebration on Sunday, March 17, 2013, launching a yearlong commemoration of the contributions of this small, but durable, congregation; and

Whereas, over 200 years ago in the northwestern corner of what would become Lexington County, many German, Swiss, and Scots‑Irish pioneers settled near the Saluda River. They initially worshiped under a leafy brush arbor, an outdoor shelter of brushwood used in religious meetings, especially in the South; and

Whereas, through the 18th century, the services grew into summer camp meetings until a country outpost was created, nestling among the waterways and hills of the Midlands; and

Whereas, the congregation, recognized today as the oldest Baptist congregation in Lexington County, organized on March 20, 1813, and worshiped in a modest log cabin on the Saluda River until a one‑room white frame church was constructed in 1852; and

Whereas, that white‑frame church with no reredos served as a canopy for worship until 1953, yet the corner reserved for slaves still bears the marks on the wide‑plank wooden floor where slaves sat and worshiped. The last former slave to worship at Old Lexington held her membership there until her death in 1912; and

Whereas, after emancipation, Daniel Drafts, a local Lutheran, donated an acre of land so freed slaves could establish their own place of worship, and St. Mark’s Missionary Baptist Church was formed, which continues today to join with Old Lexington annually in the community‑wide Thanksgiving service; and

Whereas, unable for many years to afford a pastor, the congregation held services twice a month in the afternoon and Sunday School classes in each corner of the old one‑room frame church, and when no Baptist minister was available, Lutheran and Methodist ministers would supply the pulpit, or the congregation would join them at their churches; and

Whereas, the red‑brick cruciform sanctuary now serving the congregation of Old Lexington Baptist Church was built in 1953 on land donated by the Langford family on Batesburg‑Leesville’s Old Lexington Road and was renovated in 2012 with the addition of a steeple; and

Whereas, the church has worshiped in diverse sanctuaries, with sundry ministers, and under the banner of various titles: Saluda Baptist, Lexington Baptist, Saluda‑Lexington Baptist, and lastly assuming Old Lexington, in recognition of its heritage; and

Whereas, Old Lexington is vital within its denomination, sending a large portion of its 2011 undesignated offerings to the state and national Baptist convention for missions, and actively involved within the community through prison ministries and outreach to families in crisis through the Christian Ministry Center in Batesburg‑Leesville; and

Whereas, founded during the War of 1812, the congregation has emerged strong during the national trials of slavery and the Civil War, the Great Depression and the World Wars, and the South Carolina House of Representatives is grateful for the legacy and significant contribution of Old Lexington Baptist Church. Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the House of Representatives:

That the members of the House of Representatives of the State of South Carolina, by this resolution, recognize and honor Old Lexington Baptist Church for a meaningful impact on its community and congratulate the congregation upon the celebration of its two hundredth anniversary.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be provided to Reverend John H. McKeown, pastor of Old Lexington Baptist Church.

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