**A** **SENATE RESOLUTION**

TO RECOGNIZE AND CONGRATULATE FLAT ROCK AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL (AME) CHURCH OF ABBEVILLE ON THE OCCASION OF ITS HISTORIC ONE HUNDRED FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY AND TO COMMEND THE CHURCH FOR A CENTURY AND A HALF OF SERVICE TO GOD AND THE COMMUNITY.

Whereas, having been organized in 1866, Flat Rock African Methodist Episcopal Church is commemorating its historic one hundred fiftieth anniversary with a special celebratory service on Sunday, April 24, 2016; and

Whereas, the story of Flat Rock AME Church begins in the Civil War era shortly after the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation. The congregation’s first place of worship was a brush harbor on land donated by friends within the community; and

Whereas, the church received its name from a flat rock located about a mile from Penny’s Creek. The congregation underwent some adjustments in 1883 that resulted in the establishment of Rocky River AME Church about ten miles from Flat Rock. In addition, some of the founders of nearby Mt. Clement CME Church were originally members of Flat Rock; and

Whereas, led by the Reverend T.C. Devlin, pastor, the church laid the cornerstone for its first structure on September 5, 1885. This edifice, a rectangular wood frame with a belfry and balcony on both sides, was built at the intersection of two county roads and had seventeen rectangular windows with an arch at the top, a seating capacity of about five hundred, and a membership of approximately four hundred. The members worshipped in this sanctuary from 1876 to 1906. Along the way, the congregation, with the support of the community, was able to establish Flat Rock School; and

Whereas, in 1906, under the leadership of Reverend J.I. Reynolds, pastor, and Reverend T.F. Harper, presiding elder, the church built a second structure. Difficult years resulting from the Great Depression faced the church, with struggles common to people of color, yet the church was able to flourish and minister to the needs of God’s people using both buildings until 1972, when the church decided to build a new sanctuary. During this era, Flat Rock was building a rich history in producing many who were called to bring souls to Christ through the preaching of the Word of God; and

Whereas, on December 12, 2001, Flat Rock AME came under the leadership of Reverend Wayman Coleman III, who led the church in the adoption of a mission statement: “The mission of Flat Rock African Methodist Episcopal Church is to grow in membership, care for each member, develop Christian leadership, and give assistance to the community as we are blessed.” Since that time, the church school has blossomed to the glory of God, Bible studies have been held at the church and at the Anderson County Library, a Christian education director has been appointed, and many other signs of the Lord’s blessing have been evidenced; and

Whereas, on June 4, 2006, Flat Rock AME, celebrating with joy the completion of the remodeling and expansion of its sanctuary, held its first service in the new structure. The congregation gave praise and thanks to the God of their salvation through faith in Jesus Christ for His favor during the building process; and

Whereas, Flat Rock AME Church has been a beacon of light and a community worship center in the Abbeville area for one hundred fifty years, and, God willing, will continue its godly heritage for many more years of worship and service. Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the Senate:

That the members of the South Carolina Senate, by this resolution, recognize and congratulate Flat Rock African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church of Abbeville on the occasion of its historic one hundred fiftieth anniversary and commend the church for a century and a half of service to God and the community.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be presented to Flat Rock AME Church.

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