**A** **CONCURRENT RESOLUTION**

TO EXPRESS THE PROFOUND SORROW OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA GENERAL ASSEMBLY UPON THE PASSING OF DR. ROBERT WRIGHT SPEARS, PRESIDENT EMERITUS OF COLUMBIA COLLEGE, AND TO EXTEND DEEP SYMPATHY TO HIS LOVING FAMILY AND HIS MANY FRIENDS.

Whereas, the members of the South Carolina General Assembly were saddened to learn of the death of Columbia College’s twelfth president, Dr. R. Wright Spears, at the age of one hundred two on February 10, 2015; and

Whereas, born in Clio on October 20, 1912, he was the son of the late Charles Otho and Mary Jane Wright Spears. He was reared in this small town in Marlboro County and graduated from Wofford College, a member of the prestigious Phi Beta Kappa, in 1933, but was licensed to preach by the United Methodist Church in 1930; and

Whereas, Wright Spears married his beloved wife, Mary Blue Smith Spears, on December 24, 1935, and they were devoted to one another until her death in 1993. Together they reared two fine daughters, Mary Ann Brockwell and Nancy Lynn Rowden, who blessed their parents with five loving grandchildren, twelve great‑grandchildren, and one great‑great‑grandchild; and

Whereas, Reverend Spears earned a Bachelor of Divinity from Duke Divinity School in 1936, and was admitted into the South Carolina Conference in full connection in 1937, and ordained an elder in 1939. He served in a number of rural United Methodist parishes until 1951, where he encountered rising racial tension that caused his concern for social justice to become increasingly more focused and shaped him as a lifelong advocate for individual and civil rights; and

Whereas, under Dr. Spears’ guidance from 1951 to 1977, Columbia College achieved a racially diverse student body with grace and peace at a time when other institutions experienced turmoil; and

Whereas, when he took the helm, Columbia College had only one hundred fifty students on a seven‑acre campus with three buildings, coupled with critical financial issues and an inadequate endowment. Two years later, student enrollment had more than doubled, and two new dormitories had been built; and

Whereas, he led the school community through the tragic loss of every building in a 1964 fire, helped to rebuild the college after the fire, strengthened the institution financially, energized the alumnae network, and enhanced the academic experience; and

Whereas, deeply committed to his community, he served as president of the South Carolina Christian Action Council and as a board member of the South Carolina Department of Social Services; and

Whereas, he authored two books, *Journey Toward Unity: The Christian Action Council 1933‑1983*, and his autobiography, *One in the Spirit: Ministry for Change in South Carolina*; and

Whereas, Dr. Spears was awarded honorary doctorate degrees from Wofford College, Columbia College, and Baker University of Baldwin City, Kansas. In 2004, he received Columbia College’s highest honor, the Sesquicentennial Medallion; and

Whereas, the Spears retired to Lake Junaluska in 1977, where Dr. Spears remained active in the church and community, and at the age of ninety‑five, he helped found Lake Junaluska Peace Conference, a global gathering of scholarly spiritual leaders; and

Whereas, the members of the South Carolina General Assembly are grateful for the life and legacy of Palmetto son Wright Spears and for the example of sacrifice and kindness he set for all who knew him. Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the House of Representatives, the Senate concurring:

That the South Carolina General Assembly, by this resolution, expresses its profound sorrow upon the passing of Dr. Robert Wright Spears, president emeritus of Columbia College, and extend deep sympathy to his loving family and his many friends.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be presented to the family of Dr. Robert Wright Spears.

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