**A** **HOUSE RESOLUTION**

TO RECOGNIZE AND CONGRATULATE ST. JOHN AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL (AME) CHURCH OF RIDGELAND 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 founded on September 19, 1865, St. John African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church is commemorating its historic one hundred fiftieth anniversary with a special celebratory service on Sunday, September 20, 2015, as well as with other events throughout its anniversary year, including a banquet, homecoming, and Gospel concert; and

Whereas, the story of St. John AME Church begins in the Civil War era. After the Emancipation Proclamation was issued, many white families, abandoning their lands and homes, moved away from the Ridgeland area and sought employment in places north; and

Whereas, the Freedom Bureau of the United States War Department was established to care for the large number of freed Negroes. The bureau established schools and hospitals and was authorized to assign forty acres from abandoned lands to each Negro male. However, it made no provision for the religious training of blacks. Mrs. Mitchell Heape noticed this, and she presented the church building and lot to former slaves. The leaders of the church became Methodist, and thus was born St. John AME; and

Whereas, to ensure that everything was legal, on September 19, 1874, the congregation purchased the lot and building from Mrs. Francis Owens, a member of the Heape family, for thirty‑eight dollars; and

Whereas, the first building, destroyed by fire in 1904, was rebuilt under the ministry of the Reverend C.M. Boyd. That building was destroyed in the late 1950s by Hurricane Gracie, and services were held in the Ellis Community School until the present building was erected; and

Whereas, although no record of the church’s earliest ministers survives, the first trustees are known to have been Peter Wright, Henry Polite, Isaac Hooks, Peter Thomas, Alfred Wright, Joshua Young, Arthur Givens, and Tony Cordray. Some of St. John AME’s former ministers are S.E. Greathart, C.M. Boyd, S.E. Bennett, A.L. Brown, J.H. Nero, C.W. Gillianson, Jr., R. Johnson, S.B. Burgess, P.J. Hammitt, St. Julian Heyward, S.L. Green, Marshall B. Randall, Willie E. Smith, Richard Williams, A.F. Woodbury, Ernest Smalls, John Paul Brown, J.O. Johnson, Jerry Williams, Harry Burns, Robert White, Martinez J. Masterson, and Jack Lewis, Jr. Some of the church’s former associate ministers are Casey Brown, Thomas McClary, Ruby Brown, Clementa C. Pinckney, and Vara Burns. The Reverend Gregory M. Kinsey serves as St. John AME’s current pastor; and

Whereas, St. John AME Church has been a beacon of light and a community worship center in the Ridgeland 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 House of Representatives:

That the members of the South Carolina House of Representatives, by this resolution, recognize and congratulate St. John African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church of Ridgeland 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 provided to St. John AME Church.

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