**A** **HOUSE RESOLUTION**

TO RECOGNIZE AND HONOR SPRINGFIELD BAPTIST CHURCH, AND TO CONGRATULATE THE PASTOR AND CONGREGATION UPON THE OCCASION OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF MINISTRY TO THEIR COMMUNITY AND THEIR GOD.

Whereas, the South Carolina House of Representatives is pleased to learn that Springfield Baptist Church of Greenville County will celebrate its sesquicentennial anniversary on the weekend of July 14-16, 2017; and

Whereas, during the mid 1800s, many issues, including slavery, were strongly disputed in America, which ultimately led to the conflagration of the Civil War between Northern and Southern states; and

Whereas, in the years prior to this war, Negroes in Greenville and many other Southern areas did not have a place to worship; and

Whereas, in July 1832, the white congregation of what is now First Baptist Church Greenville, a relatively new church itself and one that strongly believed in freedom of religion for all people, opened its doors to Negroes, welcoming them to sit in the gallery; and

Whereas, at the first conference of Dr. William D. Thomas, who became pastor of First Baptist in 1863, Dr. John A. Broadus noted the work of the colored members, and a committee of three white members was appointed to attend meetings of the group until further arrangements were made to accommodate State law requiring the presence of a white person at religious meetings of Negroes; and

Whereas, after attending these meetings and worship services, the observing committee reported that the colored members displayed “a degree of zeal and earnestness in attending their public religious exercises” that deserved the conscientious nurture of First Baptist Church; and

Whereas, on April 21, 1867, in a First Baptist Church meeting, the moderator, Dr. James P. Boyce, announced that the colored members had held a meeting “preparatory to organization of a new church,” and a letter was submitted on their behalf with the signatures of sixty-five colored members of First Baptist Greenville, stating they believed they could be more widely and effectively useful if they organized into a separate and independent church; and

Whereas, the signatories requested that they be released from the role of First Baptist Church and expressed a “desire to keep…continued confidence in those with whom [they had] so long united in Church fellowship and in…affection for them.” They asked to use the church basement on Friday nights and to continue receiving counsel from First Baptist as previously enjoyed; and

Whereas, a resolution was passed by First Baptist that assured the colored people of the desire to continue Christian affection and confidence and to offer continued counsel, sympathy, and assistance, as well as the prayer that God would guide them in their undertaking. A second resolution granted them use of the basement and requested that they continue to occupy seats in the gallery until they secured their building; and

Whereas, the few Negroes who continued affiliation with First Baptist at that time, soon afterward asked for letters of dismissal, which were also granted. The resigning members formed Springfield Baptist Church, now recognized as the oldest historically black Baptist church in downtown Greenville; and

Whereas, from that time until the first church building was constructed in 1870, Springfield Baptist Church held its worship services in the white Greenville Baptist Church; and

Whereas, the South Carolina House of Representatives values the one hundred fifty years during which Springfield Baptist has ministered the Gospel to the community while encountering temporary setbacks, such as a major fire in 1972 that completely destroyed the church building, and triumphs during which the hand of God has pointed the way. 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 honor Springfield Baptist Church, and congratulate the pastor and congregation upon the occasion of the one hundred fiftieth anniversary of ministry to their community and their God.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be presented to Reverend Kippie C. Brown, senior pastor of Springfield Baptist Church.

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