**A** **HOUSE RESOLUTION**

TO RECOGNIZE AND CONGRATULATE BETHLEHEM UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF ST. MATTHEWS 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 in 1868, Bethlehem United Methodist Church will celebrate its one hundred fiftieth anniversary in 2018; and

Whereas, fulfilling a God‑given vision to establish a permanent place of worship in the Caw Caw region of Calhoun County, Mr. Prince S. Murph acquired the initial site of the church in 1868. The old building on the property served as the sanctuary and the first school for African Americans in the region; and

Whereas, due to the difficulties imposed upon African Americans in the time after the Civil War, black ministers were hard to find and had to travel a great distance to reach the church. The Elder appointed Bethlehem’s ministers from 1868 until 1891. There were periods of time when the church was without a pastor and the District Superintendent had to appoint a pastor on a Sunday‑by‑Sunday basis; and

Whereas, until 1977, the church was the only black Methodist Church in Calhoun County. Currently, it is still the only black United Methodist church recognized by the South Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church in Calhoun County; and

Whereas, the church has experienced tremendous growth through the years. Initially meeting in a small wood‑framed structure with a porch, a steeple, and bell tower, construction began on the current sanctuary in 1963, and an educational building and restroom facilities were added in 1976. In 1997, additions were made to the sanctuary to increase its capacity and make the church more accessible for the handicapped; and

Whereas, Bethlehem has been a mainstay in its community, fulfilling the spiritual needs of the surrounding area and encouraging young people to build quality lives and to increase their education; and

Whereas, to mark its milestone sesquicentennial anniversary, the church will set apart a special celebratory time during its worship services on October 14, 2018; and

Whereas, Bethlehem United Methodist Church has been a beacon of light and a community worship center in the St. Matthews area for one hundred fifty years, and 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 Bethlehem United Methodist Church of St. Matthews 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 Bethlehem United Methodist Church.

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