**A** **HOUSE RESOLUTION**

TO CONGRATULATE WESLEY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH ON CELEBRATING ITS HISTORIC ONE HUNDRED FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY AND TO COMMEND THE CHURCH’S PASTOR AND CONGREGATION FOR THEIR YEARS OF DEDICATED SERVICE TO THE COLUMBIA COMMUNITY.

Whereas, the members of the House of Representatives are pleased to learn that Wesley United Methodist Church celebrated the milestone of its one hundred fiftieth anniversary in September of 2019; and

Whereas, this historic house of worship was first organized in 1869 by the Reverend J.C. Emerson, fulfilling the dream of an African American congregation being formed on its own rather than as a part of an established white church. Initially named the Columbia Mission, meetings were held in a couple of buildings in downtown Columbia until 1873, when the first chapel was built; and

Whereas, by 1879, the Columbia Mission had changed its name to Wesley Methodist Episcopal Church and was meeting at its chapel on the northwest corner of Gervais and Sumter Streets, now the location of the South Carolina Supreme Court. In 1910, the congregation commissioned the construction of a new sanctuary at the corner of Barnwell and Gervais streets, designed by well‑known local architect Arthur W. Hamby; and

Whereas, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were a period of important self‑reflection for the Methodist Family as it struggled with issues of segregation and discrimination that caused the denominations to split several times. Through those difficult times, the Wesley church continued to open its doors and its heart to the people of the community who shared a dream of justice and equality. When the separated denominations reunited in 1939, the church was renamed Wesley Methodist Church; and

Whereas, over many decades, the church fostered the spiritual formation of generations, served as a source of help and hope for the hungry and needy, and provided a place of acceptance and inclusion for those who sought a safe haven. In the 1960s, it served as a training ground for civil rights activists and demonstrators; and

Whereas, in 1972, when the white and black Methodist conferences in South Carolina unified, the church was once again renamed, thereafter known as Wesley United Methodist Church. As the church continued to grow over the years, it expanded and adapted to serve the needs of its congregation, adding a nontraditional service, which served as a model for diversity and inclusion in the United Methodist Church for over a quarter of a century. The church also purchased land for parking, renovated the sanctuary, and added classrooms and fellowship space; and

Whereas, in 2008, an historical marker was erected by the Historic Columbia Foundation recognizing Wesley as the oldest African American Methodist congregation in Columbia; and

Whereas, in 2015, due to the historic flooding in Columbia, portions of the sanctuary collapsed, after which Main Street United Methodist Church opened its doors and heart to Wesley, and the congregations worshiped together for nearly three years, during which these churches formed a strong bond. Following much deliberation and planning, and by the grace of God, generous donations allowed for repairs. On September 23, 2018, the congregation returned to their beloved Wesley sanctuary; and

Whereas, on this sesquicentennial anniversary, the members of the congregation celebrated the history of Wesley United Methodist Church, and they continue to embrace the church’s focus on growing spiritually, living faithfully, and providing service to others. Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the House of Representatives:

That the members of the South Carolina House of Representatives, by this resolution, congratulate Wesley United Methodist Church on celebrating its historic one hundred fiftieth anniversary and commend the church’s pastor and congregation for their years of dedicated service to the Columbia community.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be presented to Reverend Tiffany Knowlin Boykin.

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