**A** **HOUSE RESOLUTION**

TO RECOGNIZE AND HONOR BETHANY BAPTIST CHURCH IN MCCORMICK COUNTY AND TO CONGRATULATE THE CONGREGATION FOR ONE HUNDRED FIFTY YEARS OF FAITHFUL MINISTRY IN THE CLARKS HILL COMMUNITY.

Whereas, the South Carolina House of Representatives is pleased to learn that Bethany Baptist Church, which began on December 5, 1869, when a group of recently freed slaves of Scott Ferry Community gathered to worship God, will celebrate its sesquicentennial anniversary in 2019; and

Whereas, few in number but united in their efforts and strengthened by their faith in God, they organized Bethany Baptist Church under the leadership of Reverend Gespzer, and from humble beginnings the church grew; and

Whereas, the original thirty‑four members were Brothers Edmond Gardenhire, Richard Kenner, John Fair, Lewis Crafton, Ruben Bussey, Henry Gardenhire, Harry Henderson, Abraham Merriweather, Archie Brown, Sylvester Marshall, James Brown, Jacob Garret, Archie Collier, Stranberry Brown, Adam Collier; and Sisters Prudence Collier, Lucinda Crafton, Aardie Collier, Lucy Scott, Letty Merriweather, Edith Farlow, Mary Collier, Hannah Beasley, Sarah Scott, Mary Gardenhire, Emily Crafton, Rosa Henderson, Ann Brown, Mariah Middleton, Matilda Garret, Emily Prescott, Carolina Kennet, Millie Collier, Sarah Gardenhire; and

Whereas, since its beginning in 1869, Bethany Baptist Church has ordained forty‑five deacons. The first to be recognized were Deacons Adam Collier; Stranberry Brown; Sylvester Marshall; F. Hammond; Hanniable Marshall; Wilson Walls; J. Middleton; Walter Nealous; Tom Middleton; Billy Scott; Richard Thompkins; Curry Scott; Isreal Reed; J. Bussey; Henry Abrams; Thomas Kenner, Jr.; Bose Gowdy; Thomas Abrams; Bettis Houston; Jim Smith; Lewis Price; James Thomas; L. W. Collier; Frank Collier; G. W. Callaham; Eddie Crafton; Lewis Gowdy; Lucious Bussey; and Lewis McKie; and

Whereas, under the leadership of Reverend H. B. Bady who retired in 1998, the following brethren were ordained as deacons of the church: Deacons Henry Williams; Tom Thomas; Adam Flono; Henry Flono; Robert Kenner; Johnny Price; Doris Houston; James Freeman; Lawrence Gowdy; Luther Prescott; Willie Nelson; David Gowdy, Sr.; Carl Houston; Thomas Freeman; Nick Boyd, Jr.; and Albert Houston; and

Whereas, since 1869, eleven ministers have lead Bethany Baptist Church in the task of spreading the Gospel of Jesus. Reverend Edmond Gardenhire became the pastor the day the church was organized, and served faithfully for thirty years. Reverend J. W. Jennings was then called and served the congregation for twenty years; and

Whereas, others who were called to serve the congregation included Reverends W. D. Merman who served for four years, S. A. Jennings who served six months, R. K. Boyd for three months, Gus Holmes for eight years, J. D. Williams, G. C. Williams for two years, H. B. Bady for forty years and ten months, Winston Oliphant for twelve years and ten months, and the current Pastor Russell Brisco; and

Whereas, the church prospered under the long leadership of Reverend Bady, during which many improvements were made to the facility and numerous ministries were begun. A well was drilled and an electric pump installed; a new lorry replaced the old one; four heaters were installed, which were later replaced by central heating and air conditioning; the church was underpinned and a new covering placed on the roof; three pianos were purchased; a room was added to the church, and the church was bricked in; a checking account and envelope system were established; new pulpit furniture was purchased; restrooms were installed; two buses and a van were purchased; three mercury‑vapor outdoor lights were installed; in the sanctuary, carpet was laid, a pastor’s study was added, new lights and a walkway and an emergency light were installed; the floor was refinished in the sanctuary; and a public address system was purchased; and

Whereas, the interior of the church was painted, and new windows, pews, and baptism pool were installed. The exterior was beautified with planted flowers, landscaping of the yard, and painting of the exterior. Other improvements included the building of a fellowship hall, the donation of land, new doors and a new roof on the sanctuary, vinyl siding on the church, and the purchase of a copy machine, a VCR, and a handicap ramp; and

Whereas, during that time a trustee board was established, the H. B. Bady Youth Choir was organized, and many souls were added to God’s Kingdom; and

Whereas, in its century and a half, the church has ordained the following eleven ministers: Reverends Edmond Gardenhire who served as the church’s first pastor, M. J. Jennings; Richard Kenner; Smith Crafton, L. G. Gardenhire, G. T. Kenner, Joe Bells, Lewis Price, J. C. Middleton, R. W. Kenner, and Adam Collier. Also Brothers Lewis McKie and Johnie Bussey were licensed to the ministry; and

Whereas, after the resignation of Reverend Bady, the church had meditated and prayed long before extending a call to Reverend Winston G. Oliphant, who accepted the call on March 31, 1999, and he resigned in 2011. Under his leadership Minister Debbie Nelson was the first women to give an initial trial sermon at Bethany Baptist Church in 2005. A male chorus, the Pastor Aid Committee, the Junior Usher Board, Family and Friends Day, and the Youth Department were organized. Thirty‑three people were baptized, eleven members were received by letter and one by Christian experience, one was restored, and four were dismissed by letter; and

Whereas, during this time many improvements were made. New heating and air condition units were installed in the sanctuary and annex building, along with handicap signs, name plates placed on the pastor’s study, and bulletin signs; new wall plugs and fans were added; a new microphone and speaker were added in the annex building, and it was sided; a van, a new computer and printer, a steeple, and a P.A. system and speakers were purchased; and

Whereas, the church was without a pastor for a year and a half after Reverend Oliphant resigned. On January 30, 2013, Pastor Russell Brisco was elected to serve as pastor of Bethany Baptist Church. Under his leadership the following improvements have been made: a new computer and printer, two flat screen TVs, and a new van were purchased; an internet connection was installed; cordless microphones were donated and placed in the sanctuary; and a precise church budget was established for the year; and

Whereas, during his tenure, fifteen people have been baptized and joined the Bethany Baptist Church, and two have rededicated their lives to God. Bethany Baptist Church joined the 5th Sunday Community Service; Bethany and Hopewell Baptist Church have joined for Bible studies on Wednesdays evenings; and the Summer Enrichment Program and second Sunday Children’s Church Service were implemented; and

Whereas, ministries that have been implemented while Pastor Brisco has been serving include the Pastor Aide Ministry, Sista‑2‑Sista Ministry, music ministry, singles’ ministry, program committee, Christian Education Ministry, Stewardship Ministry, Marriage Ministry, and Public Relations Ministry; and

Whereas, the congregation has participated in adding blessings to the functions of the church. Sister Georgia C. Scott donated a communion set, and Brother James Crafton donated a bell to replace the one stolen. The first Veterans Memorial Service was held in the church cemetery. In 2015, Reverend Irene Freeman became the first woman to be ordained at Bethany Baptist Church; and

Whereas, when Deacon Doris Houston resigned after serving as chairman of the Board of Deacons for twenty‑seven years, Deacon Carl Houston was elected to serve in her place. When he passed away, Deacon Albert Houston was elected chairman. He resigned after years of service, and Deacon James Freeman was elected chairman. Deacon David Gowdy served as secretary and treasurer for years, and Sister Rickeyla Thurmond was elected as secretary and Sister Jennifer Houston as treasurer. Sister Angelia Sibert was elected as assistant treasurer and Sister Linda Riley as bookkeeper; and

Whereas, a signature event in the life of the church was the passing of Sister Myra Freeman on November 26, 2002. A faithful member of Bethany Baptist Church, she had lived one‑hundred years; and

Whereas, through the years, the desire and the ability to help others have seen their fulfillment as Bethany Baptist Church has been blessed to organize five daughter churches since 1869: Jerusalem Baptist Church and Mt. Transfiguration Baptist Church in Aiken County, Hosanna Baptist Church and Laura Grove Missionary Baptist Church in McCormick County, and Carey Hill Baptist Church in Edgefield County; and

Whereas, through a century and a half of changes, Bethany Baptist Church has been faithful to its mission of leading people to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and of bringing hope to the lost, and the House of Representatives wishes the congregation many years of growth and prosperity. 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 Bethany Baptist Church in McCormick County and congratulate the congregation for one hundred fifty years of faithful ministry in the Clarks Hill community.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be presented to Pastor Russell Brisco.

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