

2008 SESSION

ENROLLED

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 36

Commending Brown's African Methodist Episcopal Church.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, March 8, 2008

WHEREAS, Brown's African Methodist Episcopal Church, located in the Town of Smithfield, will celebrate its 140th anniversary in 2008; and

WHEREAS, the origins of Brown's African Methodist Episcopal Church sprung from the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church that was established in Philadelphia by Bishop Richard Allen in 1787; and

WHEREAS, the first church was a simple, plain, unpainted structure built in 1812 that was purchased by the Methodist Protestant Society in 1848; and

WHEREAS, in 1868 the founders of the church, George Washington Thomas, Aldine Thomas, Henry Diggs, Leroy Colonal, Ellen Colonal, Edward Boykins, Willie Bailey, Margaret Ward, Georgianna Hayes, Pricilla Wilson, and Robinson Crusoe banded together and bought the building and established a new church for the community, which was officially named Brown's African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1877; and

WHEREAS, in 1957 the Reverend F. R. A. Ward was pastor when the church was struck by fire and burned completely to the ground; all of the church's historical documents were lost and shortly thereafter Pastor Ward died, and Brown's AME Church was left without a foundation or leader; and

WHEREAS, the Smithfield Elk's Lodge No. 65 compassionately opened its doors free of charge to Brown's AME Church, and the Bishop assigned a young pastor to the church, the Reverend Sidney Wesley Williams, Jr., and the congregation gratefully continued their worship in the lodge for seven years; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Williams led the congregation with great enthusiasm, and soon trustees were authorized to plan for a new church; during this time, Ebenezer AME Church united with Brown's AME Church to successfully create a new and stronger church family; and

WHEREAS, the new Brown's AME Church, the church's current building, was completed and a worship service celebrating its glorious dedication was held on the first Sunday in March in 1964; and

WHEREAS, several inspirational ministers served Brown's AME Church during the 1990s and early 2000s, and the church underwent substantial improvements, including the addition of a beautiful steeple, an organ, a new van, and a new roof and upgrading of the church's marquee and mechanical systems; and

WHEREAS, in 2004 the Sarah Bass Allen Historical Monument was erected in honor of the AME founder's wife, a former slave born in Isle of Wight County in 1764, who is memorialized as "a pillar of the building, a mother in Israel" and whose work enabled Richard Allen and his fellow ministers to carry on their work to establish the church; and

WHEREAS, in 2006 the Bishop appointed Brown's AME Church's present minister, the Reverend Willie L. White, Sr., who has been instrumental in implementing improvements and has provided the congregation with a spirit of renewal to meet the needs of the future; and

WHEREAS, Brown's AME Church has been served throughout its 140-year history by immensely dedicated and able pastors, who have provided visionary leadership, devout worship, meaningful Christian education, and enthusiastic ministry and community missions; and

WHEREAS, throughout its long history, Brown's AME Church has provided its devoted congregation, its neighbors, and the community a place to worship, to help others, and to grow in faith and service; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the House of Delegates hereby commend Brown's African Methodist Episcopal Church on the occasion of its 140th anniversary; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the Reverend Willie L. White, Sr., on behalf of Brown's AME Church as an expression of the House of Delegates' best wishes for a joyful celebration and future success in its ministry.

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