

## HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 374

*Celebrating the life of the Reverend Dr. Robert Louis Taylor.*

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 17, 2012

Agreed to by the Senate, February 23, 2012

WHEREAS, the Reverend Dr. Robert Louis Taylor, the youngest of seven children, was born on May 26, 1916, in Hanover County, and entered into eternal rest on February 4, 2012; and

WHEREAS, the Reverend Dr. Robert Louis Taylor began his education in a segregated one-room school in Noel in Hanover County; attended Armstrong High School in Richmond, where he was elected president of his graduating class; earned a bachelor of arts degree from Virginia Union University and the master of divinity degree from the university's Samuel Dewitt Proctor School of Theology; continued graduate study in sociology at Richmond Professional Institute, now Virginia Commonwealth University; and received an honorary doctorate degree from Virginia Union University; and

WHEREAS, affectionately called "The Dean" by his colleagues, the Reverend Dr. Robert Louis Taylor was a kind and affable gentleman who mentored young pastors, encouraging them to remain socially active and community conscious; and

WHEREAS, the Reverend Dr. Robert Louis Taylor tenaciously practiced his faith with fierce determination, and "with a cordial but insistent agitation, he constantly prodded the community toward engagement" to effect positive change; and

WHEREAS, the Reverend Dr. Robert Louis Taylor was dedicated to his calling, serving God's people as pastor of several churches, including St. Mark Baptist Church in Manakin, Watch Tower Baptist Church in Louisa County, Westwood Baptist Church, Second Baptist Church South Richmond, and, as the beloved under-shepherd, Fourth Baptist Church in Richmond, the first African American Baptist church in Church Hill, from which he retired after 34 years of faithful service; and

WHEREAS, continuing to serve in ministry even after retirement, the Reverend Dr. Robert Louis Taylor was named Pastor Emeritus of Fourth Baptist Church and served as interim pastor of Mt. Olive Baptist Church in Glen Allen, Providence Baptist Church in Ashland, and Pilgrim Baptist Church and St. John Baptist Church in Richmond; and

WHEREAS, the Reverend Dr. Robert Louis Taylor presided over a host of religious organizations, among them the Baptist Ministers Conference of Richmond and Vicinity, the Mattaponi Baptist Association of Virginia, the Goodwill Baptist Convention of Virginia, the National Baptist Convention of America, USA, Inc.; toured West Africa and Europe with the Lott Carey Delegation; and represented the World Council of Churches as a delegate to Africa and England; and

WHEREAS, the Reverend Dr. Robert Louis Taylor was a pioneer in local civil rights and was among the African American and white clergy who met with representatives of downtown Richmond stores that had refused to serve students from Virginia Union University during the lunch counter sit-ins; he savored the privilege afforded to him to march with and introduce Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., during Dr. King's visit to Virginia Union University; and

WHEREAS, the Reverend Dr. Robert Louis Taylor devoted his talents and time to numerous community endeavors, including aiding public housing residents, promoting job growth and economic development, caring for the homeless and the poor, advocating educational opportunities and work training programs to enable school dropouts and the unemployed to compete for jobs, and serving as campaign manager for Senator Henry L. Marsh III during his run to become the first African American elected Mayor of the City of Richmond; and

WHEREAS, the Reverend Dr. Robert Louis Taylor treasured his longtime role as Police Chaplain for the Richmond Bureau of Police and considered it a privilege to pray for, encourage, and counsel police and provide pastoral care to police officers to support and assist them in performing their duties to ensure public safety; and

WHEREAS, a remarkable and distinguished pastor, the Reverend Dr. Robert Louis Taylor powerfully and persuasively proclaimed the Gospel each time he mounted the pulpit; he was a consensus builder and peacemaker who was actively involved in the city's ecumenical movement, building inter-denominational bonds, improving race relations, addressing ethical and moral issues in the community and before elected officials, and working diligently to enhance community interaction; and

WHEREAS, colleagues remember the Reverend Dr. Robert Louis Taylor as "passionate about his faith and social justice, never sinking to the level of his adversaries, and that he was a powerful, persuasive presence with a gentle authenticity"; and

WHEREAS, during his lifetime, the Reverend Dr. Robert Louis Taylor received many honors, accolades, and awards, including the Brotherhood Award from the National Council of Christians and

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Jews in 1974, for bridge-building and civic and religious leadership, and the Fourth Baptist Church child day care center and church extension are named in his honor; and

WHEREAS, the Reverend Dr. Robert Louis Taylor once declared that he "sought to be a good shepherd under the influence of our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ," and he has run his course with faith and perseverance; and

WHEREAS, the Reverend Dr. Robert Louis Taylor's life is worthy of emulation, and he inspired family, friends, fellow clergy and churchmen, congregants, law-enforcement officers, elected officials and community leaders, and thousands of people whose lives were touched and enriched by knowing him; and

WHEREAS, the loss of the Reverend Dr. Robert Louis Taylor will be mourned and his memory cherished by all who knew him; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby note with great sadness the loss of the Reverend Dr. Robert Louis Taylor, native son, and pastor emeritus of Fourth Baptist Church in Richmond; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of the Reverend Dr. Robert Louis Taylor as an expression of the General Assembly's respect for his memory.