

2012 SESSION

ENROLLED

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 58

Commending the Wesley Grove United Church of Christ.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, March 9, 2012

WHEREAS, in 1887 a group of men and women who moved to Newport News met to worship together according to their shared religious beliefs and formed Wesley Grove Christian Church; and

WHEREAS, Wesley Grove Christian Church received its name because the group, who had moved to Newport News in search of better opportunities, first gathered in a grove of trees; the members also named their church in honor of its first deacon, Wesley Rainey, Sr.; and

WHEREAS, under the leadership of the Reverend J.H. Edlow, the first pastor of Wesley Grove Christian Church, the members met in several locations and in 1892 moved to a permanent house of worship; the cost of the building was \$125; and

WHEREAS, it was extremely challenging for the members of Wesley Grove Christian Church to find the funds to pay for the building, but with the installation of the Reverend James M. Parson as the new pastor in 1893, the group redoubled their efforts and raised the money; and

WHEREAS, as the congregation grew at the end of the 19th century, the church moved several times into larger and better quarters; under the leadership of the Reverend S.A. Howell, the church became involved in outreach efforts; and

WHEREAS, the members of Wesley Grove Christian Church strongly supported the missionary efforts of the Afro-Convention of the South, which through the years sent missionaries to many parts of the country and overseas; and

WHEREAS, Wesley Grove Christian Church was a leading force in the establishment of Franklinton Christian College; its pastor, Reverend Howell, was president of the college; and

WHEREAS, during the Great Depression, Wesley Grove Christian Church faced difficult times; Franklinton Christian College was forced to close, Reverend Howell resigned, and a new pastor, the Reverend J.B. Jones, served from 1931 to 1939; and

WHEREAS, Wesley Grove Christian Church was part of two large denominational mergers during the 20th century; in the 1950s, the Congregational Church and the Christian Church merged, and the members changed the church's name to Wesley Grove Congregational Christian Church; and

WHEREAS, some years later, the United Church of Christ became an umbrella organization for all Congregational, Evangelical, and Reformed denominations, and the Newport News congregation's name changed to Wesley Grove United Church of Christ; the church also moved to a new and larger building; and

WHEREAS, Wesley Grove United Church of Christ has been led by many pastors since its founding 125 years ago; through its storied existence, the members have dedicated themselves to moving the church forward, and during trying times, their strong faith has held them together; and

WHEREAS, as part of Wesley Grove United Church of Christ's 125th anniversary celebrations, the congregation will hold gospel concerts, family night dinners and fellowship, and a cookout, and will present a play commemorating the church's rich history; the theme for the year is "A Legacy of Faith and Love Continues"; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, That the Wesley Grove United Church of Christ hereby be commended on the occasion of its 125th anniversary; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Wesley Grove United Church of Christ as an expression of the House of Delegates' congratulations and respect.

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