

2015 SESSION

ENROLLED

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 85

Commending Celestial Baptist Church.

Agreed to by the Senate, February 5, 2015

WHEREAS, Celestial Baptist Church, which provides spiritual leadership and generous outreach programs to the Portsmouth community, celebrates its 100th anniversary in 2015; and

WHEREAS, the Reverend Frank M. Jones and 13 officers organized Celestial Baptist Church on March 15, 1915, in Portsmouth; after three years they were able to purchase land in Forest Park, known as Mount Vernon Avenue, where they erected a framed building; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Jones served with dedication for 28 years until his death on October 6, 1943; thanks to his sound leadership, the church's original mortgage was burned during his lifetime; and

WHEREAS, the Reverend W. Limon Lowe accepted leadership on March 23, 1945, and during his tenure, two adjoining lots were purchased, the sanctuary was enlarged, and an annex was added; he resigned to accept a call to serve as a pastor in Delaware, but he returned and became a member of Celestial Baptist Church after his retirement; and

WHEREAS, the Reverend H. G. Hairston accepted leadership of Celestial Baptist Church in November 1950 and served until February 28, 1965; under his leadership, additional land was purchased and the church's debt was retired; and

WHEREAS, the Reverend C. L. Robinson accepted leadership of Celestial Baptist Church on January 8, 1967; during his tenure, the framed building was demolished and a modern brick edifice was built and dedicated; and

WHEREAS, the Reverend Leon J. Boone was elected interim pastor of Celestial Baptist Church on January 18, 1977, and elected pastor on November 19, 1977; the mortgage on the church was paid off shortly after his arrival and was burned in August 1983; he remained pastor for 35 years until August 2012; and

WHEREAS, the Reverend Ann Joyce Grant Fortineau is a lifelong member of Celestial Baptist Church and has served in many auxiliaries; she was licensed by the church in 1993 and assumed the responsibilities of assistant pastor in 2012, serving faithfully in that position until her ordination in November 2012; and

WHEREAS, since December 2012, Reverend Fortineau has led the congregation as interim pastor; the way she carries out her duties with faith, knowledge of the Word, dignity, and grace has made her an inspiration to all; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate of Virginia, That Celestial Baptist Church hereby be commended for its exceptional spiritual leadership of the residents of Portsmouth on the occasion of its 100th anniversary; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Celestial Baptist Church as an expression of the Senate of Virginia's admiration for the church's many contributions to the Portsmouth community.

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