

2016 SESSION

ENROLLED

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 350

Commending First Presbyterian Church.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 26, 2016
Agreed to by the Senate, March 3, 2016

WHEREAS, First Presbyterian Church, which has grown with and supported the Hopewell community by providing opportunities for joyful worship and generous outreach programs, celebrates its 100th anniversary in 2016; and

WHEREAS, the Reverend G. A. Wilson was ordained by the East Hanover Presbytery to organize a Presbyterian church in the booming Hopewell community, and he became the first pastor of First Presbyterian Church when it was officially established on February 15, 1916, one day before Hopewell was incorporated as a city; and

WHEREAS, in 1917, the Reverend E. D. Thomas became pastor of First Presbyterian Church, and the congregation thrived until the end of World War I and the closure of the nearby guncotton plant that had driven the community's growth; the Reverend James Bear then served as a longtime supply pastor; and

WHEREAS, the Reverend James Ellsworth Cook revitalized the church community when he began his ministry in 1923; he oversaw construction of a new church building, organized Sunday school classes, and was instrumental in the establishment of Woodlawn Elementary School; and

WHEREAS, the Reverend William E. Hill, Jr., joined First Presbyterian Church in 1932 and helped lead the community through the Great Depression; with his enthusiastic ministry and sound fiscal management, he not only helped the church grow, but provided support to community organizations and the new Rivermont Presbyterian Church; and

WHEREAS, in 1944, the Reverend Samuel L. Belk, a former supply pastor, assumed leadership of First Presbyterian Church and carried on its proud tradition of spiritual growth; he was followed by the Reverend Eugene C. Ensley, who initiated new construction and mission projects and guided the church through the early years of the Civil Rights movement with dignity and grace; and

WHEREAS, the Reverend Leslie T. West, Jr., served as pastor of First Presbyterian Church for 11 years, beginning in 1965; he ensured that members of the congregation were active leaders in the community, supporting schools, civic organizations, and neighbors in need; and

WHEREAS, in 1977, the Reverend Dr. Richard M. Webster ushered in a new era for First Presbyterian Church with his easygoing nature and focus on counseling; he, too, strengthened the church's role in the community and in the Presbytery; and

WHEREAS, First Presbyterian Church was ably led by the Reverend Dr. Charlie Brown from 1989 to 1991 and the Reverend Kenneth M. Brown from 1991 to 1994, when the Reverend Dr. Ronald K. Bullis became interim pastor; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Bullis went on to become First Presbyterian Church's longest-serving pastor, with 2016 marking his 22nd year; he takes a personal interest in each member of the church family, and has offered wisdom and enlightenment through his Something Really Unusual Sunday School classes; and

WHEREAS, First Presbyterian Church strives to be a vibrant, active contributor to the community and has remained true to its mission statement, Feeding Hungry Hearts, throughout its history; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend First Presbyterian Church in Hopewell on the occasion of its 100th 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 Dr. Ronald K. Bullis, pastor of First Presbyterian Church, as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for the church's storied history and legacy of service to the Hopewell community.

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