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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 510

Offered March 7, 2016

Commending the Old Stone Church Foundation and its United Methodist Church Affiliates.

Patrons—Minchew, LaRock, Bell, John J., Boysko, Carr, Greason, Murphy and Spruill; Senators: Wexton and Favola

WHEREAS, in 2016, the Old Stone Church Foundation and its United Methodist Church Affiliates—the Leesburg United Methodist Church, Mount Zion United Methodist Church, and Evergreen United Methodist Church, along with the Virginia Conference of the United Methodist Church—celebrate the 250th anniversary of the first Methodist land acquisition in the Western Hemisphere, on which the former Old Stone Church was built; and

WHEREAS, the site of the former Old Stone Church is now owned by the Virginia United Methodist Historical Society of the Virginia Conference of the United Methodist Church; and

WHEREAS, on May 11, 1766, Nicholas Minor, the founder of the Town of Leesburg, deeded a half acre of property to Robert Hamilton, a Methodist convert, "for four pounds current money of Virginia, for no other use but for a church or meeting house, graveyard"; and

WHEREAS, the first building on the site was a Methodist meeting house, completed in 1768, and thereafter the Methodist community in the area thrived, and in 1778 the Leesburg Methodist Society hosted the first of several annual conferences with representatives from all Methodist societies in the colonies; and

WHEREAS, after Methodism became a separate denomination from the Anglican Church in 1784, a new house of worship was constructed and renamed Old Stone Church; Old Stone Church was then the only church building in the Town of Leesburg, and it counted among its congregation many of colonial Leesburg's leading citizens; and

WHEREAS, in 1790, the Town of Leesburg hosted the Virginia Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the precursor to the modern United Methodist Church, which was presided over by the denomination's first two American bishops; and

WHEREAS, in 1848, the congregation of Old Stone Church split over the issue of slavery, with some members leaving to form what is now Leesburg United Methodist Church at a new location and the rest staying at Old Stone Church for a time, but later moving to form what is now Mount Zion United Methodist Church; both congregations helped form the relatively new Evergreen United Methodist Church, which is also in Leesburg; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Conference of the United Methodist Church purchased the Old Stone Church property in 1965 for development of a denominational shrine under the auspices of the Virginia United Methodist Historical Society of the Virginia Conference; and

WHEREAS, though the original Old Stone Church building was demolished in 1901, the property, which includes a graveyard dating back to the early 19th century, has been preserved as a historic and archaeological site, which is listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend the Old Stone Church Foundation and its United Methodist Church Affiliates—the Leesburg United Methodist Church, Mount Zion United Methodist Church, and Evergreen United Methodist Church, along with the Virginia Conference of the United Methodist Church—on the occasion of the 250th anniversary of the first land acquisition for the Methodist denomination in the Western Hemisphere; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare copies of this resolution for presentation to the Old Stone Church Foundation, Leesburg United Methodist Church, Mount Zion United Methodist Church, Evergreen United Methodist Church, and the Virginia United Methodist Historical Society as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for Leesburg's historical significance to the foundation of Methodism in the United States.

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