

2017 SESSION

ENROLLED

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 972

Commending Bethlehem Congregational Church.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 17, 2017

Agreed to by the Senate, February 22, 2017

WHEREAS, for more than 120 years, Bethlehem Congregational Church in Disputanta has helped members of the community build a stronger connection to Jesus Christ through spiritual leadership and opportunities for worship; and

WHEREAS, Bethlehem Congregational Church shares its heritage with the many Czech, Slovak, and Polish churches formed by immigrants throughout the United States; the church community was organized on September 3, 1896, by 35 individuals who had come from Pennsylvania, Minnesota, and other states to work as farmers in Prince George County; and

WHEREAS, in its early days, Bethlehem Congregational Church was pastored by the Reverend John Jelinek, who traveled from Pennsylvania to preach and administer the sacraments; in 1898, the church dedicated a new sanctuary at the intersection of what is now Pole Run Road and Hollywood Drive, with the Reverend Vincent Totusek as the first permanent pastor; and

WHEREAS, in 1914, Bethlehem Congregational Church added a second building, which was later added to the original sanctuary and is now the fellowship hall and kitchen, and in 1925, a Sunday school classroom was added; and

WHEREAS, from the 1960s to the 1990s, Bethlehem Congregational Church carried out many renovations and enhancements to better serve the growing congregation, including heating and air conditioning, indoor lavatories, sidewalks, stained glass windows, and upholstered pews; the church more recently added additional classrooms and an outdoor pavilion and stage; and

WHEREAS, in 1985, ministers and laymen from Virginia and North Carolina met at Bethlehem Congregational Church and formed a regional fellowship, which voted to join the Conservative Congregational Christian Conference; and

WHEREAS, Bethlehem Congregational Church also works with the Christian Endeavor movement, which unites children and adults of 83 denominations in 76 nations in a shared love of Jesus Christ; and

WHEREAS, Bethlehem Congregational Church will commemorate its 121st anniversary on September 17, 2017; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend Bethlehem Congregational Church for more than 120 years of service and spiritual leadership to the Prince George County community; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Bethlehem Congregational Church as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for the church's unique history and contributions to the residents of Prince George County.

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