

2017 SESSION

ENROLLED

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 983

Commending Beulah Baptist Church.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 20, 2017
Agreed to by the Senate, February 22, 2017

WHEREAS, Beulah Baptist Church, the first African American church founded in Alexandria after the Union occupation during the Civil War, has a crucial place in Alexandria's history; and

WHEREAS, after the Reverend Clem Robinson left Virginia to be educated in Pennsylvania, he learned that Virginia prohibited African Americans who were educated in other states from returning home; and

WHEREAS, in 1861, with Alexandria under Union control, Reverend Robinson was finally able to return to Virginia and establish schools for escaped slaves; he served more than 700 students in his very first year at the First Select Colored School (1862) and at the associated Beulah Normal and Theological Institute; and

WHEREAS, in 1863, Reverend Robinson founded Beulah Baptist Church, a church that has made education central to its mission for more than 153 years; after the Civil War, Beulah Baptist Church offered assistance to newly freed African Americans to help them find work, clothing, and shelter; and

WHEREAS, Beulah Baptist Church has endured through 153 years of history—including slavery, Jim Crow, segregation, and systemic racism—and under the leadership of its present pastor, the Reverend Dr. Columbus Watson, for more than 55 years, it has remained a symbol of faith and community, a model for Alexandria and for Virginia, and a vibrant congregation to this day; and

WHEREAS, Beulah Baptist Church serves as a testament to the strength of its members, a shining example of how hardworking people who band together to support each other can overcome almost anything; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend Beulah Baptist Church for receiving a historical marker from the Department of Historic Resources; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Beulah Baptist Church as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for its storied history and its contributions to Alexandria's African American community over the past 153 years.

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