

2017 SESSION

ENROLLED

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 410

Commending Bethel Baptist Church.

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

WHEREAS, in 2017, Bethel Baptist Church in Gloucester County celebrates 150 years of spiritual leadership, generous community outreach, and joyful worship in the Baptist tradition; and

WHEREAS, organized by 16 founding members in July 1867 in the Sassafras Stage area, Bethel Baptist Church was originally known as Sassafras Stage Church and is the second-oldest African American congregation in Gloucester County; and

WHEREAS, Sassafras Stage Church was renamed Bethel Baptist Church shortly after the renovation of the original sanctuary, which stood near the church's present location; the cornerstone for the current building was laid on June 12, 1889; and

WHEREAS, in its early days, Bethel Baptist Church brought together faith communities from throughout the area, and it is affectionately known as Mother Bethel for helping establish four other churches in Gloucester County and one in Williamsburg; and

WHEREAS, throughout its history, Bethel Baptist Church has served the congregation through several organizations, auxiliaries, and ministries and strengthened the Gloucester County community in various ways; and

WHEREAS, members of Bethel Baptist Church helped establish the Weaver Orphan Home in Hampton, the Gloucester Training School, and the nationally known Gloucester Agricultural and Industrial High School, the first secondary school for African Americans in Gloucester County; and

WHEREAS, Bethel Baptist Church partners with other churches and organizations to provide food, shelter, and clothing for the homeless and less fortunate, supports the Gloucester County Boys and Girls Club and an after-school program for the nearby Bethel Elementary School, and has been a polling place for elections; and

WHEREAS, on January 1, 2017, Bethel Baptist Church began the yearlong celebration of its anniversary with the lighting of 150 candles and by ringing the church bell 150 times; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, That Bethel Baptist Church hereby be commended for its legacy of service to the community on the occasion of its 150th 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 Michael W. Jackson, pastor of Bethel Baptist Church, as an expression of the House of Delegates' admiration for the church's many contributions to the residents of Gloucester County.

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