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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 393

Offered February 10, 2017

Commending Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church.

Patrons—McClellan, Dance, Deeds, Locke, Lucas, Spruill and Sturtevant; Delegates: Aird, Bagby, Bourne, Carr, Herring, Hester, Howell, James, Lindsey, McQuinn, Price, Rasoul and Tyler

WHEREAS, Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church, a prominent landmark in Richmond's historic Jackson Ward District, is celebrating its Sesquicentennial in 2017; and

WHEREAS, throughout its 150-year history, Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church has served as a center of spiritual and community life, and the church has a proud history of addressing the social concerns of Richmonders; and

WHEREAS, Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church was organized in an abandoned Confederate horse stable on Brown's Island by the Reverend John Jasper in 1867, during a period of desperate times for many African Americans in Richmond following the Civil War; and

WHEREAS, Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church moved to its current location in 1869 and is credited with being the first church in post-war Richmond organized by an African American; and

WHEREAS, the Reverend John Jasper was known for his charismatic ministry and celebrated preaching, and he first delivered his famous "De Sun Do Move" sermon in 1878 from the pulpit of Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church; and

WHEREAS, the congregation of Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church grew rapidly as white and black residents came to hear the Reverend John Jasper preach and, by 1887, a larger structure was needed to accommodate the church's 2,500 members; and

WHEREAS, Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church is a superb example of Gothic Revival "high style" architecture; the sanctuary, designed and built by George W. Boyd in 1887 and expanded by African American architect Charles T. Russell in 1925, features a series of original stained-glass windows; and

WHEREAS, regarded as a pioneer in the field of historic preservation, Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church opened the John Jasper Memorial Room and Museum in 1926, which houses a collection of Bibles, books, paintings, clothing, and ceremonial artifacts, including a golden bust of John Jasper made in 1904; and

WHEREAS, Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church was saved from destruction when Interstate 95 was built in 1957, and it is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and the Virginia Landmarks Register; in 2004, the church was designated a local "historic church" by the Richmond City Council, the only black church to receive that distinction; and

WHEREAS, two historical highway markers in the Commonwealth pay tribute to Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church, one at the church's location on Duval Street in Richmond and another in Fluvanna County near the birthplace of John Jasper; and

WHEREAS, Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church organized a charity with a staff of social workers to administer to the needy in Richmond, one of the first black churches to do so; this tradition continues today as members of the church are called to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, care for the sick, shelter the homeless, and visit the imprisoned; and

WHEREAS, the core values of Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church are hospitality, relationship building, Biblically-based learning, and community impact; the church strives to have every ministry, worship experience, and event exemplify these values; and

WHEREAS, seven pastors have led Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church over its long history, and the church is currently served by the Reverend Tyrone Nelson; under his leadership, the church has increased in number, diversity, and spirit as it continues to adapt to the needs of the twenty-first century; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church, a prominent landmark in Richmond's historic Jackson Ward District, on celebrating the 150th anniversary of its founding in 2017; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the Reverend Tyrone Nelson, pastor of Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church, as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for the church's heritage of dynamic fellowship and extraordinary leadership in Richmond.

INTRODUCED

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