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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 523

Offered March 5, 2018

Commending Wesley Grove United Church of Christ.

Patrons—Price, Mullin and Yancey; Senators: Locke and Mason

WHEREAS, for more than 130 years, Wesley Grove United Church of Christ has provided spiritual guidance and opportunities for fellowship and joyful worship to the Newport News community; and

WHEREAS, originally known as Wesley Grove Christian Church, Wesley Grove United Church of Christ was organized by the Reverend J.H. Edlow in 1887; the congregation held services at various locations in Newport News, until 1892, when its first permanent sanctuary was built at the corner of 19th Street and Ivy Avenue; and

WHEREAS, the Reverend James M. Parson became pastor of Wesley Grove in 1893 and led the growing congregation to build a larger house of worship; he was succeeded by the Reverend Smith A. Howell, who grew the congregation from 19 members to more than 1,000 members over the course of his 30-year tenure; and

WHEREAS, with the help and hard work of church officers and members, Reverend Howell oversaw the completion of a new sanctuary on 19th Street; after his resignation in 1929, deacons and church officers ensured that services continued at Wesley Grove until the Reverend J.B. Jones became pastor in 1931; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Jones helped the Wesley Grove United Church of Christ continue to grow and was followed by the Reverend Thomas J. Moore, who oversaw repairs to the sanctuary and the construction of a fellowship hall; and

WHEREAS, the year of 1957 was historic for Wesley Grove as the Congregational Christian Church and the Evangelical Church and Reformed Church merged to form the United Church of Christ; the Reverend Z.P. Jenkins served the church as pastor from the late 1950s to 1970 and led the church to its beautiful current location at the corner of 23rd Street and Roanoke Avenue; and

WHEREAS, the Reverend Vernon Harris served as interim pastor of Wesley Grove until Reverend Jenkins returned in 1974, leading the church until his death in 1975; the Reverend G. Wesley Raney III, the grandson of a founding member, was installed as pastor in 1976 and established many new ministries and programs; and

WHEREAS, after the Reverend Isaac L. McDonald became pastor of Wesley Grove in 1986, he continued to expand the church's ministries and established an annual program to reward students for hard work and good grades; and

WHEREAS, the Reverend Prince Raney Rivers, another descendent of a founding member with strong family ties to the church, became pastor of Wesley Grove in 2003 and served until the Reverend Dr. Alexander Jamison, Sr., became pastor in 2007; and

WHEREAS, the current pastor of Wesley Grove, the Reverend Antonio Newsome, was installed in November 2013 and has ably led the community in spiritual growth; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend Wesley Grove United Church of Christ on the occasion of its 130th anniversary in 2017; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Wesley Grove United Church of Christ as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for the church's long legacy of contributions to the Newport News community.

INTRODUCED

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