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**HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 1089**

Offered February 18, 2019

*Commending First Church of Newport News (Baptist).*

Patrons—Price and Ward; Senators: Locke and Mason

WHEREAS, in 2019, First Church of Newport News (Baptist) celebrates its 155th anniversary of providing opportunities for joyful and spirit-filled worship and generous community outreach; and

WHEREAS, originally known as First Baptist Church, First Church of Newport News (Baptist) was founded in 1864 by the Reverend Thomas Henry Poole from Isle of Wight County; the congregation holds the distinction of being the oldest congregation still in existence within the original city limits, predating the founding of the city by 32 years; and

WHEREAS, in its earliest days, the small wood-framed church located under what is now the 28th Street Bridge was a spiritual home for many formerly enslaved people; and

WHEREAS, under the leadership of Reverends Carr and C. D. Cooley, First Church of Newport News (Baptist) congregants worshiped in soldiers' barracks before moving to a building constructed for the church on land bought in 1897; and

WHEREAS, under the Reverend Dr. William Dixon, planning and construction began on a new church building that would house the church for most of the 20th century; the impressive structure would include a steeple that was believed to be the highest in Newport News and was a landmark on the city skyline for decades; and

WHEREAS, First Church of Newport News (Baptist) continued to expand under Reverends H. Howell Harris, W. A. Taylor, and C. D. Henderson; in 1919, the Reverend Dr. A. A. Galvin became pastor; many ministries and facets of parochial life in the congregation that still exist were founded during his tenure including the Benevolent Fund and the Men's Star Bible Class; and

WHEREAS, under the next pastor, the Reverend Dr. John F. Williams, First Church of Newport News (Baptist) formed both a gospel choir and a deaf and blind ministry; in 1961, the Reverend Dr. Fred J. Boddie, Jr., began his 39-year tenure, the longest of any pastor in the church's history, and moved the church to its current location on Wickham Avenue; and

WHEREAS, in 2005, the Reverend Dr. Reginald Dawkins became the eleventh pastor of First Church of Newport News (Baptist); in 2011, Reverend Dr. Rodney Johnson was installed as the twelfth pastor, and the church continues to grow in its outreach with numerous programmatic enhancements and community outreach endeavors; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend First Church of Newport News (Baptist) on the occasion of its 155th anniversary in 2019; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to First Church of Newport News (Baptist), as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for the congregation's rich legacy of spiritual guidance and community outreach.

INTRODUCED

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