

## HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 652

*Commending First Baptist Church of Waverly.*

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, January 14, 2019  
 Agreed to by the Senate, February 21, 2019

WHEREAS, for 150 years, First Baptist Church of Waverly has provided spiritual leadership, generous outreach programs, and opportunities for joyful worship to the members of the Sussex County community; and

WHEREAS, First Baptist Church is recognized as Waverly's oldest church, founded by a woman simply known as "Mother Hubbard," a post-Civil War missionary who traveled the area spreading the gospel to all people, including newly freed slaves; the first services were held in a bush harbor sometime in 1868; and

WHEREAS, First Baptist Church is acknowledged as the place where Waverly's freed slaves were first educated; as the church grew, the Reverend Gregory was called as its first pastor, and under his leadership, the church became more structured and plans were made for the first church building; and

WHEREAS, First Baptist Church's initial building was completed in 1882 under the Reverend P. R. Berry, who served for 28 years, baptizing and marrying members of the first generation of the church; the Reverend R. D. Pittman of Petersburg served for three years, and the Reverend M. C. Holland served for 14 years, overseeing the building's remodeling; and

WHEREAS, under the 10 years of leadership of the Reverend H. L. James of Richmond, the interior of the First Baptist Church was improved, and the first auxiliaries of the church were organized; and

WHEREAS, it was during this time in the 1920s, in cooperation with the officials of Sussex County, that the first public school for African Americans was erected on First Baptist Church property at the site of the present church; the school was the only school for African Americans in Waverly well into the 20th century, when the Sussex County Training School was created; and

WHEREAS, the Reverend L. A. Jackson served for 12 years, leading a project to install new windows, and the Reverend S. L. Craig, who served for two years, was successful in burning the mortgage; the Reverend C. L. Robinson, who served for 14 years, undertook a number of renovation projects and increased membership and was succeeded by the Reverend E. J. Johnson, who served for 16 years; and

WHEREAS, the 10th pastor of First Baptist Church, the Reverend William N. Bland, Jr., served for 12 years, paying off the mortgage of the new edifice in a year and accomplishing a number of infrastructure improvements, including asphaltting the parking lot; and

WHEREAS, the Reverend Richard A. Mims served for five years at First Baptist Church, leading new programs such as youth Bible study and the Mass Choir and Praise Dance ministries, as well as the installation of a new roof, new air conditioning units, and a security system; and

WHEREAS, in 2002, the Reverend Samuel Robinson, Sr., joined First Baptist Church as its 12th pastor and was known for his ministries visiting the sick; as the 13th pastor, the Reverend Kenneth Lee instated the male chorus and launched a church website; in 2014, the Reverend Ronald C. Taylor led the congregation spiritually and oversaw the installation of a new roof; and

WHEREAS; on October 2, 2016, the Reverend Dr. Bridget Wilson began serving as interim pastor, bringing the church full circle, once again with a woman at the church's helm; she was installed as the congregation's 15th pastor on March 19, 2017, and she made her mark by reinstating twice-monthly Bible study, recognizing church youth for their academic achievement, and continually improving the building's lighting, thermostats, and sound system; and

WHEREAS, throughout its history, First Baptist Church of Waverly has welcomed people from diverse backgrounds, adding a Hispanic service and blended worship and building an enduring sense of community in the Waverly area as large numbers of friends and former members return to the church for Family and Friends Day and Vacation Bible School; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend First Baptist Church of Waverly for providing spiritual leadership, generous outreach programs, and opportunities for joyful worship to the members of the Waverly community for 150 years; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the Reverend Dr. Bridget Wilson, pastor of First Baptist Church of Waverly, as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for the church's legacy of contributions to Sussex County.