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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 379

Offered February 27, 2020

Commending the Reverend Franklin Todd Gray.

Patrons—Bourne and McQuinn; Senator: McClellan

WHEREAS, the Reverend Franklin Todd Gray, the longtime pastor of the Fifth Street Baptist Church in Richmond, will celebrate his 25th anniversary with the church in June 2020; and

WHEREAS, a native of Chillicothe, Ohio, and adopted son of Virginia, Reverend Gray was born on July 5, 1960; and

WHEREAS, a fourth-generation preacher, Reverend Gray was educated in Chillicothe City Schools, graduated with a bachelor's degree from Ohio University, and earned a master of divinity degree from Virginia Union University's Samuel Dewitt Proctor School of Theology and a master of theology from Union Theological Seminary in Richmond; he received an honorary doctor of divinity degree from Richmond Virginia Seminary; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Gray is a veteran of the United States Navy and entered the ministry after his honorable military service; he has served in the ministries of Zion Baptist Church in Chillicothe, Ohio, and First Baptist Church in Richmond, and as the pastor of New Hope Baptist Church in Ohio and the Mount Olive Baptist Church in the community of Wicomico Church, Virginia; and

WHEREAS, on June 4, 1995, Reverend Gray was greeted as "teacher" by a full church school assembly at the Fifth Street Baptist Church in Richmond and was affirmed as "preacher" at the church's morning worship service, beginning his pastoral duties with the delivery of a powerful and spirit-filled sermon; he was installed as the church's 11th pastor on August 6, 1995, and his visionary leadership, anointed preaching, and dynamic teaching has blessed the congregation, the city, and especially the Highland Park community; and

WHEREAS, a professor of church history and theology at the Samuel Dewitt Proctor School of Theology at Virginia Union University, Reverend Gray is admired and highly respected by his congregation, colleagues, and community as a teacher and pulpiteer without equal, as well as for his intellect and generosity, dedication to the Gospel ministry, knowledge of the Scriptures, love of teaching and preaching, and commitment to Christian service; he labors tirelessly, giving of his time, treasure, and talents to ensure that congregants and the community feel God's presence and love in their lives; and

WHEREAS, as the beloved senior pastor of the Fifth Street Baptist Church, Reverend Gray has led the church to experience significant growth, develop innovative ministries, and expand and improve church facilities through major building programs; and

WHEREAS, with an emphasis on celebratory worship, evangelism, and community witness, under Reverend Gray's leadership, the church has experienced a great spiritual revival, has embraced a renewed enthusiasm in worship services, and has renewed its dedication to diversified ministry and civic and community engagement; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Gray has received numerous awards and accolades, including his selection as a National Merit Scholar and as the recipient of the D.C. Rice Theological Scholarship, the Union Theological Seminar Graduate Scholarship, the NAACP Community Leadership Award, and the SLC Leadership Award; he was awarded the key to the city of Chillicothe, Ohio, by the mayor, who twice proclaimed "Rev. F. Todd Gray Day" in his honor; and

WHEREAS, his many affiliations, interests, and civic involvement attest to his calling; Reverend Gray has served as cochair of the City of Richmond's Commission on African American Males, chair of the citywide Men's Revival, moderator of the Shiloh Association, chair of Virginia Churches of the National Baptist Convention USA, Inc., and as a member of the Private Industry Council, the Richmond Renaissance Board, the United Way of Greater Richmond and Petersburg, the board of the Baptist General Convention of Virginia, and many other community organizations; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Gray has served the Fifth Street Baptist Church with honor, integrity, and great dedication for 25 years, and his passion for Christian service and ministry, love of and devotion to family, unconditional love for people, and selfless service to others are worthy of emulation; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend the Reverend Franklin Todd Gray for his 25 years of service as pastor of the Fifth Street Baptist Church; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the Reverend Franklin Todd Gray as an expression of the General Assembly's

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59 admiration and gratitude for his extraordinary commitment to ministry, his family, his congregation, his
60 community, and the people of the Commonwealth.