

23106227D

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 751

Offered February 17, 2023

Celebrating the life of the Reverend George A. Pera.

Patrons—Bennett-Parker; Senator: Ebbin

WHEREAS, the Reverend George A. Pera, an esteemed faith leader and former pastor at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Alexandria and an active and beloved member of the Alexandria community, died on January 17, 2023; and

WHEREAS, after graduating from the former Peabody High School in Pittsburgh, George Pera earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Pittsburgh before matriculating at Princeton Theological Seminary, where he was notably the first degree candidate to ever serve as a teaching fellow; and

WHEREAS, dedicated to honing his abilities as a chaplain and pastor, George Pera trained in clinical pastoral counseling at Bellevue Hospital in New York City; with Dr. Paul Tournier, the famed Swiss physician and psychiatrist, in Geneva; with Dame Cicely Saunders, the founder of the modern hospice movement; and with a public speaking coach from the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art; and

WHEREAS, George Pera began his career as a chaplain at The Ohio State University and New York University before taking a position as associate pastor at Central Presbyterian Church in New York City; and

WHEREAS, George Pera transferred to First Presbyterian Church in Greenwich in 1964 and a year later became its senior pastor and head of staff, drawing a following over the years through his insightful sermons and his active engagement in civic and community affairs; and

WHEREAS, George Pera next served as the senior pastor of the American International Church in London from 1977 to 1980, during which time he enjoyed the unique distinction of leading the first American Thanksgiving Day services ever held in Westminster Abbey, St. Paul's Cathedral, and Westminster Cathedral; and

WHEREAS, George Pera became the senior pastor at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Alexandria in 1980, providing the congregation with sage counsel and ample opportunities for community outreach until his retirement in 1995, thereafter receiving the title pastor-emeritus from the church; and

WHEREAS, George Pera would continue to preach in his retirement, including as guest preacher at the American Church in Paris and as an interim pastor at Calvary Presbyterian Church of Alexandria, while also devoting considerable time and leadership to local service organizations and nonprofits, including Senior Services of Alexandria, Elder Crafters of Alexandria, Agenda: Alexandria, Inova Alexandria Hospital Foundation, ALIVE!, and The Call to Community; and

WHEREAS, in recognition of his accomplishments in service to the community of Alexandria, George Pera was named a Living Legend of Alexandria in 2009 and was presented with the Annie B. Rose Lifetime Achievement Award from the Alexandria Commission on Aging in 2003; he was also the recipient of an honorary doctor of divinity degree, an honorary doctor of humane letters degree, and an honorary doctor of literature degree; and

WHEREAS, preceded in death by his wife of 58 years, Nancy, George Pera will be fondly remembered and dearly missed by his children, Tracey and David, and their families and by numerous other family members and friends; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby note with great sadness the loss of the Reverend George A. Pera, a cherished member of the Alexandria community whose inspired leadership and compassionate service touched countless lives; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of the Reverend George A. Pera as an expression of the General Assembly's respect for his memory.

INTRODUCED

HJ751