

# 2011 SPECIAL SESSION I

ENROLLED

## HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 504

*Celebrating the life of the Reverend Dr. John Otis Peterson.*

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, April 11, 2011

WHEREAS, the Reverend Dr. John Otis Peterson, the beloved pastor of Alfred Street Baptist Church in Alexandria for 42 years, died on March 22, 2011; and

WHEREAS, a humble man who never forgot his roots in the small town of Horse Head in Northumberland County, John Peterson graduated as valedictorian of Julius Rosenwald High School before receiving a bachelor's degree from Virginia Union University; and

WHEREAS, as a young man, John Peterson was called to the ministry; he was ordained in 1953 at his home church, First Baptist Church of Heathsville, and after completing his undergraduate education, continued his studies at Virginia Union University's School of Theology, receiving a master of divinity degree; and

WHEREAS, a gifted educator, John Peterson taught math and science for more than 20 years, mentoring and encouraging his students to fulfill their potential while continuing to further his own knowledge through studies at various institutions, including Lynchburg Theological Seminary, which bestowed upon him an honorary doctorate; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Peterson was a man of great faith and conviction who served several congregations before becoming pastor of historic Alfred Street Baptist Church in Alexandria in 1964; and

WHEREAS, under the inspired leadership of Dr. Peterson, Alfred Street Baptist Church experienced growth in membership, spiritual revival, and expanded services and facilities; and

WHEREAS, a pioneering pastor, Dr. Peterson led the Alfred Street Baptist Church congregation through the tumultuous times of the civil rights movement, ordained the church's first female deacon, and traveled around the world to spread the Gospel; and

WHEREAS, respected for his wise counsel and compassionate heart, Dr. Peterson served in leadership capacities for numerous Christian and community organizations, including as president of the Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Convention and Baptist General Convention of Virginia, member of the Alexandria School Board, volunteer chaplain of the Alexandria Police Department, and supporter of the Alexandria Branch of the NAACP; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Peterson guided, inspired, and challenged his congregation as the number of members ballooned from less than 200 to more than 2,800 at the time of his retirement while his prudent fiscal manner protected the church's financial resources; and

WHEREAS, from the small community of Horse Head to Alfred Street Baptist Church's pulpit to the far corners of the world, Dr. Peterson's life was marked by his deep and abiding faith and love for others; and

WHEREAS, a beloved husband, father, and grandfather, Dr. Peterson will be greatly missed and fondly remembered by countless family members, friends, and individuals whose lives he touched and the entire congregation of Alfred Street Baptist Church; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the House of Delegates hereby note with great sadness the loss of the Reverend Dr. John Otis Peterson; 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 Dr. John Otis Peterson as an expression of the House of Delegates' respect for his memory.

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