

14103523D

## HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 242

Offered January 31, 2014

*Commending Mill Swamp Baptist Church.*

Patron—Morris

WHEREAS, Mill Swamp Baptist Church, a religious institution in Isle of Wight County that traces its roots to one of the oldest Baptist churches in Virginia, celebrates 240 years of serving and uplifting the members of the community in 2014; and

WHEREAS, Mill Swamp Baptist Church draws upon a long tradition of Baptist communities in Colonial America, dating back to the foundation of Burleigh Baptist Church, the first organized Baptist congregation in Virginia, in approximately 1714; and

WHEREAS, after the dissolution of Burleigh Baptist Church in the mid-1700s, members of the former congregation formed Mill Swamp Baptist Church on July 2, 1774; amid the upheaval of the Revolutionary War and the formation of this great nation, the church began to grow and thrive; and

WHEREAS, under the first and longest-serving pastor, David Barrow, Mill Swamp Baptist Church became a beacon for freedom, liberty, spiritual guidance, and fellowship; under David Barrow and his successors, the church added many new members and created branches throughout the area; and

WHEREAS, decades later, Mill Swamp Baptist Church again played an important role in history during the Civil War; the Reverend John W. Ward, who served as a part-time chaplain in the Confederate Army, courageously opened his home to refugees and Confederate sympathizers during the war; and

WHEREAS, over the next 100 years, Mill Swamp Baptist Church was ably led by numerous pastors, many of whom oversaw improvements to the church building, increases in membership, and the exercise of missionary spirit through the creation of new branches; and

WHEREAS, in 1928, Mill Swamp Baptist Church was tragically destroyed by fire; under the strong leadership of the Reverend J. W. Simmons, the church was rebuilt as the brick structure that stands to this day; and

WHEREAS, beginning in 1937, the Reverend L. E. Holzbach instituted a great era of Bible study for the Mill Swamp Baptist Church congregation; he also worked to successfully pay off the church's debts through gifts and donations and oversaw many improvements that helped the church enter modern times; and

WHEREAS, in 1974, Mill Swamp Baptist Church celebrated its 200th anniversary; as the oldest continuous Baptist church in the Commonwealth, it had established an incomparable record of service to God and the community; and

WHEREAS, Mill Swamp Baptist Church has continued to grow and improve to the present day, dedicating the Mill Swamp Baptist Memorial Steeple in 1980, expanding ministries, and adding a full-time youth pastor in 2003; and

WHEREAS, for nearly two and a half centuries, Mill Swamp Baptist Church has succeeded in its mission to teach the congregation how to enjoy a personal relationship with God and spread the good news of the Lord throughout the world; and

WHEREAS, the talented, dedicated, and inspiring leaders of Mill Swamp Baptist Church have built a legacy of outreach to the community and devotion to the spiritual needs of the congregation that few other churches can match; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend Mill Swamp Baptist Church on the occasion of its 240th anniversary; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to James Jones, pastor of Mill Swamp Baptist Church, as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for the church's storied history and respect for its enduring tradition of service to the community.

INTRODUCED

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