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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 33

Offered January 13, 2016

Prefiled January 4, 2016

Commending the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

Patrons—McEachin, Barker, Dance, Ebbin, Edwards, Favola, Locke, Lucas, Saslaw, Sturtevant, Surovell and Wexton; Delegates: Bagby, Bell, John J., Boysko, Carr, Davis, Heretick, Herring, Hester, Hope, Keam, Kory, Krizek, Levine, Lindsey, Massie, McClellan, McQuinn, Minchew, Morefield, Plum, Rasoul, Simon, Spruill, Toscano, Tyler, Villanueva, Ware, Watts and Wright

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, the African Methodist Episcopal Church grew out of the Free African Society which was established by Richard Allen, Absalom Jones, and others in Philadelphia in 1787; and

WHEREAS, the African Methodist Episcopal Church is the first major religious denomination in the western world that developed from sociological and theological beliefs and differences; the church rejected the negative theological interpretations which rendered persons of African descent second-class citizens; and

WHEREAS, the African Methodist Episcopal Church has a membership of 2,510,000 people, located in 20 Episcopal Districts in 39 countries on five continents, with a mission to minister to the social, spiritual, and physical development of all people; and

WHEREAS, since its founding the African Methodist Episcopal Church has been preaching and teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ; feeding the hungry; clothing the naked; housing the homeless; cheering the fallen; providing jobs for the jobless; administering to the needs of those in prisons, hospitals, nursing homes, asylums and mental institutions, and senior citizens' homes; caring for the sick, the shut-in, and the mentally and socially disturbed; and encouraging thrift and economic advancement; and

WHEREAS, there are 70 African Methodist Episcopal Churches serving the people of the Commonwealth from the sandy Eastern Shore to the majestic heights of the Blue Ridge Mountains; and

WHEREAS, the African Methodist Episcopal Church is an adamant supporter of education and is affiliated with 17 institutions of higher education; and

WHEREAS, the African Methodist Episcopal Church has been and continues to be the center of cultural life for many communities throughout the decades; exceptional music programs have long been a part of this cultural tradition, including choirs; and

WHEREAS, the African Methodist Episcopal Church has been at the forefront of the Civil Rights and Voting Rights movements, advocating for equality in housing, education, health care, and employment, as well as encouraging unhindered access to the ballot box; and

WHEREAS, the African Methodist Episcopal Church maintains that the faith community must lead and be the conscience of the nation, for "race relations will not improve with the passage of legislation alone; it will also require a change of heart and thinking. The African Methodist Episcopal Church calls upon every church, temple, mosque, synagogue and faith communion to commit anew to do everything possible we can to end benign neglect that includes ignoring, tolerating and accepting racism and to make a commitment to end racism by the example of our lives and actions"; and

WHEREAS, nine members of Mother Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina, were brutally murdered in the church sanctuary and untold violence and hatred remains prevalent in American society; the African Methodist Episcopal Church stands boldly and steadfastly opposed to violence, whether it be gun violence, gang violence, police violence, domestic violence, environmental violence, economic violence, violence against religious institutions and houses of worship, or any other form of violence; and

WHEREAS, the African Methodist Episcopal Church supports implementation of stricter gun control; one in three people in the United States know someone who has been shot; on average, 31 Americans are murdered with guns every day and 151 are treated for a gun assault in an emergency room; every day, on average, 55 people kill themselves with a firearm, and 46 people are shot or killed in an accident with a gun; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend the African Methodist Episcopal Church for its years of ministry and service to the Commonwealth and the nation; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the Right Reverend William P. DeVeaux, presiding prelate of the Second Episcopal

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56 District of the African Methodist Episcopal Church as an expression of the General Assembly's
57 admiration for the church's contributions to spiritual life in the United States.