

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 33

Commending the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

Agreed to by the Senate, February 18, 2016
Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 26, 2016

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 that opposed negative theological interpretations that rendered persons of African descent second-class citizens; and

WHEREAS, the African Methodist Episcopal Church currently 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 a strong advocate for education and is affiliated with 17 institutions of higher education; and

WHEREAS, the African Methodist Episcopal Church has been throughout the decades and continues to be the center of cultural life for many communities, with exceptional music programs as a part of this cultural tradition, especially choral music; 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 believes that the faith community must lead and be the conscience of the nation because improvement in race relations will require not only the passage of legislation but also a change of hearts and minds; and

WHEREAS, Mother Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina, stood boldly and steadfastly against senseless violence committed on June 17, 2015, when nine of its members were brutally murdered during the church's Bible study and prayer service; and

WHEREAS, the African Methodist Episcopal Church continues to demonstrate leadership in its advocacy for peace and forgiveness in its ministry and message; 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 District of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for the church's contributions to spiritual life in the United States.

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