

## 2017 SESSION

INTRODUCED

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### SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 379

Offered February 7, 2017

*Commending Third Baptist Church.*

Patrons—Dance; Delegate: Aird

WHEREAS, in 2017, Third Baptist Church in Petersburg is celebrating the 175th anniversary of its founding and its rich history as one of the oldest black independent churches in the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, in 1842, several members of Gillfield Baptist Church formed Third Colored Church, which would later become Third Baptist Church; and

WHEREAS, the Third Baptist Church congregation was made up almost entirely of free blacks, although black churches were required to retain white leadership at the time; and

WHEREAS, the congregation first gathered at the Old Market Street Church, then, after the Civil War, Third Baptist Church purchased an old schoolhouse at Lavender Lane and Rock Street to use as a church; and

WHEREAS, among the earliest preachers at Third Baptist Church was the Reverend John Jasper, one of the most famous black ministers of the nineteenth century; and

WHEREAS, in 1961, Third Baptist Church purchased the former Wesley Methodist Church and moved to its location at 630 Halifax Street; and

WHEREAS, the Reverend Leroy A. Cherry became pastor of Third Baptist Church in 1996, when the church was in a transitional stage and facing declining membership and a deteriorating building; and

WHEREAS, over the following years, Third Baptist Church undertook substantial renovations and upgrades; however, Pastor Cherry's ultimate vision was for the congregation to return closer to its original home; and

WHEREAS, Third Baptist Church moved to a new church at its present location at 550 Farmer Street in 2006, and plans for a building expansion are currently underway; and

WHEREAS, under the faithful leadership of Pastor Cherry, the membership of Third Baptist Church has grown tremendously, the ministries have expanded considerably, and the church has grown stronger in love and truth; and

WHEREAS, Pastor Cherry built a strong deacon board and during his leadership the church ordained its first female minister, the Reverend Linda Drummond, in 2012; and

WHEREAS, Third Baptist Church is thriving today; each week the congregants gather for joyful worship in the Baptist tradition, for generous fellowship and community outreach, and to give thanks for the many blessings that continue to flow; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend Third Baptist Church in Petersburg on celebrating its 175th anniversary in 2017; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Third Baptist Church as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for its significant history and contributions to the Commonwealth.

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