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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 327

Offered February 25, 2020

Commending Bethany Baptist Church.

Patrons—Orrock, Fowler and Cole, M.L.; Senator: McDougle

WHEREAS, Bethany Baptist Church, the oldest church in the Fredericksburg Area Baptist Network, celebrates its 250th anniversary of service to the Lord and the Woodford community in 2020; and

WHEREAS, founded in 1770, Bethany Baptist Church began as Guiney's Bridge Church under the leadership of Elder Nathaniel Holloway; the congregation met in a small frame building in a grove of oaks near the present-day location of the church; and

WHEREAS, despite persecution of its leaders in its early years, Guiney's Bridge Church grew to 45 members by 1791 and, under the leadership of John Waller, the church was admitted to the Goshen Association of Churches; and

WHEREAS, by 1818, the congregation was known as Bethany Baptist Church, and by 1825, a larger frame building was constructed to accommodate the growing membership; and

WHEREAS, misfortune struck in 1842 when Bethany Baptist Church was destroyed by fire; however, the faithful congregation quickly rebuilt on the same site with brick, and that building serves as the nucleus of the present-day church; and

WHEREAS, in 1872, with the agreement of the entire Bethany Baptist Church body, 30 African American members of the congregation started Beulah Baptist Church, which continues to thrive in 2020; and

WHEREAS, during the latter half of the 19th century, Bethany Baptist Church's membership increased to 714 members, among whom an active female missionary society developed; and

WHEREAS, by 1925, Bethany Baptist Church was one of the 10 largest churches in the Goshen Association of Churches and had its first full-time minister, the Reverend W.L. Witt; in 1929, the church expanded its facilities, which accommodated the congregation for almost 40 years; and

WHEREAS, during World War II, 21 members of the Bethany Baptist Church congregation joined the other young men of their generation in service to the nation, with John Paul Houck making the ultimate sacrifice; and

WHEREAS, Bethany Baptist Church leaders made the decision in 1968 to construct an educational building and baptistery for the growing congregation, and in 1970 the church was accepted into the Fredericksburg Baptist Association; and

WHEREAS, while the surrounding community has changed from a largely rural farming area to a more suburban population, Bethany Baptist Church has adapted and continued to address the spiritual needs of all its members; and

WHEREAS, as the Woodford community has grown and changed, Bethany Baptist Church has grown apace, ordaining women into its deacon service and welcoming the Reverend Dr. Susan McBride as a pastor, while maintaining its commitment to traditional Baptist theology; and

WHEREAS, from its founding days before the signing of the Declaration of Independence, Bethany Baptist Church and its faithful congregation have grown in faith and numbers and remained steadfast in their service to the Lord and the community; and

WHEREAS, Bethany Baptist Church has been served throughout its 250-year history by immensely dedicated and able pastors, who have provided visionary leadership, devout worship, meaningful Christian education, and enthusiastic ministry and community missions; and

WHEREAS, throughout its long history, Bethany Baptist Church has provided its devoted congregation, its neighbors, and the community a place to worship, to help others, and to grow in faith and service; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly commend Bethany Baptist Church on the occasion of its 250th anniversary; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Bethany Baptist Church as an expression of the General Assembly's congratulations and best wishes for future success in its ministries.

INTRODUCED

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