

2021 SPECIAL SESSION II

ENROLLED

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 822

Commending Mt. Oni Baptist Church.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, August 9, 2021

WHEREAS, for more than 150 years, Mt. Oni Baptist Church in Ruther Glen has provided spiritual leadership, generous outreach, and opportunities for joyful worship to members of the community; and

WHEREAS, Mt. Oni Baptist Church was formed in 1870 by former members of Reedy Baptist Church seeking a more conveniently located place to worship; the church's first pastor, the Reverend Albert Owens shepherded the congregation in its early years until his death; and

WHEREAS, the Reverend Elmore Taylor served as the second pastor of Mt. Oni Baptist Church and was succeeded by his son, the Reverend Hamilton Taylor, who led the congregation for 37 years and oversaw the completion of two subsequent church buildings; and

WHEREAS, the fourth pastor, the Reverend Harry J. Ellis pastored Mt. Oni Baptist Church for 13 years, leading the congregation through the Great Depression and the beginning of World War II; and

WHEREAS, in 1945, the Reverend W.D. Adkins became pastor and over the course of his two decades of service led a remodeling project and worked with congregants and community members to excavate a basement for the church; and

WHEREAS, the Reverend E. Walter Anderson joined Mt. Oni Baptist Church as the sixth pastor in 1966; he placed a special emphasis on supporting young people in the community through a Christian education program, a scholarship fund, and a tutoring program coordinated with Caroline County Public Schools; and

WHEREAS, the Reverend Anderson oversaw the creation of the male chorus at Mt. Oni Baptist Church and reached out to the wider community as moderator of the Mattaponi Baptist Association of Virginia; during his tenure as pastor, Margaret Jones became the first female preacher in the church's history, and the church has benefited from the contributions of many other women leaders since; and

WHEREAS, the Reverend Marion Tapscott served as interim pastor of Mt. Oni Baptist Church from 2005 to 2007; the following year, the Reverend Harry Reginald Carter became pastor and established a successful Children's Church program and a transportation ministry and purchased land for construction of a new church building; and

WHEREAS, the Reverend Vaughn M. Cunningham served as interim pastor of Mt. Oni Baptist Church until 2015, when the Reverend Marvin Gilliam, Jr., was installed as pastor; the Reverend Gilliam established a website and social media accounts for the church and purchased a new sound system and video equipment to help the church reach a wider audience; and

WHEREAS, as the eighth pastor of Mt. Oni Baptist Church, the Reverend Gilliam led the congregation to raise money and donate provisions for people affected by the water crisis in Flint, Michigan, and victims of tornadoes in the Commonwealth; he built strong relationships with local government officials to offer insights on police reform and developed a supportive partnership with Bowling Green Elementary School; and

WHEREAS, the current pastor of Mt. Oni Baptist Church, the Reverend Jasper Chamberlain, Jr., joined the church in June 2020 and has helped the congregation navigate the challenges of hosting worship services during the COVID-19 pandemic by hosting drive-in services and broadcasting services on the radio; and

WHEREAS, notably, Mt. Oni Baptist Church has only had nine full-time pastors and six chairs of its deacon's ministry in its entire 150-year history, a mark of the church's stability, longevity, and importance in local community life; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, That Mt. Oni Baptist Church hereby be commended on the occasion of its 150th anniversary; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Mt. Oni Baptist Church as an expression of the House of Delegates' admiration for the church's long history and its congregation's many contributions to the Caroline County community.

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