

2023 SESSION

ENROLLED

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 468

Commending Gillfield Baptist Church.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, January 16, 2023
Agreed to by the Senate, January 19, 2023

WHEREAS, Gillfield Baptist Church, one of the oldest African American congregations in Petersburg, celebrated its 225th anniversary in 2022; and

WHEREAS, Gillfield Baptist Church was first known as Davenport Church, which was founded in Prince George County in 1788 under the mission of the local First Baptist Church; and

WHEREAS, the congregation that would later become Gillfield Baptist Church achieved autonomy in 1797, marking the date of the church's founding, and relocated to Petersburg six years later; and

WHEREAS, known at various times in its earlier years as the Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ of Petersburg or Sandy Beach Church, Gillfield Baptist Church assumed its current name in 1878 upon the completion of its current church building, which was spearheaded by the Reverend Henry W. Williams, D.D., who led the congregation from 1865 to 1900; and

WHEREAS, Gillfield Baptist Church has been subsequently led by the Reverend George B. Howard (1900-1912), the Reverend Samuel Allen Brown (1913-1951), the Reverend Wyatt Tee Walker (1952-1960), the Reverend Grady Wilson Powell, Sr. (1961-1997), the Reverend Glenn Eugene Porter, Sr. (2000-2003), and Dr. George Washington Carter Lyons, Jr., who has been the pastor of the congregation since 2007; and

WHEREAS, under the leadership of the Reverend Wyatt Tee Walker, future chief of staff to the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., at the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, many members of Gillfield Baptist Church supported the civil rights movement in Petersburg in the 1950s and 1960s, participating in sit-ins at the local public library that helped to bring integrationist reforms to the city; and

WHEREAS, Gillfield Baptist Church has grown and developed over the years to enhance its ability to provide uplifting and meaningful opportunities for worship and outreach in the community, with the acquisition of an adjacent property in 2018 representing the third major expansion in the church's history; and

WHEREAS, over the past 225 years, Gillfield Baptist Church has offered spiritual guidance and comfort to its many members and extended ample aid and support to the community, becoming a vital part of what makes Petersburg a wonderful place to live, work, and raise a family; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend Gillfield Baptist Church on the occasion of its 225th anniversary; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Dr. George Washington Carter Lyons, Jr., pastor of Gillfield Baptist Church, as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for the church's history and its contributions to the Commonwealth.

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