

2024 SPECIAL SESSION I

INTRODUCED

24200117D

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 691

Offered May 21, 2024

3 Commending Shiloh Baptist Church (Old Site).

5 Patrons—Cole, Anthony, Hayes, Hope, Mundon King, Sewell and Watts

6 WHEREAS, Shiloh Baptist Church (Old Site), a thriving church community in Fredericksburg, was
7 formed from the previous Shiloh Baptist Meeting House congregation nearly 170 years ago; and

8 WHEREAS, Shiloh Baptist Church (Old Site) traces its roots to the formation in 1804 of the first Baptist
9 meeting house in Fredericksburg, a wooden building on Lafayette Boulevard; and

10 WHEREAS, the congregation subsequently met in an abandoned building on the corner of Hanover Street
11 and Sophia Street until 1820, when its trustees purchased from Horace and Elizabeth Marshall a plot of land
12 at 801 Sophia Street, which remains the current location of Shiloh Baptist Church (Old Site); and

13 WHEREAS, by the 1830s, the church had hundreds of congregants, including white members and both
14 free and enslaved Black members, from the City of Fredericksburg and Stafford, Spotsylvania, and Caroline
15 Counties; and

16 WHEREAS, between 1849 and 1855, white members of the church broke away to form Fredericksburg
17 Baptist Church, now known as Shiloh Baptist Church (New Site), and sold the building on Sophia Street to
18 the Black members of the congregation; and

19 WHEREAS, at the time, Black congregations were not permitted to meet without a white overseer, and
20 Fredericksburg resident George Rowe became the legally required pastor of Shiloh Baptist Church (Old Site);
21 and

22 WHEREAS, the Civil War had a significant impact on both the Fredericksburg community and the
23 congregation of Shiloh Baptist Church (Old Site); Sunday services were discontinued during the war, and
24 George Rowe resigned as pastor in 1863; and

25 WHEREAS, the Reverend John C. Diamond became the pastor of Shiloh Baptist Church (Old Site) on
26 November 8, 1910, and began to lead the church into the modern era; a skilled architect and builder, he built
27 an addition behind the church building and oversaw the installation of stained glass windows and the
28 construction of a parsonage nearby; and

29 WHEREAS, in addition, Reverend Diamond served the community as an educator at the Fredericksburg
30 Normal & Industrial Institute (F.N. & I.I.), then the only Black high school in the area, and raised money for
31 the United War Work Fund to support veterans after World War I; and

32 WHEREAS, Reverend Diamond retired as pastor of Shiloh Baptist Church (Old Site) in 1920 and was
33 succeeded by the Reverend B. H. Hester, who also inspired young people as a teacher, coach, and principal at
34 F.N. & I.I.; and

35 WHEREAS, the Reverend Lawrence A. Davies served as the next pastor of Shiloh Baptist Church (Old
36 Site) for exactly 50 years, from March 4, 1962, to March 4, 2012, shepherding the church through the civil
37 rights movement and significant periods of growth and change in the community; and

38 WHEREAS, Reverend Davies and other members of the congregation advocated for desegregation and
39 increased participation by the Black community in local and state elections, drawing the attention of the
40 Virginia Conference of the NAACP, which held its 1963 annual convention in Fredericksburg, with Shiloh
41 Baptist Church (Old Site) as the convention headquarters; and

42 WHEREAS, Reverend Davies worked with local business owner and church deacon Weldon Bailey to
43 establish Citizens United for Action to support Black candidates for office; both men then went on to achieve
44 great success in public service themselves; and

45 WHEREAS, Weldon Bailey was one of Fredericksburg's first Black election judges and Reverend Davies
46 became the first Black member of the Fredericksburg City Council in 1966 and the city's first Black mayor in
47 1976; he was reelected as mayor four times and retired as the longest-serving mayor in city history; and

48 WHEREAS, Reverend Davies significantly enhanced the quality of life in Fredericksburg as both a
49 spiritual leader and a public servant, taking a special interest in public transportation, mental health and
50 overall wellness, and affordable housing; and

51 WHEREAS, Reverend Davies's steady leadership helped Shiloh Baptist Church (Old Site) recover from
52 damage related to Hurricane Agnes and continue meeting the needs of a growing congregation; he worked
53 closely with other community organizations and churches in the region to build fellowship and create new
54 opportunities for ministry; and

55 WHEREAS, in 2012, Reverend Davies was named pastor emeritus of Shiloh Baptist Church (Old Site),
56 having proudly served the church for one-third of its history since the Civil War; and

57 WHEREAS, the Reverend Aaron L. Dobynes, Sr., assumed the pastorate on June 1, 2014, and has
58 maintained the traditions of excellence in faith leadership and outreach for which Shiloh Baptist Church (Old

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59 Site) is well known in the Fredericksburg community; now, therefore, be it
60 RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, That Shiloh Baptist Church (Old Site) hereby be commended on
61 the occasion of its 170th anniversary as an independent church; and, be it
62 RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for
63 presentation to Shiloh Baptist Church (Old Site) as an expression of the House of Delegates' admiration for
64 the church's long and storied history and legacy of contributions to the residents of Fredericksburg.