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HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 107

Offered February 10, 2026

Commending Mt. Gazerine Baptist Church.

Patron—Ware

WHEREAS, the church is among those “mediating institutions,” in the phrase of Tocqueville, in the early years of the American republic, that provide a bulwark of freedom from the state for the individual and for the free individual in association with others; and

WHEREAS, Mt. Gazerine Baptist Church of Blackstone, in Nottoway County, has been such a bulwark, and such a communion for Christian believers, since the wartime year of 1864; and

WHEREAS, it was “sometime in 1864,” according to the Reverend Dr. Irene B. Allen, pastor of Mt. Gazerine, that, “a group of recently freed Negroes came together to worship in Spirit and Truth”; and

WHEREAS, Mt. Gazerine Baptist Church's first locale was, Rev. Dr. Allen continues, drawing on documents composed by her grandmother, Cordelia Bagley, “a ‘brush harbor’ near the Big Nottoway River,” a brush harbor being “a makeshift building constructed from wood poles and brushes. Builders of the brush harbor were James Lee, William Amphy, Jerry Greenhill, Mrs. Rebecca Dagner (an ancestor [of] Pastor Irene B. Allen), James Amphy,” and unremembered others; and

WHEREAS, the first pastor of Mt. Gazerine Baptist Church was Reverend Lee Rather, and it was he who guided the church to build its first framed, wood building, a structure that was destroyed by fire in the 1930s; and

WHEREAS, subsequently, Mt. Gazerine Baptist Church built its present building, singing “Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow”; and

WHEREAS, pastors of Mt. Gazerine Baptist Church since that time have included the Reverend C.C. Johnson, the Reverend Thomas Jordan, the Reverend L.A. Wilson, the Reverend John Megginson, the Reverend Royal Nickens, the Reverend John Winbush, and, at the present, the Reverend Dr. Irene B. Allen; and

WHEREAS, Mt. Gazerine Baptist Church has also been blessed with 33 deacons, 18 trustees, and six clerks; and

WHEREAS, to expand upon its ministries, Mt. Gazerine Baptist Church has added an Educational Building and Fellowship Area, and, within the sanctuary, an organ, a piano, a heating system, new carpets, new cushioned pews, stained glass windows, and a bulletin board, as well as a Holy Cross in front of the edifice, and, for the Fellowship Area, a freezer, refrigerators, and comfort areas for ladies and the handicapped; and

WHEREAS, numerous other improvements have been provided for in both the church and Fellowship Annex and the parking lot, and the donation of two acres permitted an extension of the Mt. Gazerine Baptist Church cemetery; and

WHEREAS, Rev. Dr. Allen notes that, “Mt. Gazerine continually built and sustained ministries such as Sunday School, Bible Study, Deaconess Ministries, Senior Ushers, and Missionary Ministries, as well as Junior Ushers, Choir, and Mothers of the Church, Vacation Bible School, and Rhoda Ministry for young girls”; and

WHEREAS, several sons and daughters of Mt. Gazerine Baptist Church have been licensed and ordained for evangelism and pastoring in the Gospel Ministry; and

WHEREAS, from 1898 through 1949, Mt. Gazerine Baptist Church also operated the Mt. Gazerine School, which offered instruction to children in such subjects as math, grammar, history, spelling, Bible studies, and personal hygiene; and

WHEREAS, Cordelia Bagley, who compiled the history of Mt. Gazerine Baptist Church, has written that, “Through history the most instructed thinkers have but a limited advantage over the most illiterate. For people who make history haven't the time to write it. Therefore, we must tell some of the doings of this grand age-old institution, Mt. Gazerine Baptist Church. The history of Mt. Gazerine is the glass which we may behold with ancestral eyes”; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, That Mt. Gazerine Baptist Church of Blackstone hereby be commended for 162 years of faithful ministry of the Gospel and cultivation of community characterized by faith, hope, and love; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the Reverend Dr. Irene B. Allen on behalf of the devoted members of the congregation, who are committed to continuing the legacy of worship and service at Mt. Gazerine Baptist Church.