

2026 SESSION

ENROLLED

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 199

Commending Pilgrim Baptist Church.

Agreed to by the Senate, March 10, 2026
Agreed to by the House of Delegates, March 12, 2026

WHEREAS, in 2025, Pilgrim Baptist Church celebrated its 125th anniversary of service as a beacon of hope, strength, and spiritual growth in the Richmond community; and

WHEREAS, Pilgrim Baptist Church traces its roots to 1900, when the Reverend William Thomas organized a congregation in a small chapel in Miller's Field, around what is now the 1600 block of Chamberlayne Avenue; and

WHEREAS, after the church disbanded a few years later, two members of the community, Christina Kemp and her daughter, Carrie Satterwhite, saw the need to continue providing religious education to local children and formed a Sunday school in their home; and

WHEREAS, Pilgrim Baptist Church began to reorganize as early as 1909 with the Reverend James H. Williams as its pastor, but it was not until 1917 that the church purchased a building located on what is now Bowling Green Road and united a group of the original congregants from the Miller's Field church with Christina Kemp and Carrie Satterwhite's group; and

WHEREAS, over the next few years, Pilgrim Baptist Church continued to grow in faith and number, with its membership reaching 200 individuals; and

WHEREAS, in 1960, Pilgrim Baptist Church formed a committee to discuss the need to relocate due to a city development project; the project ultimately did not include the church, and in the process, the congregation expressed their strong desire to remain a part of the community; and

WHEREAS, over the course of its history, Pilgrim Baptist Church has benefited from the dedicated leadership of numerous pastors and interim pastors, all of whom have helped the congregation grow spiritually, ensured financial stability, and maintained the church's active role in the wider community; and

WHEREAS, in 2013, the Reverend Dr. Sylvester L. Turner was called as pastor of Pilgrim Baptist Church and served until his passing in 2026; under his leadership, the church ordained three new ministers, licensed three associate members as ministerial staff, installed new carpet and upgraded the sound system, re-stained and cushioned the pews, and conducted other renovations to better serve the congregation; and

WHEREAS, Pilgrim Baptist Church's longstanding commitment to education, outreach, and social justice has had a profound and meaningful impact on the lives of countless local residents, and the congregation's ability to adapt and thrive over the decades is a testament to the power of faith and community spirit; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend Pilgrim Baptist Church on the occasion of its 125th anniversary; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Pilgrim Baptist Church as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for the church's long legacy of contributions to the Richmond community.

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