

2026 SESSION

ENROLLED

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 12

Commending New Grove Baptist Church.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, January 19, 2026
Agreed to by the Senate, January 22, 2026

WHEREAS, for 160 years, New Grove Baptist Church has played an integral role in the Kenbridge community by providing spiritual leadership, opportunities for joyful worship in the Baptist tradition, and generous outreach programs that have touched countless lives; and

WHEREAS, New Grove Baptist Church traces its roots to 1865, when Black residents began holding worship services in a bush arbor that was located on Oral Oaks Road and became known as Moore's Arbor; and

WHEREAS, several members of the congregation, including James Bank, Alex Cousin, Henderson Ghee, Isaac Ghee, Charlie Hepburn, Anderson Ingram, Robert Nelson, and Charlie Woodard, sought to strengthen the fledgling church and create a more permanent house of worship; and

WHEREAS, these members of the congregation worked with Mr. Leach, a white Northerner, and Mack Bagley, a Lunenburg County resident, who served as preachers and taught many of the early church members to read and write; the congregation subsequently built a log church and several members began studying to become preachers themselves; and

WHEREAS, the Reverend Alec Cheatham served as the first elected pastor of New Grove Baptist Church and helped the church community grow in both faith and number until 1892, when he was succeeded by the Reverend Peter Ghee, the son of one of the church's original members; and

WHEREAS, the Reverend James Thomas was called as pastor of New Grove Baptist Church in 1894, followed by the Reverend George Wharton in 1905, and the Reverend W.H. Salley in 1907; Reverend Salley served the congregation for 35 years, overseeing numerous enhancements to the church building and performing 419 baptisms during his tenure; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Salley was succeeded by the Reverend Robert L. Petty, who was admired for his stirring oratory, the Reverend Russell S. Jackson, who oversaw a remodeling project, and the Reverend Robert E. Bartley, who built strong relationships with the congregation and continued to offer his wise guidance even after completing his term as pastor; and

WHEREAS, in 1959, the Reverend David E. Gordon was selected as pastor of New Grove Baptist Church and led the congregation to new heights by reviving the Baptist Training Union program and focusing on youth leadership development; and

WHEREAS, two years later, Reverend Jackson returned to again serve as lead pastor of New Grove Baptist Church; he oversaw the construction of the current church building, which was completed in 1967, and guided other projects to help the church better serve its members and the wider community; and

WHEREAS, the Reverend Dr. Curtis W. Bagley, Jr., served New Grove Baptist Church for more than 30 years and led the congregation as head pastor until 2023; he played a significant role in guiding the church through periods of growth and change with vital assistance from his associate minister, the Reverend Patricia Barnette; and

WHEREAS, over the years, several members of New Grove Baptist Church have answered the call to the ministry, either at their home church or other churches throughout the Commonwealth and the region; and

WHEREAS, New Grove Baptist Church has also supported five daughter churches, including North View Baptist Church, Friendship Baptist Church, Unity Baptist Church, New Galilee Baptist Church, and Flat Rock Baptist Church; and

WHEREAS, the New Grove Baptist Church Sunday School, which has fostered a passion for faith learning since 1872, sponsors a wide range of activities that have raised money to support the Baptist Children's Home, the NAACP, and other worthy causes; and

WHEREAS, throughout its history, New Grove Baptist Church has been a beacon of hope, faith, and fellowship for its congregation and played an important role in local life through its commitment to service and community engagement; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend New Grove Baptist Church on the occasion of its 160th anniversary of service to the residents of Kenbridge and the surrounding area; 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. Jimmy Dews, head pastor of New Grove Baptist Church, as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for the church's longevity and legacy of contributions to the Kenbridge community.

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