

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 21

*Commending First Baptist Church of Midlothian.*

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, January 21, 2026

WHEREAS, on February 8, 2026, members of First Baptist Church of Midlothian will assemble in worship to commemorate the 180th anniversary of the founding of their historic congregation; and

WHEREAS, on the official Virginia Historical Marker near First Baptist Church of Midlothian appear these words, “The First African Baptist Church of Coalfield was constituted on 8 Feb. 1846 with six white and 54 enslaved and free black members from Spring Creek Baptist Church, formerly Cox’s Meeting House. The congregation, required by law to have a white pastor, initially met about a mile southeast of here in a log building at the Midlothian Coal Mining Company coalpits. After the Civil War, the church called its first black pastor and joined the Colored Shiloh Baptist Association. The congregation purchased land here after a fire in 1877, built a new sanctuary, and renamed itself First Baptist Church of Midlothian. This is the oldest African American congregation in present-day Chesterfield County.”; and

WHEREAS, documents possessed by the church report that “On February 8, 1846, on the second Sunday in the month, it appears by an old record that a group of six persons met to organize the First Church of Coalfield, named First African Baptist Church of Coalfield”; and

WHEREAS, “Originally, the congregation worshipped at Spring Creek in Cox’s Meeting House. As was the custom of the day, slaves were relegated to the back and the gallery of the church. By the mid-1840’s, Spring Creek membership had grown to include 800 slaves. At that point the Middle District Association, the governing religious association, decided to form two all-colored congregations, one of which became First African Baptist Church of Coalfield. The names of the founders are: Jordan Martin, Matthew Winfree, James McIntyre, Zachariah McGruder, Samuel Winfree, and Nelson Turnley. One week later another meeting was held to determine more fully the organization, and the following persons were added to the list of organizers: Thomas Jewett, Robert Smith, Joseph Monroe, and Matthew Ford.”; and

WHEREAS, “The following officers were elected on the First Sunday in March: Benjamin York, Squire Lockett, Nathan York, and Caesar Logan as Deacons; Benjamin York—Treasurer; Samuel Winfree—Clerk; and Jordan Martin as Pastor. The Church continued to prosper until the year 1877, when it was destroyed by fire. Shortly after the fire, a new church was built on land purchased by the same body, located about one-half mile from Coalfield Station (now Southern Railway Company), the new church being named First Baptist Church of Midlothian. Worship services were held two Sundays a month. During worship service, hymns were sung congregational style, being led by a few persons, until the year 1919 at which time the First Choir was organized under the direction of Mr. Cornelius H. Munford.”; and

WHEREAS, “by the 1950s, the church had grown so much that beginning April 1, 1956, it was decided that worship service be held four Sundays a month”; and

WHEREAS, “First Baptist Church of Midlothian has had an enormous impact on Chesterfield County. As the oldest African American church in the county, it has given birth to six churches. They are: Mt. Nebo Baptist, Mt. Calvary Baptist, Bethlehem Baptist, Spring Creek Baptist, Mt. Sinai Baptist, and Friendship Memorial Baptist Church. Since the year 1846, twenty-eight pastors have served First Baptist.”; and

WHEREAS, since May 20, 2007, First Baptist Church of Midlothian has been ably led by the Reverend Pernel J. Johnson, who is assisted in all matters by his wife and the first lady of the congregation, Lisa J. Johnson; and

WHEREAS, in summarizing the 18 decades of faithful witness by members of First Baptist Church of Midlothian, the church’s historian Audrey Ross cites the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians, chapter 2, verse 9: “But as it is written, ‘Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him’”; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, That First Baptist Church of Midlothian hereby be commended on the occasion of its 180th anniversary, for maintaining through most of two centuries a faithful witness to the Gospel; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to First Baptist Church of Midlothian as an expression of the House of Delegates’ admiration for the congregation’s contributions to the community and warm good wishes for many years more of devoted worship and sacrificial care for others.

ENROLLED

HR21ER