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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 73

Offered January 21, 2026

*Designating April 24 to April 30, in 2026 and in each succeeding year, as Christian Heritage Week in Virginia.*

Patrons—Fowler, Wright, Clark, Griffin and Walker; Senators: Cifers, Diggs and Sturtevant

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, on April 26, 1607, English settlers of the Virginia Company landed on the shores of what is now Cape Henry; and

WHEREAS, on April 29, 1607, the settlers planted a cross they had carried with them on the shore and held a service of prayer and dedication led by the Reverend Robert Hunt, who stated "We do hereby dedicate this Land, and ourselves, to reach the People within these shores with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to raise up Godly generations after us, and with these generations take the Kingdom of God to all the earth. May this Covenant of Dedication remain to all generations, as long as this earth remains and may this land . . . be evangelists to the world. May all who see this cross remember what we have done here, and may those who come here to inhabit join us in this Covenant . . ."; and

WHEREAS, on May 24, 1607, Christopher Newport, captain of the *Susan Constant*, the largest of the ships that brought these settlers across the Atlantic Ocean, erected a Protestant cross at the James River fall line in what is now the City of Richmond; three hundred years later, in 1907, a bronze replica of the Christopher Newport Cross, which is currently located near Richmond's Canal Walk, was dedicated as a remembrance of the settlers' deep and abiding faith; and

WHEREAS, on December 4, 1619, Virginia settlers held a prayer service at Berkeley Plantation in Charles City County to "be yearly and perpetually kept holy as a day of Thanksgiving to Almighty God," which is considered by some historians as the first observance of Thanksgiving in the New World; and

WHEREAS, the settlers' strong faith and Christian heritage played an essential role in life at the Jamestown Colony and was influential in the early development of many of the Commonwealth's long-standing institutions, as well as the birth of the United States as an independent nation; and

WHEREAS, the writers of the Declaration of Independence expressed their faith through the acknowledgment "that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness"; and

WHEREAS, George Mason wrote in the Virginia Declaration of Rights, forerunner to the Bill of Rights in the Constitution of the United States, "that it is the mutual duty of all to practice Christian forbearance, love and charity towards each other"; and

WHEREAS, the Bill of Rights of the Constitution of Virginia states "That religion or the duty which we owe to our Creator, and the manner of discharging it, can be directed only by reason and conviction, not by force or violence; and, therefore, all men are equally entitled to the free exercise of religion, according to the dictates of conscience"; and

WHEREAS, the founders of the United States were great men and women from many religious denominations, races, and cultures, who came here from all over the world to establish a country "with liberty and justice for all," and the Christian faith is an integral part of this rich heritage in Virginia; and

WHEREAS, many of the founders of the United States, giants in the structuring of American history and statesmen of integrity and high caliber, were Christians who did not hesitate to express their faith; and

WHEREAS, George Washington stated that "animated alone by the pure spirit of Christianity, and conducting ourselves as the faithful subjects of our free government, we may enjoy every temporal and spiritual felicity"; and

WHEREAS, James Madison, primary author of the Constitution of the United States, advocated for the "diffusion of the light of Christianity in our nation" in his treatise on religious liberty, *Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments*; and

WHEREAS, Thomas Jefferson, author of the Declaration of Independence, wrote "Can the liberties of a nation be secure when we have removed the conviction that these liberties are the gift of God?"; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, drafted by Thomas Jefferson and enacted in 1786, set the standard for the protection of religious freedom throughout the United States; and

WHEREAS, the principles of liberty, justice, and equality before the law, as well as the very structure of the nation's representative form of government, are rooted in Christianity and demonstrate the importance of faith in the history of the nation; and

WHEREAS, Christian Heritage Week provides an opportunity for Virginians to learn more about the spiritual and structural foundations of the Commonwealth and the United States; now, therefore, be it

59       RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly designate  
60       April 24 to April 30, in 2026 and in each succeeding year, as Christian Heritage Week in Virginia; and, be it  
61       RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates transmit a copy of this resolution to  
62       the Virginia Christian Alliance so that members of the organization may be apprised of the sense of the  
63       General Assembly of Virginia in this matter; and, be it  
64       RESOLVED FINALLY, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates post the designation of this week on  
65       the General Assembly's website.