

2024 SPECIAL SESSION I

ENROLLED

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 612

Commending First Baptist Church Centralia.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, May 13, 2024

WHEREAS, for 157 years, First Baptist Church Centralia in Chesterfield County has provided its community with uplifting spiritual guidance, joyful occasions for worship and fellowship, and abundant opportunities for charitable outreach; and

WHEREAS, originally known as Salem African Baptist Church, First Baptist Church Centralia was founded in 1867 by freedmen from Salem Baptist Church of Chesterfield County, and a modest sanctuary was built a couple miles from the mother church in the same year; and

WHEREAS, first led by the Reverend Lewis Branch, First Baptist Church Centralia continued to grow and flourish over its first century under the subsequent leadership of the Reverends Ned Bland, Eli Saunders, J. E. Brown, T. H. Johnson (1897-1906), William Thomas (1906-1915), H. M. Chapman (1915-1919), J. H. Binford (1919-1929), C. A. Cobbs (1929-1931), C. J. Washington (1932-1934), and W. B. Ball (1934-1949); and

WHEREAS, in the early 1900s, a second building incorporating twin towers and other Gothic Revival, Colonial Revival, and Shingle style architectural elements was constructed and later renovated, enabling First Baptist Church Centralia to better serve its congregants; and

WHEREAS, from 1950 to 1990, First Baptist Church Centralia was led by the Reverend Dr. Samuel Moss, who accommodated his thriving discipleship by moving the church to its current building on Kingsdale Road, a short distance from its previous location on Centralia Road; and

WHEREAS, after First Baptist Church Centralia's historic building on Centralia Road was tragically destroyed by arsonists in 1996, the congregation and its current pastor, the Reverend Dr. Wilson E. B. Shannon, rallied the community together to build an authentic reconstruction of the church within a year; and

WHEREAS, First Baptist Church Centralia's building on Centralia Road was named a Chesterfield County Historic Landmark in 2014 in recognition of its architectural and historical significance, and the site was further commemorated that year with a prestigious historical highway marker from the Department of Historic Resources; and

WHEREAS, since its founding, First Baptist Church Centralia has provided a spiritual home to its congregants and has made a profound and lasting impact on the Chesterfield County community; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, That First Baptist Church Centralia hereby be commended on the occasion of its 157th anniversary; 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. Wilson E. B. Shannon, pastor of First Baptist Church Centralia, as an expression of the House of Delegates' admiration for the church's history and its contributions to the Commonwealth.

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