

2024 SPECIAL SESSION I

ENROLLED

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 691

Commending Shiloh Baptist Church (Old Site).

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, June 28, 2024

WHEREAS, Shiloh Baptist Church (Old Site), a thriving church community in Fredericksburg, was formed from the previous Shiloh Baptist Meeting House congregation nearly 170 years ago; and

WHEREAS, Shiloh Baptist Church (Old Site) traces its roots to the formation in 1804 of the first Baptist meeting house in Fredericksburg, a wooden building on Lafayette Boulevard; and

WHEREAS, the congregation subsequently met in an abandoned building on the corner of Hanover Street and Sophia Street until 1820, when its trustees purchased from Horace and Elizabeth Marshall a plot of land at 801 Sophia Street, which remains the current location of Shiloh Baptist Church (Old Site); and

WHEREAS, by the 1830s, the church had hundreds of congregants, including white members and both free and enslaved Black members, from the City of Fredericksburg and Stafford, Spotsylvania, and Caroline Counties; and

WHEREAS, between 1849 and 1855, white members of the church broke away to form Fredericksburg Baptist Church, now known as Shiloh Baptist Church (New Site), and sold the building on Sophia Street to the Black members of the congregation; and

WHEREAS, at the time, Black congregations were not permitted to meet without a white overseer, and Fredericksburg resident George Rowe became the legally required pastor of Shiloh Baptist Church (Old Site); and

WHEREAS, the Civil War had a significant impact on both the Fredericksburg community and the congregation of Shiloh Baptist Church (Old Site); Sunday services were discontinued during the war, and George Rowe resigned as pastor in 1863; and

WHEREAS, the Reverend John C. Diamond became the pastor of Shiloh Baptist Church (Old Site) on November 8, 1910, and began to lead the church into the modern era; a skilled architect and builder, he built an addition behind the church building and oversaw the installation of stained glass windows and the construction of a parsonage nearby; and

WHEREAS, in addition, Reverend Diamond served the community as an educator at the Fredericksburg Normal & Industrial Institute (F.N. & I.I.), then the only Black high school in the area, and raised money for the United War Work Fund to support veterans after World War I; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Diamond retired as pastor of Shiloh Baptist Church (Old Site) in 1920 and was succeeded by the Reverend B. H. Hester, who also inspired young people as a teacher, coach, and principal at F.N. & I.I.; and

WHEREAS, the Reverend Lawrence A. Davies served as the next pastor of Shiloh Baptist Church (Old Site) for exactly 50 years, from March 4, 1962, to March 4, 2012, shepherding the church through the civil rights movement and significant periods of growth and change in the community; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Davies and other members of the congregation advocated for desegregation and increased participation by the Black community in local and state elections, drawing the attention of the Virginia Conference of the NAACP, which held its 1963 annual convention in Fredericksburg, with Shiloh Baptist Church (Old Site) as the convention headquarters; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Davies worked with local business owner and church deacon Weldon Bailey to establish Citizens United for Action to support Black candidates for office; both men then went on to achieve great success in public service themselves; and

WHEREAS, Weldon Bailey was one of Fredericksburg's first Black election judges and Reverend Davies became the first Black member of the Fredericksburg City Council in 1966 and the city's first Black mayor in 1976; he was reelected as mayor four times and retired as the longest-serving mayor in city history; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Davies significantly enhanced the quality of life in Fredericksburg as both a spiritual leader and a public servant, taking a special interest in public transportation, mental health and overall wellness, and affordable housing; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Davies' steady leadership helped Shiloh Baptist Church (Old Site) recover from damage related to Hurricane Agnes and continue meeting the needs of a growing congregation; he worked closely with other community organizations and churches in the region to build fellowship and create new opportunities for ministry; and

WHEREAS, in 2012, Reverend Davies was named pastor emeritus of Shiloh Baptist Church (Old Site), having proudly served the church for one-third of its history since the Civil War; and

WHEREAS, the Reverend Aaron L. Dobynes, Sr., assumed the pastorate on June 1, 2014, and has

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maintained the traditions of excellence in faith leadership and outreach for which Shiloh Baptist Church (Old Site) is well known in the Fredericksburg community; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, That Shiloh Baptist Church (Old Site) hereby be commended on the occasion of its 170th anniversary as an independent church; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Shiloh Baptist Church (Old Site) as an expression of the House of Delegates' admiration for the church's long and storied history and legacy of contributions to the residents of Fredericksburg.