

2013-J3402

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION commemorating the 103rd Anniversary of the Temple Beth Emeth v'Ohr Progressive Shaari Zedek of Brooklyn, New York

WHEREAS, Religious institutions, and the many spiritual, social and educational benefits they confer, play a vital role in the development of the moral fabric of a responsible citizenry; and

WHEREAS, It is the tradition of this State and this Nation to pay tribute to those institutions and individuals who have contributed to the ethical and spiritual values of their communities; and

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body takes pleasure in commemorating the 103rd Anniversary of the Temple Beth Emeth v'Ohr Progressive Shaari Zedek of Brooklyn, New York; and

WHEREAS, Temple Beth Emeth v'Ohr Progressive Shaari Zedek is dedicated to Judaism as a living and growing faith and provides its members with a strong sense of Jewish identity; it invites all Jewish and inter-faith families to become part of its warm and caring congregational family and encourages participation through religious services, affiliated organizations, educational programs, special events and life-cycle ceremonies; and

WHEREAS, In 1908, there were few Jewish families in the Flatbush section of Brooklyn; in that year, Hannah Hirsch was concerned with providing her children with a Jewish education, and she invited some of her Jewish neighbors to her home for a group discussion; and

WHEREAS, That particular meeting resulted in the establishment and organization of the first reform religious school in Flatbush; for the next three years, the school held classes in Dilliard's French Bakery and Dining Room on Cortelyou Road at East 16th Street; and

WHEREAS, On May 17, 1911, Mrs. Hirsch's group of 35 Jewish families met for the purpose of organizing a liberal reform congregation; they

met at the Savoy Hall at 854 Flatbush Avenue, and on October 17, 1911, the name of the congregation was established as Temple Beth Emeth of Flatbush (the House of Truth); and

WHEREAS, In November of 1911, a call was made to Rabbi Samuel J. Levinson of Yonkers, and he accepted the invitation to return to his native Brooklyn and lead the congregation; he was formally installed as Rabbi of Temple Beth Emeth in February of 1912; and

WHEREAS, Rabbi Levinson soon embarked on a campaign to develop a permanent structure for the Temple because services were still being held at the Savoy Hall; the location selected was the southeast corner of Marlborough Road and Church Avenue; the cornerstone was laid on July 30, 1913 and on Rosh Hashanah Eve, in 1914, the new Temple was dedicated; and

WHEREAS, Membership grew rapidly in just a few years; more space was needed for the classrooms and meeting rooms and in 1922, an addition to the sanctuary was added; already having a religious school that was one of the best around, by the mid-1930s, Temple Beth Emeth boasted one of the largest men's clubs in the country with over 800 members, and the sisterhood numbered over 400 members; and

WHEREAS, In 1936, the sanctuary was renovated and changed to an art-deco design and air conditioning was installed; a bronze Ark was designed and presented as a gift to the Temple; the renovations added greater beauty and warmth to the sanctuary and it came to be known as the little "Jewel Box"; and

WHEREAS, In the late 1960s, a massive exodus of Reform Jews from Brooklyn began which greatly reduced the membership of four congregations; by the 1990s, the merging of these congregations resulted in

today's Temple Beth Emeth v'Ohr Progressive Shaari Zedek which keeps the flame of reform Judaism alive in Flatbush; and

WHEREAS, Today, Temple Beth Emeth v'Ohr Progressive Shaari Zedek remains a vibrant and caring Jewish community, which stands on the

threshold of tomorrow, prepared to meet the challenges of the coming decades while retaining that spiritual resolve which characterizes its past; and

WHEREAS, It is the custom of this Legislative Body to take note of enduring religious institutions and to bring such institutions to the attention of the people of this Empire State; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commemorate the 103rd Anniversary of the Temple Beth Emeth v'Ohr Progressive Shaari Zedek of Brooklyn, New York; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to Temple Beth Emeth v'Ohr Progressive Shaari Zedek of Brooklyn, New York.