

2013-J3817

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION commemorating the 248th Anniversary of The African Wesleyan Methodist Episcopal Church of Brooklyn, New York, to be celebrated on February 23, 2014

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 248th Anniversary of the African Wesleyan Methodist Episcopal Church of Brooklyn, New York, which was celebrated on Sunday, February 23, 2014; and

WHEREAS, Also known as Bridge Street African Wesleyan Methodist Episcopal Church, The African Wesleyan Methodist Episcopal Church is documented as the oldest continuing African American congregation in the Brooklyn-Long Island area; and

WHEREAS, Organized in 1766, and incorporated in 1818, this unique congregation located in the heart of Bedford-Stuyvesant, New York, traces its missionary origin back to Thomas Webb, a British Captain and a convert of John Wesley, who was the father of Methodism in America; and

WHEREAS, In 1766, Captain Thomas Webb began holding open-air services in downtown Brooklyn, and in 1794, the congregation purchased land from wealthy land owner Joshua Sands to build a small church named The Sands Street Wesleyan Methodist Episcopal Church; the congregation grew rapidly and in 1810, a new church was completed named the First Methodist Episcopal Church of Brooklyn with a mixed congregation of 1,500 members; and

WHEREAS, Seven years later, the members raised funds to purchase land to build a new church; in the fall of 1817, a grand rally was held and the amount of funds collected were used for the new construction; and WHEREAS, The following year, after being legally notified, a meeting was held to choose trustees to take care of the temporal affairs of the church and religious instruction; after a delegation was appointed to visit Bishop Richard Allen at his AME Church, the African Wesleyan Methodist Episcopal Church requested a preacher for their new church and to ordain several delegates as local preachers; thus began their affiliation with the AME Church; and

WHEREAS, The First African Wesleyan Methodist Episcopal Church was incorporated in the village of Brooklyn in February of 1818; one year later, the church corporation purchased land located on the east side of High Street near Jay Street to build The First African Wesleyan Methodist Episcopal Church in Brooklyn; in 1824, Peter Croger was elected the first delegate to the General Conference of the AME Church; and

WHEREAS, Three years later, the men of the African Wesleyan Methodist Episcopal Church established an educational system for youths, and the cornerstone of The African Free School, known as Colored School No. 1, was laid under the direction of Henry C. Thompson, an African Wesleyan Methodist Episcopal Church Trustee; and

WHEREAS, In July of 1854, a property was purchased on Bridge Street by the African Wesleyan Methodist Episcopal Church from the trustees of The First Congregational Church; Reverend James Morris Williams, the 21st pastor of the African Wesleyan Methodist Episcopal Church marched his congregation from High Street to their new home on Bridge Street; hereafter, the church was known as Bridge Street African Wesleyan Methodist Episcopal Church where the congregation worshipped until 1938; and

WHEREAS, That same year, Reverend Mansfield E. Jackson, the 52nd pastor of the African Wesleyan Methodist Episcopal Church, welcomed his congregation to the new church's home on Stuyvesant Avenue, which was

purchased from the Grace Presbyterian Church; and

WHEREAS, The Church entered its third century of service under the pastorate of Reverend David B. Cousin, Sr., the 60th pastor of this historic congregation, and one of the five preaching sons of Bishop Phillip R. Cousin of the AME Church; and

WHEREAS, At the 235th Church Anniversary Celebration in 2001, a pure historical account of the congregation, pastorates, and ministries of the church from 1766 to 2000 was released, known as Volume II of The History of The African Wesleyan Methodist Episcopal Church; and

WHEREAS, The African Wesleyan Methodist Episcopal Church 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 248th Anniversary of the African Wesleyan Methodist Episcopal Church of Brooklyn, New York, which was observed on February 23, 2014, fully confident that this commemoration reflects the belief in those values which enhance the dignity and purpose of life; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the African Wesleyan Methodist Episcopal Church of Brooklyn, New York.