

## 2015-J1553

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION mourning the death of Bishop William L. Bonner, former pastor of the Greater Refuge Temple in Harlem, New York City, and noted spiritual leader

WHEREAS, It is with profound sorrow that this Legislative Body, representing the people of the State of New York, is moved this day to pay tribute to a preeminent spiritual leader of indomitable faith and dedication whose purposeful life and accomplishments will forever stand as a paradigm and inspiration for others; and

WHEREAS, Beloved pastor of the renowned Greater Refuge Temple Church in Harlem and Chief Apostle of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Bishop William L. Bonner died at the age of 93; and

WHEREAS, Born on November 12, 1921, in Bolden County, Georgia, to Emmett and Janie Bonner, Bishop William L. Bonner's ministry began in the 1940s under the tutelage of the late Bishop Robert C. Lawson, founder of the Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ of the Apostolic Faith; his first pastorate was the Green Avenue Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ in Brooklyn, New York; and

WHEREAS, In 1944, Bishop William L. Bonner was sent to Detroit to pastor the First Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ; previously a store front, today, it is a 2,500 seat edifice known as Solomon's Temple; and

WHEREAS, In 1961, upon the death of Bishop Lawson, Bishop William L. Bonner became the pastor of the 3,000 member mother church, the Greater Refuge Temple in Harlem, New York City; and

WHEREAS, Upon his arrival, Bishop William L. Bonner immediately set about the remodeling of the Mother Church and headquarters of the Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Refuge Temple; he undertook the Herculean effort of serving in the role of general contractor in order to renovate the edifice that is now known as the Greater Temple today; this ultra-

modern edifice has changed the face of Harlem's historic 7th Avenue, and is one of the most modern structures in the community; and

WHEREAS, In addition to the Great Refuge Temple, Bishop William L. Bonner's passion for souls and youth led him to create a multi-million dollar youth center known as the R.C. Lawson Building located in Harlem; his desire and vision to build and create establishments which would benefit the people of his community continued well into his later years; and

WHEREAS, Heralded as a spiritual giant by his contemporaries, Bishop William L. Bonner has simultaneously pastored churches in Detroit, Michigan, New York City, Washington, D.C., Jackson, Mississippi, and Columbia, South Carolina; as the spiritual overseer of more than 700 churches worldwide on three continents, Pastor Bonner stands today as one of the greatest ministers of all time; and

WHEREAS, Bishop William L. Bonner was also the Chief Apostle and Senior Prelate of the General Assembly of the Churches of Our Lord Jesus Christ of the Apostolic Faith, Inc., an international body of churches; under his luminous administration, the assembly grew from 155 churches in 1961, to over 500 churches and missions throughout the world; and

WHEREAS, Bishop William L. Bonner received his religious education and a Doctor of Divinity degree through the Church of Christ Bible Institute in New York City; in 1985, he was listed in WHO'S WHO IN RELIGION; and WHEREAS, In December of 1989, Bishop William L. Bonner founded the Refuge Temple of Washington, D.C.; its first services were held at the Days Inn, and in February 1990, Kelly Miller Junior High School became the church's final temporary home; in three weeks, Pastor Bonner acquired new land for the church, and its groundbreaking service was held in October of 1990; and

WHEREAS, In July of 1993, Bishop William L. Bonner initiated the Refuge Temple of Columbia, South Carolina; it was organized with only 22 members, and within three years, the congregation grew to 700; Pastor

Bonner's ministry in Columbia also consists of the Family Life Center, Retirement Community, and the W.L. Bonner Bible College; and

WHEREAS, For over 50 years, many across the country and even foreign lands have testified of the great miracles of healing, deliverance, and breakthrough under the powerful preaching and teaching of Bishop William L. Bonner; millions also experienced his evangelistic ministry via "The Hour of Truth" broadcast which aired on nationally syndicated television outlets such as BET, and The Word Network, as well as radio stations, and via live stream; and

WHEREAS, Bishop William L. Bonner's legacy will live forever, not only in the many, many lives he touched, but in the good works he has left behind; and

WHEREAS, Predeceased by his wife, Mother Ethel Mae Bonner, and daughter Ethel Mae Bonner Archer, Bishop William L. Bonner is survived by his son, William Lee Bonner, Jr., and his grandchildren, as well as many nieces, nephews, family, friends, and co-laborers worldwide; and

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to celebrate the life of this esteemed religious leader who accepted the responsibilities of moral leadership and who dedicated his life to serving others; he will truly be missed by many; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to mourn the death of Bishop William L. Bonner, former pastor of the Greater Refuge Temple in Harlem, New York City, and noted spiritual leader, as well as rejoice in his life, noting his unremitting and compassionate faith in his service to God, man and his community; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of Bishop William L. Bonner.