

2015-J5479

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION commemorating the 300th Anniversary of the Reformed Dutch Church of Claverack on May 22, 2016

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 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 is justly proud to commemorate the 300th Anniversary of the Reformed Dutch Church of Claverack on Sunday, May 22, 2016; and

WHEREAS, The Reformed Dutch Church of Claverack, among the first Dutch Reformed Churches organized in the Hudson Valley, began in 1716, as one preaching station on a circuit that ranged from Claverack Landing on the Hudson River, now the city of Hudson, to Hillsdale; and

WHEREAS, In 1727, the first church was built near what is today the First Columbia County Courthouse; Palatine German settlers in the region began to swell the congregation's ranks, and within four decades a new church was needed; and

WHEREAS, Stephen van Rensselaer deeded the current parcel to the church in February 1767; by November of that year a local builder named Solomon Strong had completed the church and it was dedicated for use; and

WHEREAS, The original church was a much smaller building, only consisting of the southernmost 30 feet of the present structure without the projecting front gable or tower; a receipt in church records suggests there was a small wooden steeple and bell; and

WHEREAS, Within a decade of the new church's construction, the congre-

gation was blessed with its most influential pastor; at the beginning of the Revolution, John Gabriel Gebhard had fled first New York City, then Kingston following the British burning of the city in October 1777; he took refuge in Claverack and became the church's pastor; and

WHEREAS, With the war still on, Pastor Gebhard initiated the founding and construction of Washington Seminary on the property to the south of the church in 1779; it later became known as Claverack College, educating Martin van Buren, Stephen Crane and Margaret Sanger before closing in 1902, by which time it was known as Hudson River Institute; and

WHEREAS, In 1816, the church began to once again grow; expansions over the next decade added the present north section and wings onto the old church, with exits to the cemetery at the rear; inside, the balconies, choir loft and iron columns were added; the pews were rearranged into their present layout; and

WHEREAS, Furthermore, in 1828, the bell tower was added in memory of John Gabriel Gebhard, who had died the previous year after 50 years as pastor; and

WHEREAS, In the next decade, the church's musical needs were attended to, and the first organ was installed in 1867; after the closure of Claverack College in 1902, its bell was installed at the foot of the church's driveway; and

WHEREAS, In 1967, the church erected another building on the property, the Christian Education Center; an architecturally sympathetic building just to the southeast of the main church, it is used for the church offices and many activities, such as Sunday school and meetings; and

WHEREAS, A new organ was dedicated in the church in April of 2000, and since that date, no changes have been made to the property; and

WHEREAS, The Reformed Dutch Church of Claverack was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2001; and

WHEREAS, Today, the Reformed Dutch Church of Claverack has roughly 200 members, and is part of the Columbia-Greene Synod of the Reformed Church

in America's Albany Classis; a monthly newsletter, THE FISHERMAN, keeps congregants informed; and

WHEREAS, In addition to Sunday services and school, the Reformed Dutch Church of Claverack offers Bible study for adults, confirmation classes and a youth group; it is a sponsoring church of Camp Fowler, a Christian summer camp in the southern Adirondacks, and hosts local meetings of community groups such as the Boy and Girl Scouts as well as Alcoholics Anonymous; and

WHEREAS, A true asset to the community, the Reformed Dutch Church of Claverack supports several prominent regional charities, including Habitat for Humanity, the Salvation Army and the AIDS Council of Northeastern New York; it has also sponsored Reformed Church missionaries in Albania, Taiwan and Mississippi; 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 300th Anniversary of the Reformed Dutch Church of Claverack on May 22, 2016; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the Reformed Dutch Church of Claverack.