

2023-J683

Senate Resolution No. 683

BY: Senator PARKER

MOURNING the death of The Reverend Calvin O. Butts, distinguished citizen, religious leader, and devoted member of his community

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to bring full recognition and just tribute to those men and women of religious commitment who accept the responsibility of moral leadership and render the wisdom of human understanding; and

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body, representing the people of the State of New York, is moved this day to pay tribute to an eminent man of indomitable faith and dedication whose public service and countless accomplishments will forever stand as a paradigm and inspiration for others; and

WHEREAS, The Reverend Calvin O. Butts died on Friday, October 28, 2022, at the age of 73; and

WHEREAS, The unity of our State and Nation is built upon the compassion of individuals such as Reverend Calvin O. Butts who upheld the values of community life and who, through their great actions, epitomized the best of humanity; and

WHEREAS, Born on July 19, 1949 in Bridgeport, Connecticut, Calvin O. Butts spent most of his lifetime in New York, beginning in early

childhood where he received his primary education; he was a promising athlete and scholar at Flushing High School where he was a member of the track team and president of his senior class, graduating in 1967; and

WHEREAS, In 1972, Calvin O. Butts received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Morehouse College, where he pledged to the Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity and was active in civil rights; he then returned to New York where he earned his Master of Divinity degree in Church History from Union Theological Seminary in 1975, and later his Doctorate of Ministry in Church and Public Policy from Drew University; and

WHEREAS, This extraordinary man was still in graduate school when he was hired to work at Abyssinian Baptist Church, starting as an office assistant and working his way up to assistant pastor, eventually being named head pastor in 1989; and

WHEREAS, Throughout his three decades as pastor of Abyssinian Baptist Church, Reverend Calvin O. Butts' work reflected the dramatic changes in how Americans confronted the nation's history of racism; he took inspiration from the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in the 1960s, and by the dawn of the 21st century, he was a partner of Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg in attempting to create lasting change in Harlem and beyond; and

WHEREAS, During his remarkable tenure as the church's leader, Reverend Calvin O. Butts was a tireless advocate for affordable housing through the Abyssinian Development Corporation, a non-profit organization he established in 1989; and

WHEREAS, Under his guidance, the corporation raised \$2.8 million to purchase and renovate property to be used as a homeless shelter; and

WHEREAS, Furthermore, with a steadfast and unwavering commitment to his community, Reverend Calvin O. Butts oversaw the building of a large apartment complex for senior citizens and apartments for moderate income households; and

WHEREAS, This distinguished man of God always gave guidance and wisdom to the many entrusted to his care and administered abundantly and unstintingly to the spiritual and corporal needs of all; and

WHEREAS, Armed with a humanistic spirit and imbued with a sense of compassion, Reverend Calvin O. Butts leaves behind a legacy which will long endure the passage of time and will remain as a comforting memory to all he served and befriended; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to mourn the death of The Reverend Calvin O. Butts, and to express its deepest condolences to his family; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of The Reverend Calvin O. Butts.