

Chapter No. 2051
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**HOUSE
CONCURRENT RESOLUTION
No. 85**

Originated in House  Clerk

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 85

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION COMMENDING THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF MERIDIAN ON THE IMPRESSIVE OCCASION OF ITS 175TH CHURCH ANNIVERSARY, AND WISHING THE CHURCH AND ITS MEMBERS MANY MORE YEARS OF A RICH AND STORIED PRESENCE IN MERIDIAN.

WHEREAS, the First Baptist Church of Meridian, a historic cornerstone of the City of Meridian, Mississippi, will celebrate the splendid occasion of its 175th church anniversary; and

WHEREAS, the City of Meridian is prominently located in Lauderdale County, which emerged as a county in December 1833, and was named after Colonel James Lauderdale; and

WHEREAS, the early settlers of the new county of Lauderdale founded Oakey Valley Baptist Church, which is the first name given to what is now known as the First Baptist Church of Meridian; and

WHEREAS, this church boasts a rich and enduring history with much due its honor, as the first pastor was Elder W.P. Carter, who also was a sitting state senator when he led the church; and

WHEREAS, the church's first mission was in the Bonita area, near the south end of the reservoir, and the mission was so

successful in Bonita that the church congregation quickly grew causing the elders to relocate to the hub of the area, the City of Meridian; and

WHEREAS, in 1859, the church changed its name to Meridian Baptist Church, and during this time of transition, Elder N.L. Clark led the church, whose namesake later became Clark College in nearby Newton, Mississippi; and

WHEREAS, after the Civil War, the church moved to its final and current location on 26th Avenue, on which four different houses of worship have been located; and

WHEREAS, the first church building was quite unique as it was physically moved from Marion, Mississippi, to downtown Meridian by church members and volunteers, and the second church building was constructed with a steeple and a bell tower in 1871, but later destroyed by fire; and

WHEREAS, out of the ashes of the fire came a third one-story structure that was erected in 1892, and a name change to "First Baptist Church"; and

WHEREAS, additions were made to the First Baptist Church until 1948, and during that year, construction began on a new educational building, which members eventually occupied on Mother's Day 1949; and

WHEREAS, the history of the church's leadership is as storied as the building itself; and

WHEREAS, Elder Solomon Williams followed Pastor Clark and led the flock from 1859 until 1867, Pastor J.B. Hamblin led for the next two years, followed by the short stint of J.L. Loyd and Theodore Whitfield in 1871; and

WHEREAS, during this period in the 1800s, there was a quick succession of pastors with Columbus Smith, J.C. Foster, W.B. Crumpton and C.M. Gordon, but Dr. J.W. Bozeman had the longest tenure during this time period from 1879 until his death in 1895; and

WHEREAS, during Dr. Bozeman's tenure, one of his church members, William Joshua David, helped start Fifteenth Avenue Baptist Church in 1891, and Calvary Baptist Church, another local church, was formed by a group of former First Baptist Church members; and

WHEREAS, after Dr. Bozeman's tenure, the First Baptist Church of Meridian continued to have distinguished pastoral leadership, such as former Mississippi College, Dr. R.A. Venable, served until 1907, until he was replaced by Dr. T.J. Shipman, who served until 1917, Dr. R.J. Bateman served from 1918-1922, Dr. L.R. Christie from 1922-1926 and Dr. Norman Cox led from 1927-1931, and then again 1939-1951; and

WHEREAS, during Dr. Cox's period of leadership, many changes occurred, one of his members, Georgia Mae Ogburn, served as a missionary in Chile for 36 years until her retirement, and a music minister and a volunteer choir replaced the paid mixed quartet

that previously supplied music, and the educational building and sanctuary were constructed; and

WHEREAS, from 1931-1939, Dr. H.C. Bass led the church, and from 1951-1959, Dr. Walter Moore took the helm and made vast improvements, such as creating an accredited kindergarten, which was started in 1955 and served the community for 36 years, and founded two mission churches at Meehan and Lauderdale, Mississippi; and

WHEREAS, the Meehan church eventually folded, but the First Baptist Church of Lauderdale continued and still continues to serve the residents there; and

WHEREAS, at some time during this period in the church's history, Dr. Leo Eddleman, President of New Orleans Seminary, served as interim pastor, with Dr. Lowry Compere filling in for him due to Eddleman's seminary duties; and

WHEREAS, in 1961, Dr. Beverly Tinnin was called as pastor, and with him, Reverend John Laughlin served as Minister of Music and Reverend David McCubbin as Associate Pastor and Minister of Education; and

WHEREAS, the three men served together for the next 25 years, until Dr. Tinnin retired in 1987 and Reverend Laughlin resigned in 1988 due to health problems, and Dr. McCubbin retired in 1996; and

WHEREAS, during the Tinnin, Laughlin and McCubbin period, there were a number of major upgrades, such as the stained glass windows were installed, an Educational Annex was built to provide

classroom space for preschoolers, a suite, new office area, an enlarged library, an elevator was installed to access the second floor fellowship hall under the sanctuary, and during this time, there was also growth in Sunday School attendance, revivals and mission trips; and

WHEREAS, Reverend John Armistead was the Youth Pastor during this time period until his departure, and was replaced by Reverend Tommy Anthony, who assumed his duties in that role, with Dr. Charles Myers serving as interim in 1987; and

WHEREAS, in 1988, Dr. Gary Bagley was called as pastor and he led the charge to hire Reverend Dough Haney as Minister of Music and Reverend Scott Bebout as Minister of Students, and also assisted the church in exiting the ministerial housing business; and

WHEREAS, in 1992, Dr. Earl Kelly was the interim pastor, and in 1993 to 1994, Dr. Leland Berg was the spiritual leader and he attempted to restore the building program; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Raymon Leake, who was called in 1995 from the First Baptist Church of Picayune, Mississippi, with Lee Yancey as Youth Minister, Reverend David Bishop as Minister of Music and Reverend Stan Davis as Minister of Education; and

WHEREAS, in 1996, a new church logo was introduced, Miriam Chesney began playing the church organ and Barry Germany began playing the piano for the church, and under Dr. Leake's leadership, the church shifted the ministry from a "come to us" to

a "go where they are" and "be doers of the Word and not hearers only"; and

WHEREAS, for 25 years the church's outreach saw missionary trips to Haiti, Mexico, Dominican Republic, India, China, Holland, Zambia, Bolivia and various locations in America; and

WHEREAS, for more than 10 years, church volunteers have journeyed to Trinidad for construction, sports camps, evangelistic and special season missions, and the Mohess Road Baptist Church in Trinidad has been enlarged and the church supports several "housing churches" as well as other outreach and medical missions, with each fifth Sunday being devoted to the Trinidad Mission Project; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Brad Smith followed Reverend Yancey and later Reverend Jason Brooks in 2004, and in January 2007, Abby Dennis came on staff as the first Director of Children's Ministries, a move seen necessary by the increased number of young families in the church; and

WHEREAS, in 2002, Mr. Wayne Polk was called to be the church's Director of Outreach, Ministry and Discipleship, he was key to the church's missional approach, he left in 2006 to start a new church in Canton, Georgia, but later returned in 2011; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Matt Snowden took over as Associate Pastor of the church in 2007, but left in 2010 to become Pastor of First Baptist Church of Waco, Texas; and

WHEREAS, in 2010, Mrs. Walter Rogers began ministry responsibilities at the church, which included grief share sessions for the bereaved and English as a second language classes; and

WHEREAS, the First Baptist Church of Meridian has been and continues to be a shining example of God's faithfulness to helping us serve as Christians and lead others by being obedient to His will, which has continued to be the overarching theme adopted by the pastoral guidance of each pastor who has been privileged to lead the congregation over the years; and

WHEREAS, this church continues its journey of reaching souls for the Lord Jesus Christ and is a dedicated place of worship for many; and

WHEREAS, it is the policy of this Legislature to recognize and commend outstanding and contributory religious institutions such as the First Baptist Church of Meridian, which continues to be a cornerstone of Meridian and Lauderdale County, as it strives to spread the Christian faith:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, THE SENATE CONCURRING THEREIN, That we do hereby commend and congratulate the diligence of the pastors and members of the First Baptist Church of Meridian, Mississippi, on the occasion of the church's historic 175th anniversary and extend warmest wishes for continued prosperity, spiritual growth and success.

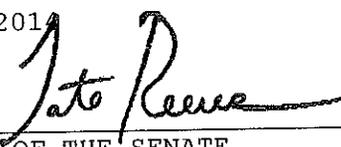
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be furnished to the First Baptist Church of Meridian and to the members of the Capitol Press Corps.

ADOPTED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
March 31, 2014



SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ADOPTED BY THE SENATE
April 1, 2014



PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE