

By Senator Joyner

18-02116B-09

20092714

Senate Resolution

A resolution recognizing March 31, 2009, as "African Methodist Episcopal Church Day" at the Capitol.

WHEREAS, the African Methodist Episcopal Church grew out of the Free African Society, established by Richard Allen, Absalom Jones, and others in 1787 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and

WHEREAS, facing discrimination at the hands of white American Methodists at the St. George Methodist Episcopal Church, members of the Free African Society transformed their mutual aid society into two church congregations, one of which was Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, and

WHEREAS, while the African Methodist Episcopal Church is doctrinally Methodist, its clergy, scholars, and lay persons have written many important works that demonstrate the distinctive theology and praxis that have defined this Wesleyan body, and

WHEREAS, in 1794, Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church was dedicated with Richard Allen as pastor, and

WHEREAS, to establish Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church's independence from interfering white Methodists, Richard Allen successfully sued in the Pennsylvania courts in 1807 and 1815 for the right of his congregation to exist as an independent institution, and

WHEREAS, the geographical spread of the African Methodist Episcopal Church prior to the Civil War was mainly restricted to the Northeast and Midwest, and

WHEREAS, the most significant era of denominational development occurred during the Civil War and Reconstruction,

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30 when Union army officials allowed African Methodist Episcopal
31 Church clergy to move into the states of the collapsing
32 Confederacy to welcome newly freed slaves into their
33 denomination, and

34 WHEREAS, by 1880, African Methodist Episcopal Church
35 membership reached 400,000 members, and

36 WHEREAS, the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Florida
37 began on June 22, 1865, with the appointment of Rev. William G.
38 Steward as the founding pastor, and

39 WHEREAS, Bishop Henry M. Turner transported African
40 Methodism across the Atlantic Ocean into Liberia and Sierra
41 Leone in 1891 and into South Africa in 1896, and

42 WHEREAS, by the 1990s, the African Methodist Episcopal
43 Church included more than 2.5 million members, 8,000 ministers,
44 and 7,000 congregations, with 21 bishops and 9 general officers
45 comprising the leadership of the denomination in more than 30
46 nations in North and South America, Africa, and Europe, and

47 WHEREAS, the African Methodist Episcopal Church boasts more
48 than 105,000 members in the Florida, East, Central, West Coast,
49 South, and Bahamas conferences, who are currently led by Bishop
50 McKinley Young, the denomination's 109th elected and consecrated
51 bishop, NOW, THEREFORE,

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53 Be It Resolved by the Senate of the State of Florida:

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55 That the Senate recognizes March 31, 2009, as "African
56 Methodist Episcopal Church Day" at the Capitol.