

By: Senator(s) Stone, Barnett,
Jackson (32nd)

To: Rules

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 15

1 A RESOLUTION CONGRATULATING AND EXTENDING GREETINGS TO
2 REVEREND ARTHUR FITZPATRICK AND THE CONGREGATION OF STRAWBERRY
3 MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH IN MARSHALL COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI, ON THE
4 OCCASION OF ITS 150TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION (1867-2017).

5 WHEREAS, in June 2017, Strawberry Missionary Baptist Church
6 in Marshall County, Mississippi, will be celebrating its 150th
7 Anniversary, a great day in the life of the church and community;
8 and

9 WHEREAS, in 1867, Eliza Dawson gave the freemen of Marshall
10 County, Mississippi, permission to build a church on Section 14,
11 Range 3, Township 3, making Strawberry Plains Baptist Church one
12 of the first African-American Baptist Churches documented in
13 Marshall County. Though the church was organized on Dawson land,
14 the name chosen harkened back to the Davis Plantation, Strawberry
15 Plains. On January 31, 1880, 13 years after the church was
16 established on loaned land, the church bought the four-acre site
17 from William Cox for a sum of \$90.00. The 1880 deed stated the
18 church's name as the Colored Missionary Baptist Church; and



19 WHEREAS, the church was founded by a group of young people,
20 most of whom were less than 26 years old. The church's first
21 Pastor, Reverend Elijah Reynolds, gave up the pulpit in 1893. The
22 church's founding officers, Sally Stevenson; Joe Oliver; Tom
23 Williams; Alan Perkins; Frank Lee; Matt Finley; Martha Jane
24 Perkins; and Fannie Lawrence, lived to see the dawn of the
25 Twentieth Century. Sally Stevenson was the church's first Mother;
26 and

27 WHEREAS, with a pastor and founding officers in place, the
28 second Sunday was designated as preaching Sunday. In harmony with
29 the second Sunday preaching, annual revival was set the week
30 following the second Sunday in August. It was here that the
31 tradition of the mourner's bench and pounding were established.
32 In 1892, the Strawberry School opened with an enrollment of 438
33 students, all of whom were in the First Grade. Many of the
34 students were young adults. Enrollment peaked in 1906 with 883
35 students. After having taught more than 4,000 children how to
36 read, write and count, the school closed in 1956; and

37 WHEREAS, in 1890 after some years in the church, it was
38 completely destroyed by fire, but this did not stop the business
39 of the church. Services were held under a Bush Harbor until the
40 new church was built. During 1905, the church burned the second
41 time. Two years later, still under the pastorate of J.L. Harris,
42 the wood-frame structure was built and dedicated on June 9, 1907,
43 the second Sunday. The wood structure remained in service for 71



44 years in its original physical state. The second and third
45 generation of the slaves wanted more for their families and their
46 offspring. It was decided to rebuild a new sanctuary on the same
47 land; and

48 WHEREAS, groundbreaking for a new sanctuary was directed
49 under Reverend Odie Williams. Construction was completed in 1978
50 under the leadership of Reverend Arthur Fitzpatrick. On December
51 7, 2003, the new sanctuary groundbreaking took place. It was
52 remarked, "This building, which is going to be erected here, is a
53 memorial to those who had a vision for the church. By erecting
54 this building at this time, it will allow us to move from a family
55 church to a community." One year later, December 5, 2004, church
56 members and friends came together to participate in the Ribbon
57 Cutting Ceremony and celebrate the new and present sanctuary
58 dedication; and

59 WHEREAS, through the years, the church has been blessed by
60 numerous pastors and lay spiritual leaders who have allowed
61 themselves to be led by Him who is and who will forever be. As
62 Strawberry Missionary Baptist Church moves forward, remembering
63 the sacrifice of those who were before, they look to the future,
64 and we recognize that this church has been a blessing to others:

65 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF
66 MISSISSIPPI, That we do hereby congratulate and extend the
67 greetings to Reverend Arthur Fitzpatrick and the congregation of
68 Strawberry Missionary Baptist Church in Marshall County,



69 Mississippi, on the occasion of its 150th Anniversary Celebration
70 (1867-2017).

71 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be presented to
72 the Pastor and congregation of Strawberry Missionary Baptist
73 Church, and made available to the Capitol Press Corps.

