

By: Senator(s) Frazier, Blount, Dearing,  
Jackson (32nd), Norwood, Simmons (12th)

To: Rules

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 7

1 A RESOLUTION EXTENDING THE GREETINGS AND CONGRATULATIONS OF  
2 THE MISSISSIPPI SENATE TO PASTOR HICKMAN M. JOHNSON AND THE  
3 CONGREGATION OF HISTORIC FARISH STREET BAPTIST CHURCH IN JACKSON,  
4 MISSISSIPPI, ON THE OCCASION OF ITS 125TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION  
5 (1893-2018).

6 WHEREAS, the history of Farish Street Baptist Church is  
7 linked to the history and expansion of Christianity among  
8 African-Americans in Mississippi. Organized in 1893, Farish  
9 Street Baptist Church has been blessed by the vitality,  
10 imagination and inspiration of its leadership; and

11 WHEREAS, the Reverend Elbert B. Topp served as Pastor of Mt.  
12 Helm Baptist Church from 1888-1893, when, according to Patrick  
13 Thompson in his book *History of Negro Baptists in Mississippi*,  
14 Reverend Topp with 210 members came out and organized what is now  
15 known as the Farish Street Baptist Church. The newly formed  
16 church held worship services in the Congregational Church, which  
17 was then located at the corner of Capitol and Lamar Streets.  
18 White Jacksonians would line the bridge to hear the choir sing,  
19 giving generously to the collections. Soon the infant



20 congregation had enough money to purchase the lot at the corner of  
21 Farish and Church Streets. It was here that the newly organized  
22 congregation built the first place of worship, a frame structure.  
23 Lightning destroyed this building and it was replaced by a  
24 two-story frame structure. The second story was reserved for  
25 worship, with all other activities, including funerals, taking  
26 place on the first level. A fire, which began on Oakley Street  
27 and spread, destroyed the second building. Determined to minimize  
28 this threat in the future, in 1909, Reverend Topp led the  
29 membership in constructing a brick building. He pastored Farish  
30 Street Baptist Church until 1916; and

31 WHEREAS, Reverend Topp passed away on October 3, 1925. The  
32 October ninth edition of the *Advance Dispatch* carried a front page  
33 announcement of his death. Of Topp, Patrick Thompson wrote, "No  
34 member of the convention and state was more conspicuous and  
35 popular. Reverend Topp was good-natured and full of life. He was  
36 true to his fellow preachers and had only a few equals as a Gospel  
37 Minister;" and

38 WHEREAS, Reverend E.L. Twine, an Alcorn College graduate and  
39 Teacher of mathematics, was called to serve the church in 1916,  
40 and for three years, he labored faithfully. During that brief  
41 tenure, he encouraged the congregation to purchase new pews and to  
42 make a substantial payment on the church mortgage, which had been  
43 left from previous years. His pastorate was the shortest during  
44 the church's first 100 years of existence. Because of his stately



45 nature, Reverend Twine was known by his contemporaries as the  
46 "Black Prince of Mississippi"; and

47 WHEREAS, Reverend W.L. Varnado assumed the pastorate of  
48 Farish Street Baptist Church in April 1928. Perhaps Reverend  
49 Varnado will be remembered best as the only person to pastor  
50 Jackson's three historic black congregations - Mt. Helm, College  
51 Hill and Farish Street Baptist Churches. During his term of  
52 service, the membership increased and two rooms were added to the  
53 parsonage. Reverend Varnado was a great churchman. It was during  
54 his pastorate that a young Jackson State College student from the  
55 Class of 1927 was ordained to the gospel ministry. His name was  
56 Joseph Harrison Jackson; and

57 WHEREAS, without fanfare, Reverend Chester A. Greer, who had  
58 served diligently as the third Pastor, returned in January 1935 to  
59 begin his second pastorate. Reverend Greer began a building  
60 program, which resulted in the replacement of the forty-year-old  
61 structure with a modern building, which still serves the  
62 congregation today. The groundbreaking ceremony was a joyous  
63 occasion. Mrs. Lillie Bentley and Mr. Turner M. Patterson, two of  
64 the original 210 members to leave Mt. Helm Baptist Church in 1893,  
65 participated in breaking ground for the new facility. Dr. Jacob  
66 L. Reddix, President of Jackson State College, Chairman of the  
67 Trustee Board of Farish Street Baptist Church, gave invaluable  
68 advice during the construction phase. At the laying of the  
69 cornerstone, Jackson State College Band performed to the delight



70 of the congregation. Dedication services for the newly  
71 constructed church building were held during the week of March  
72 5-12, 1950. A renewed people joined hands with their sisters and  
73 brothers to praise Him Who is the great Builder and without Whom  
74 they that build, build in vain; and

75 WHEREAS, after serving for twenty-three years during his  
76 second pastorate, Reverend Greer was successful in retiring the  
77 debt and burning the mortgage before his victorious and faithful  
78 members. With his health on the decline, Reverend Greer decided  
79 to retire from the pulpit in March 1958. Reverend Greer was named  
80 "Pastor Emeritus" of the church. Three decades of service to a  
81 great congregation had come to an end. The Assistant Pastor,  
82 Reverend G.W. Williams, supplied the pulpit until a successor was  
83 elected. Reverend Greer passed away on August 13, 1962; and

84 WHEREAS, during the summer of 1958, a young seminary teacher,  
85 Reverend S. Leon Whitney, came to Jackson to teach at the  
86 Mississippi Baptist Seminary. Thus began a term of service that  
87 lasted ten years; and

88 WHEREAS, in June 1968, Reverend Hickman M. Johnson, Chaplain  
89 of Tougaloo College, was invited to serve as Interim Minister. On  
90 July 22, 1968, the church voted to call Reverend Johnson and on  
91 August 4, 1968, he preached his first sermon as Pastor. On  
92 December 1, 1968, Reverend Johnson was installed as the sixth  
93 Pastor of Farish Street Baptist Church; and



94           WHEREAS, Reverend Johnson brought to the church a strong  
95 capacity for effective organization. He recommended that the  
96 Church become incorporated and on November 13, 1969, a Charter of  
97 Incorporation was issued to Farish Street Baptist Church by the  
98 State of Mississippi. He labored for a continuous and consistent  
99 building program and established the necessary framework for the  
100 most diversified religious education and service-oriented programs  
101 in the church's history. While improvements were to be made on  
102 the 1969 model, the functions on which this model were based  
103 remain unchanged: education, fellowship and administration. In  
104 May 1977, the Educational Building was dedicated. This was the  
105 first of several major improvements to the physical property  
106 completed during Reverend Johnson's years. Dr. Johnson is an  
107 administrator with great spirit; an historian who is cognizant of  
108 the importance of a people's heritage; a businessman with a  
109 vision. He is a theologian and a teacher, who strives daily to  
110 build an even stronger congregation at Farish Street Baptist  
111 Church, a congregation committed to serve this community; and

112           WHEREAS, the membership of Farish Street Baptist Church  
113 willingly acknowledges that they have come this far not by brick  
114 and stone nor by flesh and blood, but by faith leaning on the  
115 Lord. As the congregation moves forward, remembering the  
116 sacrifices of those who were before, they look to the future. The  
117 Lord has truly blessed this church and we recognize that it has  
118 been a blessing to the community and to the State of Mississippi:



119           NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF  
120 MISSISSIPPI, That we do hereby extend the greetings and  
121 congratulations of the Mississippi Senate to Pastor Hickman M.  
122 Johnson and the congregation of historic Fairish Street Baptist  
123 Church in Jackson, Mississippi, on the occasion of its 125th  
124 Anniversary Celebration (1893-2018).

125           BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be presented to  
126 Pastor Johnson and the Board of Elders of Farish Street Baptist  
127 Church, and made available to the Capitol Press Corps.

