

By: Senator(s) Robinson

To: Rules

## SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 98

1 A RESOLUTION COMMEMORATING THE QUASQUICENTENNIAL (125TH)  
2 ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION OF FIRST-TRINITY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF  
3 LAUREL, MISSISSIPPI.

4 WHEREAS, we join the faithful communicants of First-Trinity  
5 Presbyterian Church of Laurel, Mississippi, in noting and  
6 celebrating the Quasquicentennial (125th) Anniversary of the  
7 founding of the church; and

8 WHEREAS, the history of First-Trinity Presbyterian Church of  
9 Laurel mirrors the history of the City of Laurel, Mississippi,  
10 which began as a small lumber town and turned into a vibrant city  
11 with both industrial significance and cultural attractions; and

12 WHEREAS, in 1895, Reverend A.B. Coit came to Laurel from  
13 Enterprise, Mississippi, and met six Presbyterians with a desire  
14 to have a church of their own. Five years later in March 1900,  
15 after borrowing spaces to worship from not only other churches but  
16 the local "Opera House" and even the Laurel Hotel, the first  
17 elders and deacons were elected, followed by trustees to organize  
18 a church build. Mr. Silas W. Gardiner of Eastman and Gardiner



19 Lumber Company generously gave the church his corner lot on 5th  
20 Avenue, which he had intended for his own home, even though he was  
21 not a Presbyterian; and

22 WHEREAS, in November 1900, Reverend R.L. Campbell was called  
23 as the first minister, making it the first church of any  
24 denomination in Mississippi south of Meridian to New Orleans to  
25 employ a minister full time. On February 10, 1901, the first  
26 worship service was held, but triumph quickly turned to tragedy  
27 when the church burned to the ground 11 months later on December  
28 18, 1901. Not to be discouraged, the congregation raised  
29 \$1,500.00 the next day to rebuild. On November 1, 1903, the  
30 second building was dedicated, and this small remarkable group of  
31 Presbyterians accomplished building two churches in two years.  
32 The Board of Trustees officially incorporated the church in May  
33 1915 in order to facilitate the handling of church property and  
34 gifts of money and endowments, an act unique to most southern  
35 churches at the time. Reverend Grayson L. Tucker accepted the  
36 call as pastor in 1917, which became a successful 40 years of  
37 pastorship; and

38 WHEREAS, in the following decades as Laurel grew, so did  
39 First Presbyterian's congregation. On January 24, 1924,  
40 successful lumber businessman Mr. Lauren C. Eastman offered  
41 \$100,000.00 to construct a larger building, provided the church  
42 would raise funds to match his offer. It was successfully raised  
43 in just two weeks, and the internationally researched building



plan began. The architect for the building was Rathbone de Buys of New Orleans, accompanied by his consulting firm of Frohman, Robb and Little of Boston; and

WHEREAS, the sanctuary is a beautiful 13th Century Gothic Revival style architecture connected by a 72-foot tower to the 15th century Gothic Revival style Kirk House. The building is of gray-lavender South Carolina brick, and the roof is gray-green slate with matching flagstone walkways. The hardware throughout is hand wrought iron, and the cork floors are imported from England and Wales. The sanctuary houses the 2nd largest pipe organ in Mississippi, an Aeolian Skinner with 4,000 pipes, a favorite instrument for concerts by organists nationwide. The rare, intricate stained-glass windows were imported from England and depict Bible stories. They were given in memory of Lauren Eastman Rogers by his mother and widow. The stained-glass windows in the Ladies' parlor uniquely depict images of women from the Bible. Lauren Rogers, also the namesake of Laurel's first art museum, the Lauren Rogers Museum of Art, was a First Presbyterian Deacon when he suddenly passed from appendicitis at the age of 22. The first service was held in the new sanctuary November 6, 1925; and

WHEREAS, more decades of growth brought the need to add an education wing, which was completed in 1957. A sister plant church, Trinity Presbyterian Church, was erected in North Laurel in 1963. However, as local industry and economy fell in the 1980s



69 and denominations encountered splits, membership in both churches  
70 declined and First Presbyterian and Trinity Presbyterian reunited  
71 in 1992 to form First-Trinity Presbyterian Church at the 5th  
72 Avenue location; and

73 WHEREAS, First-Trinity's history is one of successfully  
74 overcoming many obstacles to remain mighty in service as faithful  
75 followers of Christ giving all glory to God; and

76 WHEREAS, the theme for 2025 is "Building on a Cornerstone of  
77 Faith" to celebrate the 125th year of the church's formation,  
78 110th year of official incorporation, and the centennial year of  
79 the completion of what is often referred to as "Laurel's  
80 Cathedral":

81 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF  
82 MISSISSIPPI, That we do hereby commemorate the Quasquicentennial  
83 (125th) Anniversary Celebration Of First-Trinity Presbyterian  
84 Church of Laurel, Mississippi, and extend the sincerest  
85 congratulations of the Mississippi Senate to the present and past  
86 Pastors and Congregations on this auspicious occasion.

87 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be presented to  
88 the Pastor and Board of Trustees of First-Trinity Presbyterian  
89 Church and made available to the Capitol Press Corps.

