

2025-J831

Senate Resolution No. 831

BY: Senator COMRIE

HONORING Bishop Calvin Rice and First Lady Willie Mae Rice for their steadfast and unremitting commitment to the ministry after 46 years of devoted service

WHEREAS, The character and richness of religious and community life in this noble Empire State is nourished and fulfilled through the faithful concern and selfless devotion of those who would commit their energies and purpose to the ministry of others; and

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to bring full recognition and just tribute to those individuals who distinguish themselves and the ministry through their unremitting commitment and preeminence of service; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to honor Bishop Calvin Rice and First Lady Willie Mae Rice for their steadfast and unremitting commitment to the ministry after 46 years of devoted service; a Tea Party honoring the First Lady will be held on Saturday, April 12, 2025, at New Jerusalem Worship Center in Jamaica, New York, and a Pastoral Anniversary Banquet Celebration will be held on Sunday, April 13, 2025, at Russo's on the Bay in Howard Beach, New York; and

WHEREAS, Pastor Calvin Rice has been the Senior Pastor of the New

Jerusalem Worship Center in Jamaica, New York, since January 2005; in April 2018, he was elevated to the office of Bishop in the Berean Fellowship of Churches, headquartered in Columbus, Ohio, where Bishop Timothy J. Clarke serves as the presiding prelate; and

WHEREAS, Before his tenure at New Jerusalem, Bishop Calvin Rice led the First Central Baptist Church (FCBC) of Staten Island for 20 years, growing the congregation from just 35 members to over 2,000; and

WHEREAS, Bishop Calvin Rice also founded the First Central Housing Development Corporation (FCHDC), which restored two residential buildings and transformed an abandoned supermarket into a 15,000 square foot family life community center; and

WHEREAS, Additionally, he served as the Executive Director of Staten Island Communities United, a nonprofit organization responsible for distributing \$2.5 million in funding to five communities on Staten Island through a New York State Family Preservation grant; and

WHEREAS, Since his arrival in Jamaica, Bishop Rice has successfully overseen a large construction project at New Jerusalem Worship Center; this expansion doubled the size of the church, while also increasing membership and attendance by 40 percent; and

WHEREAS, In addition to his work at the church, Bishop Calvin Rice founded and currently serves as the CEO of the Rochdale Early Advantage Charter School, a Pre-K to Grade 8 publicly funded institution housed within the New Jerusalem Worship Center complex; and

WHEREAS, The school, which opened in 2010 with just 35 students, now enrolls 486 scholars, employs 80 staff members, and operates with an

annual budget of \$10 million; in 2018, Rochdale was recognized as a "Rewards School," a distinction given to only 155 schools statewide; to accommodate the school's rapid growth and a waiting list of over 600 applicants, Bishop Rice directed a vast expansion project; and

WHEREAS, Bishop Calvin Rice is currently a member of the Mayor's Clergy Advisory Team as well as the Queens District Attorney's Clergy Advisory Board; he is also a founding member and part of the leadership team of Queens Power, a community organization which unites residents to advocate for justice; and

WHEREAS, Bishop Calvin Rice's contributions to community and economic development have earned him recognition from the New York Association of Black and Puerto Rican Legislators; in 2013, he was awarded the Vernon M. Dougherty Distinction in Ministry Award by The New Theological Seminary, the institution's highest honor; additionally, he has received numerous proclamations from New York's Governors, NYC Mayors, US Senators, and City Council members; and

WHEREAS, Throughout his career, Bishop Calvin Rice has held over eight board positions, chairing four, and has been featured in more than 30 newspaper and magazine articles; he has received over 75 awards and honors, including the prestigious "Living the Dream Award" from ABC; furthermore, in 1994, he was inducted into the Staten Island College Hall of Fame and became the first living African American to have a street in Staten Island named in his honor; and

WHEREAS, Bishop Calvin Rice has preached across the United States, Canada, the Middle East, and South Africa; he has licensed, ordained, and mentored over 50 sons and daughters in ministry, including 15 who currently serve as senior pastors; he is also a New York State certified chaplain and served for 22 years as the Protestant Chaplain at the South

Beach Psychiatric Center in Staten Island; and

WHEREAS, Bishop Calvin Rice and First Lady Willie Mae Rogers are the proud parents of three children and the loving grandparents of five grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, Bishop Calvin Rice and First Lady Willie Mae Rice have brought to their ministry an overwhelming spirit of charity and compassion, acting from vision and enlightenment in conducting their administrative and spiritual duties, while always displaying the highest standards of personal and professional integrity and dedication; and

WHEREAS, This distinguished man and woman of God have always given enlightenment, guidance and wisdom to the many entrusted to their care and have administered abundantly and unstintingly to the spiritual and corporal needs of all; and

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body that when a person of such noble aims and accomplishments is brought to our attention it is appropriate to publicly and jubilantly proclaim and commend that individual for the edification of others; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to honor Bishop Calvin Rice and First Lady Willie Mae Rice for their steadfast and unremitting commitment to the ministry after 46 years of devoted service; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to Bishop Calvin Rice and First Lady Willie Mae Rice, New Jerusalem Worship Center.