

2015-J4783

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION commemorating the 230th Anniversary of New Paltz United Methodist Church of New Paltz, New York

WHEREAS, Religious institutions, and the many spiritual, social and educational benefits they confer, play a vital role in the development of the moral fabric of a responsible citizenry; and

WHEREAS, It is the tradition of this State and this Nation to pay tribute to institutions and individuals who have contributed to the ethical and spiritual values of their communities; and

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body takes pleasure in commemorating the 230th Anniversary of New Paltz United Methodist Church of New Paltz, New York, to be celebrated in 2016 with a number of events and activities observing this momentous milestone; and

WHEREAS, In the late 18th Century, New Paltz United Methodist Church began as a stop on the preaching circuit of Ezekiel Cooper, only 20 years after the Methodist Church first came to America; and

WHEREAS, The itinerant preacher began making the rounds of what was then called the East Jersey Circuit in 1786, and may have visited New Paltz at that time; therefore, the local congregation officially dates its establishment as of 1786; and

WHEREAS, From its humble beginnings as informal meetings in private homes, the congregation established its first building at the corner of Main and Church Streets; in 1878, they moved the building down the block and then built an addition; and

WHEREAS, By the early 1900s, the Methodist Church was serving as a "mission church" to young women as the New Paltz Normal School; unfortunately, the odors from the next door livery stable led the pastor at the time to write to the regional Methodist conference pleading for monies to build a new church; eventually, the congregation's wish was granted,

and in 1929, it was relocated to its present site on Grove Street; and
WHEREAS, In the 1960s, an education wing was annexed to the Church,
and more recent remodeling has modernized the building and made it handicapped accessible; and

WHEREAS, Under the luminous leadership of Reverend Bette Sohm, the Pastor of New Paltz United Methodist Church is marking the Church's anniversary by organizing a busy calendar of guest pastor visits, lectures, musical presentations and other activities; the majority of activities revolve around the Church's history; and

WHEREAS, Each month, a guest pastor will be invited to speak to the faithful members of the New Paltz United Methodist Church who is either a former Church pastor, former member of the congregation, child of a congregation member, or has some past association with the Church; and

WHEREAS, The year-long celebration began in December of 2015 with a visit from Bishop Jane Allen Middleton of the Regional United Methodist Church Conference who spoke about the Church's history; after the presentation, members gathered at a pot luck dinner which featured dishes that appeared in recipe books published by the Church at fundraising events going back to the 1950s; and

WHEREAS, The second guest preacher, Reverend Kevan Hitch, who served as Pastor of the New Paltz United Methodist Church in the early 2000s, conducted the worship service on Sunday, March 6, 2016; and

WHEREAS, The first of four musical events, a concert by several past Church Organists, will be presented in May of 2016; the series will wind up in October of 2016 with Sweet Singer, a one-man biographical performance by baritone Steve Kimbrough of the life of Charles Wesley, brother of New Paltz Methodist Church founder, John Wesley, and author of more than 6,000 hymns; and

WHEREAS, In addition, New Paltz Methodist Church has kicked off a lecture series named in honor of recently deceased congregation member and Pulitzer Prize winning historian, Carleton Mabey; and

WHEREAS, In January of 2016, Anna Bates of Empire State College, was featured as the series' first lecturer; currently, she is compiling a "social history" of the New Paltz United Methodist Church by distributing questionnaires to congregants seeking stories of how they and their families became connected with the religious institution; and

WHEREAS, In March of 2016, Lee Pritchard, Director of the Camerata Chorale and long-time Professor of Music at The State University of New York at New Paltz, spoke about the "seven streams" of Methodist hymnody and led the congregation in a participatory hymn sing; the next lecturer was Doctor Morris Davis of Drew University, who spoke on the topic of "The Evolution of Methodist Theology"; and

WHEREAS, The Carleton Mabee Lectures will continue on April 17, 2016, when Bill Rhoads, a popular lecturer on local architecture, will present one of his talks combined with a walking tour that traces the sites that have been home to New Paltz United Methodist Church since the 18th Century; and

WHEREAS, The New Paltz United Methodist Church of New Paltz, New York, stands on the threshold of tomorrow, prepared to meet the challenges of the coming decades while retaining that spiritual resolve which characterizes its past; and

WHEREAS, It is the custom of this Legislative Body to take note of enduring religious institutions and to bring such institutions to the attention of the people of this Empire State; now, therefore, be it RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commemorate the 230th Anniversary of New Paltz United Methodist Church of New Paltz, New York, fully confident this commemoration reflects the belief in those values which enhance the dignity and purpose of life; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to New Paltz United Methodist Church of New Paltz, New York.