

## 2015-J5053

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION commemorating the 100th Anniversary of First Assembly of God Church of Binghamton, New York, to be celebrated from May 14-15, 2016

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 those 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 100th Anniversary of First Assembly of God Church of Binghamton, New York, to be celebrated from May 14-15, 2016; and

WHEREAS, This auspicious occasion will be celebrated with a myriad of events throughout the weekend including "A Stroll Down Memory Lane" with historical trolley tours of the city, an Open House, a 100th Birthday Party, an evening service, and a multi-media choir and drama presentation; and

WHEREAS, On February 5, 1916, the Reverend John Kellner was called from his home in New Castle, Pennsylvania, to minister to a small group of people who were conducting prayer meetings in private homes in the city of Binghamton, New York; he had expected to stay but a few weeks, but that ministry lengthened into a total of 28 years; the following year, he married the former Olive Youngs of Binghamton; and

WHEREAS, On May 28, 1917, the tiny congregation became affiliated with the General Council of the Assemblies of God; for the next several years, the small Assemblies of God Mission in Binghamton, known as Faith Pentecostal Society, grew larger and subsequently, they had to relocate many times; on December 19, 1919, the members of the Society purchased a

three-story brick building at 34 Tayntor Avenue; and

WHEREAS, During the summer of 1922, tent meetings were held for community residents, when summer ended, the people returned to the Mission and became convinced of their need for a larger place of worship; on February 12, 1924, the church was officially incorporated; and

WHEREAS, In April of 1928, the Church moved once again; the congregation purchased the former High Street Methodist Church, located at Conklin Avenue and High Street; the building could seat 550 people and also came with a parsonage, which would be used for Sunday School classrooms; and

WHEREAS, The members of the Church changed their name to Faith Tabernacle, and remained there until 1957; from 1930 to 1934, during the interim in Pastor John Kellner's ministry, the work prospered under the direction of the Reverend O.P. Brann; in 1934, Pastor John Kellner was again called to pastor the Binghamton flock; and

WHEREAS, Pastor John Kellner was succeeded by Reverend John Jenkins who ministered until September of 1950; following him, the Reverend Paul Bills and his wife, missionaries in Alaska, served as an interim pastor; and

WHEREAS, In October of 1950, Faith Tabernacle welcomed Pastor R.D.E. Smith and his wife, Goldie; under his leadership, the ministry of Faith Tabernacle once again expanded, and soon after his arrival he began the radio program, The Voice Of Pentecost; and

WHEREAS, Within five years of his arrival, Pastor R.D.E. Smith was looking for a way to cope with a church that had outgrown its facilities; they bought the much larger Kalurah Temple at 255 Washington Street in downtown Binghamton, and the new building was dedicated on May

5, 1957; at that time, the church name was changed from Faith Tabernacle to First Assembly Of God; and

WHEREAS, During the 1970s, First Assembly of God managed the Turning Point Coffee House which reached out into the community with regular

street witnessing teams and festivals complete with marches through downtown Binghamton; and

WHEREAS, In February of 1976, the Church welcomed to Binghamton, Pastor Ronald Piedmonte and his wife, Sally; two years later, he began the television program, "It's A Wonderful Life!" on Channel 40; and

WHEREAS, From 1973-1975, Ernest and Miriam Steffansen pastored First Assembly of God; the Sunday School reached an attendance of 300 children, and the adult Sunday School classes were also well attended; after the Steffansens left, Reverend Edward Simmons and his wife took over leadership of the Church; and

WHEREAS, In 1980, the first Youth Pastor came to join the Senior Pastor and Assistant Pastor on staff; two years later, the positions of Minister of Music and Minister of Outreach were added; in 1983, the members of the Church purchased an existing structure nearby and in March of 1984, it was opened as the A/G Learning Center; and

WHEREAS, Sunday School, Wednesday night programs, and adult classes were moved into this facility, and an 8:30 early morning service was added; and

WHEREAS, In August of 1987, another building was purchased and named the Family Center providing space and kitchen facilities for large fellowship groups, church meals, Home Fellowships, School of Ministry and Wee Care Nursery School; and

WHEREAS, In October of 1988, the Church was approached by the Council of Churches to assist in the resettlement of a Pentecostal refugee family from Russia who arrived in early 1989, with more families to come; and

WHEREAS, A World Relief office operated in the Church, until relocating to the New York Penn Trade Center, to assist in resettling Vietnamese into the Binghamton Area with the Welcome Home program for American-Asians; for the next four or five years there were Ukrainian and Spanish services meeting weekly in Church facilities; and

WHEREAS, In the early 1990s, and every holiday, the Minister of Music

presented productions which were well attended by the community and enjoyed by all; in March of 1995, one of the members opened her home to minister to women in crisis; this later became the Teen Challenge ministry in the area; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Ronald Piedmonte retired in June of 1997, after

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serving as Senior Pastor for 21 years, and has remained in Binghamton as our Pastor Emeritus; in June of 1997, Reverend William Kirk and his wife, Laura and their family arrived to lead the First Assembly of God; and

WHEREAS, To pay off the mortgage of the church building, Pastor William Kirk instituted the principal of the Joash Chest offering which soon paid off the debt; under his luminous leadership, the children's ministries, such as Sunday School, Kidz Zone & Club 56, Junior Bible Quiz, summer outreach and the Wednesday night programs of Royal Rangers and Missionettes were successful ventures; as with the children's ministries, teen programs are also vital; many young people are being mentored under the dedicated leadership of ministerial and lay leaders; and

WHEREAS, At District Council in May of 2005, Pastor William Kirk was asked to serve the New York District of the Assemblies of God as Assistant District Superintendent; he accepted the position and began his duties in Syracuse, New York, in August of 2005; and

WHEREAS, Upon Reverend William Kirk's departure, Reverend Ronald Piedmonte was asked to serve as interim Executive Pastor, and Reverend Brandon Samuel held the title of Preaching Pastor; on September 18, 2005, Reverend Brandon Samuel was overwhelmingly elected to the position of Senior Pastor; and

WHEREAS, In this capacity, he reached out to the community with TV recorded live from the 11:00 a.m. Sunday morning service and broadcast on four stations throughout the week; during Reverend Brandon Samuel's

tenure, the Learning Center ground floor was transformed as The City Light Cafe; and

WHEREAS, In 2009, the Church Board of Directors gave approval for construction of a bridge connecting the Family Center to the Worship Center creating indoor access between the two buildings; the first floor of the Family Center was then renovated to house the Nursery and Pre-School Departments; and

WHEREAS, Pastor Brandon Samuel held the title of Senior Pastor for six years; after six months without a Senior Pastor, Reverend Lance Bass was elected as Senior Pastor of First Assembly on January 29, 2012; Pastor Lance Bass and his wife, Linda, their children, Laken, Landon, Lane, Luke, and Logan brought a renewed sense of vision for reaching the inner city; and

WHEREAS, Under his able leadership, the Church began to enlarge its local outreach ministry; in the spring and fall there were many Adopt-a-Block Saturdays where people went out to clean up city yards and sidewalks, greeting folks with love; the old kitchen and downstairs of the Worship Center were renovated to include a commercial kitchen and a large gathering area; and

WHEREAS, In March of 2014, the First Assembly of God began to offer free weekly community meals on Wednesday evenings and a weekly Sunday breakfast was instituted in August of 2014; in the first year of service, 12,990 residents were fed; one year later, 16,950 meals were served to the public; and

WHEREAS, In April of 2015 the Food Pantry was established, serving an average of 55 families per month; in addition, a delicious Thanksgiving dinner was held the Saturday before Thanksgiving, feeding over 600 people; the kind members of the Church also prepare and serve dinner at the Rescue Mission on a monthly basis; and

WHEREAS, Truly committed to its community, the First Assembly of God partnered with an existing local ministry, The Impact Project, to Save Souls One House At A Time; through its steadfast efforts, several local

houses have been restored in one Saturday; and

WHEREAS, On September 20, 2015, Pastor Jerry Qualls, and his wife, Laura came to the First Assembly of God; he serves as Interim Pastor while the congregation work through the process of securing a new Senior Pastor; in this role, he preaches, conducts seminars, and serves as an interim pastor in several different churches; and

WHEREAS, For a Century, thousands of people have experienced life changes through the ministry of Binghamton First Assembly of God by making a difference in their cities, Nation and world; and

WHEREAS, First Assembly of God Church 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 100th Anniversary of First Assembly of God Church of Binghamton, New York, to be celebrated from May 14-15, 2016, fully

confident that 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 Jerry Qualls, Interim Pastor, First Assembly of God Church.