

2015-J5318

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION Commending the Frederick Douglass Memorial AME Zion Church in Elmira, New York, upon the occasion of celebrating its 175th Anniversary

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 it is the sense of this Legislative Body to recognize that the quality of life in communities across the great State of New York are reflective of these exemplary institutions dedicated to serving the community's needs; and

WHEREAS, It is the tradition of this Legislative Body to pay tribute to these enduring places of worship within the State of New York whose spiritual mission and longevity have formed a bedrock of faith and inspiration for generations; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to commend the Frederick Douglass Memorial African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church upon the occasion of its 175th Anniversary which was celebrated on Saturday, April 23, 2016, in Elmira, New York; and

WHEREAS, In 1838, according to one local historian, Frederick Douglass, escaping slavery, was taken into the home of Jervis Langdon and his wife in Millport, New York, thereby establishing a lifelong and deep connection to Elmira, which he would visit many times over the coming decades as he became one of America's foremost abolitionists, orators, writers and statesmen; and

WHEREAS, In 1839, at the Elmira Armory on East Church Street in Elmira, eight former slaves heard the young Frederick Douglass deliver a speech and were inspired to establish a church; in 1840, the Frederick Douglass A.M.E. Zion Church was established and, following the death of Frederick Douglass in 1895, it was renamed the Frederick Douglass Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church; and

WHEREAS, The history of this illustrious place of worship has become widely known and revered for its local, statewide and national influence and commitment; for the past 175 years, this abiding congregation has

stood fast through nearly two centuries of tremendous cultural, social and political change, always staying true to its origins and its commitment to equality for African Americans and, in fact, in its pursuit of a world of dignity, freedom, peace and strength; and

WHEREAS, Since 1840, this extraordinary congregation has continued its exalted work and played its part in historical events, including serving as a station on Harriet Tubman's legendary Underground Railroad which carried so many out of slavery into freedom, and its venerable pulpit has played host to some of the finest preachers, orators and political leaders, including New York State Governor Theodore Roosevelt; and WHEREAS, Throughout the generations of its existence, the Frederick Douglass Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church has enjoyed numerous occasions to pause to celebrate its origins; to offer thanks and praise for its rich and storied life; and, in honor of its founders, pay tribute to the members of the church and community who have made such enduring, significant and vital contributions to the life, diversity and strength of the Elmira and Chemung County communities; and

WHEREAS, This remarkable institution has admirably met the diverse needs of area individuals and families; its singular mission has been a labor of love for a long line of distinguished and devoted Reverends, staff and congregants, past and present, who have secured an enduring place in the life of this community, serving as essential points of service, compassion and civic pride; and

WHEREAS, Steeped in such a meaningful and worthwhile history, Reverend Michael D. Bell and the present-day congregation of the Frederick Douglass Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church should take just pride in its purposeful growth as it looks forward to continuing to serve so many of the essential and fundamental needs of the community; now, therefore, be it RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commend the Frederick Douglass Memorial African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church upon the occasion of its 175th Anniversary, and stands 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 Reverend Michael D. Bell, Frederick Douglass Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church.