

Senate Resolution No. 1953

BY: Senator TEDISCO

COMMEMORATING the 180th Anniversary of the Duryee Memorial African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church of Schenectady, New York, to be celebrated on May 5, 2017

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 180th Anniversary of Duryee Memorial African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church of Schenectady, New York, to be celebrated at a Banquet on Friday, May 5, 2017; and

WHEREAS, Schenectady was first settled in 1661; in 1795, it was incorporated as a borough, and three years later, it was chartered as a city; and

WHEREAS, More than 170 years later, the Duryee Memorial African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Zion Church was established; initially known as the African Church, it was the first black church in Schenectady; and

WHEREAS, In the early part of 1837, Isaac G. Duryee, then a young man and student at Union College, purchased a piece of property on Lower Franklin Street in Schenectady to erect a small church building and give it to the people; Reverend Isaac G. Duryee then served as the first Pastor of the African Church; and

WHEREAS, In 1840, the African Church hosted a public meeting to discuss the electoral process; in 1855, the Church achieved another first, becoming home to the first free school for 37 black children; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Isaac G. Duryee, known to his congregation as a modern day "Paul", died on February 8, 1866; his headstone read "A firm friend of the colored race"; and

WHEREAS, In 1894, the Church became known as the Duryee Memorial African Episcopal Zion Church when it joined the African Methodist Episcopal Conference, connecting it with a Negro religious organization; the Church became part of the Genesee Conference, which would later be renamed the Western New York Conference; and

WHEREAS, After the Church was razed in 1907, the Duryee Memorial AME Zion Church purchased a two-story building on Hulett Street; and

WHEREAS, In 1937, the Church celebrated its 100th Anniversary with a

16-day celebration under the leadership of Reverend A. L. Pierce; five years later, the parsonage was rebuilt and a garage was added in 1943; and

WHEREAS, In 1954, the Church was comprised of 115 members, and 55 children attended Sunday School; music was always an important aspect and the members sang in three groups: a children's choir, a cathedral choir, and a young people's choir; and

WHEREAS, The Duryee Memorial AME Zion Church became one of the founding members of the Schenectady Inner City Ministry (SICM) in 1967; the Ministry consisted of 58 congregations and 15 denominations; and

WHEREAS, In 1999, under the guidance of Reverend Kenneth Q. James, Sister Isabelle Brown organized the first after-school academy, where Sister Patricia Henderson served as the Assistant Director; the school provided academic support to elementary, middle and high school students; and

WHEREAS, In 2005, Reverend James D. McCathan was appointed Pastor of Duryee Memorial AME Zion Church; in an effort to bring the community churches together and address issues of crime and violence in their neighborhoods, he established the Ministerial Alliance, a group of ministers from Schenectady who came together to coordinate different services and activities for the community; and

WHEREAS, Today, the Duryee Memorial AME Zion Church is led by Reverend Ruby J. Smith, the Presiding Elder of the Albany District; and

WHEREAS, The Duryee Memorial African Methodist Episcopal Zion 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 180th Anniversary of the Duryee Memorial African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, to be observed on May 5, 2017, 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 The Reverend Ruby J. Smith, Pastor, Duryee Memorial African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church.