

BY: Senator STEWART-COUSINS

COMMEMORATING the 150th Anniversary of the Messiah
Baptist Church

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 Nation to pay tribute to those institutions and individuals who have contributed to the ethical and spiritual values of their communities; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to commemorate the 150th Anniversary of the Messiah Baptist Church in Yonkers, New York, to be celebrated in September 2024; and

WHEREAS, First organized in 1874 in Yonkers, New York, the Messiah Baptist Church is the oldest predominantly Black church congregation in Westchester County; and

WHEREAS, The Messiah Baptist Church originally held its services in a hall in the second story of 50 North Broadway in Yonkers; the church then purchased the former Westminster Presbyterian Church building in 1965; this building, located at 76 Warburton Avenue in Yonkers, was constructed in 1880 based on designs by New York City-based church architect Lawrence B. Valk and was restructured in 1886 after a fire; and

WHEREAS, The Messiah Baptist Church has played a central role in both the Yonkers and the Westchester County Black community since the late nineteenth century, and has been a regional focal point for the Civil Rights Movement; and

WHEREAS, In 1965, the church hosted speakers such as Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., President A. Phillip Randolph of the Negro American Labor Council, and James Farmer of the Congress of Racial Equality for a Negro American Labor Council rally at 76 Warburton Avenue; and

WHEREAS, From 1988 through 1990, under the leadership of Reverend Darryl George, the Messiah Baptist Church was a base for initiating and organizing the high-profile desegregation movement in Yonkers; and

WHEREAS, Since 2015, Messiah Baptist Church has been led by Reverend Frank E. Coleman Jr., and his wife, Reverend Margaret Fountain-Coleman; and

WHEREAS, In 2023, the New York State Board for Historic Preservation recommended adding the Messiah Baptist Church building to the State and National Registers of Historic Places; and

WHEREAS, Today, the church reaches over one thousand members throughout the year through services and the church's many programs, including bible study, youth programs, cultural outreach programs, and local food programs; and

WHEREAS, The Messiah Baptist Church remains a beautiful place in which to worship and serve the community, and the Reverends Coleman have a bright outlook for the future of their community; 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 150th Anniversary of the Messiah Baptist Church; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the Messiah Baptist Church of Yonkers, New York.