

BY: Senator BROOKS

COMMEMORATING the 117th Anniversary of Bethel
A.M.E. Church of Freeport, 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 those institutions and individuals who have contributed to the ethical and spiritual values of their communities; and

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body is justly proud to commemorate the 117th Anniversary of Bethel A.M.E. Church of Freeport, New York; and

WHEREAS, Bethel A.M.E. Church was founded in 1902, with Reverend DeShields as its first pastor; it is the sixth oldest organized religious institution in the Village of Freeport, New York; and

WHEREAS, The first structure was built in 1910, on Henry Street near Sunrise Highway under the pastorate of Reverend William Edwards; due to the rapid growth of the congregation, the church was moved to Helen Avenue in 1924; and

WHEREAS, As the years went on and Bethel A.M.E. Church continued to evolve, a building fund was established by Reverend Harold F. Berry and continued by Reverend Beresford Barrow; this move was accomplished under the dynamic leadership of Reverend S. Frank Emmanuel, who was appointed as Pastor in 1968; and

WHEREAS, A true asset to the church, Reverend Emmanuel organized Bethel's Senior Citizen Center, and the Cathedral and Chancel Choirs; he also started the Acolytes serving every Sunday; and

WHEREAS, Bethel A.M.E. Church found a new home in 1974, at its current address, 420 North Main Street; and

WHEREAS, In 1978, Reverend Joseph Robinson became the spiritual leader of Bethel A.M.E. Church; under his guidance the existing church mortgage was liquidated and more pews were added to the rear of the sanctuary; and

WHEREAS, Furthermore, he performed a feet washing ceremony of the Acolytes during Easter week, and formed the first Boy Scout Troop at Bethel; during his pastorate, the church was given recognition by the State Legislature for its outstanding service in the local community; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Simon P. Bouie began his tenure with Bethel A.M.E. Church in 1986, during which time the church became computerized, a chair lift was installed for the elderly and disabled, and two houses

and a van were purchased; and

WHEREAS, Appointed in June of 1994, Reverend Harry J. White II was instrumental in the success of numerous ministries, some of which include The Bethel Bible Institute, The Burning Bush Ministry, The Annex at 100 North Main Street, The Women's Ministry, The Healing Ministry, Evangelist Department, The Liturgical Dancers and The Youth Program (JAM-Jesus And Me); and

WHEREAS, In addition, he re-established The Senior Program, and established The Bradford Boardman Library, as well as The Radio Ministry; and

WHEREAS, With a passion to lift the prophetic voice and liberate all people, Reverend Stephen Michael Lewis currently serves as the visionary Pastor and leader of Bethel A.M.E. Church; he began his tenure on June 17, 2011, and under his leadership the church has continued to evolve; and

WHEREAS, Under the luminous direction of Reverend Stephen Michael Lewis, Bethel A.M.E. 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 117th Anniversary of Bethel A.M.E. Church of Freeport, New York; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to Reverend Stephen Michael Lewis, Bethel A.M.E. Church, Freeport, New York.