

BY: Senator COMRIE

MOURNING the death of Bishop Dr. Charles Leslie Norris, Sr., beloved man of faith, visionary pastor, and devoted servant to his community

WHEREAS, There are certain outstanding individuals whose lives of faith, leadership, and service profoundly enrich the spiritual and civic fabric of our communities; through his unwavering devotion to ministry, commitment to justice, and dedication to uplifting others, Bishop Dr. Charles Leslie Norris, Sr., was one such individual; and

WHEREAS, It is with profound sorrow and deep regret that this Legislative Body records the passing of Bishop Dr. Charles Leslie Norris, Sr., a respected clergyman, mentor, and community leader whose life was marked by faith, integrity, and a steadfast commitment to Christian service; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Charles Norris devoted his life to helping others, embodying the mission of reflecting Christian values of loving his family, serving fellow Christians, and serving the community, earning honor for the life he lived and the service he rendered to others; and

WHEREAS, As a man, Dr. Charles Norris first ministered to his family which extends to three generations; he was married to the late Ruby D. Norris for more than forty years; the couple were blessed with two sons, Keith Alexander Norris and Charles Leslie Norris, Jr.; and

WHEREAS, Upon the passing of his first love of his life, Dr. Charles Norris married the second love of his life, Arnella Anesta Webson Norris who cared for him until he took his last breath; and

WHEREAS, Bishop Charles Norris accepted the call into pastoral leadership at Bethesda Missionary Baptist Church in 1972 and was elected Pastor on May 3, 1973; he worked to strengthen the Church, negotiating and purchasing the Hillside Center from the First Presbyterian Church of Jamaica to install a house of worship; and

WHEREAS, Bishop Charles Norris led this congregation for approximately 40 years, preaching, teaching, and touching the hearts of the people with an unconditional love in word and deed; and

WHEREAS, Bishop Norris's ministerial vision and style gave way to spiritual leadership and mentorship, attracting and benefiting many renowned ministers; he led programs for individuals and families who were battling AIDS and tended to the needs of the homeless; additionally, he provided guidance to grassroots activists who emerged as legislative leaders at the local, state, and federal levels; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Charles Norris was presented with an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree by the Educational and Theological Consortium of the Eastern United States, on the basis of his twelve consecutive years as

Pastor and Minister of Worship at Bethesda Missionary Baptist Church, as well as serving faithfully in several offices in the Eastern Baptist Association as Vice Moderator of Queens and Recording and Corresponding Secretary; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Charles Norris also served as a board member of the NAACP, member of the Second Chance Panel, member of the York College Presidents' Advisory Council, and Executive Secretary of the Southeast Queens Clergy for Community Empowerment; he was also a graduate of the Urban Ministry Program of New York Theological Seminary and New York City Mission; and

WHEREAS, Bishop Charles Norris's past achievements include a Mayoral appointment to the Human Rights Commission and a Queens Borough President appointment as Chairman of the Martin Luther King, Jr., Commission of Queens County; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Charles Norris grounded his ministry in Christian principles of fairness, justice, compassion, and cultivation of genuine Christian community, leaving a lasting and meaningful legacy; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Charles Norris is lovingly remembered by his family, the congregation of Bethesda Missionary Baptist Church, friends, colleagues, and countless individuals whose lives were enriched by his ministry, leadership, and example of faithful service; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to mourn the passing of Bishop Dr. Charles Leslie Norris, Sr., and to honor his enduring legacy of faith, leadership, and service to the Queens community and beyond; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of Bishop Dr. Charles Leslie Norris, Sr.