

By: Dukes

H.R. No. 400

R E S O L U T I O N

1           WHEREAS, The members of Ebenezer Baptist Church in Austin are  
2 celebrating the 140th anniversary of their church's founding on  
3 February 15, 2015; and

4           WHEREAS, Also known as Third Baptist Church, this venerable  
5 house of worship traces its history to February 1875, when the  
6 Reverend C. Ward and 18 charter members gathered in the home of  
7 Elisa Hawkins, and the congregation soon built a frame structure a  
8 few blocks away, at the corner of Catalpa and Curve Streets; and

9           WHEREAS, Within its first decade, the church outgrew that  
10 initial building, and in 1885 the membership completed construction  
11 of a new home at East 10th and San Marcos Streets, the same location  
12 Ebenezer Baptist occupies today; the present Gothic-style  
13 limestone and brick sanctuary dates to the early 1950s, and the  
14 tower features the same bell that was used in the church's early  
15 years; and

16           WHEREAS, Ebenezer Baptist Church has nurtured a rich  
17 tradition of musical excellence, due in large part to the efforts of  
18 Virgie Carrington-Dewitty, who served as director of music for more  
19 than a half-century; it was under her direction in 1938 that the  
20 Ebenezer choir became the first African American gospel group to be  
21 heard on a commercial radio program in Texas; and

22           WHEREAS, Over the decades, Ebenezer Baptist Church has  
23 benefited from the dedicated efforts of a number of outstanding  
24 members of the clergy, including its current pastor, the Reverend

1 Dr. Ricky Freeman, who has ably led the congregation since 2012; a  
2 centerpiece of the local community, the church offers a variety of  
3 commendable programs, including those focused on mission outreach  
4 and youth development, and its scholarship committee annually  
5 provides financial assistance to the congregation's college-bound  
6 members; moreover, the church formed the East Austin Economic  
7 Development Corporation in 1988, an initiative that has partnered  
8 with other organizations and businesses to revitalize underserved  
9 areas of the city; and

10 WHEREAS, Countless Austin residents have looked to Ebenezer  
11 Baptist Church for spiritual guidance during its long history, and  
12 the congregation is indeed deserving of special recognition as it  
13 marks this special anniversary milestone; now, therefore, be it

14 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 84th Texas  
15 Legislature hereby commemorate the 140th anniversary of the  
16 founding of Ebenezer Baptist Church and extend to the church's  
17 congregants sincere best wishes for the future; and, be it further

18 RESOLVED, That an official copy of this resolution be  
19 prepared for the church as an expression of high regard by the Texas  
20 House of Representatives.