

By: Bonnen of Brazoria

H.R. No. 2627

R E S O L U T I O N

1 WHEREAS, The members of Bethlehem African Methodist
2 Episcopal Church in Old Ocean are celebrating the 150th anniversary
3 of their church's founding on June 11, 2017; and

4 WHEREAS, This historic institution traces its roots back to
5 the end of the American Civil War when, shortly after news of the
6 Emancipation Proclamation issued by President Lincoln arrived in
7 Texas, five former slaves, Abraham Kennedy, Calvin Parks, Saul
8 Harris, Charlie Lee, and Charles Allison, purchased a 600-acre
9 tract of land in the Chances Prairie community on which to build
10 homes for their families; and

11 WHEREAS, Looking ahead, the men also reserved an acre of this
12 tract as a future church site, and in 1867, the first church, a log
13 building, was erected on the property; under the guidance of its
14 inaugural pastor, Father Hayward, the church aligned with the AME
15 denomination in 1880, and it later merged with Brazoria and Cedar
16 Break churches; and

17 WHEREAS, In 1916, the original edifice was destroyed by a
18 storm, but members soon banded together to fund a new sanctuary
19 constructed by E. O. Viola; that facility housed the congregation
20 until 1940, when the Reverend E. A. Thomas successfully spearheaded
21 an effort to purchase and build the present-day building; and

22 WHEREAS, Over the years, Bethlehem AME has benefited from the
23 able leadership of many dedicated clergymen, and that tradition of
24 service is continued today by the Reverend Fred P. Blair Jr., who

1 assumed the pulpit in 2010; the church has long played a vital role
2 in the community through numerous ministries and outreach programs,
3 including its annual Trustee Rally and Memorial Day celebration;
4 and

5 WHEREAS, For the past century and a half, Bethlehem AME
6 Church has served as a source of inspiration and guidance to those
7 who worship there, and its continued existence is a testament to the
8 unwavering commitment of its members and clergy, both past and
9 present; now, therefore, be it

10 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 85th Texas
11 Legislature hereby commemorate the sesquicentennial of Bethlehem
12 African Methodist Episcopal Church and extend to the congregation
13 sincere best wishes for many more years of shared prayer and
14 fellowship; and, be it further

15 RESOLVED, That an official copy of this resolution be
16 prepared for the church as an expression of high regard by the Texas
17 House of Representatives.