

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 28

BY SENATOR GATTI AND REPRESENTATIVE REYNOLDS

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To commend and congratulate the First Baptist Church of Minden for its rich history and the faithful foundation upon which it was built.

WHEREAS, on February 4, 2018, the First Baptist Church of Minden had a Special Reunion Dedication Service, "Remembering the Past, Celebrating the Present, and with a Vision for the Future", dedicating the newly renovated facilities, including the children's, preschool, youth, and adult education facilities, auditorium, and kitchen; and

WHEREAS, the Minden Baptist Church was organized with four charter members, R. L. Horn, Phebe Bird, Thomas Lovel, and Sarah Drew, on December 29, 1844, when two sessions were held that day under the leadership of two men from the Rehoboth Church of Mt. Lebanon, Elders W. J. Larkin and L. L. Washburne, with the meeting likely being held in the home of Mrs. Drew; and

WHEREAS, from these beginnings, the small congregation in what was then a community on the frontier, less than fifty miles from the international border with the Republic of Texas, continued to increase in number; and

WHEREAS, in 1846, the church moved into its first house of worship, located on what is today the southeast corner of the intersection of Lee Street and Broadway, and that building was the home of the congregation for the next fifty-six years, longer than any other house of worship; and

WHEREAS, as Minden grew, the Minden Baptist Church grew, slowly but steadily, until a major disruption of the church membership came in 1865 and 1866 when nearly fifty

members of the congregation, freed slaves, were granted letters of dismissal to unite with the newly formed St. Rest's Baptist Church; and

WHEREAS, by 1878, the church rolls listed fifty-four members, but over the next decade the membership more than doubled, and it was during these years problems began to surface with the church building; and

WHEREAS, in 1901, the new Minden Mill of the Bodcau Lumber Company opened and brought a newfound prosperity and the Minden Baptist Church became financially able to construct a new building, an impressive brick structure located on what is today the front parking lot of the Minden Medical Center on Main Street; and

WHEREAS, in 1902, the church entered this building, remarkable for its indoor baptistry with glass walls and the first electric lights in the church, but after entering the new building, membership stabilized and actually dropped; and

WHEREAS, after the church built a third home in 1925, the second house of worship was later remodeled and became the Rex Theatre; and

WHEREAS, in the years immediately after World War I, Minden and the church began a period of rapid growth, and by 1924, it was clear that the Minden Baptist Church had outgrown its relatively new home, only being home to the congregation for twenty-three years; and

WHEREAS, in preparation for building a new church home, the congregation reorganized in the early spring of 1924; its newly chartered name became the First Baptist Church of Minden; and

WHEREAS, the English property at the corner of Broadway and First Street was purchased as a site for the new church building, and being aided greatly by the philanthropy of Joseph G. and Nancy Mullins Ferguson, the new home of the First Baptist Church was completed and ready to be occupied by the end of April 1925; however, the first event in the church occurred in February when church organist Miss Lavinia Shealy was married to Mr. Bert David in the unfurnished church; and

WHEREAS, the first event in the church after completion was the funeral of former United States Congressman John T. Watkins of Minden, a former president of the Louisiana Baptist Convention; and

WHEREAS, the church increased its membership more than one hundred percent in eight years, a rapid growth which continued unchecked over the next few years; and

WHEREAS, by 1939, the church boasted over one thousand eight hundred members and was one of the largest Southern Baptist churches in Louisiana, the all-time peak membership being recorded four years later in 1943 when the church roll included the names of two thousand two hundred forty-six persons; and

WHEREAS, in 1944, the First Baptist Church of Minden celebrated its centennial and also played host to the annual meeting of the Louisiana Baptist Convention, the fifth time the church served as host; and

WHEREAS, in the years after the war, resident membership continued to boom, peaking in 1949, but over the next few years the membership dropped off a little as the religious community in Minden grew; and

WHEREAS, the Sibley Road Mission of the First Baptist Church was established, taking members from the mother congregation, and that church later became the Southside Baptist Church and is today the North Acres Baptist Church; and

WHEREAS, one other local church, the Germantown Baptist Church, began as a mission of First Baptist and, in addition, other Southern Baptist churches were established in Minden, so although Minden was growing, the membership at FBC did not keep pace; and

WHEREAS, during the 1960s, growth began again at First Baptist as Dr. Ronald Prince was called as pastor in November 1966, and his dynamic leadership sparked a new time of increase; resident membership climbed back over the one thousand six hundred mark for the first time in nearly a decade in 1969, and by the time Dr. Prince retired from the pulpit in 1987, had reached one thousand eight hundred twenty-two; and

WHEREAS, under the leadership of the Rev. Wayne Dubose, pastor from 2001-2009, the church enjoyed a new period of growth and continues to prosper under its current pastor, Rev. Leland Crawford and his wife Rose; and

WHEREAS, the success of the state of Louisiana, the strength of our communities, and the overall vitality of American society depend, in great measure, upon the faithful dedication of people like the founders, forefathers, and members of churches like the First Baptist Church of Minden.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby commend and congratulate the First Baptist Church of Minden for its rich history and the faithful foundation upon which it was built, and does hereby extend best wishes for continued growth and prosperity.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to Reverend Leland Crawford.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES