

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 278

By Watson

A RESOLUTION to honor and congratulate the congregation of First Presbyterian Church of Chattanooga upon its 175th anniversary.

WHEREAS, the many fine churches across this State constitute an institutional foundation for an orderly and just society for all Tennesseans, and their dedicated service to God and humanity is the bedrock upon which our State and Nation are founded; and

WHEREAS, it is appropriate that the members of this legislative body should recognize these venerable religious institutions and their congregations, who, through their unflinching capacity for love, dedication of spirit, and faith in God, strive to enrich the lives of people in their communities; and

WHEREAS, one such dynamic and historic community of faith is First Presbyterian Church of Chattanooga, a congregation of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), whose members will recognize its 175th anniversary on June 21, 2015; and

WHEREAS, the church was founded in a log cabin on the corner of Chattanooga's Fifth and Lookout streets with 28 founding members, the building serving as the community meeting place where the name Chattanooga was chosen for the village previously known as Ross's Landing, and in which the town's first school was conducted; and

WHEREAS, the congregation was first known as the Presbyterian Church of Chattanooga and was gifted a plot of land by the town at the corner of Third and Walnut streets, where African-Americans were welcome and the building was made available for use by other denominations; and

WHEREAS, the church then moved southward, as did the community, to the corner of Seventh and Market streets, where the building subsequently was commandeered during the Civil War for use as an Army hospital; and

WHEREAS, during the Civil War occupation, services were held in the home of Rev. Thomas Hooke McCallie, the only pastor who remained in Chattanooga during the war; and

WHEREAS, Northern-minded Presbyterians decided to form Second Presbyterian Church in 1871, and the Presbyterian Church of Chattanooga became known as First Presbyterian Church; and

WHEREAS, former Confederate Capt. Jonathan Bachman became pastor of First Presbyterian during Reconstruction, and he became nationally known for uniting Union and Confederate veterans during his 50-year tenure; and

WHEREAS, in 1884, the church moved to the corner of Seventh Street and Georgia Avenue, where the first upscale church architecture in the city was employed, incorporating the city's first pipe organ; and

WHEREAS, over time, the growing congregation needed a larger facility, and in 1910, it moved to the corner of McCallie Avenue and Douglas Street; and

WHEREAS, in 1926, First Presbyterian pastor Dr. Joseph G. Venable began preaching sermons over Chattanooga radio and the program has run uninterrupted since its inception 89 years ago; and

WHEREAS, successors Dr. James L. Fowle, Ben Haden, Dr. Michael A. Milton, and Rev. Timothy E. Tinsley continued the congregation's outreach for Jesus Christ into the community and beyond; and

WHEREAS, First Presbyterian has been the mother church of most other Presbyterian bodies in the Chattanooga area and even grandmother and great-grandmother of some, as well as partnering with other PCA congregations in church planting in distant states; and

WHEREAS, it has sent its own people and supported others as missionaries to six continents, sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ with other tongues and tribes and nations; and

WHEREAS, the 13 pastors and the members of First Presbyterian Church have been active leaders and ministers in the Chattanooga community, and they have taken part in founding the city's first Sunday school, Chattanooga Prison and Prevention Ministry, the community's United Way, and the Children's Home, as well as three major banks, and Baylor School, McCallie School, Girls Preparatory School, and Bright School, and bringing Scouting to the community; and

WHEREAS, a powerful institution in service to the Kingdom of God, First Presbyterian Church is one of a number of great religious institutions and catalysts for spiritual change in our State, Nation and World; and

WHEREAS, First Presbyterian Church has stood on the rock-solid foundation of Christian belief, service, and love for 175 years; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED NINTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we hereby join in celebrating the 175th anniversary of First Presbyterian Church of Chattanooga, thank the people of this congregation and their pastors for their notable service to their Lord and this State, and wish them much continued success for years to come.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.