

## RESOLUTION 15-664

**WHEREAS**, the City Council and the Mayor of the City of Huntsville, Alabama are apprised that Phillips Christian Methodist Episcopal Church will celebrate its 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on September 20, 2015, at Phillips CME Church; and,

**WHEREAS**, the story of Phillips Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, also known as Phillips CME Church, is a compendium of stories about people, their courage, their faith, and their faith communities. The story began in 1865, in the aftermath of the Civil War and the throes of Reconstruction. That beginning was five years before the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church was organized on December 16, 1870, by 41 former slaves and officials of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South; and,

**WHEREAS**, in 1866, the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South authorized its Bishops to organize their "Colored" members into their own "separate ecclesiastical jurisdiction." The Bishops carried out the instructions of the General Conference between 1866 and 1870. Proceeding in the "Methodist Way," organizers formed former slaves into Annual Conferences in order to elect delegates to an organizing General Conference. In 1867, the Huntsville Church and 13 other presiding elder districts in Tennessee and North Mississippi were assigned to the Colored Memphis Conference. That was the first Annual Conference organized in the developing CME Church. Having been assigned to the Alabama Annual Conference in 1873, and the North Alabama Conference in 1894, Phillips CME Church is in the North Central Alabama Conference today; and,

**WHEREAS**, the early years of the Huntsville church were marked by frequent relocations. Worship services were held in "the Grove" at the home of John and Julia Kemp on Pump Street. Other meeting sites were the Masonic Hall of Evening Star Lodge Number 6, and the Fred Davis School. From "the Grove," worship services were moved to a converted broom factory on West Clinton Street. The church moved again when the congregation purchased Rison Chapel for \$1200 in 1904. The beautiful white frame edifice was a source of joy. Located on Church Street, slightly west of where the Depot Roundhouse stands today, the building burned in 1916. Since there was no insurance, the congregation was without a place to worship again. Under the inspired leadership of Robert Shephard, Chairman of the Board of Stewards, the congregation worshiped regularly until a new edifice was built at 312 Church Street, the site where Rison Chapel had burned. During the interim, members worshiped at the Fred Davis School, the Masonic Hall Number 6, the Immaculate Hall on Meridian Street, and in private homes. The Robert Shephard home was one such meeting place; and,

**WHEREAS**, the Reverend W.D. Avery, an Alabama A & M Institute professor and brick mason, was named pastor in 1920. With the help of his students and financial assistance from Bishop Charles H. Phillips, the Reverend Avery replaced the building destroyed by fire and retired the debt on Rison Chapel. Hence, the name Phillips Chapel CME Church was given to honor Bishop Phillips. The church was dedicated in 1922.

**RESOLUTION 15-664**  
**PAGE 2 OF 2**

In addition to denominational service, community outreach has been an important component of Phillips' ministry. As far back as the 1890s, members were community oriented. Attorney Robert Jones represented the church on the Site Selection Committee for Council High School and Attorney John Kemp was an advocate for the cause. During the initial pastorate of the Reverend L.L. Reddick, Jr., he organized a radio ministry and a kindergarten.

**WHEREAS**, another longtime ministry at Phillips is the Phillips Brotherhood Community Outreach (PBCO). Led by James Perkins for almost 20 years, the Brotherhood has collaborated with such organizations as Big Brothers/Big Sisters and CASA, and mentored boys at Blossomwood School. One highlight of the ministry is the annual educational trip for boys to nearby cities; and,

**WHEREAS**, the Reverend Keith Ellison was called from his ministry in Savannah, Georgia to lead Phillips. Standing on the shoulders of those who preceded him, Reverend Ellison stressed his vision of discipleship and the need to win souls to Christ. During his tenure, the membership has increased significantly. He has led the congregation in purchasing land on Winchester Road and looks forward to a building program. His ministry is spiritually vibrant as he leads the church in celebrating 150 years.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the City Council and Mayor of the City of Huntsville, Alabama, gratefully acknowledge, congratulate, and extend best wishes to Phillips CME Church, in honor of its 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. May you have continued success in all future endeavors.

**ADOPTED** this the 10<sup>th</sup> day of September, 2015.

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President of the City Council of  
the City of Huntsville, Alabama

**APPROVED** this the 10<sup>th</sup> day of September, 2015.

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Mayor of the City of Huntsville, Alabama