

Proclamation



WHEREAS, Big Bethel AME was conceived in 1847 from enslaved African Americans, established as Bethel Tabernacle in 1855, and joined the African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1865; and



WHEREAS, Bishop Daniel Payne organized the AME Church in the South, including Atlanta, in 1865 with Brother Joseph Wood as Lay Preacher of Bethel AME Tabernacle; and



WHEREAS, Reverend John Wesley Gaines was the first ordained African American minister and the first assigned by the AME Church to lead the Bethel Flock; and



WHEREAS, under the guidance of Rev. F. Jesse Peck, its second leader, the St. James Lodge Number Four of the Prince Hall Free and Accepted Masons was established in 1871; and



WHEREAS, Big Bethel was the founding location for Morris Brown College in 1881, had Booker T Washington, President William Taft, Marcus Garvey, Mary McLeod Bethune, President Jimmy Carter, William Clinton, Nelson Mandela, and other global change agents speak from its pulpit, and included prominent Atlantans in its membership; and



WHEREAS, Big Bethel, listed on the National Register of Historic places, developed Renaissance Walk, Bethel-Trinity Partnership, Bethel Towers, Senior Village, a Credit Union, Youth Retreat Station, its Amphitheatre, Emily's Haven, prison ministries, and held many national conferences at its site; and



WHEREAS, under the servant leadership of Reverend Dr. Jonathan C. Augustine, its 37th pastor, Big Bethel AME Church continues to welcome and serve the global community by opening its doors for the 2025 Annual Friendship Worship Service of the Atlanta Chapters of The Links, Incorporated;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the Fulton County Board of Commissioners recognizes Big Bethel AME Church for 178 years of service as Atlanta's Oldest Congregation, and does hereby proclaim Sunday, November 2, 2025, as **"BIG BETHEL A.M.E. CHURCH APPRECIATION DAY"** in Fulton County, Georgia.

Fulton County Board of Commissioners

Attest:

Commissioner

Clerk to the Commission

F U L T O N C O U N T Y