

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 1005

By Parkinson

A RESOLUTION to honor and commend Reverend Sheilah Easterling-Smith for her ongoing dedication to uplifting and empowering women.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that we should honor those individuals who have answered a divine call to the ministry and who have served with dedication, vigor, and enthusiasm to perform God's work for their congregations and their communities; and

WHEREAS, one such stalwart servant of the Lord is Reverend Sheilah Easterling-Smith, an associate minister at Mississippi Boulevard Christian Church—Disciples of Christ (DOC) in Memphis and the founder of the Women of Promise and Praise (WOPP), which is celebrating fifteen years of ministry in 2022; and

WHEREAS, a native of Cleveland, Ohio, Reverend Sheilah Easterling-Smith is an honors graduate of John F. Kennedy High School and was a scholarship student at Indiana State University, where she majored in journalism; and

WHEREAS, after graduating from Indiana State University, Reverend Easterling-Smith worked in public relations positions in Chicago, Illinois, and Cleveland, Ohio; she continued in education at Jackson State University, where she majored in communications; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Easterling-Smith has enjoyed a varied career, working in the radio, newspaper, and music industries; she currently serves as a navigator for the Congregational Health Network (CHN) for Methodist LeBonheur Healthcare, where her responsibilities include planning community, clergy, and health disparity classes and programs; and

WHEREAS, after accepting her call to the ministry, Reverend Easterling-Smith attended Memphis Theological Seminary, graduating *cum laude* with a Master of Divinity degree; she

served as the II Vice Moderator for the Tennessee Region for the DOC from 2010 to 2012 and conducted workshops for the Women's Ministry of DOC in Atlanta, Georgia; Greensboro, North Carolina; and throughout Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, she holds several certificates, including Ministerial Assessment Coordinator from Fuller Theological Seminary, DEEP Diabetes Educator, Mental Health First Aid Instructor, Chronic Disease Management Specialist Instructor, and Suicide Prevention Counselor, and she holds a National Health Minister certification from Wesley Theological Seminary; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Easterling-Smith's service to the Lord at Mississippi Boulevard Christian Church has included active participation in many ministries, including serving as Christian Education Commission leader, Ministry Lead for David Generation of Preachers, Ministry Lead of Stephen Ministers, Church Council member, and Social Concerns Commission member; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Easterling-Smith has received numerous accolades; she was the 2009 recipient of the Women of Excellence Award from the *Tri-State Defender*, 2014 recipient of the Esther Award from the national coalition of Women in Ministry, and the 2019 recipient of the 3V Leader Award for Women who are viable, vocal, and visible in their communities; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Easterling-Smith and her work with WOPP have been important to the women of Tennessee from all walks of life; comprising ten women from different denominations, the ministry seeks to uplift and empower women and young ladies; and

WHEREAS, each year, a scholarship is awarded to a young lady based on scholastic excellence and community service, and many scholarship recipients have gone on to become graduates of Spelman, Hampton, Clark Atlanta, and Howard universities; and

WHEREAS, WOPP has impacted many women over the years, ministering through events such as prayer breakfasts, literacy projects, conferences, seminars, workshops, food drives, book club series, and back-to-school supply drives; other notable events include the

annual Seven Last Words Service, Motherless Daughters Luncheon, Lenten Devotions, Faith and Health Forum, and Black History Program; and

WHEREAS, each program features a health component with access to health screenings and information; the group has also given its time, energy, and resources to many mental-health-related organizations, homeless shelters, and libraries, as well as LeBonheur Children's Hospital; and

WHEREAS, in addition to her work with WOPP, Reverend Easterling-Smith enjoys the love and companionship of her husband, Reverend Larry Smith; together, they have led the Majestic Couples Group since 2005; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Easterling-Smith continues to demonstrate excellence in her calling to serve her congregation and her community; the members of her organization are proud to call her an associate and friend and look forward to her continued guidance for many years to come; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor and commend Reverend Sheilah Easterling-Smith for her ongoing dedication to uplifting and empowering women.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy and upon proper request made to the appropriate clerk, the language appearing immediately following the State seal appear without House or Senate designation.