

Legislation Text

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Recognizing and honoring Old Pine Street Church on the Occasion of its 250th Anniversary.

WHEREAS, The founding of Old Pine Street Church predates the Revolution. Philadelphia was the fastest-growing city in the English-speaking world in the 1760s, and the Presbyterian church had to rapidly expand in order to ease growing pains. With the First Presbyterian Church near Market Street and the Second Presbyterian Church slightly further north, parishioners who lived further south expressed the need for a Third Presbyterian Church. Thus, Thomas and Richard Penn freely gave a lot on the edge of the City-at Fourth and Pine Streets-for the erection of a new church and the establishment of a burial ground; and

WHEREAS, The burial ground was laid out, and burials began along the Pine Street side of the lot in 1766. Shortly thereafter, architect Robert Smith was hired to design the church building. The first service at Old Pine Street Church, then the Third Presbyterian Church, was on June 3, 1768, on the first Sabbath day of the month; and

WHEREAS, One of the church's first pastors, George Duffield, served as the chaplain to the First Continental Congress in 1774, and he and many of his parishioners joined George Washington and his troops at Valley Forge in the winter of 1776-1777. With parishioners such as John Adams, the church soon developed a reputation as the "Church of the Patriots." While Duffield was in Valley Forge, the British troops occupying Philadelphia used the church as a hospital and then a horse stable; and

WHEREAS, Old Pine Street Church was a shaping influence and leader of the newly independent United States. Many members of the church's pastorate took on significant leadership roles in the Presbyterian General Assembly. Others made contributions to the betterment of Philadelphia and the nation. Pastor Ezra Stiles Ely provided the land for Jefferson Medical College, and Pastor Thomas Brainerd was a strong anti-slavery crusader who helped found the Union League to support the Union in the Civil War; and

WHEREAS, Around the turn of the 20th Century, the Old Pine Street Church's building and surrounding neighborhood had begun to decline. However, the church stayed resilient and served its community through vocational training for immigrants and worship services conducted in the Polish language; and

WHEREAS, Beginning with the formation of the Friends of Old Pine by Dr. Alexander Mackie in 1951 and continuing under the leadership of William Pindar, the church experienced a renaissance. The aging building was completely remodeled and the congregation grew with a larger ministry footprint. The Old Pine Community Center was built at Fourth and Lombard Streets in 1976 to give the church and its community a space to meet, study, and recreate; and

WHEREAS, The church merged with Scots Church in 1953 and Mariners Church in 1959. The church's official name became The Third, Scot and Mariners Presbyterian Church-Old Pine Street Church's official name to this day; and

WHEREAS, Old Pine Street Church's historic colonial courtyard marks the burial locations of 3,000 late 18th

Century and early 19th Century Philadelphians. Among those buried are a signer of the U.S. Constitution, 3 Continental Congress attendees, a ringer of the Liberty Bell, over 200 Revolutionary War soldiers. The last body interment in the Old Pine churchyard was in 1958 for In Ho Oh, a Korean University of Pennsylvania student murdered outside his home at 36th and Hamilton Streets. In 1983, the church created a Memorial Garden to receive cremated remains. The renowned Philadelphia Orchestra conductor Eugene Ormandy's remains are located next to the Memorial Garden; and

WHEREAS, After 250 years, Old Pine Street Church continues to thrive. The church is led by its 18th pastor, Rev. Jason Ferris, and is part of the Presbyterian Church (USA). The church founded the Philadelphia Committee for the Homeless in 1982, and it has provided meals for more than 100 members of the City's elderly population through its Saturday for Seniors Program since 1978. The church is also an active participant in Habitat for Humanity and has provided meeting space for Alcoholics Anonymous for over 30 years. In 2006, Old Pine hosted the 300th Anniversary of the Presbyterian Church in the United States; and

WHEREAS, It has been said of Old Pine Street Church, "If these walls could speak, what stories they would tell of courage, devotion, and of a people's love and service to God". The City of Philadelphia celebrates the Old Pine Street Church's love and service to God and to its neighbors, promoting freedom, goodwill, and peace for 250 years and counting; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That we hereby recognize and honor Old Pine Street Church on the occasion of its 250th Anniversary.

RESOLVED FURTHER, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to Old Pine Street Church, evidencing the sincere admiration and respect of this legislative body.