

No. R-30. House concurrent resolution congratulating the Old First Church of Bennington on its 250th anniversary

(H.C.R.12)

Offered by: Representatives Campion of Bennington, Corcoran of Bennington, and Mook of Bennington

Offered by: Senators Hartwell and Sears

Whereas, the first organized Protestant congregation in Vermont was established on December 3, 1762 in the town of Bennington, and

Whereas, on this date, the Old First Church of Bennington, also known as the First Congregational Church of Bennington, was “gathered” as the first Protestant congregation in the New Hampshire grants, the territory that from 1777 forward would be known as Vermont, and

Whereas, the organizers of the Old First Church consisted of proprietors of the town of Bennington, who had come from western Massachusetts and Connecticut, and

Whereas, these worshipers were Separatists whose theological perspective was premised on the Great Awakening, a Christian revitalization movement of the first half of the 18th century that influenced Protestant practitioners of several denominations in the American colonies, and

Whereas, the original meetinghouse for the congregation was constructed in the center of Bennington Village, the green in front of the present structure, and

Whereas, the current sanctuary was constructed in 1805, and it was the first church building in Vermont in which the state did not play any role, and

Whereas, the church architect, Lavius Fillmore, was responsible for the design of the building, which features basement-to-rafter columns constructed of whole trunks of pine trees as well as box pews and a high pulpit, and

Whereas, a major restoration of the 1805 building occurred in 1937, and the poet Robert Frost, who is buried down the hill from the church, spoke at the rededication ceremony, and

Whereas, other building highlights have included another significant sanctuary restoration in the 1990s and the construction of a church barn used for congregation and community events, and

Whereas, as the First Congregational Church of Bennington, the congregation’s mission includes both its religious activities and participation in social service organizations, such as the Bennington Coalition for the Homeless, the Bennington Tutorial Center, Habitat for Humanity, and a school building project in Afghanistan, and

Whereas, on December 3, 2012, the Old First Church marked 250 years since the congregation was first gathered, now therefore be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That the General Assembly congratulates the Old First Church of Bennington on its 250th anniversary, and be it further

Resolved: That the Secretary of State be directed to send a copy of this resolution to Mike Briggs, Moderator of the Old First Church in Bennington.