

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 643

By Woodson

A RESOLUTION to commend Reverend Martha Kathryne Bowen Wagley for meritorious service to the United Methodist Church and the people of Tennessee.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should pause to specially recognize those individuals who, through their dedication to serving others, have distinguished themselves as religious and community leaders of whom we can all be proud; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Martha Kathryne Bowen Wagley is one such estimable person who has served for thirty-two years as an ordained pastor in the United Methodist Church; and

WHEREAS, throughout her exemplary career, she has faced gender discrimination with resolve and dignity and has been unabashed in her determination to defend the rights of women and minorities alike; and

WHEREAS, a native of Memphis, Reverend Wagley graduated from Treadwell High School before earning her Bachelor's Degree from the University of Memphis and then continuing her education at Memphis Theological Seminary, from which she graduated Summa Cum Laude with her Master of Divinity Degree; and

WHEREAS, a deeply spiritual woman who has used her education and personal faith to better her community, Martha Wagley has held several distinguished positions in a variety of civic organizations; and

WHEREAS, she stood on the Board of Trustees of Memphis Theological Seminary for eight years, served as President of the Memphis Ministerial Association from 2005 to 2006, and was an esteemed member of the Downtown Churches' Association; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Wagley has served as Senior Pastor of Mason and Braden United Methodist Churches in Tipton and Fayette counties, St. Mathews United Methodist

Church (UMC), Springdale UMC in Memphis, and Germantown UMC, which, during the time of her pastorate, became the largest congregation in the denomination to be led by a female pastor; and

WHEREAS, a pioneer in women's leadership, Martha Wagley was the first woman District Superintendent to serve in the Memphis Conference and in the State of Tennessee when she was stationed in Dyersburg from 1989 through 1995; during this time, she worked with churches and ministers in a five-county area that encompassed West Tennessee and Western Kentucky, and she also served on the Cabinet of the Bishop; and

WHEREAS, in addition to this remarkable service, Reverend Wagley also stood as Director of the UMC's Board of Higher Education and Ministry in Nashville, in which position she worked with people from across the globe who were entering the ministry; and

WHEREAS, since July 1, 2002, Martha Wagley has been the Senior Pastor of First United Methodist Church in downtown Memphis; the church functions as an urban ministry, providing services to its diverse congregation and to the surrounding community through a food pantry, a clothes closet, and a variety of after-school educational and recreational programs through First Works, Inc.; and

WHEREAS, on February 6, 2006, Reverend Wagley led the First United Methodist Church of Memphis during its 180th anniversary, as the church's rich history and the bright future ahead of the oldest church congregation of any denomination in the City of Memphis were celebrated; and

WHEREAS, later that same year, she watched in horror as the beautiful, 114-year-old landmark, the First Church sanctuary, caught fire and burned during the downtown Memphis fires of October 6, 2006; and

WHEREAS, in a display of tremendous courage and strength of character, Reverend Martha Wagley led her congregation out of the heartbreak of the tragedy and into the joy of a groundbreaking ceremony at the church site on October 6, 2008, all the while working to personally raise donations for the reconstruction; and

WHEREAS, no stranger to accolades for her many personal and professional accomplishments, she has been the honored recipient of a number of awards; in 2006, she was selected as one of *Memphis Women Magazine's* "50 Women Who Make a Difference"; and

WHEREAS, throughout her career in the ministry, Reverend Wagley has broken the ground for other women to follow in her footsteps through her willingness to serve as the first woman pastor at each of her churches and the first female in the leadership roles she has filled; and

WHEREAS, her many noteworthy and celebrated achievements aside, Martha Wagley is thankful for the love and companionship she shares with her dedicated husband of forty-six years, Jerry Wagley; equally devoted to the service of the United Methodist Church, Mr. Wagley has served on church committees and in choirs and has willingly changed jobs or extended his commute to afford his wife the opportunity to accept each appointment; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Wagley and Mr. Wagley, throughout life's changes and trials, continued to focus on the upbringing and education of their two sons and service to other family members; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Wagley will take her retirement on July 1, 2009, to enjoy some much deserved time with her husband, her grandchildren, and her family; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Martha Wagley is an exemplary public servant and consummate community leader who has led her congregations with poise and graceful strength, benefiting not only the congregations she has served, but also her community and the citizens of this great State; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we hereby honor and commend Reverend Martha Kathryn Bowen Wagley for her honorable and dedicated service to the good people of Tennessee and the United Methodist Church, salute her commitment to gender equality, and extend to her our best wishes for a happy and fulfilling retirement.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.