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HOUSE RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, The members of the Illinois House of Representatives are pleased to congratulate the congregation of the First Evangelical Lutheran Church of Decatur on the occasion of the church's 125th anniversary; and

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WHEREAS, The First Evangelical Lutheran Church of Decatur was organized on October 24, 1882 in order to meet the community's need for an English-speaking Lutheran congregation; the church's charter was signed by Mr. and Mrs. Frederic A. Korsmeyer, Martin L. Deck and his wife Eleanor Casner Deck, Jacob A. Harry and his daughter Amelia K. Harry, and Albert G. Webber; the Reverend R. E. McDaniel was also in attendance as the pastor pro temp; shortly after the organizational meeting, the second floor of a building at 503 N. Main Street in Decatur was rented as a place of worship; and

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WHEREAS, In the spring of 1883, a lot at 303 N. Main Street in Decatur was purchased by the Deck family and donated to the First Evangelical Lutheran Church as the site for a new church building; the congregation's first pastor was the Reverend A. W. Walter, who served from June 2, 1883 until April 15, 1885; on June 11, 1883, a Sunday School was organized with Miss Amelia Harry named as its superintendent; and

1 WHEREAS, Construction of the First Evangelical Lutheran
2 Church's first building was begun on May 17, 1886; the
3 building's cornerstone was laid on May 30, 1886 by the church's
4 second pastor, the Reverend John D. Roth; by the autumn of
5 1886, the construction was completed to the point that both the
6 congregation and Sunday School held services in the church's
7 basement; the church's nave was completed on July 5, 1891;
8 after Reverend Roth's departure from the church on June 21,
9 1888, he was replaced by Martin L. Wagner, who served from 1888
10 until 1895, Frank C. Oberly, who served from 1895 until 1898;
11 Herman A. W. Yung, who served from 1898 until 1900; and by the
12 Reverend Hiram Peters, who served from 1900 until 1907; the
13 church's seventh pastor, the Reverend Roy G. Catlin, assumed
14 the pastorate while a student at the Chicago Theological
15 Seminary on May 15, 1908, and served the congregation until
16 1931; and

17 WHEREAS, In 1929, the First Evangelical Lutheran Church's
18 building was to be sold to Sears Roebuck, Inc. as the sight of
19 a new department store downtown in downtown Decatur; the
20 congregation vacated the building and began meeting in the
21 Women's Club building on West Main Street in Decatur; after the
22 planned sale fell through, the congregation negotiated with
23 Sears Roebuck to pay for the restoration of the building; after
24 the restoration was complete, the congregation moved back to
25 the original building; and

1 WHEREAS, In 1941, the First Evangelical Lutheran Church
2 congregation decided to purchase the old Federal Post Office
3 building on North Main and Eldorado Street in Decatur; after
4 the old church was sold, the congregation worked for over
5 eighteen months remodeling the Post Office into a beautiful
6 church building; the work was finally completed in 1943 under
7 the pastorate of the Reverend Roland Reichmann; and

8 WHEREAS, On September 1, 1954, the Reverend Alfred H. Stone
9 began service as pastor of the First Evangelical Lutheran
10 Church; Reverend Stone served the church until 1960, when the
11 Reverend Paul E. Erickson was called to be Senior Pastor; and

12 WHEREAS, On February 3, 1964, the First Evangelical
13 Lutheran Church purchased a site at 250 West Decatur Street,
14 where the church remains to this day; on July 19, 1964, a
15 ground-breaking began for the construction of the church's
16 newest building; the building was dedicated on November 28,
17 1965; and

18 WHEREAS, In 1972, Albert W. Weidlich was called to serve as
19 Senior Pastor of the First Evangelical Lutheran Church; Pastor
20 Weidlich served the church until 1980, when the Reverend Roger
21 L. Dahlin was called as Pastor; the Reverend Robert E. Van de
22 Ven joined him as Co-Pastor in 1981; and

1 WHEREAS, On April 20, 1986, ground was broken for the
2 renovation and construction of an addition to the First
3 Evangelical Lutheran Church's building; the construction was
4 dedicated on May 15, 1988; and

5 WHEREAS, In 1989 and 1990, the Reverend Steven D. Barnes
6 and the Reverend Charles R. Strietelmeier were called to serve
7 as Co-Pastors of the First Evangelical Lutheran Church; in
8 1994, the Reverend Kathleen Burkheimer became the church's
9 first woman pastor, where she served until 1999; and

10 WHEREAS, In 1998, the Reverend Richard J. Wolf was called
11 as Senior Pastor; in 1999, Reverend Wolf's spouse, Rachel K.
12 Wolf, was called as an Associate in Ministry to be the church's
13 Visitation and Outreach Minister; on September 30, 2007, Mr. and
14 Mrs. Wolf left for Houston, Texas to pursue other interests;
15 and

16 WHEREAS, The First Evangelical Lutheran Church's rich
17 history and dedicated service to the City of Decatur are
18 treasures to be cherished by the people of the City of Decatur
19 and the State of Illinois; therefore, be it

20 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
21 NINETY-FIFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we

1 congratulate the congregation of the First Evangelical
2 Lutheran Church of Decatur on the occasion of the church's
3 125th anniversary and wish the members continued success and
4 happiness in the future; and be it further

5 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
6 presented to a representative of the First Evangelical Lutheran
7 Church of Decatur as a symbol of our esteem and respect.