



City of Pittsburgh

510 City-County Building
414 Grant Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15219

Text File

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Committee: City Council

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WHEREAS, on March 13, 2004, the Hill District's then-131 year -old Ebenezer Baptist Church caught fire which quickly grew to five alarms; and,

WHEREAS, within minutes of receiving the call and without concern for their personal safety, the Pittsburgh Bureau of Fire arrived at Ebenezer Baptist Church responding with more than 70 firefighters and more than 17 fire apparatus to the blaze on Wylie Avenue; and,

WHEREAS, after nearly four hours of gallant effort, they continued their attempts to squelch the flames at this historic landmark - still used as both a place of worship and as a school at this time - until the situation turned deadly and tragic events ensued; and,

WHEREAS, the collapse of the regal 115-foot bell tower capped with four spires resulted in more than two dozen injuries and, tragically, the deaths of two selfless, dedicated, and heroic firefighters in the line of duty: Battalion Chief Charles Brace, age 55, and Master Firefighter Richard Stefanakis, age 51; and,

WHEREAS, Charles Brace and Richard Stefanakis joined the Pittsburgh Bureau of Fire in 1973 and 1974, respectively. Their decades-long tenure with the Bureau spoke to the bravery and unselfishness that were hallmarks of their character; and

WHEREAS, despite the damage and loss that occurred that Saturday morning 15 years ago, Ebenezer Baptist Church was beautifully rebuilt and its congregation, the Hill District and the City of Pittsburgh stand in resolute solidarity in the promise to never forget.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Council of the City of Pittsburgh does hereby recognize and commend the Pittsburgh Bureau of Fire and its members for their tireless efforts and dedication to fighting the Ebenezer Baptist church fire, and for their continued work and ceaseless courage throughout the City that keeps us all safe; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Council of the City of Pittsburgh does hereby declare Wednesday, March 13, 2019, to be "**Ebenezer Baptist Church Fire Remembrance Day**" in the City of Pittsburgh.