

RESOLUTION NO. 17 OF 2022

A RESOLUTION TO OFFER AN APOLOGY TO THE MEMBERS OF LITTLE UNION BAPTIST CHURCH AND THEIR DESCENDANTS FOR AN INCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED ON SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 1963, AND TO OTHERWISE PROVIDE WITH RESPECT THERETO.

BY: COUNCILWOMAN TABATHA TAYLOR

WHEREAS, Little Union Baptist Church was the epicenter of the civil rights movement in Shreveport, where the late Pastor, Dr. Claude Clifford McLain fearlessly allowed strategy planning meetings, in terms of demonstration, sit-ins, and mass-meeting; and

WHEREAS, on September 15, 1963, six African Americans, including four young girls, were killed in Birmingham, Alabama, when a bomb exploded in a church where they were worshipping; and

WHEREAS, as a result of the tragic event, President John F. Kennedy proclaimed that September 22, 1963, would be a day of national mourning and the NAACP asked that its local chapters across the country hold memorial services on that day; and

WHEREAS, on September 22, 1963, a memorial service was held at Little Union Baptist Church located at 1846 Milam Street; and

WHEREAS, that day, resistance to justice and equality became a reality for all as displayed by Shreveport City Police in an act of sacrilege and desecration when they rode horses inside the newly renovated church sanctuary up and down the aisles, leaving a trail of horse manure before grabbing Reverend Harry Blake and savagely beating him outside the building; and

WHEREAS, while it has been almost 60 years since that day of infamy in the 130-year history of their congregation, members of the church who are still alive bear emotional scars from that event. The sights, sounds, and odor of that event are still vivid in the minds of members who were children at that time and were engaged in cleaning the refuse left by the horses; and

WHEREAS, while no legal remedy is possible and our city has made progress in the area of race relations, the City of Shreveport owes an official apology for the treatment Little Union Baptist Church and their descendants received at the hands of officers and employees of the City of Shreveport.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Shreveport in due, regular and legal session convened, that an official apology is extended to the members of Little Union Baptist Church and their descendants for the treatment they suffered at the hands of officers, employees and agents of the City of Shreveport which occurred on Sunday, September 22, 1963.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this resolution shall be executed in duplicate originals with one original presented to the Little Union Baptist Church, and the other original filed in perpetuity in the office of the Clerk of Council for the City of Shreveport.

APPROVED AS TO LEGAL FORM:

City Attorney's Office