

PRESBYTERY OF ST. AUGUSTINE
RETIREMENT RESOLUTION FOR JOE W. RIGSBY
February 4, 2017

Whereas Joe W. Rigsby has always been “on stage,” as it were, having the spotlight all to himself as the only child of Arthur and Nebraska Rigsby, born in Newton, Mississippi, and starring in academics as well as in basketball, baseball and track;

And, whereas entering Stillman College in 1960, he joined the Drama Club and participated in several theater productions while studying sociology and philosophy, earning his first degree in 1964;

And, whereas a larger drama was unfolding even in his college years as Joe felt the Spirit of God calling him into ministry, leading him to serve as a student supply preacher at Good Hope Presbyterian Church in Bessemer, Alabama and then, after college, to enroll at Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary in Charlotte, North Carolina, from which he graduated with a Masters of Divinity in 1967, and in so doing earned recognition for his outstanding preaching; and later received a Doctor of Ministry degree from Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia;

And, whereas Joe received his most important casting call from Lorraine Sturgis, who became his life-partner and has stood by him for over five decades, and who together were blessed with a son and daughter and three grandchildren;

And, whereas Joe Rigsby was the first African American to be ordained to the ministry of Word and Sacrament in the Presbytery of South Mississippi, called in 1967 to reorganize three small churches; and after five years there and two years serving the Washington Shores church in Orlando, he returned to those three Mississippi churches to continue to be used by God to build up these congregations: Fairview in Heidelberg, Gavin Chapel in Bay Springs, and Pineview in Hattiesburg;

And, whereas, according to the Master Script, Joe decided to bring his preaching talents and hook shot back to Florida, being called as pastor of Woodlawn Presbyterian Church in 1988; and during his ensuing tenure of nearly 29 years leading Woodlawn in a fruitful era of spiritual growth, new facilities, and broad community engagement, and loving his people as a faithful shepherd, teacher and friend;

And, whereas Joe has served on the regional, national and international stage, as an official Delegate of the PCUSA to the World Council of Churches, as a respected leader within our denomination, serving on the General Assembly Council for many years as well as Moderator of this Presbytery and the Presbytery of Mississippi, and in numerous other capacities;

And, whereas he has, over the years, consistently functioned as a prophetic voice of conscience in this Presbytery, speaking uncomfortable but necessary truth in love among his colleagues, providing gentle, patient and persistent leadership in matters of justice and inclusion, in order that we might be more like the Body Jesus would have us be;

And, whereas his gifts of wise insight into the Scriptures and human nature, his inspiring preaching, infectious laughter and trusted guidance will be sorely missed and still welcomed;

Therefore, let it be resolved by the Presbytery of St. Augustine that the Rev. Joe W. Rigsby be granted retirement with honor, enfolded in our gratitude to he and Lorraine, and with all good wishes for continued service to God and long enjoyment of your life together.