CITY OF WINTER PARK

proclamation

Bethel Missionary Baptist Church Day | October 25, 2026

WHEREAS, in 1911, Bethel Missionary Baptist Church was organized from Mount Moriah Missionary Baptist Church, founded by Brother and Sister I. W. Williams and family, Brother and Sister J. B. Brown and family, Reverend Sister Myrick, Brother C. Mosley and son Walter, Sister Ellen Johnson and family, and Sister Eugenia Dixon, beginning a legacy of faith, worship and service to the Winter Park community; and

WHEREAS, under the leadership of its first pastor, Reverend C. J. Smith, Bethel established its deacon board, mother's board and Sunday school, laying a strong foundation for spiritual growth; and

WHEREAS, in the 1920s, Reverend E. W. Lewter organized the first choir, credited as the first Black group to broadcast on WDBO radio; and

WHEREAS, through support and leadership, including the contributions of William A. Coursen and the ministry of Pastor L. H. Hendrix, Bethel incorporated as Bethel Missionary Baptist Church of Winter Park, Inc.; and

WHEREAS, Bethel's Minister of Music, Brother E. Dale Stafford, formed the Winter Park Summer Community Choir, providing youth and young adults of all faiths an opportunity to create a legacy gospel music impact across central Florida; and

WHEREAS, under the leadership of its current pastor, Ronald A. Critton, Bethel continues to support the Winter Park community through food and clothing assistance, volunteer service, and outreach; and

WHEREAS, the 115th anniversary of Bethel Missionary Baptist Church commemorates over a century of faith, worship and service, honoring the founders, pastors and members who have sustained its ministry at 425 W. Welbourne Ave.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Sheila DeCiccio, by virtue of the authority vested in me as Mayor of the City of Winter Park, in the state of Florida, do hereby proclaim **Sunday, October 25, 2026,** to be **"Bethel Missionary Baptist Church Day"** in the City of Winter Park, Florida.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the City of Winter Park, Florida, to be affixed this 19th day of October 2026.

Sheila DeCiccio
Mayor