Litany of Remembrance and Thanksgiving

Prepared by the Virginia Baptist Historical Society and the Center for Baptist Heritage & Studies for River Road Church, Baptist Richmond, Va.

This litary is to serve as a resource for others. It is hosted on the Baptist Joint Committee website with permission.

Leader: Our God, our help in ages past, **People:** Our hope for years to come,

Leader: Our shelter from the stormy blast,

People: And our eternal home.

Leader: From everlasting Thou art God, **People:** To endless years the same.

Voice of an English Baptist:

I represent Robert Norden. In God's providence, my English Baptist brethren sent me and others as "messengers" to our kinsmen who had settled in the Virginia Colony. The year was 1714. We went as "stewards of the mysteries of God" and were found as "trustworthy" in representing the Faith. With courage and conviction, we risked our lives to bring the Gospel to this place. There was Thomas White who died on our long ocean voyage to the Colony. I led in gathering our first church. Other Baptists joined us and started more chuches.

People: For all the saints who from their labors rest, Who Thee by faith before the world confessed,

Thy name, O Jesus, be forever blest.

Voice of Native Americans:

Christian settlers came and lived among us and proved by their words and deeds that they cared for us. My people recognized a Supreme Being and sought to understand the mysteries of this God. Baptist ministers shared the good news of Christ in our villages. We established our own churches and joined the English in the work of God's Kingdom.

People: Thanks be to God!

Voice of African-Americans:

The first slaves arrived in Jamestown in 1619 – a century before the Baptists came. In 1790 Virginia Baptists openly and courageously opposed the institution of slavery. They sought diligently for its abolishment. My people accepted and embraced Christianity. We made our own unique contributions in the fields of education, music and preaching.

People: Thanks be to God!

Voice of Religious Liberty:

When the Baptists arrived in Virginia they were no more free to worship than they had been in England. At times and in places they were tolerated. At other times and in certain places they were openly persecuted. Baptist ministers were beaten, whipped and jailed in Virginia for preaching. The names of the imprisoned ministers are many and include James Ireland, Jeremiah Moore, Lewis Craig, John Waller and William Webber. The Baptists of Virginia struggled to secure religious liberty by enduring persecution, circulating petitions calling for an end to the state church, and by influencing the founding fathers, including Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, who placed religious liberty into the documents of Virginia and the New Republic. We remain grateful for the courageous Baptists who in our own time in history continue to defend the cornerstone of all our freedoms – religious liberty.

People: Praise be to you, O Lord!

Voice of Missions:

In the early 1800s Luther Rice traveled through Virginia and awakened us to the cause of world missions. A long line of missionaries – women and men – went from our churches to serve at home and around the world. Their names include: "the Bedford Plowboys" – Jeremiah Bell Jeter and Daniel Witt – who were the first state missionaries in Virginia; Lott Cary who went as the first missionary to Africa; Lewis and Henrietta Hall Shuck who pioneered missions work in China; and Lottie Moon who served in China. Countless numbers of unsung heroines – women in missionary circles, societies, and unions gave their material resources to support missions education and the work of our missionaries.

People: Praise be to you, O Lord!

Voice of Children:

I am happy that people in Virginia Baptist churches cared about children. They started Sunday schools. John Mason Pilcher led them. Because of this, boys and girls across the centuries learned about Jesus. They also felt we would like to know about children in other lands. Jesus loves them too. The Sunbeam Bands were started in churches with the help of George Braxton Taylor and Anna Louisa Elsom to teach children about missions. This inspired us to support our missionaries.

People: Praise be to you, O Lord!

Voice of Education:

We are thankful for Baptist educators in Virginia who led in the establishment of academies, seminaries, colleges and universities to provide Christian education. We also

give thanks that religious news was reported across the long years. We give thanks that in 1832 the Virginia Baptist Seminary was organized for the purpose of preparing ministers. Later, it became Richmond College and today it is the University of Richmond. Across the years other educational institutions were established including Virginia Union University, Averett University, Virginia Intermont College, Bluefield College as well as Fork Union, Hargrave and Oak Hill academies. In recent history Virginia Baptists have supported seminaries including the Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond and the John Leland Center. Education has been a key value of Virginia Baptists.

People: Praise be to you, O Lord!

Voice of Benevolences:

We remember with gratitude that Virginia Baptists were concerned about the needs of humanity and therefore established children's homes, homes for the aged, a hospital and several good will centers.

People: Praise be to you, O Lord!

Voice of Women in Ministry:

Virginia Baptist women have honored God's call to the ministry. With courage, they have written and taught and preached on the unsearchable riches of Christ. We remember Martha Stearns Marshall who preached in Virginia in the late 1700s. We likewise remember other Virginia daughters of our time in history including Addie Davis, Marjorie Bailey and Anne Rosser. Virginia Baptist women serve not only in the field of Christian education but also as ordained clergy.

People: We lift up our hearts to you, O God!

Voice of People from Around the World:

We remember with thanksgiving the lives of innumerable missionaries and ministers who went from Virginia to every part of the world to share God's grace. We remember the sacrifices and service of those who brought the Gospel to China, Africa, the Americas and other lands around the world. We remember the ways in which they ministered to the spiritual and physical needs of people. We rejoice that today there are still Virginia Baptists who serve around the world. We acknowledge the service of clergy and laity who in partnership work with people in other lands.

People: In Christ there is no East or West,

In Him no South or North; But one great fellowship of love Thro'-out the whole wide earth. Voice of People from around the world who have come to Virginia:

People groups from other lands and other continents, speaking many different languages, have come to Virginia and are coming in greater numbers. We are thankful for the welcoming spirit of Virginia Baptist churches which have opened their church houses as worship spaces where new Virginians can worship in their own languages.

People: In Christ now meet both East and West,

In Him meet South and North: All Christly souls are one in Him Thro'-out the whole wide earth.

Leader: God of grace and God of glory,

People: On Thy people pour Thy pow'r;

Leader: Crown Thine ancient church's story,

People: Bring her bud to glorious flow'r.

Leader: Grant us wisdom, Grant us courage,

People: For the facing of this hour,

Leader: For the facing of this hour.