

RESOLUTION NUMBER 171
Mary Jean Cox Pearson

WHEREAS, we pause in our deliberations to note the passing of St. Louis resident, Mary Jean Cox Pearson; and

WHEREAS, Mary Jean Cox Pearson, beloved First Lady of the Newstead Avenue Baptist Church, wife, mother, and teacher, was born on March 1, 1943, in Humboldt, Tennessee. She was the thirteenth of seventeen children born to Willie and Lizzie Cox. Sister Pearson, as she was affectionately called, professed her love of Christ early in life and never wavered in her faith; and

WHEREAS, in spite of the limited opportunities for African Americans in the South in the fifties and sixties, Mrs. Pearson graduated from Lane College with a degree in teaching in 1969. It was during this time that she met Richard L. Pearson, Sr., an army veteran and college student. Mr. Pearson knew at first glance that the pretty young woman with long hair and a cute walk would one day be his wife. The couple married on June 21, 1970, and moved to St. Louis to start their careers. Pastor Pearson, who was not yet a “church-goer,” soon realized that Sister Pearson was a committed Christian with super strong faith in God. “It didn’t matter what great plans I had on Sunday, such as going to see a sports event; she would always direct me to drop her off at church,” recalls Pastor Pearson. He eventually decided to see what it was that arrested her attention every Sunday. Mrs. Pearson’s character and strength caused him to start attending church each Sunday, ultimately becoming a preacher and pastor, as well as giving up vices such as alcohol and cigarettes. The couple, blessed with two children, Yolanda (Buford) Hawthorne and Richard (Alicia) Jr., remained partners in life for 43 years; and

WHEREAS, Mary Jean Pearson was a dedicated elementary school teacher who began her career at Dunbar Elementary School in the Kinloch School District. She became one of the first African Americans selected to integrate the Parker Road Elementary School in the Ferguson - Florissant School District. She would go on to teach at Airport and Bermuda elementary schools. She served her students with devotion, integrity and love. “She was an excellent teacher who did not accept foolishness in her classroom. However, she was equally caring; her spirit was very Christ-like. I always knew she cared about my future,” remarked a former student. Mrs. Pearson, who worked under three superintendents, including Dr. John Wright, retired after 32 years of service; and

WHEREAS, First Lady Pearson was a devoted member of the Newstead Avenue Missionary Baptist Church, serving in several ministries. In addition to being First Lady, she was known for her lovely soprano voice, and was one of the lead soloists in the music ministry. She taught in the Sunday School and Vacation Bible School ministries and was a member of the Mother and Deaconess Board, Women’s Missionary Union and the Minister’s Wives Group of the Antioch District. Sister Pearson shared the many talents and gifts that God had bestowed upon her with as many people as she could. Her life was a testament to her strong faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and the church, as well as her belief in the importance of education; and

WHEREAS, Sister Pearson went into the presence of the Lord on Friday, November 15, 2013, at Barnes Jewish Hospital, with her family at her side. In addition to her husband and children, she is survived by eight grandchildren, Julian, Bria, Riara, Aliyah, Justin, Tyler, Renelle and Nyla; her sisters Georgia Mae Cole of Jackson, TN, Tommie Lou (Robert) Allen of Jackson, TN, Christine (Jim) Davis of Southfield, MI, Alberta Woody of Memphis, TN, and Ida Bea (Franklin) McFadden of Clarksville, TN; her brothers Rev. Sammie Cox of Jackson, TN, Odell (Shirley) Cox of Dayton, OH and Lloyd (Fannie) Cox of Toledo, OH; and a host of nieces, nephews, cousins, other family members and friends; and

WHEREAS, she is preceded in death by her parents, Willie and Lizzie Cox, four brothers Clarence Cox, George Cox, Robert Cox and Willie Cox; three sisters Donnie B. Triggs, Constance Cox, and Juanita Williamson.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Aldermen of the City of St. Louis that we pause to remember the many contributions of Mary Jean Cox Pearson to the citizens of the City of St. Louis and we join with her many friends in expressing our sorrow at her passing, and we further direct the Clerk of this Board to spread a copy of this Resolution across the minutes of these proceedings and to prepare a memorial copy for presentation to the Pearson family, at a time and place deemed appropriate by the Sponsor.

Introduced on the 22nd day of November, 2013 by:

Honorable Samuel L. Moore Alderman 4th Ward

Adopted this the 22nd day of November, 2013 as attested by:

David W. Sweeney
Clerk, Board of Aldermen

Lewis E. Reed
President, Board of Aldermen