

1 IN THE SENATE

BY THOMAS

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2 SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 33

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IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

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EIGHTH LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

5

Honoring the Right Reverend William

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Jones Gordon, Jr., Bishop of Alaska.

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BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:

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WHEREAS on Friday, May 11, 1973, Alaska's Episcopalians listened almost in disbelief as the third Bishop of Alaska, William J. Gordon, Jr., announced he would step down from his episcopal office not later than September 1, 1974; and

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WHEREAS Bill Gordon's service as an Episcopal clergyman in Alaska dates from 1943 when he became Deacon-in-Charge of St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Seward, then moved with Shirley, his bride of but a few weeks, to Point Hope where for five years he was Priest-in-Charge of St. Thomas Mission; and

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WHEREAS on May 18, 1948, he was consecrated Bishop of the then Missionary District of Alaska; at age 30, he became the youngest bishop in the Protestant Episcopal Church; and

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WHEREAS for more than three decades Bishop Gordon has ministered the word of God and shared His love throughout the Great Land; he is one of the few Alaskans of whom it can be said that he knows most of the state and its people; few have experienced more intimately the heartbreaks and hopes, the isolation and the challenge of Alaska; and

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WHEREAS with love and charity toward every Alaskan, Bishop Bill Gordon has reached out across the vastness that is Alaska -- across its near impassable mountains, the unending tundra and muskeg, the broad and wild rivers -- and threaded his way by ferry, kayak, dog team and ultimately by plane along the waterways, down the trails and across the air corridors to

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1 the parishes and missions that comprise his charge; whether winging his way
2 on a mission of mercy to isolated Alaskans needing medical care or supplies,
3 or bringing desperately needed food to those communities for whom rescue
4 seemed beyond hope, or just keeping in touch with his widely scattered
5 flock, Bill Gordon is known to most Alaskans, whatever their faith, as the
6 "flying bishop;" and

7 WHEREAS, as one of the state's best known "bush pilots," Bishop Gordon
8 has logged more than 8,300 hours and more than 1,000,000 miles in at least
9 three planes -- several affectionately known as the "Blue Box" -- that he
10 has flown during his 26 years as Bishop of Alaska; and

11 WHEREAS what Bill Gordon has preached in terms of Christian brotherhood,
12 he has practiced in his life's ministry: witness the revolutionary policy
13 of spanning differences in cultural heritage by training Native Alaskan
14 peoples as priests to take over the missions of the Episcopal church through-
15 out the state; he also led in the development of cooperative Christianity in
16 organizing the Alaska Council of Churches and in encouraging ecumenical
17 congregations;

18 BE IT RESOLVED by the Alaska State Legislature that on the occasion of
19 his relinquishment of episcopal duties, the members of this body salute the
20 Rt. Rev. William Jones Gordon, Jr., Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Alaska,
21 and honor him for his service to Alaskans of every faith, creed and race;
22 with humility and purpose, his leadership inspired us all; it has truly been:
23 "One in the Spirit"; and be it

24 FURTHER RESOLVED that the members of the Alaska State Legislature
25 acknowledge with gratitude and no small matter of pride Bishop Gordon's
26 announced desire to remain in Alaska, continuing to make his home in Fair-
27 banks; we are confident that he will be called to further service in this
28 state for her people: Alaska always will have need of a good shepherd.

29 COPIES of this resolution shall be sent to Bishop and Mrs. William J.

1 Gordon, Jr., and to their children, Paneen (Mrs. Douglas Davidson), William
2 J., III, Rebecca (Mrs. Gerald Chisum) and Anna Clarke.

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