**WELCOME SPEECH**

**FOR**

**NETTIE JOHNSON**

Ladies and gentlemen, Reverend Dr. Turner and Mrs. Turner, **family** and friends… and let me be clear… we are **ALL** family… it is an honor to have the opportunity to speak to all of you **ANY** day, but **today** is truly special. For those of us that have the privilege of calling the Mount Vernon Baptist Church our home, there is a sense of pride… of belonging, and on occasions like this, when we commemorate the anniversary of our very own pastor, we can revel in the special gifts we've shared throughout the years - gifts of remembrance, acknowledgement and celebration.

Psalm 122:1 teaches us, “I was glad when they said to me, Let us go into the house of the Lord.” Here we are, enveloped and embraced by the knowledge that He Is with us and in His house, we are **home**… within ourselves and within a compassionate and supportive community. There are all kinds of definitions for the word, “family” in the world and I know, for sure, that having a sense of being cared for… of belonging, of having respect and regard for one another, of feeling connected, these are some of the characteristics that define a family, and that is truly what we have here under this roof, with one another. Someone once said that we as human beings have about five essential needs for living a fulfilled life: survival, faith, love, personal strength, and a sense of belonging to a greater good. I know we have that connection here at Mount Vernon Baptist Church and it is a blessing to share this house and this community with all of you.

At the center of our spiritual house and hearth and home, is our pastor, Rev. Dr. Rodney Turner and his wonderful wife, Lynette. Today we celebrate the **fourteenth** anniversary of Rev. Dr. Turner as our leader, teacher, and guide. How blessed we are!! Rev. Dr. Turner has led our congregation with heart, faith and wisdom while also tirelessly contributing to our community and beyond. His impact as a leader and a humanitarian sets an example for all of us… and he shows us by living a life of compassion, generosity, and humanity. Happy Anniversary, Dr. Turner **(or would you prefer to call him Reverend?**) Here’s to many more years of growth, community, and faith! I would also like to acknowledge our associate pastors, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Thank you for all of the support and guidance you provide to this congregation. Your presence allows us to forge even deeper connections to each other and to God. (**Turn to Mrs. Turner and say**) To you, Mrs. Turner, you have been our guiding light as well the Reverend’s constant source of love and support, and as you dedicate yourself to (**Name 2 or 3 of the projects or duties she performs for the congregation**) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, you are really the beacon that lights this home and warms our souls. I know I speak for the congregation when I say we wish you many more years of sharing your spirit and faith.

It is always a privilege to welcome our church family and an even greater gift to open our doors and our arms to all of the guests that have gathered with us today. It's been said, “We rise by lifting others.” Here at Mount Vernon Baptist Church, we lift together, and we rise as **one community,** united in our faith. On behalf of our pastor, Reverend Dr. Turner, we all want you to know that there is always room for more hands and even stronger bonds. We welcome all of you and invite you to join us as members of our wonderful church.

Thank you all!