

Community

Hundreds Come Out to Pay Tribute to Emmanuel Pastor Mendez

▲ Celebration of 10 years of service to Emmanuel

By DAVID L. DILLARD
Chronicle Staff Writer

A crowd of politicians, businessmen and community activists comprising nearly 350 people met at the Anderson Center Saturday evening to pay tribute to Rev. John Mendez for 10 years of service at Emmanuel Baptist Church.

Mendez, 43, who took the leadership post at Emmanuel after pastor S.W. Mack, said the congregation accepted him with open arms.

"It was love at first sight," he said. "And I want you to know whatever we have accomplished, we have done it together."

Darryl Prince, superintendent of Sunday school at Emmanuel and a 20-year church member, was pleased that the tribute was held. He said Mendez has done good work in the community.

"He is the voice of the community. A lot of people won't admit to it," Prince said. "(Mendez) goes out to the schools to check on the kids

and he has a genuine interest in people."

Williard Bass, a church deacon and co-founder of the church-sanctioned Kemet School of Knowledge, said he has enjoyed working with Mendez because of his commitment to educating youths.

"He's very concerned about the future of our youth," he said. "I think he's a very generous man and an excellent role model."

Many people said they put Winston-Salem State University's homecoming and various other activities on hold to attend the tribute.

"I said this is my pastor," Womble said to a cheering crowd. "I'm going to Emmanuel."

Alderman Vivian Burke, Ben Ruffin, and Larry Leon Hamlin were among the many community leaders who heralded Mendez. But the most powerful remarks came from Rev. Sam Austin, pastor of Brown Memorial Baptist Church in Brooklyn, New York, a man who

Mendez calls his spiritual father. While Austin was pleased that a banquet was held in honor of Mendez, he encouraged the audience to pay tribute to Mendez by standing by his side when he carries his ministry into the neighborhoods.

"Oftentimes people take you for granted and never give you what you deserve while you're alive," Austin said. "(Mendez) doesn't need people to show their appreciation by attending this banquet; he needs people to stand by his side when he goes out into the streets."

Mendez, known for his activism and continuous fight to achieve justice, said he does not want to be a politician. His desire, he said, is to serve God.

"I just want to be a good pastor," he said. "I've tried to do what God wants me to do."

Mendez, full of emotion after the banquet, credited his accomplishments to his deacon and trustee boards and those who work with him.



The Rev. John Mendez (at podium) celebrated his 10-year anniversary as pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church with a dinner at the Anderson Center at Winston-Salem State University on Saturday.

"They let me be me and trusted in the Holy Spirit enough to follow me," he said. "We have dared to try to embrace truth, and at times we didn't know what we were doing or what was going to happen, but we knew it was the right thing to do."

New Youth Group Starts

A new organization, Youth Challenge Inc., was officially announced last Saturday.

Jesse L. Vaughan, president and founder of the organization, invited nearly 80 people to the Hawthorne Inn and Conference Center to join him and his board of directors, Lee Phipps, the Rev. Seth O. Lartey of Goler Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church and the Rev. Lucius Simms of Holy Temple Church of Deliverance in Bennett, for breakfast to kick off a victory campaign aimed at taking the youths of the city back from drugs, violence and destruction.

Latonya Simms sang "The Only Hope for the World is Jesus" after prayer. Vaughan explained to those who attended that more than 22 programs and services to be implemented through "Campaign '96." By 1996, Vaughan said, the Youth Challenge Inc. will have 300 intercessors praying for the city, 1,500 partners, a budget of \$500,000 and a Youth Challenge Abundant Life Center, where youths and their families can receive the vital support and gain the tools needed to overcome daily problems and circumstances.



Richard L. Williams

Williams Named Executive Editor

Richard L. Williams, who joined the Chronicle in February as managing editor, has been named executive editor of the newspaper.

Williams worked as a reporter with the now-defunct Raleigh Times from 1984 to 1987. After leaving Raleigh, Williams moved northward to Gannett Suburban Newspapers in White Plains, N.Y. There, he began as a reporter and later worked as a copy editor and assistant city editor.

Williams, 34, is a native of Edenton and a graduate of N.C. A&T State University.

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