

Local pastor helps black Ecuadoreans build church

BY COURTNEY GAILLARD
THE CHRONICLE

Souls and salvation weren't the only things on Rev. John Mendez's mind when he traveled to South America recently.

After a number of black Ecuadoreans were converted by Southern white Protestant churches, Mendez says, they were abandoned by the Protestants and left to build the church literally from the ground up. Unaware of how to do that, a number of South Americans then turned to African-American churches for guidance and instruction on how to run their Protestant church in a predominantly Catholic country.

Mendez was happy to receive that call and go where he was needed.

"Many white missionary organizations from the Americas went there (South America), planted churches, converted folks, then left them hanging," said Mendez, who said he was receiving weekly calls at Emmanuel Baptist Church, where he is pastor, from people in distress about organizing their new Pentecostal church in their impoverished living conditions.

Mendez spent eight days traveling around Quito (the capital of Ecuador), Santo Domingo, San Lorenzo, El Meraldes - all areas that are heavily populated with black people. Throughout his visit, Mendez encountered a number of people who were interested in not only the African-American theological perspectives but their history of racism and means of dealing with it in the church.

Mendez explained that the black Protestants fell victim to overt racism from the clergy in the white Southern Baptist Church, who often told them to "lock up all of the Africans and throw away the key," and have since broken off from the white church.

"They need help and want help. They're not looking for handouts but just help and support so they can get (on) their feet, and a lot of churches really want to get involved," Mendez said.

Serving as a church consultant of sorts, Mendez went to Ecuador representing his church as well as the Progressive National Baptist Convention (PNBC), an international association of Baptist churches. Mendez has

brought the matter of the struggling Protestant church in Latin countries to the attention of the organization with the hope of identifying more ministers who would like to get involved.

He also hopes that once the Latin churches develop a stable operation for their congregations, that they will consider partnering with the PNBC to maintain a worldwide discourse with other churches, which will allow them to receive the other resources they will need in the future.

"They identify with the African-American church, particularly (with) Dr. King (MLK)," Mendez said.

About a year ago, Mendez was preparing for the United Nations Conference on Racism in Ecuador as a delegate from the Americas, including North and South America. It was then and there that he was first introduced to some African Pentecostals who informed him that they were in desperate need of instruction on creating and organizing a structured plan for their church. Since that time Mendez and his congregation have been in frequent dialogue with the group and have



Rev. John Mendez poses with members from the Progressive Baptist Church in Quito, Ecuador, in front of the building that will become their future place of worship.

Photo by Courtney Gaillard

even been able to assist them with financial aid.

"Our worst day is still better than their best day," Mendez said. "We complain about the roof leaking. Thank God you've got a

roof."

Beyond spiritual stability, Mendez feels that the role of the church, once it is established on a solid foundation, will impact the people and region socially, politi-

cally and economically.

A follow-up trip to Ecuador is planned for September, when Mendez will return and hopefully with a group of other ministers from the United States.

Construction projects change traffic patterns at Winston-Salem State

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

A number of construction and renovation projects under way at Winston-Salem State University this summer will force temporary changes in vehicular and pedestrian traffic patterns on campus beginning immediately.

The projects include:

- Construction of campus tennis courts at the Anderson Center, to be completed in July.

- Installation of air-conditioning systems in Dillard Hall, Atkins Hall and Moore Hall, to be completed August.

- Construction of the new residence hall facility known as Ram Commons, to be completed in August.

- Demolition of Colson Hall and the Old Student Affairs Building, scheduled for August.

- Construction of the addition to the F.L. Atkins Building, to be completed in October.

- Installation of an elevator in Coltrane Hall, to be completed in October.

- Restoration of the S.G. Atkins House, to be completed in October.

- Installation of a central chiller plant and chilled water loop/steam repairs, to be completed January 2003.

As a result of the construction projects, no vehicular traffic will be allowed to travel

past the Carolina Hall parking lot on Cromartie Street or Wallace Street at the intersection where the Physical Plant and

Atkins Hall buildings are located.

All other vehicular traffic should use the main entrance to

campus or the entrance off of Reynolds Park Road. Other traffic patterns will be implemented at appropriate times as

construction project locations change. Appropriate signage will be posted when traffic patterns change.

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