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THE CHRONICLE

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Mendez goes to Iraq to push peace



Rev. John Mendez

BY COURTNEY GAILLARD
THE CHRONICLE

Rev. John Mendez, pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church, is among a group of black pastors that traveled to Iraq Saturday for a four-day trip to promote peace. The group is expected to be back in the United States today.

A coalition of ministers — including Mendez, Rev. Walter Frontroy, Amous Smith, Mahbi Bray, Garland Hegler, Rev. Herbert Daughtry, Rev. James Fitzgerald, Ron Daniels and Tracy West — was hosted by the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) upon arriving in the region. MECC is a fellowship of indigenous churches in the Middle East.

MECC made requests, on behalf of the American ministers, to meet with members of

the Iraqi government, including Saddam Hussein. However, Mendez said the ministers had not received confirmation on whether or not they would meet with Iraqi government officials before departing.

While Mendez is in Iraq

“(Some Americans) think the whole country is (filled with people like) Saddam Hussein, which it isn’t. There’s mothers, there’s children, there’s fathers.”

— John Mendez

with this contingent of U.S. ministers, he also is a representative of the Progressive National Baptist Convention and the Ministers Conference of Winston-Salem and Vicinity, of which Mendez is president.

According to Mendez, Rev. Al Sharpton and Rev. Martin Luther King III, developed the idea for this peace trip to the

Middle East. Mendez says Sharpton was unable to accompany the men due to prior presidential campaign commitments.

The Chronicle spoke with Mendez before he left the United States to go to Iraq. He said that the group hoped to make a peaceful plea to the Iraqi government and citizens.

“The whole idea is that we’re trying to advocate peace in the religious community — (with) Muslims as well as Christians, Buddhists, Jews, Hindus, etc.,” Mendez said.

One day before flying to Iraq, the ministers met with Iraq’s U.N. ambassador, Mohammed Aldouri, and a representative of U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan in New York. Mendez was unable

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Roundtable has its first change in leadership

Longtime members of the organization take over convener roles previously held by Larry Womble and Khalid Griggs

BY T. KEVIN WALKER
THE CHRONICLE

For the first time in five years the Black Leadership Roundtable has new leaders. The grassroots black issues advocacy group rearranged house last month. Longtime members Linda Sutton and Fleming El-Amin were elected to be co-convener of the organization by members of the roundtable.



Sutton

They succeed Rep. Larry Womble, who was the convener of the roundtable since it was reformatted in 1998, and Imam Khalid Griggs,

who had been co-convener for the past several years. Griggs and Womble were not eligible to be re-elected to head the organization. Roundtable bylaws prohibit officers from serving more than two consecutive terms. Griggs and Womble will continue to be active members of the roundtable. Each man has committed to serving on roundtable committees.

“I think people have seen something in me that I have not seen in myself,” El-Amin said of being elected by the membership. “I am extremely humbled.”

El-Amin is a high school teacher who up until recently headed the board of directors of CAT-TV. Sutton is an active volunteer with such organizations as the NAACP. She has been a member of the roundtable since its inception five years ago. Sutton has served as recording and corresponding secretary for the roundtable.



El-Amin

Sutton hopes to continue to build relationships between the roundtable and other local African-American organizations. The roundtable has worked successfully with the Urban League, Ministers Conference of Winston-Salem and Vicinity, and the NAACP on past projects. Sutton wants the groups to speak with one voice on issues that affect the black community.

“We could be so much more effective if we spoke in one, powerful voice,” she said.

Sutton said she also wants to work on efforts to increase the organization’s membership. The roundtable is open to anyone who would like to be a member.

El-Amin said the roundtable is planning to announce a Saturday tutorial program for stu-

See Roundtable on A4

City urges patience in storm cleanup effort

BY T. KEVIN WALKER
THE CHRONICLE

It has been a week since an ice storm swept through the Triad, wreaking the most havoc here in the city, where ice brought down trees and power lines. Electric company officials had restored power to nearly all homes by Wednesday, but the cleanup effort here could



Turner

take months.

Teams from the city’s Road Appearance, Sanitation and Streets divisions have been working extra hours since late last week to clear storm debris. Last week crews cleared more than 500 trees that fell on city streets. Some of the debris made travel along major roads, including New Walkertown Road, nearly impossible. Greg Turner, assistant city manager for public works, said crews have begun the slow process of picking up piles of trees and branches from neighborhoods.

City residents are responsible for gathering fallen trees and limbs on their

See Cleanup on A4

HAWS wins another HUD HOPE VI grant

CHRONICLE STAFF REPORT

The Housing Authority of Winston-Salem was notified yesterday that it had received another HOPE VI grant. The \$18.1 million grant, which HAWS applied for late last year, will be used to revitalize Happy Hill Gardens. In 1997, HAWS received its first HOPE VI grant. It is currently being used to revamp Kimberly Park Terrace.

Ernie Pitt, publisher of The Chronicle and chairman of the HAWS board, thanked the City Council, which reluctantly agreed to commit money to the Happy Hill project. That commitment

made HAWS’ application for the grant stronger.

“Our getting this grant is an indication that the housing authority is on the right track,” Pitt said. “The staff, management and board are doing the right things. We are going to hit the ground running with this award.”

HOPE VI grants are given by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. This may be HAWS’ last HOPE VI grant. HUD recently decided not to request additional money for the 10-year-old HOPE VI program, which was created to redevelop decades-old public housing structures.



Photo by Bruce Chapman

After a heart-stopping match-up in Saturday’s CIAA championship, Bowie State University President Dr. Calvin Lowe celebrates his school’s victory over Virginia Union. Bowie State beat the Panthers 72-71. For more news about this year’s CIAA tournament, check out Sportsweek, B1.

Black church being urged to address AIDS crisis

Several churches have agreed to take part in week of healing

BY PAUL COLLINS
THE CHRONICLE

Kris Butler of Greensboro, who was diagnosed in 2000 as having HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, says many people in the African-American community are in a state of denial about AIDS. “We do not realize it happens to us,” she said.

She said, for example, that it’s not well known that many black males are bisexual.

She feels there may be little progress in addressing HIV/AIDS in the black community until African-American churches get actively involved. She said there’s a stigma that HIV/AIDS is a homosexual disease. She believes many churches are reluctant to deal with sexuality issues, such as people having sex outside of marriage, and bisexual and homosexual relationships.

“I don’t think churches should pass out condoms — just educational information,” Butler said.

March 2-8 is The Black Church Week of Prayer for the Healing of AIDS, the largest AIDS awareness program in the United States targeting the black community, according to the Balm in Gilead, which spearheads the event. Mt. Calvary Holy Church, Goler Memorial AME Zion Church, Greater Cleveland Avenue Christian Church and Union Baptist Church are some of the Winston-Salem churches participating.

Here are some facts about AIDS in the black community, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Harvard AIDS Institute: Of the estimated 40,000 new HIV infections each year, more than 50 percent occur among African-Americans. In 1998, African-American women constituted 64 percent of new female AIDS cases, and African-American men accounted for 50 percent of new AIDS cases among men. AIDS is the number one cause of death for black adults aged 25 to 44, before heart disease, cancer and homicide. One in 50 black men is HIV-positive. One in 160 black women is HIV-positive. Black senior citizens represent



Butler



Budde

See AIDS on A4