

Rodney remembered as community's 'moral compass'

BY LAYLA GARMS
THE CHRONICLE

Friends and loved ones of Rev. Dr. Cedric Rodney gathered at Home Moravian Church in Old Salem on Tuesday to bid goodbye to the cherished mentor, community servant and teacher.

Rodney passed away on Nov. 20, just weeks before he and his wife, Dr. Mae Lipscomb Rodney, director of Library Services at Winston-Salem State University, would've celebrated their 28th wedding anniversary.

Rodney, a native of Georgetown, Guyana, served nearly 30 years over two stints as pastor of St. Philips Moravian Church in Old Salem and recently retired from his post as James A. Gray Distinguished Professor of Religion and Ethics at WSSU, ending an esteemed academic career that spanned four decades. When he took leadership at St. Philips – the oldest standing African American church in North Carolina – Rodney became the first full time pastor of the 146-year-old organization, and the first ordained minister of African heritage to serve in the Southern Province of the Moravian Church.

"Today, we are witnessing the passing of someone who influenced and guided the lives of many of us," concluded Conrad Mitchell, chairman of the Trustee Board at St. Philips. "The name St. Philips is synonymous with Dr. Rodney, and Dr. Rodney is synonymous with St. Philips."

The 88 year-old was well known in the local sector for his dedication to community service and commitment to his faith. Rev. Richard "Rick" Sides, pastor of Home Moravian Church, said the father of three led "a long and faithful life."

"The number of lives he touched with his winsome smile, hearty handshake and encouraging words is innumerable," Sides remarked. "...He encouraged all of us to be what You (God) created us to be ... to find life's greatest meaning in serving others."

Nearly 300 were in attendance,



WSSU Photo by Garrett Garms
Community icon Dr. Cedric Rodney died on Nov. 20.

many of whom hailed from Winston-Salem State University, the Moravian community or one of the many community agencies Rodney worked with over the years. WSSU Provost Brenda Allen offered prepared remarks from former WSSU Chancellor Alvin Schexnider, who established the school's Distinguished Service awards in 1997 and later named them in Rodney's honor, and current Chancellor Donald Reaves, both of whom were unable to attend the 11 a.m. service.

"Cedric truly filled the role of a counselor and advisor to many of the students, faculty and staff on the campus of Winston-Salem State University. We all knew that he was someone we could depend on to share his wisdom and his insight," Allen said, reading Reaves' remarks. "We will always treasure the gift of having known Dr. Cedric Rodney."

Allen, who has served as provost

since 2009, hailed Rodney as "the moral compass" for students, faculty and staff. She said Rodney's ethical leadership and strong convictions made him "a true hero that should serve as an example for all of us."

"Often underestimated because of his calm and level manner, Dr. Rodney was a tenacious fighter when it comes to accomplishing what he wanted to do," she declared. "...He was a remarkable human being who has left his mark on this community. His legacy at Winston-Salem State University will forever shape the university."

In accordance with Moravian tradition, the Rt. Rev. Graham Rights read a memoir he had helped Rodney to write. The memoir looked back on Rodney's long life, beginning with his childhood experiences, many of which were informed by his family's strong commitment to the Christian faith, and highlighting the myriad accomplishments, accolades and personal milestones he achieved over the course of his adult life. Rodney was an avid traveler who collected clocks and dabbled in photography and amateur radio, but his greatest passion lay within the work he did as a preacher and teacher, Rights said. Rodney had led the prayer at WSSU football games since the 1970s and, until his retirement in August, had never missed a game, according to the memoir. Rights said Rodney brought that same dedication to every personal and professional endeavor he took on.

"He loved people and he loved his community," Rights declared. "He was a good friend to all who knew him. They found him conscientious and caring. He did his best in whatever he undertook."

Dr. Rodney was buried in Old Salem's God's Acre cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to WSSU Friends of the Library, 227 O'Kelly Library, 27110 or to St. Philips Moravian Church, 3002 Bon Air Avenue, 27105.

Seniors

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the Dallas Mavericks, Washington Wizards and Utah Jazz. Howard just signed a one year contract with the Minnesota Timberwolves on Nov. 15. The Foundation's good deeds extend beyond Winston-Salem to the cities where Howard has played pro ball.

Steve Nivens, the Foundation's Community Relations manager, says seniors are often the focus of the Foundation's activities because Howard is very close to his grandmother, who helped raise him.

Children are another focus. Howard holds an annual free basketball camp for local kids, often bringing in high-profile basketball talent to help conduct the training.

Nivens said the Thanksgiving meal tickets were distributed through churches, recreation centers and Healy Towers senior apartments, in hopes that seniors would bring friends with them to eat.

"Josh sponsors about 200 senior citizens just so they can get together and see each other for old times, because a lot of them don't get to come out," said Nivens. "...So we just try to keep the bond, keep the community strong."

Though Howard's game schedule keeps him away from most of the Foundation's events, he personally conceives of and often funds the initiatives, said Nivens. He added that last year, Howard actually made a surprise appearance at K&W for the Thanksgiving event. He wasn't playing at the time because of the NBA lock-out. NBA teams are back in action now. In fact, Howard and the T-Wolves had a game the night of the event. Still, many senior diners said they felt Howard was there in spirit and expressed gratitude for his generosity.

"I think it's wonderful because he has the heart to give back to the community, which I'm sure he feels



Photos by Todd Luck
Lamar Perry, Judy Felder and Jo Ann Brown.

gave so much to him as he was growing up," said Jo Ann Brown.

Brown gave tickets to friends Lamar Perry and Judy Felder. The three enjoyed the pre-Thanksgiving meal and fellowship. Perry praised Howard, who attended and played at Glenn High School, for not forgetting his roots. She said Howard is showing those who look up to him through his actions that everyone should reach back, regardless of how high they climb in life.

"As ... a role model, (he is) letting them know when you have the opportunity to move ahead, you still have an obligation," said Perry.

Many who got tickets still had plans to enjoy a big Thanksgiving meal the next day with family members. Felder said the free meal and outing was a great break from holiday preparations.

"It gave me a break from the kitchen baking this morning," she said.

At another table, Beverly Lowe, Cassie Taylor and Homer Franklin Cooper dined together. They all came from Healy Towers, a public housing complex for seniors just a short distance away from the restaurant. They all said that it was a great idea to give out tickets at the complex because some of their neighbors might not have gotten a turkey dinner otherwise.

"It's very nice because a lot of people can't afford it," said Lowe.

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With Thanks

What we enjoyed and loved we can never lose, for all that we love deeply becomes a part of us. As the holiday season approaches we reflect on what our friends mean to us. Whether it was a prayer, call, card, or gift, we thank you for taking the time to share with our family during our time of remembrance. Your continued prayers are welcomed.

No God, no peace: Know God, know peace

Louise McGhee and Family

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