

Windsor

A leader ready to move on

Former pastor will return clergyman to Howard University

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Jersey native, who also has a doctorate in psychology from Michigan State University and a master's degree in divinity from Yale University, was selected after a nationwide search. He will begin his duties next month and be formally installed later this year.

"It's the right time and right place," Richardson said before a testimonial dinner for him at East Windsor's La Renaissance banquet hall, which was attended by about 200 people. "Leaving's a hard thing to do because the church has tremendous potential."

Richardson took over Archer Memorial's reins in 1984, when it had less than 10 members. He has been recognized for his team approach to ministry, which enabled the church's phenomenal growth, minister Shelley Best said.

Colleagues and church members said Richardson was valued for his leadership style, his teaching, his concern for youth and the sensitivity he brought to his job.

"He's a totally involved person," said Matthew Williams, chairman of the church's board of trustees. "He knows his people and their capabilities. He demands things that you should be doing."

Besides increasing membership, Richardson's major accomplish-

ment was increasing programs for youngsters. He reached out to youths by starting discussion groups for teenagers and children's and teenagers' choirs, and by matching teenage girls with older female members, Best said.

When 17-year-old Obi Nwankpah was killed in an April fight with another teenager, Richardson took part in the counseling Windsor High School administrators initiated to help students cope with the death. Several youngsters attended Friday's testimonial for Richardson at his expense, Best said.

Richardson's understated approach was recognized as his biggest asset, said the Rev. James Hubert, Hartford District AME Zion supervisor.

"You can be dynamic without being a showman. Dr. Richardson is one of those powerful leaders who doesn't have to be flamboyant. . . . He's able to motivate people," Hubert said.

So it was, church members said, when Richardson successfully negotiated with the state two years ago for the \$65,000 purchase of 5 acres in Windsor, where the church will expand in the future.

Richardson said he regrets not being part of that future. But his life is one of callings, Richardson said, and his new post is a clarion he cannot ignore.