

## **Northwest Baptist Church, Miami partial history**

In 1972 the Northwest Christian Academy was established as a ministry of the church and maintains an Early Learning and Development Center (18 mos. - 3 years) and a K4-12 grade school.

For a brief period of time between 1978 and 1979, Dr. E. H. Richards was called to be pastor.

James R. Summers was called as pastor in September 1979 and served the church for the next 34 years. Though he would often grin and say he was "just an ole country boy from Tennessee," Pastor Summers was firmly committed to expositional preaching, and he was instrumental in leading the church through the vast social and cultural changes that north Miami would experience over the next three decades. Under his leadership, the church doors were open to all, and as a result, the church truly became reflective of the beautiful, multicultural community growing around it.

'I can see the prospects for Northwest Baptist ... I accept the challenge and that of the people to do something instead of just sitting still.'

— **Rev. E.H. Richards**



# New Northwest Baptist pastor has big plans for his church

By VICKI SALLOUM  
Herald Staff Writer

"I've always been a man with a great deal of vision. And I've seen my visions become reality," says the Rev. Dr. E. H. Richards, new pastor of Northwest Baptist Church.

Dr. Richards has not yet settled in a new home, and already he talks of doubling Sunday school attendance, establishing a video-tape morning worship service and building a \$1 million Christian recreation center for the 5,000 members of the church, at 951 NW 136th St.

"Most preachers wouldn't have that much ambition, I guess," says 37-year-old Dr. Richards, who was chosen from a field of 20 candidates.

"But I can see the prospects for Northwest Baptist and its total ministry. I accept the challenge and that of the people to do something instead of just sitting still. The Bible says where there is no vision, the people perish."

Dr. Richards says he would like construction to begin within five years on a Christian family-life center to house a gymnasium, bowling alley, skating rink and auditorium to be used by parishioners and students of the church's Northwest Christian Academy.

"There is so much entertainment in secular life that we don't have the liberty to take our kids to," says Dr. Richards, whose five children range in age from 2 to 15. "Clean, wholesome recreation could be provided here where we could control it."

And that's not all.

He wants to double Sunday school attendance from 1,500 to 3,000; increase the bus ministry from 350 to 1,000; expand the church's book store and double enrollment at the 1,000-student Northwest Christian Academy, which accommodates a day care center through 12th grade.

He believes it can all be done.

"God wants to do far more than I desire," he says. "If his people are willing and can get this vision, it can definitely become reality."

Born in Decatur, Ala., Dr. Richards set his sights on playing professional baseball - until the age of 19, when a near-fatal truck accident brought him down on his knees with a pledge to "surrender myself to preaching the gospel."

Before starting his North Dade ministry April 30, Dr. Richards was pastor of the 1,400-member Cottdale Baptist Church in Tuscaloosa, Ala.

He replaces the church's pastor of nine years, the Rev. F. William Chapman, who has entered full-time evangelistic work in Silva, N.C.

"He (Richards) is the kind of pastor that builds churches," says David Paulison, a church deacon and member of the pulpit committee that selected him. "He's a preacher straight from the Bible. He doesn't tell you what you want to hear. He tells you what he feels the Bible says."

"We feel like the Lord led us to the type of individual we were praying for," says Ken Miller, chairman of the pulpit committee. "He has the heartbeat of a fundamentalist and the vision the church needs to reach out into the community."

While in Tuscaloosa, Richards was instrumental in building a \$238,000 facility to house a first through 12th grade Christian day school.

He also expanded the church's bus ministry, acquiring seven additional buses, he says.

Richards says he wants "Christ to receive all the glory for anything accomplished" during his new ministry.

"I feel like I'm in the center of the Lord's will in being here," he says. "My objective is to lead the people to Christ. I just want to see a Bible-believing, soul-winning church."