

# Nazaret Baptist's years of moving over — for now

By NANCY SAN MARTIN  
*Herald Writer*  
After enduring three relocations, two name changes and five pastors since 1970, Nazaret Baptist Church is beginning to settle down.

"It's kind of sad," said Caridad Velazques, a member of the congregation since it was founded. "When you move around so much it's hard to maintain the energy and enthusiasm of members."

Two months ago, the church installed the **Rev. Sergio Rodríguez**. Members say they hope he will be a permanent pastor.

"I feel good here," said two-year member Armando Calzavilla. "When I came from Cuba, I tried to find a church that was consistent with my beliefs. This pastor is a good preacher."

Nazaret, 2225 SW 17th Ave., shares a two-story building and sanctuary with Shenandoah Baptist Church.

The churches alternate worship services. Nazaret uses the building's top floor for Sunday

school. Shenandoah uses the classrooms on the bottom floor.

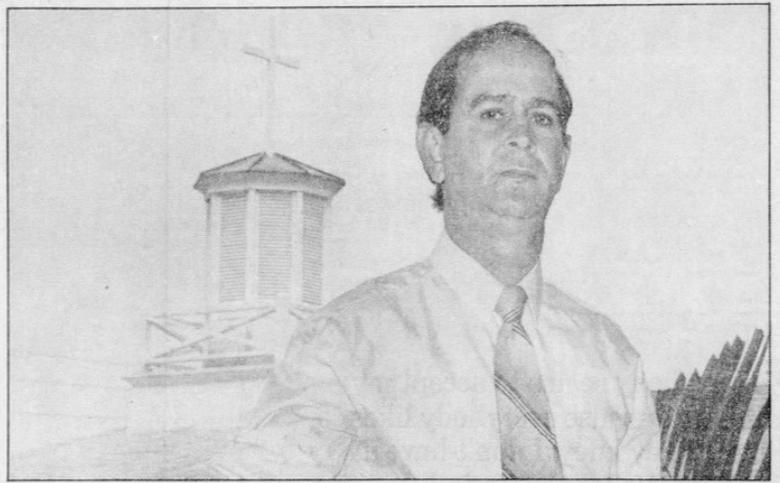
Both congregations equally divide maintenance and utility expenses. A coordinating committee meets monthly to arrange schedules.

On special occasions such as church anniversaries, the congregations unite for the celebration.

The **Rev. Lloyd White** of Shenandoah said he is pleased with the relationship. One of the reasons the arrangement has worked so well is that "there's been a healthy respect for one another," he said.

Nazaret started as a Spanish department of Riverside Baptist Church when it was in Little Havana. In 1970, the department became an independent church with 180 members. For almost 12 years, the church was called *Iglesia Bautista Hispana Riverside*.

When Riverside sold its building in 1979, the Spanish congregation moved in with what was then Flagler Baptist Church at 3501 W. Flagler Street, losing half its



RAUL RUBIERA / Miami Herald Staff

The **Rev. Sergio Rodríguez** hopes to build membership so Nazaret Baptist Church can eventually get its own building.

members.

Three years later, Flagler sold its building. The Spanish church relocated temporarily with *El Calvario* at 226 SW 17th Ave. During that time it merged with another Spanish church, *El Salvador*. The congregation changed its name to Nazaret.

In 1984, members began to meet at a property in Little Havana, which the church was purchasing. But Nazaret could not support

itself. A year later, the congregation sold its property and moved in with Shenandoah.

Now in its third year with Shenandoah, membership at Nazaret has steadily grown to 140.

White said he predicts there will be more collaboration in programs between the two congregations.

"The outlook for the Spanish congregation is much brighter because the neighborhood is heavily Spanish," he said.

A native of Cuba, **Rodríguez** left the island in 1982, where he had been a Baptist priest for 20 years. He preached in Spain for a year before coming to the United States in 1983. He was pastor of a congregation in Immokalee until he was transferred to Nazaret.

**Rodríguez's** immediate goals for Nazaret are to increase membership to 200, set up an active youth program and initiate programs such as social work.

Nazareth Baptist Church. Iglesia Bautista Nazaret, Miami  
In 1962 Shenandoah Baptist Church started a Spanish mission in Miami. The mission was organized into a church in 1970.  
The following pastors have served the church thru the years  
Miguel A. Calleiro 1962-1971  
Jorge Martínez 1972-  
**Sergio Rodriuesz (1987-[1999])**  
Noel Pérez (2014)(2025)

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