

Richard, Charles M., Jr. was born in Orlando, Florida. He graduated from the University of Miami and Dallas Theological Seminary. Richard served as pastor of Kings Avenue Baptist Church, Brandon. He and his wife, Sharran have two children.

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Pastor Richard Retires After 35-Years At Kings Avenue And Welcomes New Senior Pastor  
By  
Michael Smith -  
November 1, 2017 3043

By Michael Smith

When **Chuck Richard** came to **Kings Avenue Baptist Church** in Brandon in 1982 he asked the Lord to allow him to pastor the church for at least five years. God more than honored his request.

Pastor Richard recently retired after nearly 35 years as senior pastor of the church.

When Pastor Richard arrived at Kings Avenue he said there were 70-80 people in the church. Now, 230-250 people worship there on Sunday mornings.

During Pastor Richard's tenure, Kings Avenue started hosting its Walk Through Bethlehem production, held over four nights during the second weekend of December. This year's event will be the 31st annual.

"I thank [God] for allowing us to have Walk Through Bethlehem because thousands of people have come to receive Christ as their Savior and [many more] have rededicated their lives to Christ," he said.

In 1985, Kings Avenue started a Christian school on its campus, reaching a high enrollment of 330 students per year. Today, Kings Avenue Christian Preschool offers Christian education for children 6 weeks old to 4 years old.

Pastor Richard, 68, wanted to continue as Kings Avenue's pastor until he was 70, but after being diagnosed with multiple sclerosis this past year he decided he could no longer lead the church because of the effects of the disease.

Pastor Richard preached his last sermon at Kings Avenue on Sunday, August 13. The church held a retirement party and reception in honor of the pastor and his wife, Sharr-an, on Saturday, October 21.

On Sunday, August 27, Kings Avenue ordained and installed John McRae, who served as the church's youth director for the past 4½ years, as its new senior pastor.

Pastor McRae, 36, wants to continue to build on the legacy left by Pastor Richard.

“My vision for the church is to see us grow—not just in our numbers—but as we serve God and His Kingdom and see people come to the Lord,” he said. “I really want to see our church involved in the community, even more than we are.”

Kings Avenue holds worship services on Sunday mornings at 8:15 (traditional) and 10:45 (contemporary) and Sunday evenings at 6. On Wednesday nights, the church offers youth and Awana programming at 6:45 and worship at 7.

For more information about Kings Avenue Baptist Church, located at 2602 S. Kings Ave., visit [kingsavenue.org](http://kingsavenue.org) or call 685-3095.

# A Time To Celebrate

A Baptist church marks its pastor's 25th year with the congregation.

By DANN LAWRENCE WHITE  
The Tampa Tribune

**BRANDON** — It was one of those divisive moments that can tear apart lifelong friendships and create profound rifts in families.

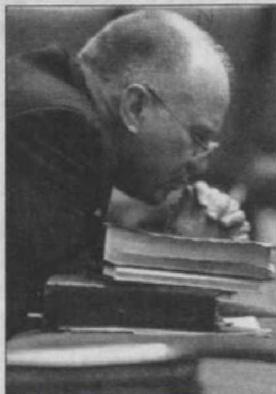
The members of Kings Avenue Baptist Church had managed to raise \$125,000 in 1990, enough to build the framework and fund some basics for a new 30,432-square-foot multipurpose center on the church property at 2602 S. Kings Ave., Brandon.

However, they needed \$200,000 more to complete the building.

"We were in the process of voting on whether to borrow the rest of the money," said the church's pastor, the **Rev. Chuck Richard**. "A third of the members didn't want to borrow the money, and the vote would have torn the congregation apart. There would have been a lot of hard feelings."

That's when God stepped in, **Richard** said.

He and some of the church deacons slipped away to Piccadilly Cafeteria on State Road 60 in Brandon to get away from the tense atmosphere at



The **Rev. Chuck Richard** prays before delivering a sermon. A service Oct. 14 will mark his anniversary with the church.

## KINGS AVENUE BAPTIST CHURCH

**ADDRESS:** 2602 S. Kings Ave.

**PHONE:** (813) 685-3095

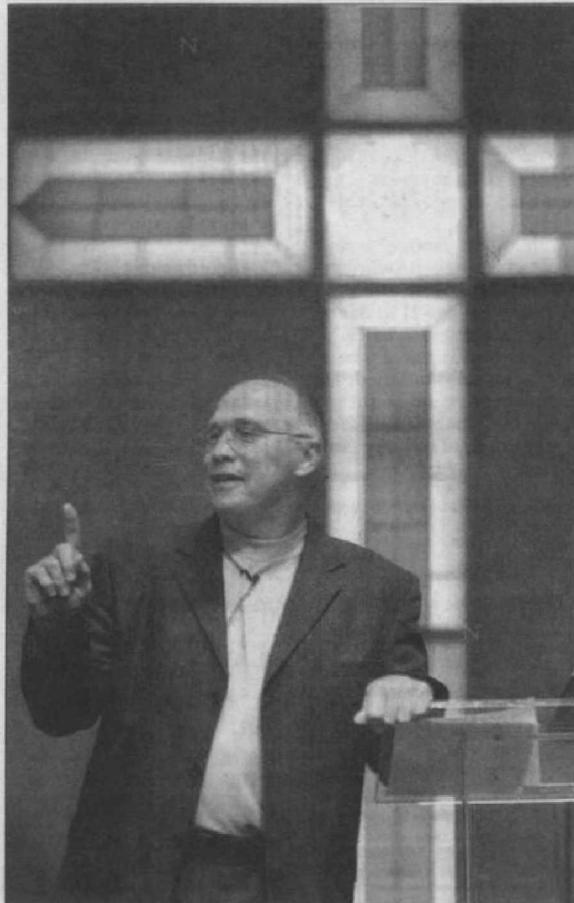
**PASTOR:** **Chuck Richard**

**SERVICES:** Traditional worship at 8:15 a.m. Sunday, contemporary worship at 10:45 a.m. Sunday, evening service at 6 p.m. Wednesdays

**INFORMATION:** [www.kingsavenue.org](http://www.kingsavenue.org)

the church and have a bite to eat. At a nearby table, a group

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Tribune photos by KEVIN MA

Between 300 and 350 members attend Sunday worship services, more than triple the number in 1982 when **Richard** arrived.

## 25 YEARS

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of Brandon homebuilders, known for their Christian philanthropy, overheard them discussing their dilemma.

"They approached us and offered to loan us the entire \$200,000 interest-free," Richard said. "What began as a disaster turned out to be a glorious day."

Jan Hellier, who served as secretary of the church for 17 years, was working in the office when Richard and the deacons returned from their lunch.

"I remember that day as if it were yesterday," she said. "They went out to get away and came back with smiles on their faces. I still get tears in my eyes when I think about it."

The Cheever Building was completed, but it took the congregation at Kings Avenue Baptist Church 16 years to repay the loan. Richard said he was determined to pay every penny back so the group of businessmen could pass the good luck on to another worthy cause.

"We finally finished paying it off a year ago," he said. "But that was one loan we paid gladly."

It's that commitment to his church and to the people who make up the church that sets Richard apart, Hellier said.

In a time when pastors are fortunate to remain at a church for five years, Richard is preparing to celebrate his 25th anniversary at Kings Avenue Baptist Church.

The church will mark the occasion with a service starting at 10:45 Oct. 14, featuring guest speakers, music, blessings and a social after the service. All those who know Richard are invited to attend.

Richard, a Florida native, said he never set out to spend his adulthood in Brandon. He grew up in Orlando and attended the University of Miami on a football scholarship.

"My dad promised he'd buy me a Corvette if I got a scholarship, but my mom was pregnant at the time so I didn't get my car," he recalled.

Instead, he bought a Corvette on his own in 1973, when he joined the Army ROTC as a second lieutenant and the Army gave him a salary he didn't need. That was also the same year he met his wife, Sharr-an.

"And I still have them both," he said. Sharr-an Richard works beside her husband, mostly in children's ministries. The car has been credited with getting them both to the church on time.



Tribune photo by KELVIN MA

The Rev. Chuck Richard sings with the choir. All those who know him are invited to attend the service in honor of his anniversary.

After graduating from the University of Miami, Richard wasn't sure what he wanted to do with his life.

"I knew I wanted to do something to help people," he said. "I thought about being a doctor, but I don't like the sight of blood. Then I thought about coaching, but football is only temporary. Finally, I thought about helping people get to heaven, which is eternal."

Raised in the Baptist faith, Richard headed to the Dallas Theological Seminary, then worked for five years as an associate pastor at First Baptist

Church of Lutz before going to Kings Avenue Baptist in October 1982, the day the church's chapel was dedicated.

"I was a brand-new preacher in a brand-new building," he said. "It was pretty exciting."

The church had 82 members at the time.

"But we grew quickly in the first five or six years," Richard said. The church has 800 members, with 300 to 350 attending regular Sunday worship services.

The church quickly outgrew its 5-acre property and was "borrowing" an empty lot to its

south to stage an annual Walk Through Bethlehem, a theatrical re-creation of the birth of Jesus. Then church leaders discovered the lot was being sold. The congregation scrambled to come up with money to purchase the adjoining property so they could continue what Richard calls the church's "Christmas gift to the community."

"That's been one of the most special things we've done," he said, noting that the event celebrated its 20th anniversary last year. "The entire church gets involved on some level."

An estimated 5,000 to 7,000 people attend Walk Through Bethlehem each year.

"For many residents, it's become a holiday tradition," he said.

Richard's love of children is evident in the photos of him with newborns in the congregation on bulletin boards around the church office.

The importance of children also is evident in the emphasis he places on the school he founded at the church 18 years ago, where he's able to offer students a Christian education in classes at costs lower than most other schools in the area.

The multipurpose building includes a gymnasium — a

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combination gymnasium and cafeteria, which can be converted for basketball games, lunchroom meals, Bible studies, Friday night youth activities, Thanksgiving banquets and church services.

"We definitely got our money's worth," Richard said. "It's used seven days a week."

He said it isn't just the church and the people that tie him to Brandon, it's the community, the place where he raised his three children — Cassie, 29, Chaz, 26, and Chelsea, 21.

"Family is important to me," he said. "I didn't want to be moving my children around every five years. Brandon is a community with a strong Christian influence, strong family values, the best schools in Hillsborough County and great athletic and cultural opportunities. I don't know if I'd be able to find those things anywhere else.

"My desire is to be where God can use me the most, and he's allowed me to stay here," Richard said. "My gift is caring for my flock, and my goal is to reach as many people in my ministry each day as I can."

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***Church Receives  
New Pastor And  
Sanctuary, Also***

By MICHELLE JONES  
Tribune Staff Writer

BRANDON — Sunday the members of Kings Avenue Baptist Church are scheduled to dedicate their new \$250,000 sanctuary and install a new pastor.

The Rev. Charles M. Richard Jr. is coming to the south Brandon church at 2602 Kings Ave. from the First Baptist Church of Luiz, where he was the associate pastor and the minister of youth and education.

"I am looking forward to what God is going to do through this church in this community," said the blue-eyed, blond-haired Richard.

Prior to becoming a church in 1978 the congregation was a mission of Tampa's Bayshore Baptist Church.

Until recently the congregation met in a unique round sanctuary that holds 150 people. The new, rectangular-shaped building will hold 350 people.

"We will use the old building for a fellowship hall," said the 33-year-old Richard.

Richard said the people of his church put in over 1,000 hours of work on the church grounds.

"They laid sod, painted the old buildings, put in an irrigation system and all the shrubbery and did general cleaning up work," he said. "They are a hard working group of people."

Richard was born and raised in Orlando, where he attended Edgewater High School.

He attended the University of Miami on a football scholarship and majored in religion and "football."

After a hitch in the Army, Richard attended seminary at the Dallas Theological Seminary where he earned a master's degree in theology.

Before entering the seminary Richard worked for a while at Disney World on the Jungle Cruise.

"I was so enthusiastic I lost my voice," he said. "I sure hope I don't lose it in the pulpit."

Richard said it was an organization in college, the Campus Crusade For Christ, that helped him decide to dedicate his life to full-time service to the Lord.

"I am one of the few people in the world who receives compensation for doing what I love to do," he said. "I come to church, study the Bible and share Jesus Christ with people because I want to."

On Sunday, Richard is scheduled to be installed at 11 a.m. by the interim pastor, the Rev. Steve Cloud. Afterwards, there will be dinner on the grounds and a gospel sing and dedication service at 2 p.m.

Dr. William Moyle of the Tampa Bay Baptist Association and Dr. Fred Boehmer, the association's newly elected moderator will take part in the dedication.

Special music will be provided by the Clearwater Christian College Choir.

"I want this church to be scripturally founded and loving within itself and loving to those around us," he said. "I'd like to see us strive for the Agape, the completely unselfish love of God, toward one another and the community."

Richard says he also wants to have Christ-centered programs and opportunities to meet the needs of specific groups.

"I want people to come here and feel wanted and feel the love of God," he said.

Richard, his wife Sharran and two children, Cassie Marie, 4, and Chaz, 14 months, are planning to move to Brandon soon.

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## Construction to begin soon on church center

The center, which will be built in stages, will provide additional space for Sunday school classrooms, a larger kitchen, a library and an activity room.

By **CAROL NEEF**  
Tribune Staff Writer

BRANDON — Construction of a large, two-story multipurpose building for Kings Avenue Baptist Church is expected to begin within two weeks.

Ground breaking ceremonies for the building were held Sunday.

The building will be named the Cheever Family Life Center in honor of the late James Cheever, a deacon of the church, an architect and chairman of the church's long-range planning committee.

According to the **Rev. Charles M. Richard**, pastor of Kings Avenue Baptist Church, the congregation has pledged more than \$900,000 to be paid over a three-year period.

The shell of the 29,000-square-foot center will be constructed first.

"Then, depending upon need," **Richard** said, "we will build Sunday school rooms or an interim auditorium that can be used for worship services, recreation or fellowship. We have \$154,000 which was donated since April 1986."

Kings Avenue Baptist Church has

approximately 750 members. Attendance at Sunday worship service averages 500.

**Richard** said, "It's pretty cramped. With the new center we will be able to hold just one worship service for all the church. The beauty of the concept of a multipurpose auditorium is we could hold worship services in it in the **a.m.**, have a concert that night and take the chairs down and play volleyball or basketball."

Target date for completion of the entire center is 1990, **Richard** said.

Among the facilities the additional space will provide are: more Sunday school classrooms, a larger interim sanctuary, larger kitchen, a gymnasium, church library and activity room for classes such as ceramics.

General contractor for the project is Fasco Inc. of Tampa.

Dayne Piercefield of Lutz is chairman of the long-range building committee, Haven Kicklighter is chairwoman of the building committee and Dave Scott is chairman of "Walk by Faith," the fund-raising committee.