

## **CHURCHES RISING THIS EASTER IS SPECIAL FOR NEW OR EXPANDED CONGREGATIONS.**

By Kenneth D. MacHarg

Several Broward county congregations have something extra to celebrate this Easter Sunday.

Two congregations are enjoying new facilities that are helping them to expand their ministries, while one new church will hold its first service today.

“We have been nomads for nine years,” explained Pastor Elroy Shaw, the assistant pastor of Miramar’s Christway Baptist Church that has been meeting in the Miramar High School for the past three years.

Today, the church will celebrate its first Easter in a brand new facility at 3800 South Douglas Road, right across from the high school building. Then, this evening at 5 p.m., the congregation will hold an official dedication service.

The church held its first Sunday worship in the new facility two weeks ago.

Christway’s new building isn’t the only thing different about the congregation. Recently the church changed its name from Caribbean Baptist Church to Christway. “We decided to change in order to better identify with the community and not just a group of people,” said Shaw, a native of Jamaica who lives in Pembroke Pines.

The Miramar church has a membership of nearly 500 of which, according to Shaw, 60 percent come from a Caribbean background. “We have people from almost every Caribbean island, but we also have people from the U.S., Africa and various ways of life. We have a real diversity,” Shaw explained.

Attendance at the church had jumped during the first two weeks in the building. “I think that cultivated people prefer to worship in a church building,” Shaw said.

Christway’s new building was built to hold 500 people, so Shaw said that almost immediately they are going to have to deal with an overflow problem.

The dedication service this evening will feature a sermon by John Sullivan, Executive Director of the Southern Baptist Florida Baptist Convention.

Another area church spreading out in new facilities is Saint Katherine Drexel Roman Catholic Church in Weston that is meeting in a newly rented facility while waiting to build a new church.

“Being in our own facilities allows us to be able to do what we want,” said Father Paul Edwards who is the priest of the congregation. “Last year we were renting space in a

school and could only have the three major services of Holy Week on Thursday, Friday and Easter weekend.”

“This year we can be open all day for people to pray and we can provide additional services,” Edwards said. “This year we will have a full schedule.”

Today’s Easter services are scheduled for 10 a.m. in English and 12:30 p.m. in Spanish.

The 1,500 member congregation is 60 percent Hispanic, Edwards explained, with major groups from Colombia and Venezuela, but large numbers of participants from other countries such as Peru and Argentina.

“We are expecting an overflow crowd on Easter,” the priest said.

The church owns property in the Weston area on which they plan to build a church building. But, for now the church has rented and remodeled space in the Weston Community Center, 2700 Glades Circle, Suite 200 in Weston.

For Hollywood Pastor Ken McCord, this Easter will be an occasion to remember. Today, he and several associates are launching a brand new church in Hollywood.

“There is a trend of people moving back east in Broward County and we want to be a part of that,” said McCord, explaining why he is helping to start a church in an established community where other churches already exist.

“We want to be very mindful of what the other churches in Hollywood are doing and fill in some of the gaps,” McCord said. “We don’t want to take people from other churches, but we want to connect with non-Christians.”

McCord said that while his congregation, The Church of Hollywood Downtown, has Baptist roots, it wants to serve those people who are not connected with any denomination and who have no church home.

“We are going to be cutting edge, relevant and relational,” he said. “We will be in the city, for the city, a community of God’s people injecting life into the city.”

“The first service will celebrate the resurrection,” McCord said. “It will be a big celebration.”

McCord said that a hallmark of the new church will be contemporary worship and home groups where the people of the city can connect with neighbors and study the Bible.

The Hollywood congregation for now is a satellite of the Church of Pembroke Pines, a church begun in the early 90s by Guy Melton.

Today's service is scheduled for 10 a.m. at the Hollywood Center Performing Arts Center, 1770 Monroe Street in Hollywood.

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