

# Bayside Presbyterian marks 40th year

The special guest Sunday will be Fletcher Hutcheson Jr. of Leesburg, son of a former pastor.

By **Cindy Clayton**  
Staff writer

Some might call it "Church Triumphant."

But 40 years ago, Bayside Presbyterian Church was the dream of a few folks who lived in Norfolk and were worried about the spiritual needs of their neighbors in Virginia Beach.

"The Presbyterians in East Ocean View became concerned that there was no church out this way," said the Rev. Richard Keever, Bayside minister.

Keever said the Norfolkians began by knocking on doors and eventually started Bayside Presbyterian Church, then located on Tulip Road.

On Saturday and Sunday the church, now at Ewell Road and Independence Boulevard, will celebrate its 40th anniversary with a

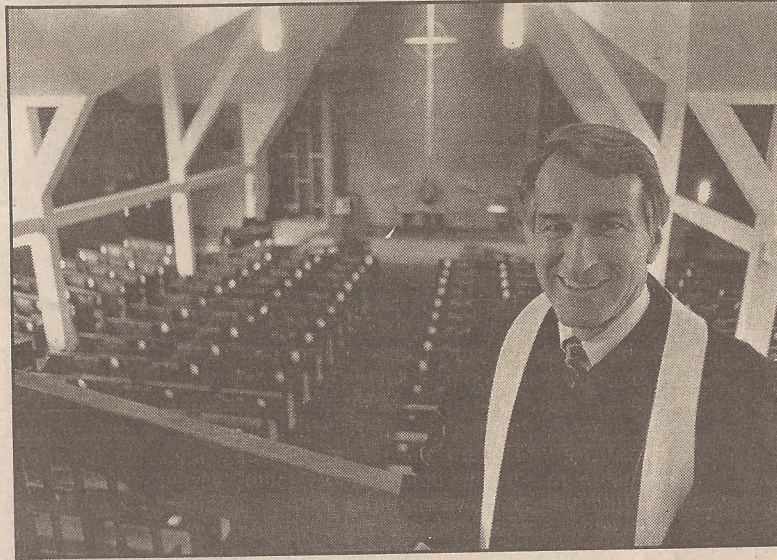


Photo by DOUGLAS E. MAUME

**The Rev. Richard Keever is the pastor of 40-year-old Bayside Presbyterian Church.**

homecoming featuring a special service, special meals and special choir program called "Hymns Triumphant."

The program will be performed Saturday night after a special dinner and anniversary cake. Special

guests of the evening will include former members who went into the ministry.

"Hymns Triumphant" will be performed by the church's 50-member choir and will be accompanied by the church orchestra. Bayside's

clerk of the session, Lucy Walters, said the program includes songs based on the "Lord's Prayer."

She said Sunday's activities will include services at 8:30 and 11 a.m. and will be followed by a light luncheon and special music.

Both services will be preached by Fletcher Hutcheson Jr. of Leesburg. He is the son of a former minister, the Rev. Fletcher Hutcheson. The elder Hutcheson became pastor of Bayside in 1967 and served until his death in 1981.

Keever said he looks at the homecoming as a celebration of the "faith and the hope and the love the congregation has generated over those 40 years."

But those who have attended the church say the greatest of those is love — love of people.

When Bayside began, Keever said, it had 72 members. Today, there are more than 1,200 members.

Mary Hutcheson, wife of the former minister, said the church has always been oriented to missions and people. "I think it's the vitality that's always been here at Bayside," she said.

All the growth the church experienced in the first few years spurred

the move from Tulip Road and an expansion that doubled the current facilities three years ago.

Hutcheson has been at the church for 26 years. That's a long time to watch a church change. "It's been gradual, but when you're here during the changes you don't take note of a lot of them," she said.

And while a lot of families have come and gone over the past four decades, Bayside has seen only three pastors.

Keever said the Rev. S.K. Emurian began evangelizing in Virginia Beach in the early 1950s. Emurian would drive to various neighborhoods and would stop the car when he spotted children playing outside. He would then get out of the car and play Sunday school songs on his hand-held organ. The church was founded in 1953 and in 1955 got its first official minister.

That was retired Navy Chaplain John E. Johnson. Twelve years later, Fletcher Hutcheson became pastor and held the position for 14 years.

Keever, a former staff member of the Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, arrived at the church in 1982.