

# Hispanic church makes history

## Church is a first for Episcopalians in North Carolina

By MIRIAM STAWOWY  
The Herald-Sun

With guitars, tambourines and songs in Spanish, more than 100 worshipers stood in front of Durham's Iglesia El Buen Pastor (Church of the Good Shepherd) Friday for the blessing and celebration of North Carolina's first Hispanic Episcopal church.

"Let the doors be opened," said Bishop Gary Gloster, dressed in red and white robes, as his pastoral staff entered the red brick building and Gloster marked the threshold with the sign of the cross. "Peace be to this house."

The doors opened to a new congregation that welcomed the guidance of the Rev. Nicolas Menjivar, a native of El Salvador.

"I feel I'm at the beginning of a path," Menjivar said. "I have all the challenges and responsibilities ahead, but I also have the trust of the Hispanic community."

Menjivar said he will work to help unite the community and fill a desperate need for spiritual guidance in the Hispanic community.

"The Latinos here respond when you offer them growth in their faith," Menjivar said. "They're hungry for spiritual faith."

José Guillermo Alvarez, a worshiper who attended the church's blessing, said the church is needed in the community.

"I need to pray for my soul," Alvarez said. "We need this church."

During the bilingual service, representatives of the congregation gave Menjivar the tools to begin his ministry: a Bible, a stole, oil, the church's keys, the church's Canons, bread and wine. After a prayer, everyone clapped as a symbol of approval of the new vicar.

The Episcopal Church is the first mainline denomination in the state to recognize the need for a Hispanic church.

For the past two years, the Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina has been working on reopening the former St. Andrews Episcopal Church for worship after it closed and became Durham's Hispanic Center, said Father Scott Benhase, rector of St. Philip's Episcopal

please see **HISPANIC/B4**



The Herald-Sun/BERNARD THOMAS

### PROCESSION OF CELEBRATION:

Acolyte June Santa (top photo, foreground) leads the procession of people attending the Celebration and Benediction on Friday of Durham's new Episcopal mission, Iglesia El Buen Pastor (Church of the Good Shepherd), on Liberty Street. Bishop James Gary Gloster (right) gathered everyone together to begin the procession that marched into the new church to initiate the celebration.



## HISPANIC FROM B1

Church in Durham.

The opening of the church is an exciting event for the diocese and comes in response to the area's growing Hispanic community, he added.

"We should have 10 others like this," Benhase said. "We need to get on the stick. People are looking for a place to express their

faith. The church is such an important part of the Hispanic community."

The Rev. Menjivar arrived in Durham in January after heading a ministry in Los Angeles. He immediately began visiting families and heading Bible studies at home churches. He will celebrate his first official service this Sunday at 6:30 p.m.