## The Delace News from MA3/88 700 become A Leader in Leading Hungry

empty God " The Detect News/S

By HELEN ORDNER

"It is my belief," the Rev. Jeannine Wren said firmly, "that
empty buildings do not glorify

Glorifying God is the aim of the minister of Panthersville Presbyterian Church — for herself and all of its 70 members.

The small church, sitting beside its graveyard, might be excused for lessening its activities — some in similar circumstances have either withered or moved away. Its members are aging, its Sunday School roll of children might fill a half-mage.

It's a 90 percent white church in It's a 90 percent black neighborhood a 90 percent black neighborhood and hasn't been able to add many members to change that ratio.

The congregation at Panther ville Presbyterian, no matter he small, has a hig mission. The have set out to feed the hungry. on at Panthers, They

The YMCA operates a day care center in the educational building; a mental health program has regular dinners there, but the biggest project is a food pantry.

ie metro area, n four years ago, it has one of the three largest in tro erea, according to Mrs.

"God has blessed this church," she said. "This is what God wants this church to do; we've never had trouble getting money."

In 1987 the church, with its pastor the only salaried person, provided food to more than 9,000

Families who come to the church referred by the Family and Children Service receive food for four and a half days. Those who come without referral are given food for the day, and instructions on obtaining aid.

But, said Mrs. Wren, "I love

PANTHERSYILLE workers can recite a litary of stories of the hungry they see, the stories they hear. They witness sickness, the misery of parents with no food for their children. They share the abject, lost feeling of people who have never been without food before, who have never needed to know where to go for food stamps. being able to break always do."

Mrs. Wren recalled two food pantry clients who "charmed" her. There was a deaf man, over 60, raising his five-year-old grandson. The grandfather had a job in Macon, but they had to get there, and needed food. The grandson "translated" the sign language the deaf man used, to the minister.

At the end, Mrs. Wren said she felt such warmth that she told them she would like to have a \$

prayer.

"I closed my eyes, they had theirs open, for the child to sign to his grandfather. I said 'amen' and the little boy looked up at me. He didn't know how to do amen."

She also remembered the family which was trying to get to Florida. The young mother, her wetery blue eyes and pasty skin showing the effects of malmourishment, was driving. Six-month-old twins, wearing only diapers in the chilly weather, were in the front seat beside her; others kids filled the back seat. She had the car heater on, to keep the babies warm.

Another client, a magazine-cover model type with two little girls, found herself down and out to the point that they were living in a car and she had to ask for food. She had moved to Atlanta to take advantage of an art scholarship which had been cancelled,

leaving her without resources.

They were invited to a church



The Rev. Jeannine Wren relaxes in her study with Sara

supper which happened to be scheduled at that time and a church member took them into her

my rule

home
The woman soon found employment with one of the more prestigious Atlanta department stores.
Volunteers in the food pantry see mothers and children, out of food and about to be put on the street, after the man of the family has walked out. They see families who are victims of a drug abuser.

All kinds of people come to the church — people who burst into tears when sacks of food are bagged for them; they have been so terrified. "To be hungry is a frightening thing."

THE FOOD panty couldn't operate without H. B. 'Pat' Petterson, an elder in the church and food supply officer, or Brenda Gales, the elder in charge of operating the pantry, Mrs. Wren said.

the trips to round up the fresh vetetables and fruits, canned goods, the baby formula, meat, dried beans, rice, and other items they try to keep in quantity. They also like to give out peanut butter, but 'that's very expensive.'

There are some donations, some comes from the Food Bank, and from other sources with good prices which he cultivates and carefully shops.

They sometimes see 16 families a day during operating hours. Some centers restrict their giving to certain zip codes but Panthersville follows a motto coined by the pastor's husband, George Wren:

"When in doubt, give it out."

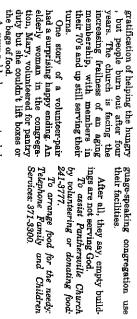
Lately, food pantry visitors from a larger aree have sought out Panthersville. Money from a federal grant which Panthersville and many other similar sites receive had to be spent by Oct. 31.

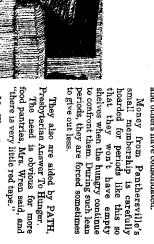
This has left some pantries without food, according to workers at agencies which refer the needy. Some church centers have closed and others have consolidated.

Mr. Wren has written a paper to aid organizations wanting to establish a food pantry which can by obtained by telephoning the Christian Council of Metropolitan Atlanta, 622-2235. The Wrens are available to talk to groups wanting to aid the hungry.

guage-speaking congregation their facilities.





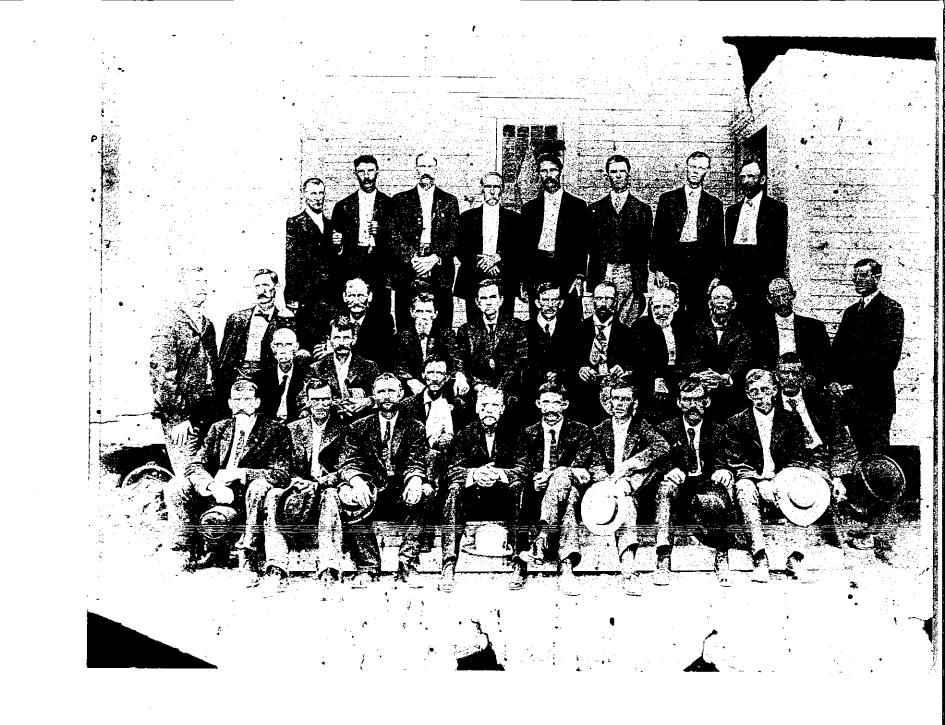


A young black man, retarded and unable to read labels or instructions, could easily heft heavy boxes so they were paired and an affection grew between the two as they worked over the years.

Mary's health failed, and she was unable to continue. By that time however, with the personal attention and encouragement Larry had received, he had developed skills that enabled him to get a job for the first time in his life.

THE CHURCH'S biggest m has been obtaining and

"After a while people who work here realize they are getting more than they give," Mrs. Wren said. "It happens to everyone. It makes us so grateful for what we have." Mrs. Wren said that the Panthersville congregation will continue to welcome other volunteers in the community who take part, and she would like to share even more by having a foreign lan-



\* Mr. Ford's Partier.

Panthersville Presbyterian Church made 75 years ago (15 th District, L.L. 120 or 121)? (15 th District, L.L. 120 or 121)? Corner of Cardler Rd. + Flat Shools Road.

Brought in by: John G. Ford 6177 Rhythm Circle Orlando, Fla. 32808

Group called the Farmer's Union.