Sometimes the House of God Ministries is referred to as the "carwash church," and for good reason. Customers come from all over Baton Rouge on Saturday mornings and afternoons to get a spotless carwash. Church members volunteer hours upon hours to wash cars. They donate their earnings to the Valley Park area church.

Located on Glenmore Street at Baywell Street, the House of God Ministries is a working and traveling congregation. They sell home-cooked meals on weekends at a neat cafeteria that also offers takeout and catering services.

"The members save us a lot of money," said its pastor, the Rev. Milton F. Clark. "They don't work here for money. They work here for God, who blesses us.

Clark, the pastor for the past 25 years, has seen the work turn a tiny building into a neighborhood force. The church owns property on four streets: a two-story building and three Greyhound-style busses.

Clark, a contractor, taught others how to build. "We built these beautiful buildings with young people," he said.

The 325,000 debt-free sanctuary seats 800, and Andrew Hall adds to the attractiveness of the landscape. Andrew Hall houses the preschool, a country kitchen, administrative offices, a full gym and game room.

The sanctuary was built 13 years ago, and Andrew Hall three years ago.

House of God programs include a preschool with 40 children, a youth program with athletic teams, special activities for all ages. Twice a month volunteers deliver food to the needy.

The big buses provide more than travel. They are also a place to minister.

"People who might never be able to travel anywhere get the chance to go with us," Clark said.

"Our trips are a way to get to know others and witness to them."

Each church bus seats 47 people. "We take 15 to 20 trips a year and go all over the country," Clark said. "All ages go. People pay their own way. It's amazing what can be done when you put numbers together.

Some of the places they have visited include Disney World; three times, Washington, D.C., Tulsa, Atlanta and San Antonio.

I had foreknowledge of what would happen," Clark said. "I was called 25 years ago when I had a vision and God spoke to me. I was a carpenter. I did not want to be a pastor.

Clark said he was sitting outside his fiancé's house when he heard God's words. "God told me he was going to give me an army of Christians to lead," he said. He broke off the engagement.

He began to teach Bible study at the 25-foot-by-35-foot church on Nairn Street in Valley Park where his late father, the Rev. R.T. Clark, was once pastor. Then he decided to preach.

Clark began to preach. "I preach the word of God," he said. "Once people get the word and are filled with the Holy Ghost, they become responsible citizens of God's kingdom."

Among the church's plans is turning some of its property into apartments for church members who hold hard times and need assistance until they recover.

Joe Gorman was 18 when he started going to the then-little church. Now 34, Gorman says, "I was breaking into houses and stealing, all kind of crazy stuff. Sooner or later I would have been arrested. We have a lot of people in church who did all kinds of stuff until they heard the gospel.

Gorman says the gospel helped him learn to be accountable and take responsibility for his life.

As the church grew, Gorman moved with it, from Valley Park to the Mayfair subdivision sharing St. Philips Church, then to the Leo S. Butler Community Center, and to its current site.

Gorman operates a lawn service company and still donates 20 to 30 hours a week for the church. From cutting the grass, delivering takeouts from the kitchen, and washing cars, to going on trips and helping put up tents, he is there, along with other volunteers.

He is also a Sunday school teacher, and he brings others to church.

"It's beautiful to see those who have been going in the wrong direction turn around, get a chance to get out of their environment where they were accustomed to a different style of living and show them how much fun they can have as Christians," Clark said.