

Wandering church finds new home in Medley

By **BARBARA GUTIERREZ**
Herald Staff Writer

The **Rev. Pedro Pared** likes to compare his church to the tribes of Israel, who roamed the desert for 40 years before coming to Canaan, the promised land.

The Northside Spanish Baptist



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Rev. Pedro Pared

Church has occupied four buildings in its 20 years of existence. For the past year and a half, the congregation has been meeting at Hialeah Gardens City Hall after selling its church to a Haitian congregation.

But now the promised land looks at hand.

And, surprisingly enough, it is the industrial town of Medley.

Medley Baptist Church has voted to accept the Spanish congregation as neighbors and invited it to build its sanctuary next to the Medley church at 7850 NW S. River Dr. The new building is supposed to be ready in November.

“This just shows that the Lord has plans for our church,” said the **Rev. Mr. Pared**, 40. “We have moved around a lot, but now we will have a permanent sanctuary.”

The relationship of the two Southern Baptist churches will be a first. Usually, a church has two congregations — an English-speaking and a Spanish-speaking one.

“But now we will have two

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separate churches side by side," said the **Rev. Mr. Pared**.

Rev. Edward Albritton, pastor of Medley Baptist Church, said his church will lease the land to the Northside Spanish Baptist congregation indefinitely, charging only \$1 a year.

"I think it will help them to grow because it will give them a permanent place of worship," said the **Rev.** Mr. Albritton who leads a church of 150 members. "And I think our congregation will realize that in helping them we can also grow."

The new Northside Spanish Baptist, with a congregation of 100 members, will have a sanctuary with room for 180 worshippers, 14 small classrooms, a kitchen and a dining room.

A large baptistry, a bedroom and bathroom will be shared by the churches, said the **Rev. Mr. Pared**, adding that the room will be used by visiting missionaries.

Northside Spanish Baptist has \$100,000 in its building fund.

"But we had not been able to

build before because with the money we had we could not buy land and build," said the Cuban-born pastor.

Northside Spanish Baptist Church was founded about 20 years ago as a mission by a now defunct English-speaking congregation. It was first based in a small house in Northwest Dade.

From there the congregation moved temporarily to a Hialeah location followed by a short stay at the mother church.

Finally, in 1968 the congregation bought its own church at 840 NW 100th St.

"But by 1980 we were losing congregation members because the community became overwhelmingly black and Haitian," said Olga Antuniz, a charter member and church secretary.

"We could not reach people who spoke our language so we sold," said the **Rev. Mr. Pared**.

The congregation then started holding services at Medley Baptist on Sunday afternoons and lost

approximately 30 members who found the time inconvenient.

Last May, a retired pastor obtained permission from Hialeah Gardens to hold the services at City Hall for free.

"So now we are here," said the **Rev. Mr. Pared** looking at the large airy room. "It's not the most appropriate place for us, but at least we can hold the service in the morning."

As a result of its interim status in Hialeah Gardens, the church has become the only one in the town. It is beginning to attract people from Hialeah and Northwest Dade.

"And we hope to grow much more when in Medley," said the **Rev. Mr. Pared**.

Mario Garcia, 24, an eight-year member of the Spanish church, believes that the union of the two churches will be mutually beneficial.

"I see it as a good example for the community," said Garcia. "Here is an American church lending a hand to a Latin one. It will serve as a lesson in brotherhood."

prayer service and Bible study.

Pulpit guest

The **Rev. Pedro Pared**, pastor of the Wellswood Baptist Spanish mission, will be guest preacher tomorrow morning at the Palma Ceia Baptist Church. **Pared** was born in Cuba and was baptized a Christian in 1959. He and his family came to Tampa from Macon, Ga., in 1973.

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Rev.
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