

Jesus Loves The Little Children

Where praise was once raised in prayer and song, now the voices of little children are heard in happy laughter or contented chatter.

Bethel United Church has become the Baseline Pre-School. The former sanctuary is the play area and the choir loft is the craft and nap-time room.

Owners of the Baseline Pre-School, Lynn Ure and Barbara Doucet, have remodelled the old building to meet health and safety standards for nursery schools, with the addition of fire doors and a partition to put the kitchen out of bounds.

The owners, who are graduates of early childhood education courses, were teaching in Windsor day-care centres when the Bethel congregation decided to merge with Maidstone United church and sell their meeting place.

Its location, convenient to two main arteries to Windsor, suggested to the partners it was a great place for a day-care centre and nursery school because parents could leave their children on their way to work. Along the main connecting link between county roads 46 and 42, (highways 98 and 2), they have a sign at the corner. Although it indicates the nursery school is close-by, the building, a few feet to the west at the corner, carries the image of a church.

It's only the outside that carries that image. Once inside with the proliferation of toys designed to stimulate imagination and creativity, the nursery school atmosphere prevails.

Early concepts of learning are taught, such as numbers, colors, and awareness of the environment.

"The main thing is teaching them how to get along, behaviour with adults and other children. Social living," Lynn explained.

They have accommodations for fifty. Regulations require one teacher to five children, so Lynn and Barbara have one assistant for the present enrollment, Cheryl Tofflemire.

Free play at whatever attracts each child takes up much of their time. Crafts geared to their age are offered.

"Every day we make something, both morning and afternoon. But the children do what they are interested in. We encourage them to come to crafts but they may prefer play with something," Lynn explained.

"We have a circle time each day when they learn to sit quietly and sing, play games, and do finger plays. Or they dance. And we have reading time."

The teachers are at the school to accept children by 7 a.m. and stay until 6 p.m. Since it is both a day-care centre and nursery school some children spend the day while others come for either morning or afternoon. A hot lunch is served as required.



In the bottom photo Lynn Ure, co-owner and teacher of the Baseline Preschool helps David Hayes count the eggs he pretended to cook and above, Cheryl Tofflemire helps Shari McLean as she plays with the school toys. The Baseline Preschool is in the former Bethel United Church a few feet from the 9th concession of Sandwich South township at the Baseline Road intersection.

