

# Purpose, Vision and Values of The River Preschool

## PURPOSE

- To provide a loving and child-centered space for children to experience reverence and wonder through a Christian faith-based and Waldorf-inspired preschool; and
- To build relationships between the Anglican Parish of St. Barnabas and community members in Greater Victoria.

## Vision

The vision of The River Preschool is to provide a warm and loving space for preschool aged children (3 to 6 years old) to inspire and awaken imagination, respect, gratitude, reverence, and curiosity for each other and for the world in which we live. We aim to do this by encouraging imaginative play both indoors and outdoors; through using simple and natural toys and crafting materials; through the nourishment of the whole child as inspired by Steiner's pedagogy in Waldorf education.

The *International Association of Waldorf/Steiner Early Childhood Education* summarizes the principles of Waldorf Early Childhood Education on its webpage as follows:

*The Waldorf early childhood educator works with the young child by creating a warm, beautiful and loving home-like environment, which is protective and secure, and where things happen in a predictable, rhythmic manner. Here she responds to the developing child in two basic ways:*

*First, she engages in domestic, practical, and artistic activities the children can readily imitate (for example, baking, painting, gardening, and handicrafts), adapting the work to the changing seasons and festivals of the year.*

*Secondly, the Waldorf kindergarten teacher nurtures the children's power of imagination by telling carefully selected stories and by encouraging free play. This free or fantasy play, in which children act out scenarios of their own creation, helps them to experience many aspects of life more deeply. When toys are used, they are made of natural materials. Wood, cotton, wool, silk, shells, stones, pine cones and objects from nature that the children themselves have collected are used in play and to beautify the room.[1]*

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[1] ([http://www.iaswece.org/waldorf\\_education/what\\_is.aspx](http://www.iaswece.org/waldorf_education/what_is.aspx))

We believe that protecting our children from the many sources of overstimulation to which we are exposed, and nourishing our children's inherent relationship with the Holy Spirit, fosters well-adjusted, happy and healthy children.

Vital to our vision is how the children see their teachers and other adults relate to one another and to the world around them. It is important that our children witness the adults treating one another with kindness and respect, and treating the things that we make and the natural world in an attitude of reverence and wonder.

We engage in daily activities which are embedded in predictable routines and daily and yearly rhythms. In our days, nothing ought to be hurried, and the time that even simple things need (such as food preparation or putting on coats and shoes to go outside) are allowed to take as much time as each child requires. Throughout the year we celebrate the changing seasons and we engage in the riches of the traditional Christian festivals such as Christmas, Michaelmas, St. Martin's Day and Easter. We will also enjoy learning about other traditions the children bring from home.

In all that we do we believe that God's Grace is at work in the lives of our children and our task is to provide an environment wherein the children have the room to grow in trust and openness to the world.

### **Values**

1. We hold a reverence for childhood; we believe that each child has their own spiritual path and aim to support that.
2. We celebrate the innate reverence and joy of an unhurried and naturally developing childhood.
3. Respect, trust, and authenticity are the foundations for all our relationships (between teachers, between children and teachers, and between teachers and parents).
4. We embrace the Christian Faith and strive to reflect God's love for all people in our actions and curriculum.
5. We are stewards of our earth and environment. We strive to cultivate wonder and curiosity through engagement with the natural world.
6. The River Preschool community members, including parents, teachers and administrators, work together with members of the parish of St. Barnabas towards our common goals of community-building.
7. The diversity of our community and its individuals is important to us.
8. Things done slowly and reverently are better than things done hurriedly or just for the sake of an 'end product;' things done using natural materials and following the rhythms of the seasons are better than things done using cheaper, artificial materials; things done with care and an eye for beauty are good for the minds and souls of our children.

For consideration as an alternative to above:

9. We believe that activities conducted purposefully and in a naturally unfolding way yield better results than things done in a hurry for the sake of an end-product. We believe that natural materials provide a better connection with the rhythms of the seasons than man-made materials. We believe that children's souls are nourished in simple and beautiful surroundings and when they have access to simple natural play things.

