



**BELLEWOOD BAPTIST'S** Robert Taylor, left, and the Rev. Basel Rogers, congregation's church building at the corner of Hamilton Rd. and Church St. the pastor, confer in front of the new

# Bellewood Baptist is new village church

They have a church building, a pastor and about 30 regular worshippers.

They are the newest church in the village, North Syracuse's Bellewood Baptist church.

The pastor is the Rev. Basel Rogers, a retired Southern Baptist minister whose home is Texas.

And Robert Taylor of 6191 Birchwood Rd. is the chairman of the new church's steering committee.

It was in his home that Bellewood began. "It was on June 2, 1971, in my home, that this work began, with a home Bible fellowship hour," Taylor said.

The idea for the church was born at Central Baptist Church in Syracuse, whose missions committee decided April 30, 1971, that the North Syracuse-Cicero area could use a mission church.

Taylor, a formal member of Central, and several other area residents who are also members, form the nucleus of the new congregation, he said.

"The decision to create the mission was based on the location of other Southern Baptist churches and missions in the area, as well as on the members in this area," he said.

Bellewood held its first Sunday services June 25 of this year, "and we had a week of Bible school following that with 43 children enrolled," Mr. Rogers said.

He arrived from Midland, Tex., that week, to take temporary charge of the church in its earliest formative stages, he said.

As a retired minister, Mr. Rogers is available to his convention for interim work such as Bellewood, and he conducts revivals around the world, he said.

"We had 65 persons here for the family night that closed the Bible school, and we had 27 at the first

worship service I preached that next Sunday.

"This small number is typical of Southern Baptist work. We start as a small group.

"Our motive in forming a new church is to go into a community, to teach the Bible and to witness to the saving power of Jesus Christ.

"We are carrying out the great commission to see that the message of the Bible reaches all people," Mr. Rogers said.

He explained that throughout the Southern Baptist Convention the intention is "not to set up competition with any other church or faith, but simply to teach and to minister."

His convention is the largest Protestant denomination in the country, with some 35,000 churches and numerous missions, he said.

Bellewood is a mission church, an offshoot of Central, and will be so until it becomes sufficiently independent to be financially and spiritually responsible for itself, Taylor said.

"When a church becomes independent, the ceremony is almost like a marriage service in that the church becomes a completely independent unit," he said.

Central, the mother-church, is the oldest Southern Baptist church in the central New York area, and its missionary activities have included founding several separate churches in the area, Taylor said.

"As a convention, we have a goal of evangelizing the United States, and our home missions program is part of that goal," Taylor said.

"It's our duty to get the Gospel message to those people who otherwise wouldn't get it.

"We do start small, because there are a lot of people who will not attend a large church, and we often attract them," Mr. Rogers said.

Bellewood meets in the former Breen residence at the corner of Hamilton Rd. and Church St.

It's a house that was built in 1856 for Isaac Randall, and was once the main house on a 400-acre farm, Taylor said.

The pastor said "We're living here in part of the house. I like to say that the church members invade me three times a week or more, when we have services, and we're awfully glad they do."

Bellewood's services include 9:45 a.m. Bible classes and 11 a.m. worship on Sundays and a

study and prayer time at 7:30 p.m. Wednesdays.

Taylor also serves as Sunday school superintendent, and he said "We have a staff of really expert Christian education workers."

Church members are conducting a survey of the area on Thursdays, to determine the religious affiliation and interests of as many North Syracuse and Cicero persons as possible.

"We're also meeting people in places like Sears, Roebuck and talking to them," Taylor said.

"We first want to make the people Christians, then to make them Baptists.

"We see a large number of people who do not have any faith at all, and those are the ones whom we minister to," Mr. Rogers said.

Bellewood does not want to have a huge congregation at any time.

Ultimately, Taylor said, the church should have about 300 members.

The state's Southern Baptist organization has decided 300 is the ideal church size, and has recommended to local congregations that if they exceed this size, they create new missions, he said.

Architects are meeting with members of Bellewood now to determine what building must be done on the property to create a church plant for the size of the expected membership, Taylor said.

"The area kids use this property for a park now, and we are going to continue to encourage them to do so.

"The church is in sort of a funny situation. It owns private property, but that property becomes almost public.

"We will never tear down or do much alteration on this building that we have. We'll do our building elsewhere on the two acres we have here," Taylor said.