

# St. Leo's

## PARISH COMMUNITY



## EMPOWER YOUTH PROGRAM

### FORMING OUR YOUNG DISCIPLES

Through the final words before His Ascension — “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19) — Jesus taught us that evangelization is a core part of our Christian identity. Only by sharing the light of Christ with others can we ensure that it spreads, transforming the world around us. And though there are certainly many worthy ways for us to accomplish this here at St. Leo’s, perhaps none is more far-reaching in its effects than our Empower Youth program.

“Empower Youth is our church’s response to proclaiming and sharing the Gospel message with young people in a caring and safe environment,” says Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry Rita Hemmer. “Young people can expect to be treated with dignity and are shown that they matter in this world — that they have a purpose.”

Intended for parish youth in sixth through 10th grades, Empower Youth is a comprehensive youth ministry program led by faithful adult leaders. Gatherings occur the second, third and fourth Wednesday of each month from 7-8:30 p.m. throughout the school year. Sixth through eighth-graders meet in the Parish Hall, while ninth and 10th-graders meet in the



SEPTEMBER 2019

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## EMPOWER YOUTH PROGRAM

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Youth Room. During this time youth are able to participate in interactive discussions and activities designed to help them build relationships with each other, the parish community and, ultimately, the Person of Jesus Christ.

“Empower Youth is led by faithful adult leaders who give witness to living a life with Christ,” Rita says. “They care deeply about our youth and want to help them encounter [Him]. They lead Empower Youth sessions designed to help youth encounter Jesus by engaging in activities that dig into the deeper meaning of Scripture, the Church and the power of the sacraments.”

Instead of a religious class, Empower Youth is meant to be an experience — one that is fun, engaging and life changing. Through it, middle and high school youth are able to become part of a faith community, recognize that they are important members of our Church now, and understand that their lives have a deeper meaning.

“There is an emphasis at Empower Youth that young people are not just the Church of the future, but also the Church of today,” Rita says. “Activities help reinforce the message that we are the body of Christ and that every person is part of that body. Youth are able to learn and experience their faith, and then are challenged to live it outside the walls of church.”

Working in collaboration with parents, Empower Youth works to foster the total personal and spiritual growth of each young person. This means incorporating all eight aspects of a comprehensive youth ministry program as outlined in the USCCB’s document *Renewing the Vision* — advocacy, catechesis, community life, evangelization, justice and service, leadership



*Through its comprehensive youth ministry approach, Empower Youth helps young people realize that they are vital parts of our Church now.*

development, pastoral care, and prayer and worship. That’s why beginning this fall, each one of Empower Youth’s Wednesday gatherings will concentrate on one of these specific components.

“Our plan is for the second Wednesdays of the month to focus on either community life (building meaningful friendships), leadership development (being courageous in our faith) or advocacy (helping youth find their voice),” Rita says. “The third Wednesdays of the month, meanwhile, will focus on evangelization (encountering Jesus), pastoral care (personal growth), or justice and service (solidarity with those in need), while the fourth Wednesdays of the month will emphasize catechesis (experiencing the Catholic faith) and prayer and worship (celebrating our relationship with Jesus). This will help complement and not duplicate the faith experience of our youth, and will also better include those that attend our local Catholic school but also want to be part of the Empower Youth community.”

Empower Youth’s 2019-20 year will officially begin on Wednesday, Sept. 11, with a special themed “Adventure Night.” This will be a community-building game and adventure night that will incorporate all youth and their families. Please look to the parish bulletin, website or Facebook page for further details.

You can also contact Rita Hemmer directly at either 308-382-4752, ext. 18 or [rita@saintleos.org](mailto:rita@saintleos.org).

*A Letter From Our Pastor*

# GETTING OUR PRIORITIES IN ORDER

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Dear Parishioners,

I know that many people are not on a school year calendar. But for many of us, September brings a livelier rhythm to our schedules. Life just seems to get busier after Labor Day. Therefore, this month seems to be a good time to think about our priorities and to pray for God's guidance.

It has been said that the truly important is often pushed aside by the merely urgent. So, as you review your priorities, please make sure that you include what's really important!

First of all, be sure to include time for God, as well as for job, family and recreation. Of prime importance, make sure that Mass on Sundays is a top priority — that's the most important event of the week. In addition, reserve some time for personal Scripture study, as well as prayer with your family or a prayer group — then incorporate that into your daily and weekly routine.

There are many forces pulling at us as we decide where to use our talents. For most of us, our jobs claim the lion's share of our efforts and sometimes threaten to engulf our whole lives. We also have responsibilities to our families and legitimate calls for service to the community — that obviously includes the Church. We have lots of areas for service right here in our own parish —



religious education, music, serving as a greeter, or any one of the many ministries in which you may use your talents to grow closer to God.

Finally, we have to set priorities for using our money. As Christians, we are responsible to God for the use of the financial resources He has entrusted to us — whether it's a lot or a little — and to make a return to God in thanksgiving. In this regard, Scripture gives us the tithe as a goal. Working toward a tithe may mean some changes in your priorities, but I can tell you from personal experience that those who have adopted this as their standard of giving experience a joy rooted in the spiritual growth that

occurs as we continually live out the “three Ts” of stewardship — time, talent and treasure.

Priorities are certainly a part of life. As you review your own priorities, especially now that many regular routines are starting up again, ask yourself how you will use the time, talent and treasure entrusted to you by God.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Rev. Donald A. Buhrman  
Pastor

## CATHOLICS ENC

# "God is Calling"

Aaron Schock had attended some small, day retreats during his Catholic high school years, but he hadn't participated in any retreats as an adult. Then a friend told him how Catholics Encountering Christ, or CEC, had changed his life. So, Aaron decided to attend.

"God is calling each one of us to have a deep relationship with Him, and CEC helps you get the ball rolling," Aaron says. "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and open your heart and help you experience God's grace. I am more aware of the presence of Jesus than ever before."



*Women participating in and leading the Catholics Encounter Christ retreat*



*Men participating in and leading the Catholics Encounter Christ retreat*

CEC is a three-day weekend during which participants experience how God's grace works within them and how they can share His grace with others.

"It is a retreat that gives you the tools to look at your spiritual life on an ongoing basis and to grow closer to Christ as He calls you closer to Him," says Sue Kohles, Office Manager at St. Leo's.

From Friday evening to Sunday evening at Camp Comeca, participants come together for song, prayer, meditation and talks presented by clergy and laity that inspire, educate and motivate.

"This is not a silent retreat, but it is a spiritual retreat with separate weekends for men and women," Sue says. "CEC is intended for adults 21 and over, and you don't need to be Catholic to attend. It is best for married couples to both attend so that you grow spiritually together."

The retreats always take place in the spring — the women's retreat is usually the last weekend of February and the men's is the last weekend of March. Aaron Schock attended the retreat the year before his wife, Sierra.

"When I left CEC that weekend, I was on cloud nine and had just a sense of security and happiness and joy in my life," Aaron says. "You develop a deeper bond with the Lord by listening and praying."

Aaron encouraged Sierra, who had never attended a retreat before, to try CEC. Sierra spent three days with women she had never met before, but by the time she left, they were sisters in Christ.

"You leave feeling empowered, and the speakers help you dive deep into your faith, reflect on topics and apply them to your daily life," Sierra says. "Camp Comeca is in a pasture in the middle of nowhere. It's just you and Jesus out there."

What makes CEC a particularly life-changing experience is that following the weekend, participants continue meeting on a regular basis.

"There's a follow-up group you meet with once a week," Aaron says. "The group keeps

# COUNTER CHRIST

## *Each One of Us*

you charged and keeps the fire burning. It holds you accountable for your actions, your piety and your study.”

Sue has been involved with CEC for 13 years as both a participant and a member of the team of parishioners who organize and speak during the weekends.

“CEC is about gaining tools to bring you to a closer relationship with God,” Sue says. “I meet weekly with four other sisters in Christ in what is called a ‘Group Reunion.’ We keep each other accountable and encourage and challenge each other to become better Catholic Christians.”

Sierra would highly encourage every parishioner to attend CEC. After CEC, Sierra has extended her prayer life beyond the church walls and continues to meet weekly with her sisters in Christ.

“My husband and I pray together daily, and most importantly my relationship with God has been strengthened tremendously,” Sierra says. “Everyone that you encounter at CEC and everything that you do will be impactful to you. The list goes on and on regarding what this retreat can do for you.”

If you would like more information about the Catholics Encounter Christ experience, reach out to Sue Kohles at 308-382-4753 or [office@saintleos.org](mailto:office@saintleos.org).

## SAVE THE DATE!

# *Annual Parish Retreat*

*To Be a Christian Steward*

**Friday, November 1**  
**Saturday, November 2**

in the Parish Hall

*St. Leo's Parish Community*

# QUESTIONS & ANSWERS ABOUT OUR ANNUAL STEWARDSHIP RENEWAL

*Commitment Weekend is **September 21-22.**  
Don't forget to bring your Commitment Card to Mass!*

## **My age or physical limitations prevent me from being active in the parish. Should I still turn in a Commitment Card?**

Yes! The first section of the card — Stewardship of Time — is the most important because it allows you to make commitments to *prayer*. Even if you can't join a ministry or make it to Mass on Sunday, you can still pray for our parish. Your spiritual support has tremendous value in the eyes of God.

## **One time I turned in a card, but no one ever called me when I signed up for a ministry.**

If this happened in the past, please forgive us! And don't give up on filling out your Commitment Card! We have a very good plan to call every person interested in joining a new ministry. If for some reason the ministry leader does not call you within four weeks of turning in your card, let the parish office know.

## **How much should I give?**

Your gift is entirely dependent on how much God has given you. At St. Leo's, we ask that you give five percent to our parish, one percent to the diocese, and four percent to other charities. Why a percentage of income? First, because the tithe (10 percent) is a scriptural benchmark that the Church has honored for centuries (see Malachi 3:10). Secondly, we give a percentage of income because it is a common-sense standard by which everyone can equitably support the parish. Most of all, we give because we believe God comes first in everything, even finances.

## **What if I can't fulfill my financial pledge?**

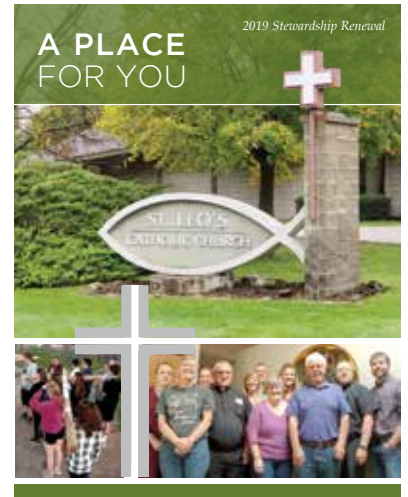
While our pledge is not a "contract," we should all make a good-faith effort to fulfill it. Of course, if your financial circumstances change — if you lose your job, for instance — then the amount of money you give the Church will change, too. Likewise if you get a raise or bonus. The biggest reason many people don't fulfill their pledge is that they attend Mass at another parish when they go on vacation, attend a wedding, etc. If you're out of town, just make up for the missed Sunday when you write your next check to the parish. Using your envelopes is a good way to see which Sundays you missed.

## **I don't even go to Mass very frequently. Why turn in a Commitment Card?**

Because this is your chance to turn over a new leaf! Why not make a commitment to God to come to Mass every Sunday, and then write down that commitment? Even if that's the only commitment you make, take a step forward. Jesus Himself is waiting for you!

## **What happens if I don't return my Commitment Card?**

We will mail you a reminder letter that includes an extra Commitment Card (in case you misplaced yours). Make every effort you can to participate. Our Stewardship Renewal is a very important annual event in the life of our parish. You and your family are part of what makes St. Leo's a great community! Most importantly, your commitments are actually promises to Christ Himself. All of us are called to give back to God a portion of what He has given us.



*Every parish family receives a special "Stewardship Package" in the mail that further explains our parish's vision of stewardship. It includes a booklet that describes every ministry in the parish, as well as your Commitment Card.*

# GOLDEN GEMS MINISTRY

*Senior Parishioners Growing in Friendship and Community*

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There are no dues, no membership roll, nor any required qualifications — just a golden opportunity to share a meal with others, catch up with friendships, and make new ones. That’s our St. Leo’s Golden Gems Ministry.

The Golden Gems, under the direction of parish nurse Julie Gortemaker, RN, meet at noon on the second Tuesday of each month at the church hall. The parish provides the main course, traditionally fried chicken, and those attending bring side dishes and desserts. There’s usually enough food left over for those who want to take some home.

“We meet at noon and have our meal until 12:30 p.m.,” Julie says. “At 12:30 p.m. we have a program, a speaker, or we play a game like trivia. From 11:30 a.m. to noon I am available to do blood pressure screenings.”

Although the group is targeted for parishioners age 60 and older, everyone is welcome.

“You don’t have to be a registered member of our church, and you can bring a guest,” Julie says. “There are no dues and there is a free-will donation, but there is no pressure. It’s the kind of service the parish provides for the older folks.”

In December, the gathering is a holiday meal with turkey and stuffing, instead of fried chicken. The parish music director attends and leads a Christmas singalong. In the summer, the group has had a barbecue with the Knights of Columbus preparing the meal.

“It’s a really good opportunity to socialize and see friends and enjoy a meal, and catch up with members of the community,” Julie says.

There usually are about 30 attending each month. There are those who faithfully attend each month, and others who attend several times a year. Although the parish cannot provide rides, there usually are those who attend who will provide rides. The only time the meeting is

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## **GOLDEN GEMS MINISTRY** *continued from page 7*

cancelled is if there is a funeral scheduled or if school is cancelled that day.

Although the Golden Gems focuses on older parishioners, the entire parish of St. Leo's benefits from the group.

"It plays an important role in that it fosters a sense of community," Julie says. "You see people that you see in church, but you don't get a chance to talk to them, and this way you can sit down with someone and talk in an easy atmosphere. It promotes community — that's the most important thing about Golden Gems. You talk to others you don't usually talk to.

And the food is really good, too! In the summer, there are tons of produce and in the winter, hearty casseroles. People exchange recipes, and it's a way for people who like to cook to share their talents. And seeing the different foods adds a dimension to it."

While the gathering is significant for building community among the members, it also helps Julie offer her care as she assesses their physical wellness.

"If they are having any health problems, I can pick up on that," she says. "If anyone has fallen, I can observe how they are walking."

For more information about the Golden Gems,  
contact Julie Gortemaker, RN, at 308-382-4753, ext. 20.

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### **LITURGY SCHEDULE**

**Daily Mass:** 9 a.m., **Saturday:** 5 p.m., **Sunday:** 8 a.m. & 10:30 a.m.

**Confession:** Saturday 4 - 4:30 p.m. **Adoration:** First Friday of the Month, 9:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.

**Abide Adoration:** Fourth Sunday of the Month, 7 - 8 p.m.