

SPIRIT LINK

St. Gerald Catholic Church † SpiritLink Newsletter † Volume 25 - Number 2 † June 2021

HOPE Given and Received

By Joan Squire

Gene and Judy Steimle are best known for their parish involvement with the HOPE (Help Our Parish Educate) program. The HOPE program was started at St. Gerald nearly 30 years ago and Judy and Gene have been the organizing force behind it for the last 15 years. The first significant action they took was to put all the HOPE data on Gene's computer, manual record keeping had become way too cumbersome. The Steimles order the gift cards, schedule sellers, and do the bookkeeping. During the pandemic sales were only available at the parish or school office but sellers recently returned after Sunday Mass.

St. Gerald purchases volume quantities of gift certificates at various local and worldwide vendors at a discount and in turn, the Parish sells the gift certificates at face value. The value of the discount varies for each vendor and the profit that stays at St. Gerald. Some of the past school projects completed with HOPE profits have been a new playground, computers, security cameras, and chrome books. Currently HOPE profits are going to a tuition assistance fund in Judy's name to be awarded to children who would like to attend St. Gerald Catholic School and simply cannot afford it.

Judy Steimle was born in Atkinson, Nebraska and graduated from St. Joseph High School. Gene grew up in Omaha and is a graduate of Omaha North. Gene and Judy met while both worked at the telephone company and recently celebrated their 35th wedding anniversary. They have attended St. Gerald since their marriage. Gene was received into the Catholic Church 6 years ago.

Gene and Judy retired early to spend summers working at national parks. Four summers were spent at Glacier and three summers at Denali. Some of their jobs included Judy working at the gift shop and Gene as a barista. Their last summer job found them at a working ranch in Colorado that offered trout fishing and Elk hunting. They served as hosts at a cabin in the back country. Judy cooked and Gene saw to other needs of the guests. They enjoyed their summer jobs very much but finally decided to retire from that lifestyle to spend more time with their grandkids.



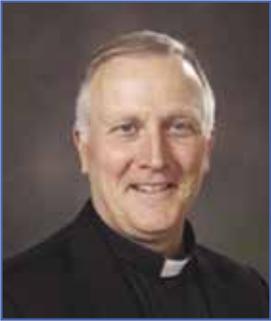
Gene and Judy Steimle

The Steimles jumped into a myriad of activities at St. Gerald. At the school Gene helped at field days and as part of the parish maintenance committee was on the school roof making repairs, painting classrooms and doing other school projects. He spent countless hours working on the remodeling project of the rectory on Tilford Circle. At the church he is an usher, member of KCs and participates in That Man is You. Judy is a sacristan, EMHC, and launders the altar server albs. At school she has worked at the lunch program, helped at the uniform sale and read to Kindergarten students. As grandparents they have enjoyed many hours cheering on their grandchildren at various sporting events. They have generously donated Nebraska football tickets to the Guardian Angel Auction.

During Covid when daughter Courtney and husband Doug continued to go to work, Gene and Judy helped out with the care and remote learning of Cole, Brooklyn and Dean who live across the street. During the summer trips to their lake house kept them in touch with many of their friends from St. Gerald.

This past winter while Gene was still recovering from knee surgery Judy was diagnosed with cancer. They are grateful for the care she has received at UNMC. The healing prayers of Fr. Michael and Fr. Mark have been a blessing. Judy would like to thank all those who showed their care and concern, those who prayed, and all the calls that helped her through the difficult early days of her diagnosis. The St. Gerald family was there for her and Gene and it really made a difference. When Judy's treatments allowed, they were thankful for the opportunity to return to Mass and receive the Eucharist. Their parish family has given them a spirit of hope and they thank God for the many blessings it affords them.

Checking in by Fr. Mark Nolte, Pastor



In addition to our weekly meetings, my leadership team and I have "Check In" meetings. Some of you may be familiar with such a term in your own places of employment. Basically, the purpose of these meetings is to briefly share with each other what is on our plates for that week and where we may need some assistance. These meetings are very short, typically around 20 minutes. Later in the week, at our longer weekly business meetings, we also take time to

briefly check in to see where everyone is, but on a more personal level. We give everyone an opportunity, if they so wish, to share where they may be struggling and where they are being blessed.

We call this our "Happy/Crappy" session. Where do I feel crappy lately and where do I feel happy, and why? This enables us to get a better pulse on where we are individually, especially spiritually. It also gives us the opportunity to pray for each other as well. This experience has really strengthened our relationship with each other and made our bond with each other much stronger.

So where are you right now spiritually and in your relationship with God and others, especially family members? These last 14 months or so COVID along with all the rising tensions within our nation have been extremely difficult and challenging for all of us, especially within our families. There is a saying that "Suffering will make you either bitter or better". My hope and prayer for all of us is that it has made us all better, especially better listeners, better lovers and better Christians. In Romans 8:28, St. Paul tells us ... "that all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to His purpose". As a college football coach once said, "If it doesn't challenge you, it won't change you".

If you are not doing so already, I would strongly encourage each of you to have your own weekly "check in" with yourself, with

your spouse and with your children. Share with each other (and especially with God in your prayer time) your thoughts, feelings, desires, and fears. Let each person share what is on his/her heart and mind without judging them or making fun of them or preaching to them. Simply listen and affirm each other. One of the deepest desires of the human heart is to know I am heard and accepted as I am.

Take time out of your busy days to check in on yourself and each other. Ask yourself and each other where are you struggling and where do you feel blessed lately, and why? One family I know takes time after dinner to simply go around the table and ask each family member to name one thing they are grateful for today. Pray with each other and forgive each other. If you live alone, is there someone you could talk to by phone or in person on a regular basis? Join one of our Nazareth small groups who meet monthly in their homes and who have "check ins" as part of their regular gatherings. This is another wonderful way to make new friends and to get to know others on a more personal level. I challenge especially our men who are fathers. If you are not doing so already, please be the spiritual leaders of your families. They are looking to you to lead them.

As your spiritual father, please know my door is always open if you just need to talk and/or need someone to pray with you. Lastly, please forgive me for any times I may have hurt you by what I said or did or for my lack of being present to you when you needed my attention, love, or affirmation. God bless you and your families, and thank you so much for all the ways many of you have taken time to check in on me.

*Sincerely in Christ,
Fr. Mark*



This year's Knights of Columbus Lenten fish dinners were all drive thru carry out. Pictured are a few of the many volunteers who manned the service line.



Every Fish Dinner Friday morning you would find Jim Smiley, and Nancy and Larry Schmitz preparing and portioning out the coleslaw for that evening.

From a Non-Believer to a Disciple of Christ

By Sherry Wachtler

Michael Koenig may be only 23, but in just a few short years, he turned from a non-believer in God to an enthusiastic, inspired disciple of Jesus Christ. And he can't wait to tell you about the Young Adult Group at St. Gerald.

Michael wasn't always a non-believer. The son of Ronald Koenig and Bekki Koenig, he grew up in a strong Catholic family with his brother Nathan and sister, Kelli. Michael attended St. Gerald Catholic School where his aunt and godmother, Judy Morrison was kindergarten teacher. He received his First Holy Communion and Confirmation at St. Gerald Church, where his Aunt Cindy Hamata sang in the choir. Multiple aunts and uncles along with his grandmother Josie Dieter supported him in his faith.

"During the summer after my freshman year at Gross Catholic, a lot of stuff happened and it all tore me apart," he said. His dad, Ronald had a stroke, a close friend's dad died and Michael broke up with his girlfriend. "I renounced my faith in God. Outwardly, I went through the motions, but I was lost on the inside."

After he graduated from Gross Catholic, he went to University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) where a friend, Adam, who was a member of a non-denominational group, Christians Reaching Universities (CRU), kept inviting him to their get-togethers. "I kept turning him down until one day I agreed to attend a Praise and Worship service."

A turning point in Michael's life may have been at the CRU conference held in Denver in December 2016. At a Praise and Worship session, the large auditorium was filled with uplifting music and inspirational messages.

"Me being prideful and stubborn, I tried to push it off," Michael said, but his heart swelled with something he had never felt.

"Then I heard a voice say, 'I love you. I am yours.' God had revealed Himself and I started crying. I went to my room and I broke down just sobbing. I realized I am saved."

Michael had come back to Christ and began praying daily and reading the Bible.

In 2018, he was still feeling some resentment toward the Catholic Church, but a friend challenged him to spend one hour in Adoration with God. That one hour was a powerful one; it changed his life and his feeling toward the Catholic Church. He was reading John 6:32-40, where the Eucharistic theme comes to the forefront: "Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst.'"

"Since then, it's been grace upon grace," Michael said.

As a full-time service technician with Wichita Heating and Cooling, he spends weekends volunteering at St. Gerald, helping Mark Nelson with the Noon Sunday choir and mentoring eighth-grade confirmation students. He also began a mentorship program for lay leaders in the fall 2019.



Michael Koenig

Michael looks forward to coordinating the Young Adult Group for those in their 20's and 30's with Father Knecht. Tentative plans are two monthly community nights (one in homes and another on campus), a monthly praise and worship night and a dinner and game night. Young Adult Bible Studies with Fr. Knecht are held Sundays from 3-4 p.m. and Mondays from 7-8 p.m. Both at the church at 96th and Q.

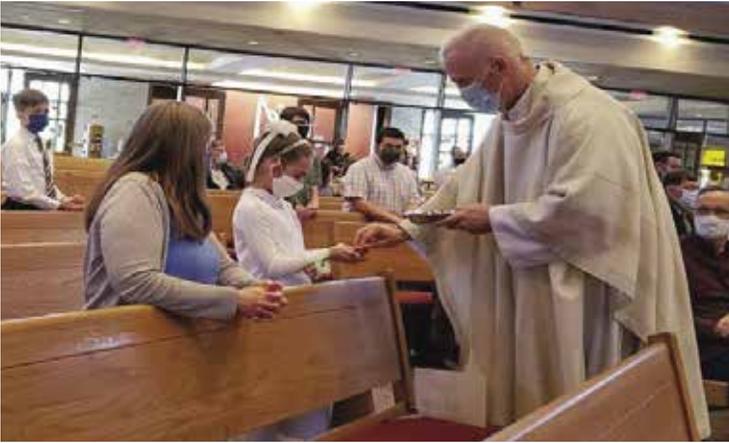
"It's been so cool to see friendships bloom and to watch people dive into the Bible," he said. As far as his future, Michael said, "I'm just learning to sit back and see where He wants to take me."

For information about the Young Adult Group, call Michael at 402-214-7284.

**Young Adult
Bible Studies
with Fr. Knecht**

Sundays: 3:00-4:00 p.m.

Mondays: 7:00-8:00 p.m.



Claire Salamin receives her First Holy Communion from Pastor Fr. Mark Nolte. Claire is pictured with her mother Laura Squire.



PreKindergarten graduation, left to right: Will Manley, Lacey Yochum, Eleanor Carroll, JJ Sanchez-Hildago, Keith Neesen, Thomas Preston, Arthur Hovoty, Mia Reilly and Eleanor Balus.



St. Gerald Catholic School had 30 8th graders graduate this year. High Schools they will be attending are Central, Gross, Mercy, Mount Michael, Papillion-LaVista, Papillion-LaVista South, Prep, Ralston, Skutt, and Westside. Pictured are left to right: Phia Higgason, Emma Gallagher, Hannah Farley, Korryn Meyer and Emily Browning.



Attending the May Crowning and Mother's Day Mass were second grade boys Elliot Tselentis, David Roshone, Brooks Skradski, Trace Povondra, Jaxton Culliver and Sam True.



Associate Pastor Marcus Knecht anoints Brenden Cunningham. His sponsor is his grandfather Doug Marsh.



The 2021 May Crowning Court, left to right: Caleb Courtney, Noah Schuette, Korryn Meyer, Emma Gallagher, Emily Browning (crowned Mary) and Keaton Meyer (Emily's escort). Being a member of the court is an honor voted on by staff.

Grant surprises 'close-knit' group

By Sherry Wachtler

Who would have guessed a small industrious group of St. Gerald ladies would become the recipients of two awards during the past year of pandemic?

The two dedicated St. Gerald groups – the Quilting and Sewing group and the Knitting and Crocheting group are the recipients of a \$5,000 grant awarded through the Omaha Community Foundation in February. An anonymous donor wanted to make sure the group's work would continue for a long time. The grant came as a welcome surprise and group member Paula Stanton says that the gift should last a good five years.

The two groups along with the parish Angel Tree project were instrumental in St. Gerald Parish receiving the 2021 ENOA Spirit of Aging award. "St. Gerald was the first major contributor to ENOA's (Eastern Nebraska Office on Aging) holiday program almost 25 years ago and you laid the foundation for the successful program that ENOA has today," ENOA Deputy Director Diane Stanton said. "The first Angel Tree donations fit in a large bag and today ENOA receives enough gifts from St. Gerald to fill a cargo van and are distributed to impoverished and/or isolated clients in a five-county area."

The Quilting & Sewing and Knitting & Crocheting groups were formed in 2010 when a larger Women's group was begun. Volunteers may pick up kits with materials already cut out with printed directions of whatever the group is working on – such as quilted baby blankets, walker totes, potholders, patriotic quilts for veterans and more. They are welcome to stay and work with the group or take them home.

Their knitting needles, crochet hooks and sewing machines have been busy making more than 6,200 hats since 2014. Hundreds of baby bibs, receiving blankets, washcloths and mittens have been lovingly stitched and distributed to children's hospitals, pregnancy service outreach programs, and elementary schools. Lap quilts, hat and scarf sets, prayer shawls, scarves, slippers have gone to shelters, hospitals, elderly care facilities and community charitable organizations. Their work has been distributed far and wide: More than 2,100 pillowcase dresses have been sent to girls in five African countries. Other items such as prayer mats went closer to home, to St. Gerald kindergartners

and kneeler covers to St. Gerald Church. "Everyone has their favorite project," Deb Bennett said.

Some of the organizations benefiting from the work of these groups are OneWorld Community Health Centers, Essential Pregnancy Services, Holy Family Church, Mockingbird School, the parish bake sale, Salvation Army Night Watch Program, Sacred Heart Elementary, Winnebago Indian mission, Mater Filius, Waterford Assisted Living, and ENOA. "Our path is never straight," Gwen Lofgren said, referring to the variety of projects available.

"We're all enjoying each other's company," Deb Banchor said. "We see our work as living out the parish mission. We are truly encountering Jesus, making disciples and transforming lives."

For more information about these groups, please call Paula Stanton, 402-339-6217; or Deb Banchor, 402-660-4193.



Members representing Angel Tree and the sewing and crochet groups are (1st row, left to right) Lori Kaup, Deb Banchor, Judy Morrison, Bev Campbell, Barb Costello, Fr. Mark, (2nd row, left to right) Diane Stanton (ENOA Deputy Director), Robin Staroska, Judy Haug, Paula Stanton, Gwenn Lofgren, and Deb Bennett.



Deb Bennett, Deb Banchor, Paula Stanton and Gwenn Lofgren are pictured with lap quilts, baby blankets and walker totes.

Quilting and Sewing meets

**3rd Monday monthly in the Fellowship Hall
Doors open at 6:00 p.m. Meeting at 6:30 p.m.**

Knitting and Crocheting meets

**2nd & 4th Mondays in the Church Library
Meeting at 6:30-9:00 p.m.**



Associate Pastor Marcus Knecht anoints Joseph True. His sponsor is his aunt Lynda True.



Garrin Lane celebrates his Confirmation with parents Jaclyn and Joseph Lane.



Confirmation candidate Charlene Beckman and her father Jim Beckman.



8th grade Girl Scout Troop. Seven of the eleven members have been active since kindergarten. The Troop periodically held bake sales after school which became extremely popular (usually a sellout) to raise money for their summer trip to Savannah, Georgia. Front left to right: Addy Fehrman, Shaely Reichmuth, Kali Wonderlich, Emma Gallagher, Hannah Farley. Back Left to Right: Joelle Krzemien, Kelsey Sigmund, Ava Puentes, Phia Higgason, Korryn Meyer and Emily Browning.



Participating in the May 15 St. Gerald 25th Annual Fr. Foster Memorial Golf Tournament at Tara Hills were Tony Buechler, Fred Kambach, Fr. Mark Nolte, John Jourdan, and Pat Garnatz.

www.StGerald.org/give - Make your one-time or recurring donation using your debit or credit card, checking, or savings account.



4th grade boys soccer.
Liam Fehrman, Gideon Erspamer, and Leo Tselentis.



8th grade boys soccer had a stellar year.
This team of boys had not played soccer together for years and their last year at St. Gerald they put together a team and ended the season undefeated.



St. Gerald is please to announce two new members of the Evangelization and Discipleship team.

Jenny Wiswell will serve as a part-time Coordinator of Discipleship and Evangelization focusing on Alpha. She has spent her life leading others to Christ. Jenny has taught high school theology, served in campus ministry, chaplaincy, and RCIA ministry in Indiana. In Omaha at St. Vincent de Paul Jenny has served as the Director of Adult Formation and during the last three years as Director of Alpha. She also home schools her daughters. Jenny and her husband Travis have 5 daughters.

Tami Kuenning has also joined the Evangelization and Discipleship team at St. Gerald. Her primary responsibility will be the Family Formation program and Sacraments Preparation. Tami is an intentional disciple, an active parishioner and currently a catechist in Family Formation. Tami and her husband Bruce have 4 children and 7 grandchildren. She is leaving her position as an elementary school teacher to join our staff.



Michael Koenig
Page 3

Grant Surprise
Page 5



SPIRIT LINK

Volume 25 - Number 2 • June 2021

Published 4x yearly by St. Gerald Catholic Church
and the St. Gerald Stewardship Committee
Office: 7859 Lakeview, Ralston, NE • 402.331.1955
All rights reserved. Copyright 2021.

Pastor: Fr. Mark Nolte

Associate Pastor: Fr. Marcus Knecht

Editor: Joan Squire

Photos: Judy Rogers, Katie Erspamer, Sherry Wachtler,
Verl Squire, Amanda Ackerman, Angie Gallagher,
Jen Shepoka, Katie Fehrman, Cara Skradski

Layout: Amy Marsh Cunningham

St. Gerald Catholic Church
7859 Lakeview St
Ralston, NE 68127-2832

Nonprofit
Organization
US Postage
PAID
Omaha NE
Permit No 693

www.StGerald.org

ST. GERALD CATHOLIC CHURCH

www.StGerald.org

MASS TIMES

Church - 96th and Q Street

Saturday: 5:00pm

Sunday: 8:00am, 10:00 am, 12:00pm

Daily: 12:15pm (M-F), Rosary begins at 11:45am

Holy Days: check the bulletin and online

Chapel - 78th and Lakeview

Sunday: 7:00am

Daily: 6:45am (M-F), Rosary begins at 7:45am

Saturday: 8:15am

Holy Days: check the bulletin and online

RECONCILIATION TIMES

Church - 96th and Q Street

Saturday: 3:00-4:30pm

Monday-Friday: 12:00-12:15pm

Chapel - 78th and Lakeview (Summer Schedule)

Monday-Friday: 6:30-6:45am

Saturday: 8:00-8:15am

LIVE STREAM IS AVAILABLE DURING THE DAILY 12:15PM, SATURDAY 5PM, AND SUNDAY 10AM MASSES.

Our Vision: Encountering Jesus • Making Disciples • Transforming Lives

St. Gerald Parish Mission Statement: Led by the Holy Spirit, we are a Catholic community of faith whose primary purpose is to know Jesus, to love Him, and to serve Him in serving others. Sent to make disciples, we invite and welcome everyone to come and share our Master's joy.