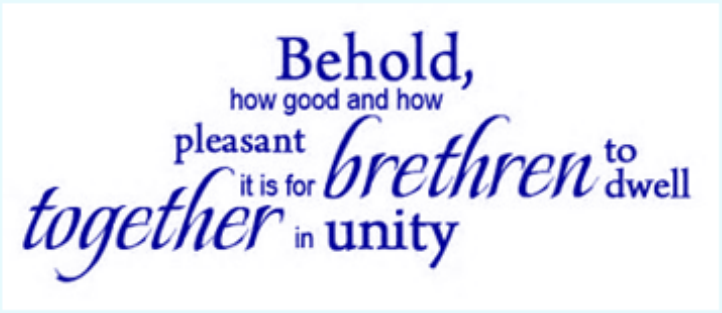
Working Together to Build Community



St. Leo's has experienced this blessing among our parishioners and is also working with other churches and organizations in the area to build a greater sense of community in the neighborhood. Because faith communities, schools, recreation centers, and community groups here are often small there are many things they cannot do alone—but working together, they have done and continue to do amazing things.

On a crisp fall weekend more than 10 years ago area churches and service providers set up tables for a community block party on the apron in front of the church. People enjoyed meeting their neighbors and learning about opportunities and services available to them. The Providers enjoyed the networking and information sharing. Out of this one-time event, the Fairmount Providers' group was born. It continues to meet seven times a year and now has more than 100 members on its emailing list. Over the years the group has shared resources and collaborated on programs to further enhance the quality of life in the community. They've dreamed, advocated, and worked together on special projects, supported each other in difficult times, and grieved when one of the leaders died of cancer at a young age.

From that original group Childhood Food Solutions (CFS), a new non-profit was formed. Its goal is to provide a food safety net for students on the days that school is not in session, especially winter and spring breaks, and summer vacation. CFS provides sacks of food that can be shared through schools and direct delivery to children's homes. At the end of the school year they provided a total of 3,390 sacks of food to children at Roll Hill, Taylor Academy, Rees E, Price, Roberts, Oyler, St. Lawrence, Resurrection, and Carson schools.

Members have also collaborated on health fairs, neighborhood safety programs and other community-wide events. When one member needs help on a specific program, others are quick to join in and provide what is needed.

Members of faith communities also have been coming together to pray and join together in projects benefitting the entire neighborhood, not just where their churches are located. These efforts have been seeded and supported in prayer starting with the first National Day of Prayer caravan of prayer through the area more than 12 years ago. Pastors and faith leaders from different groups lead prayer at schools, community centers, half-way houses, food pantries, as well as the police station and potential trouble spots in the neighborhood. In recent years an evening prayer walk from 3rd Presbyterian to President Drive Church of Christ has been added.

Several years ago the police chief encouraged faith leaders to meet regularly and share ways they could serve as a preventive factor in decreasing violence. He recognized that churches often were in more regular contact with members of the community and offered services that could interrupt the cycle of stressors that could lead to violence. The local pastors' group, known as **FACT3D** (Faith Alliance Coalition Team of District 3) helped develop a resource guide of services churches provided for police to carry with them to share with people in need of help. The group also helped host a youth conference with speakers, resources, and activities at Cincinnati Christian University and another one at the Duke Energy Center. In recent years they have combined resources to sponsor an annual Day of Hope event at a local park that provided music, food, informational booths, and activities, as well as clothing, and back to school items. This year's Day of Hope will be August 19 at Wayne playfield on Beekman Street.

St. Leo's Prayer Wall is a place where all, regardless of age, race or creed, are invited to sing God's praises, give Him thanks, and/or call upon His presence for help in times of need. The wall, a place of prayer for all peoples (much like the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem), captures the faces of the community, as well as peacemakers and saints who have inspired us through the ages.

The Wall is a place for our staff and volunteers, youth groups, community meetings, and for individuals who just pass through our parking lot on the way to work, school, etc., to pray, reflect and pause. We hope that you will share in this special way of prayer, joy, and thanksgiving. Praise God!

God cares about every need in your life and knows what you need even before you ask Him for help. Our St. Leo the Great parish community promises to remember you in our private prayer, as well as in our communal prayer, which is to say that we are praying for you all the time.

All prayer requests are held in strictest confidence. **Send your prayer request to:** Saint Leo the Great Church, 2573 Saint Leo Place, Cincinnati, OH 45225. You can also submit your prayer request online at: http://saint-leo/WorksofMercy/PrayerWallMinistry.aspx.