St. Stephen the Martyr
Religious Education

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To Report an Absence by email: RE.attendance@stephen.org

Website: https://stephen.org/education/religious-education/
Visit us on Facebook: *St. Stephen the Martyr Religious Education*

Parent Handbook
2024-2025

St. Stephen the Martyr
CATHOLIC CHURCH
Encounter, Know, Proclaim

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ST. STEPHEN THE MARTYR
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the St. Stephen the Martyr Religious Education Program is to build a foundation of faith, in partnership with parents, from which our children will continue to grow in their knowledge of God and the Roman Catholic Church.

Objectives

Message/Word: Guiding families toward a deeper personal understanding of our Catholic faith by teaching Jesus' message of love and the Traditions and history of the Catholic Church.
Worship/Prayer: Assisting families with spiritual development and prayer by providing a variety of communal prayer and worship experiences that involve people in the sacramental life of the Church.
Family: Creating a partnership where all family members feel comfortable sharing their time, talents, and faith.
Community: Nurturing meaningful relationships between families, the parish, the public, and encouraging everyone to take responsibility as leaders in parish and community-wide programs.
Service and Justice: Empowering families to work for social justice by addressing human suffering, serving those in need, pursuing peace, and defending the life and dignity of all people.

FAMILY/PARISH PARTNERSHIP

The family, or domestic Church, is the primary community in which faith is shared and nurtured. Formal religious education, in the parish Religious Education program or the parish day school, is intended to support the family in this mission.

Parents contribute to the spiritual growth of their children by nurturing the intellectual, emotional and physical growth of their children. Parents have the mission of teaching their children to pray and to discuss their vocation as children of God. (CCC #2226)

The parish community, in its turn, assists parents in their role as catechists. The catechism states that the parish is the Eucharistic community and heart of the liturgical life of Christian families; it is a privileged place for catechesis of children and parents. (CCC #2226)

These two sources, families and parishes, have appropriate roles and responsibilities in complementary ways; together they form a partnership in the responsibility for forming children in the four pillars of the catholic faith: Creed, Sacraments, Christian Life and Prayer. In this light, parents should be made aware of and asked to participate in teaching these standards thereby enriching their own faith through the process of catechizing their children.

Parents are always welcome to check out materials from our R.E. Resource library for further support.

Religious Education Staff

Director of Religious Education

Sandy Kimmey
s.kimmey@stephen.org
402-861-4510
To get to know more about Sandy, check out her bio on our website: https://stephen.org/meet-sandy-kimmey/

Assistant Director of Religious Education

Eileen Smith
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402-861-4513
To get to know more about Eileen, check out her bio on our website: https://stephen.org/meet-eileen-smith/

Confirmation Coordinator

Sam Jizba
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402-861-4512
To get to know more about Sam, check out his bio on our website: https://stephen.org/meet-sam-jizba/

What you need to know when coming to class

BEFORE AND AFTER CLASS SUPERVISION

Students should not arrive more than fifteen minutes before class begins and are expected to leave the parish grounds not more than fifteen minutes after class ends. Supervision on the playground and parking lot is not provided before or after class. **Children in Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, Kindergarten, Grades 1 and 2 must be picked up in their classrooms by their parents or another person designated by the parents, such as a neighbor or older sibling.**

ABSENCES AND TARDINESS RE.attendance@stephen.org

For absences, a phone call from the parent to the office at 402-896-5683 or a written note signed by the parent prior to the absence is requested. You may also send an email to the address above. If we have no prior notice, we assume that the child should be in class. We will call you to determine the child's safe whereabouts.

Students must be in their classrooms when class begins. Any student who is late will need to report to the Religious Education Office. No student may leave the parish premises during class time or during a parish activity without a note from parents and permission from the Religious Education Office.

FAMILY CONNECTION

The Family Connection is a weekly newsletter used to communicate Religious Education program information and activities with parents. *The Family Connection* is distributed by an email system called Flocknote.

Make sure you never miss an email! Here's how!

- Add mail@flocknote.com to your address book.
- Routinely double-check your junk/spam folders and mark notes as 'not junk'
- The Family Connection will also be posted on the parish website at www.stephen.org.

DRESS CODE

Ideally, a student's choice of attire and grooming should be left to the good judgment of the student and his/her parents or guardians and should contribute to a positive learning environment. The following clothing or types of dress are prohibited:

1. Dress which either causes or has the potential to cause either a substantial disruption or material interference with the educational process.
2. Dress which creates or has the potential to create a health or safety problem or risk.
3. Dress which contains vulgar or offensive words or language, or is sexually explicit, indecent, or lewd.
4. Dress which promotes or advances the use of illegal drugs/tobacco products or displays the logo or trademark of any brand(s) of alcohol or tobacco.
5. Oversized baggy pants may be worn ONLY with a belt that secures the waistline above the hips.
6. Hats and caps are not to be worn in the parish building.
7. Halter tops, mid-drift tops and tank tops found to be revealing and disruptive to the educational process are not to be worn in the building.

Violations of dress standards will result in disciplinary action.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Students are generally not allowed to bring electronic devices (Cell phones, iPods, gaming or music devices, etc.) to class or to Church related activities. If a child is found using any electronic device, without the catechist's consent, the device will be confiscated, and a parent will need to pick it up from the R.E. Office. St. Stephen the Martyr has a commitment to the integration of technology into the curriculum. Catechists will have access to use computer equipment for research, study and other educational purposes. The goal in providing access to these technological resources is to help facilitate the lesson. Middle school students may use their device if approved by their catechist during a lesson. If the device is being used improperly, it will be taken away by the Catechist and a parent may pick it up after class in the R. E. office. St. Stephen's parish and R.E. program are not responsible for any electronic equipment brought to R.E. class or events. Catechists and students should not use cell phones for personal calls or text messages during class.

BUILDING SECURITY PROCEDURES

1. All Visitors will check in at the R.E. office and will wear a Visitor badge while in the building. All catechists and staff will have a nametag on while in the building.
2. No students, or any adults who are not catechists or R.E. staff, will be allowed in the classroom before class begins. This means that all children, including the children of our catechists, will wait in the school commons until the bell rings and classes begin. **Students cannot be in a classroom without adult supervision at any time.**
3. **All outside doors to the building are secured by a card reader security system.** Please contact the R.E. Office for details. The R.E. Office has the capability of letting visitors enter the school commons doors.
4. **St. Stephen the Martyr is a smoke-free, gum-free, nut-free, and pet-free facility**.

HEALTH

Please notify the Religious Education Office and your child's catechist if your child has a health problem, which might affect his/her routine or if they have any special needs that we should be aware of to better facilitate their religious education. **This includes allergies, hyperactivity, diabetes, seizures, hearing problems, or medication. If your child has an action plan for a medical need, we should have a copy of it in the R.E. Office, as well as an epi-pen or anything else specified in the medical action plan.**

We have an increasing number of students with serious reactions to foods, especially nuts. We have instituted a no-nut policy to help protect these children, (See **NO NUT POLICY**)

Any special situations that exist in your family such as pending or recently granted divorce, health problems of family members, visitation with absentee parents, or death of a parent or close relative should also be communicated to the Director of Religious Education. These special situations will be handled in confidence to provide a safe and protected environment for the child.

PARENTAL CONCERNS AND PROCEDURES

A parent who has a question or concern regarding a situation involving a student is urged to follow these procedures:

1. Contact the student's catechist to discuss the situation and work with the catechist to arrive at possible solutions.
2. If the concern cannot be resolved with the catechist, the parent should then request a conference with the Director of Religious Education. After discussing the situation with both parties, the Director of Religious Education will act as a facilitator, making every effort to resolve the problem and initiate reconciliation between the two parties.
3. If resolution and reconciliation have not been achieved after discussion with the catechist and Director of Religious Education, and the parent still feels the issue has not been addressed, the pastor may be asked to assist in the resolution and reconciliation of the problem.
4. Every effort should be made to resolve questions, concerns, and problems at the earliest possible stage in a manner appropriate for Christians.

VOLUNTEER PARENTS/VISITORS

To ensure the safety of our children, we require each parent, volunteer, or visitor to sign in at the R.E. Office and to wear a badge before going anywhere in the building. All volunteers must be Safe Environment Trained.

COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

Students with a condition which may be passed on to others in the classroom must be excluded from attending Religious Education classes until no longer contagious. Including but not limited to:

1. Chickenpox – students may return after pox has scabbed.
2. Fever – students should remain home until 24 hours after a fever breaks.
3. Infections – students should be kept home for a minimum of 24 hours after starting on antibiotics.
4. Vomiting – students should remain home until 24 hours after an episode.
5. Diarrhea – students should remain home until 24 hours after an episode.

Some conditions may require a doctor's attention and note before returning to Religious Education classes.

PARKING PROCEDURE

All vehicles must enter the North parking lot by the West Drive and exit via the East Drive. Parking is available on the first, second, and third tier for you to walk up to the building and escort your children to and from your car. The crosswalks must remain clear, so our students can cross safely through our parking lot.

Children in Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, Kindergarten, Grades 1 and 2 must be picked up in their classrooms by their parents or another person designated by the parents, such as a neighbor or older sibling.

DISCIPLINE

Students in the St. Stephen the Martyr Religious Education program are expected to follow these rules:

Rule #1 – Respect Yourself, Others, and Things.
Rule #2 – Contribute to the Learning Environment.
Rule #3 – Follow Parish and Classroom Procedures.

To help students learn how to choose correct behavior a student is given a verbal reminder to choose correct behavior. If the student misbehaves again, the catechist should confer with the student to help the student make better choices and become a working member of the class. The student can then rejoin the group.

If a student chooses incorrect behavior a second time, the student is sent to the R.E. Office to conference with the Director of Religious Education (DRE). If the student is sent to the office a second time in a year, parents of the student may be contacted and asked to attend class with their child or other measures may be put in place.

If a student chooses to put him/herself or others in:

1. Physical/psychological danger- fighting, rough play, and/or throwing objects that could harm self, others, or property; bringing dangerous or illegal items such as weapons, knives, matches, lighters, smoking materials, drugs, etc. to any area of the parish property; physical or psychological threats, intimidation, force or injury; leaving the parish grounds without permission; using normal objects in a dangerous way.
2. Abuse in tone, gesture, or word-harassment of any kind; any unwanted behavior that makes others feel unsafe or uncomfortable, intimidation/bullying; disrespect in action, tone, or gesture after repeated correction, profanity, vandalism.
3. Out of control behavior-willful misbehavior toward a catechist, staff member, volunteer or another student; being unable, incapable or unwilling to listen or follow instructions; repeated violations of classroom rules.

Immediate action will be taken. The adult-imposed consequence will be:

1. Immediate removal from the group
2. A one-to-one conversation between the child and the DRE or other designated personnel. The student will fill out the bottom section of the office notice form.
3. The student's parents or legal guardian will be contacted. The student's parent or legal guardian may be required to attend class with their child or the child may be suspended from attending class. (See Suspension).

SUSPENSION

St. Stephen's reserves the right to suspend in-class instruction to a student if there is reason to believe that attendance at class could place the student or others in danger of physical or emotional harm. Suspension will be at the discretion of the Pastor or Director of Religious Education and could be due to events that occur outside of class and/or off the premises. The student and parents will be supported with materials to continue the child's religious formation at home until the student is approved to return to class by the Pastor.

CURRICULUM AND CLASS GUIDELINES

CALENDAR

The calendar is published annually, listing days of attendance, holidays, and activities. Dates and events may be subject to change as necessary. Timely notice will be provided whenever possible. Calendar and program information is also available on the Religious Education page of our website. Simply click the "What's schedule?" button to view the calendar. https://stephen.org/religious-education/

CATECHIST EDUCATION

Catechists are provided opportunities to further their own faith formation and learn new methods of catechesis through classes and workshops offered at St. Stephen's and through the archdiocese. We encourage catechists and parents to attend other enrichment opportunities throughout the year, including classes and speakers offered through St. Stephen's Adult Education.

CERTIFICATION FOR ADULTS-Safe Environment

As required by the Archdiocese of Omaha and directed by the U.S. Catholic Council of Bishops 'Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People', all clergy, lay ministers, paid staff and volunteers over 19 years of age who have access to children must take Safe Environment training and complete a background check before being allowed to work with children. Safe Environment certification is good for 6 years. **To register for an initial Safe Environment training class or to take the on-line Recertification training, please see the Archdiocesan site at** https://archomaha.org/safe-environment/ . **Volunteers must complete recertification procedures before their certification expires. There is no 'grace period' for Safe Environment certifications.** If a Safe Environment certification is allowed to lapse, the individual will not be able to work with children until they are recertified by the archdiocese. If the certification has been expired less than a year, the individual can take the regular online recertification class. If certification has been expired more than a year, the individual must undergo the initial 3-hour training again and complete a background check to be recertified. For more information on Safe Environment, please contact the DRE.

CIRCLE OF GRACE

Circle of Grace is the curriculum developed by the Archdiocese of Omaha in response to the U.S.C.C.B.'s Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People. Circle of Grace is mandated to be taught yearly to all children in archdiocesan schools, religious education and youth ministry programs in kindergarten through 12th grade.

Circle of Grace goes beyond protection programs that focus on 'stranger danger' by helping children understand the sacredness of who they are and how to seek help through their relationships with trusted adults. The Catholic Church teaches that God has created each of us as unique and special. Children are helped to recognize that each of us lives and moves in a circle of grace that contains the very essence of our mind, heart, soul and sexuality. God intends our relationships in life to be experiences of divine love. Children are taught that respectful, nurturing, loving relationships increase our understanding of our own value and help us to love others. The complete 'Circle of Grace Parent Information' from the archdiocese of Omaha is available on the program information page of the R.E website at https://archomaha.org/circleofgrace/ . For more information, please contact the Director of Religious Education.

CLASSROOM SIZE

Class sizes are regulated to build trust, community and encourage students to share their faith. Two co-catechists who are teaching in kindergarten – grade 8 will have a maximum of 15 students in their class. Individual catechists teaching alone in kindergarten—grade 8 will have a maximum of 10 students in their class. Classrooms can exceed the maximum number of students with the permission of the Director of Religious Education.

OUR PROGRAMS

Catechist-Led Classes: St. Stephen the Martyr offers catechist-led, classroom-style Religious Education classes to students in K-8th grade. One-hour weekly classes, following diocese-approved curriculums help children grow in their relationship with God, learn about the Catholic faith, and receive the Sacraments.

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd: These classes are available for Pre-K children 3-5 years old and who are fully potty-trained. CGS is a Montessori-style learning environment. CGS Catechists undergo 90 hours of formation in order to help children develop a relationship with God.

Parent-Led Faith Formation: Home-school lessons are available for students not receiving First Sacraments (i.e., Kindergarten, 1st grade, and 3rd through 7th grade. (Second grade and Eighth grade students must enroll in Catechist-led classes in order to prepare for the Sacraments with their church community.) Home-schooling families are provided the Sophia Institute "Family of Faith Curriculum" to provide a variety of weekly, age-appropriate lessons to their children throughout the month.

- Home-schooling **parents** are required to attend monthly faith-formation nights with the Director of RE or Associate Pastor.

- Home-schooling **families**, parents and children, are required to attend monthly "Community Gatherings" to share their home experiences and grow the body of Christ.

CURRICULUM FOR Pre-K through Grade 8

Kindergarten students use Our Sunday Visitor's *Allelu! program. Allelu!* helps our youngest students build a relationship with God and a foundation in scripture, prayer and tradition. For more information on this curriculum please watch this short video: http://www.allelu.com/video.html

Alive In Christ from Our Sunday Visitor is used in both Religious Education and the parish school for students in Grade 1 through Grade 7. *Alive In Christ* is approved for catechetical use by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (U.S.C.C.B.) and the Archdiocese of Omaha and has been found to be in conformity with the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Grade 7 also uses *Decision Point* and Grade 8 works through *Chosen*.

Alive In Christ was written to support the belief that faith formation is a life-long process and the responsibility of all persons by their baptism. It is designed to be used in a program of whole community catechesis. Students receive age-appropriate instruction on Revelation, Trinity, Jesus Christ, The Church, Morality, Sacraments and the Kingdom of God. *Alive In Christ* provides catechesis that is content-centered, liturgical and connected to the lectionary.

High School youth (grades 9-12), whether public, parochial or home schooled, are invited to become involved with our High School Youth Ministry program which meets for "Witness Wednesdays." Go to the website for dates and details or reach out to our Director of Mission, Adam Ybarra for more information: a.ybarra@stephen.org

HOURS: OFFICE

The Religious Education Office is open: Monday – 9 am-3 pm, Tuesday – 9 am-6:00 pm, Wednesday –10 am-8:00 pm, Thursday – 9 am - 1 pm, Friday/Saturday/Sunday-closed.

HOURS: CLASSES

- Kindergarten tthough Grade 8 classes are held Tuesdays at 4:30 pm and Wednesdays at 4 pm, 5:30 pm and 7 pm.
- Catechesis of the Good Shepherd classes are held on Tuesday at 4:30pm and Wednesdays at 5:30 p.m.
- Other activities like retreats, mass, speakers, etc. may be scheduled outside of class time.
- High School youth group students may meet for Witness Wednesdays for various Praise and Worship and Bible Studies.

LITURGY OF THE MASS

"As members of the Christian community, all are called to participate actively in the liturgical prayer of the Church. Religious Education therefore must involve the student in his/her faith community and in that community's liturgy. Liturgy itself educates, it teaches, it forms community, and it forms the individual. It makes possible worship of God." (U.S.C.C.B., "Basic Teachings for Catholic Religious Education"). Students receive instruction on the liturgy of the Mass. We expect families to regularly attend Sunday Mass.

RELIGIOUS FORMATION ADVISORY BOARD

The Religious Formation Advisory Board is an education board that provides recommendations to the pastor and the Director of Religious Education. The Board meets every other month. The mission of the Religious Formation Advisory Board is to support the DRE in the development and integration of effective religious education practices. Through research, evaluation and recommendations, the Board will assist the Director in ensuring our students receive the highest caliber of educational opportunities, spiritual growth and quality care in a loving and Christian based environment. The Director of Religious Education is the chairperson and responsible for selecting board members and providing progress reports to the Pastor. Please contact the Director of Religious Education for additional information.

ORDER OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION (OCI)

One of our favorite experiences in Religious Education at St. Stephen's is welcoming children and families into the Catholic Church. Children 7 years of age and older, teens and adults who have not been baptized or who have been baptized in another faith (not Catholic) can receive preparation for the sacraments through the Order of Christian Initiation.

Children (age 7 and above), teens and adults who have not been baptized will be fully initiated into the Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil by receiving the sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Eucharist.

Children (age 7 and above), teens and adults who have been baptized in another faith will be fully initiated into the Catholic Church by making a Profession of Faith and receiving the sacraments of Confirmation and Holy Eucharist.

Because everyone is in a different place in their faith journey and understanding of God, each child will receive individual preparation with the Director of Religious Education while also attending regular, grade-level, R.E. classes. Please contact the Director of Religious Education if your child needs special preparation for the sacraments. Sacramental preparation for those becoming Catholic is free of charge.

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

Students receive special, intense preparation for Reconciliation, Holy Eucharist and Confirmation. This is done in cooperation with the parent/guardian. Students will receive the sacraments only if they are adequately prepared. Families in both the Parish School and Religious Education Program celebrate reception of the sacraments jointly.

The sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Eucharist are received for the first time in the second grade. Students will be given materials to do at home with their parents as part of the preparation. These will include activities, learning prayers and reflections on Sunday Masses students attend with parents. *Encounter With Christ – Reconciliation and Eucharist* by Our Sunday Visitor Religion Publishing will be used in the classroom to support preparation for the sacraments.

The sacrament of Confirmation is received in the eighth grade. Candidates in eighth grade are required to participate in retreats, special events and complete Stewardship hours. Stewardship Reflection forms and additional sacrament information can be found on our website at https://stephen.org/sacrament-prep/ . Meetings are scheduled during the year so that parents may review the content of preparation, deepen their own understanding of the sacrament being received, and help prepare their children for receiving these sacraments. Sacramental preparation will involve the family and may include activities done outside of class.

All candidates for sacraments (Reconciliation, First Communion and Confirmation) must provide a copy of their Catholic baptism certificate to the Religious Education office by October 31st. Baptism certificates can be faxed directly to our office at 402-861-4590 by the parish where your child was baptized.

Children in the third grade or above who were baptized as a Catholic but have not received Reconciliation or First Communion can prepare for the sacraments by attending regular R.E. classes in addition to individual preparation with the Director of Religious Education. Please contact the Director of Religious Education for more information.

For children (age 7 and above), teens and adults who have not been baptized or who were baptized in another faith, please see the 'ORDER OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION' section and contact the Director of Religious Education for more information.

What you need to know in case of an Emergency

EMERGENCY INFORMATION

Emergency information is on file in the Religious Education Office. The information must be kept current at all times. If there is a change in your child's health information (allergies, medications, etc.) or contact information, please let the R.E. Office know right away.

In case of illness or injury, parents will be contacted by phone and are responsible for arranging the child's transportation home. If the parent cannot be reached, emergency phone numbers will be called in order to obtain necessary help for the child. Children are not allowed to walk home if sick or injured.

In the event of an emergency which requires immediate medical attention, the parent will be notified and the child will be transported by ambulance to the hospital, if necessary, at the parent's expense.

EVACUATION PROCEDURES

Catechists are given instruction to provide quick, safe evacuation of the students due to emergencies such as fire or severe weather. Evacuation procedures are posted in each classroom, the meeting/music room, the kitchen, the dining room, and the Worship Space. **During an emergency, parents will need to check with R.E. staff before any child can be released. Students cannot be released directly by the catechist during any emergency.**

FIRE AND SEVERE WEATHER

Catechists are provided with instruction on how to lead the children in emergency situations. During emergency situations, silence and order will be maintained at all times. In the case of a tornado or weather-related emergency, all students, catechists and others present will be held in designated safe areas of the building until the all clear is given.

In the case of an emergency, parents will need to check with R.E. staff before any child can be released. Students cannot be released directly by the catechist during any emergency situation.

NO NUT POLICY

It will be the policy of St. Stephen the Martyr R.E. to do our best to eliminate or minimize the risk of exposure to nuts for our students and to have a plan in place to respond to an emergency. Ultimately all students with dangerous allergies must be educated in how to protect themselves.

To minimize the risk of exposure to nuts for our students, we will:
1. Direct the catechists and coordinators to not **use or offer** any foods that contain nuts or foods that were processed and packaged in places where nut products are prepared to students in our Religious Education program, retreats, activities or Vacation Bible School.
2. Discourage students, parents and catechists from bringing **treats** to R.E. classes or activities that contain nuts or were processed and packaged in places where other nut products are prepared. St. Stephen's encourages students who have nut allergies to bring their own supply of snacks to class to lessen the risk of exposure.

3. Encourage parents who have a student with severe asthma or anaphylaxis to have an ***Action Plan*** **on file** with the R.E. Office. This plan will contain *Action Plan* forms completed by the physician and by the parent or guardian.
4. Discourage the use of candies and other products (ex. M & M's) that were processed and packaged in places where other nut products are prepared in **projects and activities** during R.E. classes and communicate to parents that items brought for the completion of projects should be checked that they do not contain nuts and were not processed in a factory that manufactures nuts.

SECURITY PLAN

St. Stephen the Martyr parish does have a Security Plan in place that is designed to ensure the safety of all its members in the event of an emergency. The Safety Plan Handbook is available in the Religious Education office. Security Cameras are installed at all entrances, hallways, in the parking lot and on the playground. Staff can view activity live via their computers. There are specific BUILDING SECURITY PROCEDURES, outlined in this handbook, that are followed during R.E. classes. In addition, all staff and volunteers are required to have proper identification badges visible on their person. Visitors are required to sign in at the R.E. Office and wear a Visitor badge while in the building.

WEATHER CANCELLATIONS

Should icy or snowy weather occur, the Religious Education program observes the school closing policies of the Millard School District. If Millard Public Schools cancel classes or evening activities due to inclement weather, we will not hold Religious Education classes that evening. **Occasionally, because of deteriorating weather conditions during the day, we will need to cancel R.E. classes late in the afternoon or early evening, even when Millard has held classes.** Cancellations and plans for re-scheduling activities will be published on the parish web-site at www.stephen.org. Parents will also be notified by text messaging. **Parents should use their discretion as to whether it is safe for their children to attend class. The safety of our children is always our primary concern.**

REGISTRATION PROCEDURES

ADMISSIONS

St. Stephen the Martyr Religious Education Program does not discriminate against students on the basis of race, ethnic background, religion, or sex. We welcome members of other parishes and other denominations. It is our strong belief as a parish that Catholic Education is to support, not replace, parents as the primary catechists of their children. Please see *Enrollment Policies, Family/Parent Partnership* and *Stewardship* for more information.

ENROLLMENT POLICY

In accordance with St Stephen the Martyr policy, youth in grades one through twelve, who are living with a registered parishioner and do not attend a Catholic school, are expected to be enrolled in the Religious Education program at St. Stephen the Martyr. It is encouraged that three, four, and five-year-olds also be enrolled in our Catechesis of the Good Shepherd and Kindergarten classes. All parishioners are encouraged to utilize the parish's religious education programs to continue to develop their faith.

Youth not enrolled in a religious education program may be required to attend additional classes to receive the sacraments of Reconciliation, First Eucharist, and Confirmation upon the discretion of the Director of Religious Education.
St. Stephen the Martyr parish community also welcomes non-Catholic, non-registered Catholics, and youth from other parishes to expand their faith through our parish's Religious Education Program.

REGISTRATION

Registration for Religious Education classes starts in February of each year. Priority for class assignments is given by date that the registration for R.E. is received in the R.E. Office, for the children of catechists and for registered parishioners.

Students enrolled in Kindergarten must be currently attending Kindergarten in a local school.

TUITION

The pastor and Finance Council set tuition and fees. Tuition (but not sacrament preparation fees) for the children of catechists, office volunteers and childcare providers is waived. Tuition can be paid through the following methods:

1. Payment in full at the time of registration.
2. Electronic Funds Transfer: EFT payments may be scheduled to begin in July and must be paid in full by April. Payments will be made on a monthly basis.
3. Tuition Assistance for full or partial tuition assistance: Tuition Assistance request forms are available at the R.E. Office and should be filled out and returned to the D.R.E. or R.E. Office in a sealed envelope. (All tuition assistance requests are confidential.) Approval is necessary before assistance can be given.
4. Waived Volunteer Position: Tuition for a family is waived or discounted for the following adult volunteer positions: catechist, coordinator, child care, or office volunteer. Sacrament preparation fees are not waived.

<u>No student will be denied Religious Education for financial reasons.</u> Tuition assistance is available due to the generous contributions of parents, catechists and many other individuals and groups in our parish.

Out of parish tuition: Students from families who are not registered at St. Stephen's parish will pay tuition at the same rate set for students of parishioners. Out of parish students are defined as those whose parents live outside the parish boundaries and are not active participants of St. Stephen the Martyr stewardship program. Families not registered in St. Stephen's parish are not eligible for tuition assistance.

In accordance with St. Stephen the Martyr Policy, financial arrangements for any tuition and fees owed from previous years must be made with the parish business office before registration for the current R.E. year can proceed.

TUITION REFUNDS

A full refund may be requested at any time prior to the beginning of the Religious Education Program year. Any withdrawals after the first class will have the following deducted from the original tuition payment: the price of instructional material, an administrative processing fee, plus a pro-rated fee for tuition for the classes attended before withdrawing. The pro-rated percentage is based on the number of quarters of class the student attended. No refunds will be given after March 1. Sacramental fees will be deducted or returned based upon whether a cost has been incurred by the parish.

Miscellaneous

ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

State laws and St. Stephen the Martyr policy strictly prohibits student's possession or use of alcoholic beverages on parish property or at any parish-sponsored function. Students who violate this policy will be suspended, referred to legal authorities and/or required to participate in counseling programs at the expense of the parents/guardians.

ANTI-PORNOGRAPHY TASK FORCE

Pornography is one of the most blatant and aggressive assailants on a child's soul and on our faith community. The Archdiocese of Omaha Anti-Pornography Task Force help provide education to protect the spirituality of our children and combat pornography, while providing resources to help those directly or indirectly affected by pornography. For more information, please contact the parish or visit the archdiocesan website at www.archomaha.org.

ASBESTOS

St. Stephen the Martyr Parish, originally built in 1992 and added onto in 1998, is an asbestos free building. Our building contains no asbestos of any form. In accordance with Environmental Protection Agency regulations, a management plan submitted to the State Department of Health is available in the administrative office for you to review.

BICYCLES, ROLLER BLADES, SKATEBOARDS

Bikes, roller blades and skateboards may be used for transportation only to and from the parish and are not to be ridden on the playground or parking lot at any time. The students must adhere to the guidelines for entering and leaving the parish premises to ensure safety for everyone. Roller blades and skateboards should be left in the R.E. Office during class.

CODE OF CONDUCT

Catechists and Religious Education volunteers, as Christian role models for our youth, must adhere to the St. Stephen the Martyr Code of Ethics and the Archdiocese of Omaha Code of Conduct. To Learn more, check out Archdiocese of Omaha Safe Environment Policies: https://archomaha.org/safe-environment/ . The Pastor and/or Director of Religious Education reserve the right to remove any catechist or volunteer who violates any part of these codes from their volunteer position in St. Stephen's R.E. program.

ST. STEPHEN THE MARTYR CODE OF ETHICS

As members, volunteers and employees of St. Stephen the Martyr parish we shall:

- Adhere to all teachings, beliefs and morals of the Roman Catholic Church.
- Acknowledge that the parish is an expression of Christ's mission on earth.
- Provide an example of what it means to be an active participant in parish life.
- Provide the best possible Catholic education in all of the programs provided by the parish.
- Provide prayer, support and encouragement for the efforts of all persons involved in the ministries of St. Stephen the Martyr.

FIELD TRIPS

Any activities scheduled off-site during R.E. classes or at another time must first be approved by the Director of Religious Education. Before any activity that will involve transporting Religious Education students or meeting at a location other than St. Stephen's parish, written permission must be received

from the parent or guardian. All Safe Environment, Archdiocesan and Parish guidelines must be adhered to at all times.

ILLEGAL DRUGS

State laws and parish policy strictly prohibit the use, evidence of use, or possession and/or transfer of narcotics, depressants, stimulants, hallucinogens, look alike pills of any type, or possession of drug-related paraphernalia, anywhere on parish property or at any parish sponsored activity. If students choose to violate this policy, they will be suspended, referred to the appropriate legal authorities, and/or required to participate in a counseling program at the expense of the parent/guardian.

ILLEGAL POSSESSION OF FIREARMS OR DANGEROUS WEAPONS

State laws and parish policy strictly prohibits the possession of any weapon judged to be harmful or dangerous to the person or self or others on parish property. An ordinary object utilized in a harmful manner is also prohibited. Any student who violates this rule will be immediately suspended from the Religious Education Program and referred to the appropriate authorities. Further disciplinary action will be taken after consultation with parents and parish administration.

RIGHTS OF NON-CUSTODIAL PARENTS

Non-custodial parents may submit a written request for their children's records and other program information, unless a court order prohibits them from doing so. Program administrators may assume the non-custodial parent has a right to the student's records and other program information unless a court order to the contrary has been provided. Court orders must be presented to the Director of Religious Education by either or both parents. Program administrators do not need permission from the custodial parent to provide records or program information to the non-custodial parent.

SMOKING/CIGARETTE-LIKE PRODUCTS

State laws and parish policy prohibit students carrying and/or using tobacco products or cigarette-like products on school property or at parish sponsored activities. Vaping is also not allowed. Students who violate this policy are subject to suspension. Repeated violations of this rule may result in expulsion.

STEWARDSHIP

Through our Baptism, God calls us to be good stewards of the time, talent and treasure that have been given to us. A Christian steward is "one who receives God's gifts gratefully, cherishes and tends them in a responsible and accountable manner, shares them in justice and love with others and returns them with increase to the Lord." ("*A Disciple's Response," U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops)*

Students are encouraged to share their gifts with our parish and community as often as possible. Each family will have the opportunity to participate in parish service projects during the year. The Family Connection and Parish Bulletin give information regarding upcoming service and stewardship opportunities.

SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE/NEGLECT

When any person has reasonable cause to believe that a child has been subjected to abuse or neglect, or observes a child being subjected to conditions or circumstances which reasonably would result in abuse or neglect, he or she shall make a report by calling the State of Nebraska, Department of Social Services at 1- 800- 652-1999. The person making the report shall also inform the Pastor and Director of Religious Education of the alleged misconduct. The parish cooperates fully in the investigation of such cases.