



The Family Connection



St. Stephen the Martyr Religious Education
Mary Maguire, Director www.stephen.org/reled

December 2, 2011

- Dec. 5/6: First Reconciliation, 7 pm
- Dec. 17: Christmas Program Rehearsals, Gym; 9 and 10:30 am
- Dec. 18: Sunday School Christmas Programs; 2 p.m. and 4 p.m.
- Dec. 20/21: Baby Shower for Mary
- Dec. 25-Jan. 7: Christmas Break
- Jan. 4: Catechist Meeting, DR; 6:30 pm
- Jan. 8: Sunday School Resumes

7th Grade January Retreats

Your student has a 7th Grade Retreat to look forward to on January 20 or 21, 2012. This is part of the candidate's Confirmation preparation. There will be three retreats available for the students to attend here at St. Stephen's. We have divided the students by class. Please note which retreat your child has been assigned. If there is a conflict for your child or you would like to volunteer during the retreats, please call Deborah by January 6, 2012, at 861-4510 or email at d.sheehy@stephen.org. There will be no retreat changes after January 6.

January 20, 2012 at 6PM-8:30 PM

7A Mrs. Mabeus
7AW4 Jerrilyn Anthonie/Natalie Bechtold
7BW4 Kathleen Meyer/Julie Riedel
7CW4 Arnold Ferry/Halle Hoge

January 21, 2012 at 8:30AM-11:00AM

7B Mrs. Jones
7AW5 Taylor Horton/Danielle Kosalka
7BW5 Kathleen Meyer/Melissa Bosselman
7CW5 Tina Anderson/Denise Frost
7BT4 Deborah Lewis/Alicia Sevcik

January 21, 2012 at 1PM-3:30 PM

7C Ms. Carter
7AT4 Christie Wilken
7AT5 Michelle Schefcik/Kasey Volcelka
7AW7 Theresa Hobza/Cheryl Vanicek



SAVIOR ORNAMENT

This Christmas, celebrate Jesus' birthday by making this keepsake ornament.

What you need:

- Wooden clothespin with round end
- Black permanent marker
- White cloth or felt
- Small wooden star (available at craft stores)
- Yellow paint
- Paintbrush
- Gold glitter (optional)
- Glue gun (and an adult)
- Straw-colored raffia (available at craft stores)
- Palm-size wicker wreath (available at craft stores)
- Ribbon

What you do:

1. On the clothespin's round knob, draw two dots for eyes.
2. Wrap the white cloth around the clothespin, like a swaddled baby.
3. Paint the star yellow; add glitter, if desired.
4. With the glue gun and adult supervision, glue the raffia to the bottom inside of the wreath. Then glue the swaddled clothespin atop the raffia and glue the gold star atop the wreath.
5. Tie a ribbon around the top, near the star.
6. Hang the ornament on your Christmas tree or tie it on a gift.

Office Hours:

Monday: 9 AM – 3 PM
Tuesday: 9 AM - 6:30 PM
Wednesday: 10 AM- 8 PM
Thursday & Friday: Closed
Sunday: 9 AM-Noon
Or by appointment

You can also call us at 896-5683.
Messages will be checked daily.
Fax number: 861-4590

- **Director:** Mary Maguire at 896-5683 m.maguire@stephen.org,
- **Admin. Asst.:** Eileen Smith at 861-4513 e.smith@stephen.org
- **Confirmation:** Deborah Sheehy at 861-4510 d.sheehy@stephen.org
- **Sunday School/VBS:** Rhonda Richeson at 861-4511 r.richeson@stephen.org
- **Youth Ministry:** Laura Bogue at 861-4509 l.bogue@stephen.org

Want to add something to the newsletter?
Contact Eileen at: 861-4513,
e.smith@stephen.org

Sunday School Lessons

December 4, 2011

Intro: Thank You God for the Bible,
Ch. 21

PreK: We Wait For Jesus With Joy,
Lesson 22

Kind: Our Mother
Prayer: Hail Mary

Tue/Wed Kindergarten: (Dec. 6/7)
Jesus is Coming
Prayer: Dear Father in Heaven



First Reconciliation

The 2nd graders of our parish will be receiving the sacrament of Reconciliation for the first time on **Dec. 5/6 at 7:00 pm**. Families are invited to join us in the Dining Room for a reception in honor of our 2nd graders after each service. More information is available on the Sacrament Preparation page of our website at www.stephen.org/reled or by calling the R.E. Office at 402-896-5683. Please keep our 2nd graders and their families in your prayers as they prepare to receive this important sacrament of forgiveness and healing.

Advent Activities

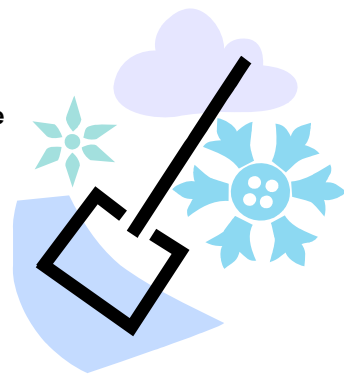
Advent Prayers — R.E. students will be preparing with special prayer and service activities during the month of December. The Advent activities will culminate with the students participating in a 'Baby Shower for Mary' on the last night of classes, Dec. 20/21. More details on page 5.

Special thanks to Kaitlin Kueny for developing the prayer activities and services as her high school senior project; and to Heather Berreth for helping to organize the 'Baby Shower for Mary'.



Weather Cancellations

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 'Weather Information' page of the parish web-site, located at www.stephen.org and broadcast on KFAB radio and local TV stations. Parents should use their discretion as to whether it is safe for their children to attend class. The safety of our children is our always our primary concern.



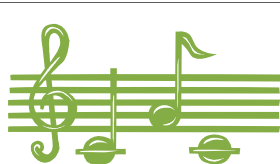
Trivia Night 2012

Registration for Trivia Night 2012 (January 28) officially opened on November 19. Seating is limited to 50 tables. Cost per table is \$160.00 for a table of 8. Paid table reservation reserves your table.

We are still recruiting volunteers to help out the night of Trivia as well. If that's your forte, we would love to have you.

Contact Sandra Jameson at 402-896-9953 (sljameson@cox.net) or Steve Orsi at 402-861-4507 (s.orsi@stephen.org) with any questions.

Children's Choir



St. Stephen the Martyr's Children's Choir will be singing at the 6:00 pm mass on Christmas Eve in the Worship Space. If your child is interested in participating, please contact Judy Dughman at j.dughman@stephen.org. Don't miss out on this exciting opportunity!

Enjoy Advent!

 by James Martin, SJ; Loyola Press

Only a saint could maintain the patience needed to confront Christmas shopping, Christmas stress, and Christmas credit card bills. That's too bad because something else gets overlooked in the rush—and that's Advent. So here are a few brief ways to enjoy yourself over the next few weeks.

First of all, get to know Advent. This liturgical season is a time of waiting—something that we all do: we're waiting for some good news, for a better job, or for our lives to improve. Advent is a time when we think about waiting for God, so it fits in perfectly with our natural human longings. "Come, thou long expected Jesus," as the hymn goes. Advent is also the time of beautiful Scripture readings, like those from the Book of Isaiah. "The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom." These are readings to give all of us hope! And Advent is the season for beloved church traditions, including the Advent wreath (<http://www.loyolapress.com/blessing-an-advent-wreath.htm>) which can easily be translated into home rituals.

Second, cut back on the craziness of Christmas preparations. Here are just a few suggestions: send cards only to close friends and family; drop one present per person from your list; and go only to the most essential holiday gatherings. Does that sound selfish? It's just the opposite! It will give you time to spend with those you really love, and more time to spend in prayer.

Maybe Advent is when you can really settle into your spiritual life, by finding joy in the season and less stress in Christmas. In short,

Knights of Columbus Blood Drive

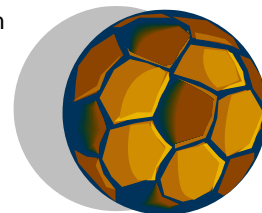
The Knights of Columbus are hosting a blood Drive on Sat., December 3. This year we are recognizing the Knights of Columbus brothers who've been involved in blood drive activities and who have passed away in the past two years: Joe Dougherty, Greg Elwer, and Ron Ingram. In addition to donating blood, please bring canned goods for the Human Needs food pantry.

The blood drive will be in the dining room from 6:30 am to 11:30 am. Register online at www.RedCrossBlood.org. You can also call either Steve Cinnamon at 402-896-4188 or Jason Castor at 402-861-8124 for an appointment. Each donation of whole blood can help up to three people. Give the Gift that money can't buy. Give blood. Give life.

The American Red Cross presented St. Stephen the Martyr with a certificate acknowledging 320 units of blood collected for the fiscal year ending June 30! That makes St. Stephen the Martyr one of the largest collection sites in the community.

Spring Soccer Registration

Spring CYSL and Micro soccer registration will be held Saturday Jan 7th from 10 am-12 pm in the dining room. Any registered parishioner born after Apr 1 2008 is eligible to participate. Season runs from late March to mid-May. Forms are on-line at www.ssmsportsclub.com and can be mailed in early to the address at the bottom of the form. Call Greg McHale at 895-0153 with questions.



Winnebago Gift Delivery	Disciples of Christ	Youth Ministry News
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We are looking for volunteers, including drivers, to help us deliver the donations from Angel Tree to the St. Augustine Indian Mission in Winnebago, NE on Saturday, December 10 from 8:00 am-3:30 pm. For more info or to sign-up, contact Laura at 402-861-4509 or l.bouge@stephen.org.



The following student's earned the Disciple of Christ Award from their Catechists:

Tyler Craft	Grade 3
Jacob Jones	Grade 3
Joanna Lueders	Grade 1
Matthew Anderson	Grade 1
Grant Hunsaker	Grade 1
Katherine McNulty	Grade 4
Sean McNulty	Grade 1
Megan kallman	Grade 5
Lucas Gappa	Grade 4
Emily Conry	Grade 5
Jocelyn Rock	Grade 5
Lauren Richter	Grade 5
Conor Flynn	Grade 5
Kieffer Holder	Grade 5

Be sure to check our website at www.stephen.org/youth for more information on what our youth are up to. Contact Laura at 861-4509 or at l.bouge@stephen.org.

EDGE- We are changing things up this week, Middle School! Meet us in the SCHOOL LIBRARY from 6:30 pm-8:00 pm on Tuesday, December 6. We will be having dinner and a movie night!

LIFE TEEN- Happy Advent, High School Teens! Join us on Sunday, December 4 in the dining room from 7:00 pm-8:45 pm. We will pack Angel Tree donations and learn about discipleship!

Project Hope	St. Nicholas Visits
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Help St. Stephen the Martyr while you prepare for the holidays.

When you shop for family and friends using gift cards purchased from Project HOPE, St. Stephen earns a small profit from each card. You receive the full value of the gift cards you purchase, so it costs you nothing to participate.

Gift cards make great gifts—they are always the right size and the right color! But, you can also use them to shop for sales at your favorite stores (both in Omaha and online) or at the grocery store in preparation for your holiday meals.

We stock more than 80 different gift cards every day. New this month: Costco, Discover, McDonald's, Taco Bell, PetSmart, Paradise Bakery, Noodles & Company and Buffalo Wild Wings.

Check the parish website at www.stephen.org for a complete list of vendors. Gift cards can be purchased after all the weekend liturgies and in the parish office between 8:30 am & 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday. Thank you for supporting the work of our parish while you shop this Christmas season.



Jolly Old St. Nicholas! — St. Nicholas will be visiting all of our Sunday School and Religious Education students this week. Thank you to the volunteers who play the part of St. Nicholas so joyfully for our children. We are also grateful to the Knights of Columbus for providing candy canes for St. Nicholas to give to the children.



Gospel Reflection for Families

Gospel Reading: Mark 1:1-8
 John the Baptist preached repentance and baptized the people, in preparation for the one who would baptize with the Holy Spirit.

Family Connection:
 The season of Advent invites us to renew our lives in preparation for the coming of Jesus. The people who heard the message of John the Baptist repented for their sins and were baptized as a sign of God's forgiveness. In Baptism, our sins are forgiven, and we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, who helps us in our life of discipleship. Led by the Holy Spirit, we use this Advent season to renew our lives so that we, like John the Baptist, might prepare the way for Jesus.

As you gather together as a family, talk about ways in which the example of others has called you to be a follower of Jesus. Name the people who have been examples to you of Christian discipleship and describe their characteristics that you have tried to emulate. Read together today's Gospel, Mark 1:1-8.

As John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus, Baptism commissions us to prepare the way of the Lord. The gift of the Holy Spirit leads us to continually renew our lives so that we might lead others to Jesus. As a family, identify at least one action that you will take this week to try to be more faithful followers of Jesus. Conclude in prayer together that God will receive this action and use it to lead others to Jesus. Pray the Prayer to the Holy Spirit. *Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created. And you will renew the face of the earth. Lord, by the light of the Holy Spirit you have taught the hearts of your faithful. In the same Spirit help us to relish what is right and always rejoice in your consolation. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.*



Another Opportunity to Give Blood: Donate for Lily!

Please donate blood to the Wheeler Blood drive on Dec. 15th from 12-6 or contact your nearest Red Cross to donate red blood or platelets. Lily has had many blood transfusions and platelets since this started. It has saved her life! Thank you all who have donated in the past and present for saving her life and many others! If you can donate red blood you are eligible for platelet donation. It takes longer but can be done in the Red Cross donation centers. Also platelets go farther than red blood. I love to hear how my nephew Alec donated this week in honor of his cousin Lily! I love to hear the stories that Lily's cancer is bringing so many donors and helping so many! Thank you!! Below is the Wheeler information. But this is the main Red Cross information if you are donating at another site or want to donate platelets -

www.redcrossblood.org/donating-blood 1-800-733-2767

The Wheeler Community Service Club is proud to be hosting the Wheeler Elementary annual Blood Drive. Be a Hometown Hero and Donate Blood.

In this season of thanks-giving, an advanced THANKS to blood donors for the special life-saving role you play in our community!!

Our annual Wheeler Elementary School blood drive is Thurs., December 15 from 12-6 PM. This blood drive will be held in support of Wheeler kindergarten, Lily Dotson.

CLICK HERE to view and schedule an appointment at the blood drive OR visit www.redcrossblood.org and search sponsor code 1560. Sign up today and pay it forward! Or, contact Risa Baltes -(402) 214-6498 or paulandrisa@cox.net.

Adult Ed-Class Time Change

Below is an update for the parent faith formation classes beginning in January.

The Quick Journey

Class time will be 7 pm (instead of 6:30 pm)

Class location will be the School Library (instead of the GPC)

We are still planning on beginning this class on Tuesday, January 10, 2012.

Visit www.stephen.org for more information or Deacon Marty Warwick, 402-861-4506

Thank you, Jesus for all you do for me. This week, I gave thanks to you by sharing:

Time: I wrote Fr. Jim a letter. Kaelyn

Talent: I sang for some veterans. Claire

Treasure: I bought a gift for the Angel Tree. Grant



Sunday

December 12

2:00 & 4:00 pm

Please join us for our annual Sunday School Christmas Program on Sunday December 18th, 2011. Refreshments will be served following both programs.

If you would like to volunteer to help with stage set-up or hospitality in the dining room or to clean up after the 4 p.m. show (help pack costumes, stack chairs, take down props, clean dining room, etc.) contact the Religious Education Office, 896-5683.

Notes to Sunday School & Kindergarten Parents:

All students attending Sunday School at 9:00 am and the Wednesday evening 4:00 PM kindergarten classes will participate in the 2:00 pm program and rehearse at 9:00 am Saturday morning, Dec. 17*. Intro and Pre-K students and teachers should go to their classrooms first on Saturday morning before rehearsal. All Kindergarten students should go to room 120 before rehearsal and on Sunday. Students and teachers should be in the classroom to get in costume and line up by 1:15 pm on Sunday.

All students attending Sunday School at 10:30 am, all Tuesday classes or Wednesday evening 5:30 PM kindergarten classes will participate in the 4:00 pm program and rehearse at 10:30 am Saturday morning, Dec. 17*. Intro and Pre-K students and teachers should go to their classrooms first on Saturday morning before rehearsal. All Kindergarten students will all go to room 120 before rehearsal and on Sunday. Students and teachers should be in the classroom to get in costume and line up by 3:15 pm on Sunday.

*The rehearsal will be Saturday December, 17th. This rehearsal is very important because it is the only time we have to practice in the gym. We are also asking each family to bring one dozen cookies or treats to the dining room on Sunday to share at the reception after the program.

Costumes:

- Intro classes will be angels. The children will make wings in class. They will need to wear "Sunday Best" clothes. The children will be standing and sitting, so please make sure they are comfortable.
- Pre-Kindergarteners are sheep. We have sheep hats with ears and pillowcase bodies for them to wear. They will need to wear long sleeve white shirts and dark pants or tights. Any big ribbons or bows in the girls' hair will be uncomfortable under the sheep hat, so simple is best.
- Kindergarteners will play all the other parts. We have costumes for everyone. Once again "Sunday Best" is appropriate, but make sure they are comfortable.

Please watch for participation information to be coming home with your child. Contact Rhonda Richeson at 861-4511 or r.richeson@stephen.org with questions. To print out form, go to www.stephen.org/reled.



Dear Parents of Religious Education Students,

This year, students will be learning about the meaning of Advent during special prayer services, teachings and activities during the four weeks of Advent. Our major focus is to show the children how we can prepare for the birth of our Lord by opening our hearts to Jesus through stewardship. Students are being encouraged to do good deeds, to help out and be kind to others, and to pray more often during Advent.

Each week they will be given the opportunity to fill out a slip of paper with their good deeds at the beginning of class or during the opening prayer service. Their good deeds will be placed into baby Jesus' manger as "straw" for him to sleep on. The more deeds the children do, the more "straw" will be in baby Jesus' manger to keep him warm. Please encourage your children throughout the week to offer good deeds and prayer for this activity. (Samples of straw are on the next page.)

The fourth week of Advent, Dec. 22/23rd, students will have a Baby Shower for Mary during classes to support our parish Angel Tree efforts. At this baby shower, students will bring items that will be donated to EPS (Essential Pregnancy Services), which provides needed items for moms and babies in low income families.

Contributions of any kind or size are welcome and greatly appreciated. Students can bring these items to the baby shower on the December 20th/21st classes. If you have already returned Angel Tree donations to church, that is fine! Our goal is to help needy moms and babies in our community.

Kindergarten -4th Grade: (any EPS item from the Angel tree or baby need item).

Suggestions:

- 4-8oz bottles
- formula (any brand)
- diaper rash ointment
- socks and booties
- newborn, small or medium diapers

5th-8th Grade: (any EPS item from the Angel tree or baby need item).

Suggestions:

- baby lotion
- formula (any brand)
- baby wipes
- baby wash or shampoo
- size LG/XL baby diapers



Thank you for your support!

This week I opened my heart to Jesus by: _____

My name is: _____

This week I opened my heart to Jesus by: _____

My name is: _____

This week I opened my heart to Jesus by: _____

My name is: _____

This week I opened my heart to Jesus by: _____

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This week I opened my heart to Jesus by: _____

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My name is: _____

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