

St. Stephen the Martyr Religious Education

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Omaha, NE 68135

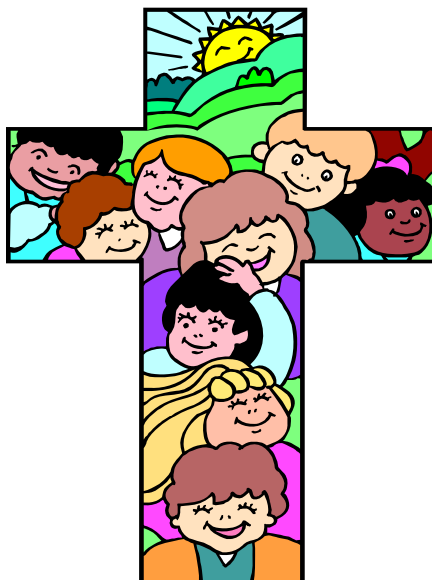
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Parent Handbook 2011-12



"Let the children come to me...
for the kingdom of heaven belongs
to such as these." (Mt. 19:14)

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ST. STEPHEN THE MARTYR

PARISH MISSION STATEMENT

St. Stephen the Martyr is a Roman Catholic Community under the authority of the Archbishop of Omaha. We proclaim with joy and enthusiasm the abiding presence of our forgiving and loving Lord, Jesus Christ, through our: 1) liturgies, 2) hospitality, 3) evangelization, 4) programs of education, and 5) ministries/activities. We call our parish families to responsible stewardship of their God-given resources: 1) spiritual, 2) ministerial, 3) material.

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.

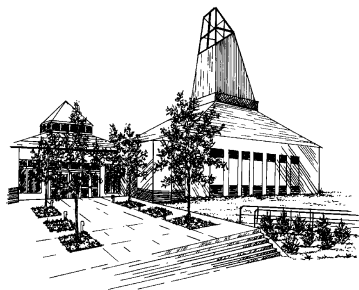
Community: Nurturing meaningful relationships between families, the parish, the public, and encouraging everyone to take responsibility as leaders in parish and community-wide programs.

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.

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.



Letter from the Pastor

Dear Parents,

Welcome to the 2011-12 Religious Education year. We have a capable, experienced and helpful Religious Education staff that is delighted to partner with you in sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Thank you for the love you show your children in having them learn the treasures of our Catholic faith tradition. Thank you for your willingness to be an example of faith for them. Thank you for letting us participate in the religious formation of your children.

The handbook you are receiving should be read carefully. It contains information that is important to know regarding the policies and requirements of our program.

The best way you can teach your children about the faith is through your regular, consistent and prayerful presence at Sunday Mass. With the upcoming changes in our Mass translations, you may be “out of the loop” for learning about them if you do not attend our autumn Masses. As Jesus grew in wisdom, age and grace, so may we and our children continue along a path of growth.

God bless you!

Fr. Jim Tiegs, Pastor

Letter from the Director of Religious Education

Dear Parents,

This is a particularly exciting year in Religious Education, with an opportunity to enrich our celebration of the Eucharist through the changes in the New Roman Missal that begin in Advent. We also have some great new catechetical tools like the *YouCat* (the new catechism for youth) and eConnect, which will give additional faith formation resources and means of communication for our parents, students, catechists, staff and parishioners.

We have to keep in mind that these additional resources and enhancements to the Mass are only valuable if we use them to bring our children and families into closer relationship with Christ. Nothing can take the place of your practicing the faith with your children.

Below are some of the teachings of the Church on this important relationship between parish and families in religious education. It is a great privilege that you allow us to be a part of your family's faith formation. Please contact me at any time if you have questions or if there is anything we can do to help you and your family.

In Christ's love,

Mary Maguire, Director of Religious Education

The 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.

Tasks of Religious Education:

- Promotes knowledge of the faith
- Promotes a knowledge of the meaning of the Liturgy and the sacraments
- Promotes moral formation in Jesus Christ
- Teaches the Christian how to pray with Christ
- Prepares the Christian to live in community and to participate actively in the life and mission of the Church
- Promotes a missionary spirit that prepares the faithful to be present as Christian in society

(National Directory for Catechesis, pp. 60-62)

Priests

Pastor**Fr. James Tiegs**j.tiegs@stephen.org

Fr. Jim Tiegs is the Pastor at St. Stephen's. He just celebrated his 37th anniversary of his Ordination to the priesthood. Fr. Jim has earned both a masters and a doctorate in ministry (D. Min.) over and above his seminary training. His childhood home was Yankton, South Dakota. Fr. Jim is a past president of the priests' council and a dean of the urban northeast deanery. He completed a clinical pastoral residency and became a certified chaplain by the Association of Professional Chaplains. While working as a chaplain at New Cassel Retirement Center in Omaha for ten years and as president of their Foundation, Father came to St. Stephen the Martyr as a "rent-a-priest" on Sunday evenings. He was named pastor of our parish December 1, 2004.

Sr. Associate Pastor**Fr. Joseph Broudou**j.broudou@stephen.org

Fr. Joseph Broudou (pronounced brew dew) was born in Republic of Mauritius, an island in the Indian Ocean. He has one brother and four sisters. He left Mauritius in 1988 and migrated to Australia, then joined the Society of the Sons of the Father (Patrists) in Singapore in 1989. His philosophical studies were completed at St. Francis Xavier Major Seminary in Singapore. In 1993, Fr. Joseph joined the Archdiocese of Omaha and was ordained to the priesthood June 1, 1996. Fr. Joseph has served at many parishes in the archdiocese, most recently at St. Vincent de Paul in Omaha. Fr. Joseph enjoys visiting the classrooms for the 5 day school and Religious Education, teaching Adult Formation and visiting the sick.

Associate Pastor**Fr. Jeff Mollner**j.mollner@stephen.org

Fr. Jeff Mollner was born in Omaha, the second of five children (a married sister belongs to St. Stephen's). He earned a degree in biology from Rockhurst University in Kansas City, MO and then returned to Omaha and studied biology for 2 more years at Creighton University. Fr. Jeff spent his first 2 years of seminary at the Pontifical College Josephinum in Columbus OH. He completed his graduate studies in theology at Mt. Angel Seminary in Oregon. Fr. Jeff was ordained in the archdiocese of Omaha in 2008. He served for 3 years at St. Margaret Mary parish, and is very excited to be a part of St. Stephen the Martyr Parish and Skutt Catholic High School. For recreation, he enjoys watching football, reading, going to movies, and spending time with family and friends.

R.E. Staff**Director of Religious Education****Mary Maguire**m.maguire@stephen.org

Mary Maguire is the Director of Religious Education at St. Stephen the Martyr. Mary earned a master's certificate in Pastoral Administration from Loyola University New Orleans in 2006 and has national D.R.E. and professional level catechist certifications. In November 2008, she was one of the first Lay Ecclesial Ministers authorized by Archbishop Curtiss for service in the Archdiocese of Omaha. Mary serves on the G.R.A.C.E.S. (Growing in Responsible Adult and Children Education in Sexuality) committee, which oversees Safe Environment procedures in the Archdiocese of Omaha. She served on the writing committee for *Circle of Grace*. Mary, her husband, Mike, and their four children are one of the founding families of St. Stephen's.

Administrative Assistant**Eileen Smith**e.smith@stephen.org

Eileen Smith is the Administrative Assistant for our program. Eileen is a Level I certified catechist and completed the 4-year Archdiocesan Biblical School program in the spring of 2007. Eileen earned a Bachelors of Education from UNO. Before joining St. Stephens, she was employed at Divine Redeemer Catholic Parish in Colorado Springs where she lived for 14 years. Eileen, her husband, David, and their three children joined St. Stephen's in 2001.

Confirmation/Middle School Coordinator**Deborah Sheehy**d.sheehy@stephen.org

Deborah Sheehy is the Middle School Coordinator and handles curriculum for grades 6-8, including preparation for Confirmation. Deborah is a Level I certified catechist and has completed the first two years of the Archdiocesan Biblical School. The family joined St. Stephen's after moving here from Canada in 1997.

Sunday School/V.B.S. Coordinator**Rhonda Richeson**r.richeson@stephen.org

Rhonda Richeson is the Sunday School and Vacation Bible School Coordinator for St. Stephen's. Rhonda previously worked part time at Mount Michael Abbey in the Development Office. She has a Bachelors of Science from UNO. Rhonda, her husband Matt and son Andy have been parishioners since 1991.

Youth Ministry**Laura Bogue**l.bogue@stephen.org

Laura Bogue was named Youth Minister in January 2008, after serving on the Pastoral Council and as the APC representative for our parish. She received Youth Ministry training through Life Teen and is earning her certification in Youth Ministry Studies. Laura is a founding member of the parish. She and her husband, Andrew, were married at St. Stephen's in 2005.

Office Assistant**Mary Masek**m.masek@stephen.org

Mary Masek assists the Religious Education Department with various duties. Mary has earned her Master's Degree in Counseling and has a private practice working with children, families, and adults. She joined St. Stephen the Martyr in 2009 upon moving to the area with her husband Darren Wisniski, and children, Jack and Madalyn.

The following policies do not describe every circumstance that might arise and should be considered as a summary of key points for your reference. St. Stephen the Martyr Religious Education reserves the right to exercise its discretion when interpreting and applying these policies and to modify these policies at any time.

ABSENCES AND TARDINESS

For absences, a phone call from the parent or a written note signed by the parent prior to the absence is requested. 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 report to the Religious Education Office for a tardy pass. 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.

ADMISSIONS GUIDELINES

St. Stephen the Martyr Religious Education Program does not discriminate against students on the basis of race, ethnic background, religion, or sex. We are religiously orientated and therefore give preference to members of our parish and members of the Catholic Church. We welcome members of other parishes and other denominations after our own community is served. It is our strong belief as a parish that Catholic Education is a support, not a replacement for parental involvement in the Church.

We expect that our parish families will be involved in the parish life and the stewardship program. The three aspects of stewardship are (1) SPIRITUAL – regularly attending Sunday Worship; (2) MINISTERIAL – being involved in a ministry or volunteer work in the Religious Education Program and parish; and (3) MATERIAL – regularly supporting the parish and our parish campaigns.

All students entering the Introductory Sunday School program shall be 3 years old on or before September 15th of the current year. Students enrolled in Kindergarten must be currently attending Kindergarten in a local school.

All students entering the Religious Education Program shall provide copies of their baptismal certificates to the Religious Education Office.

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.

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.

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.

BICYCLES, ROLLER BLADES, SKATEBOARDS

The parish provides a bicycle rack but the parish accepts no responsibility for bikes parked on parish property. 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.

BOARD OF EDUCATION

The Board of Education is a total education board that provides recommendations to the pastor and advisement to the administrators of the Parish School, Religious Education and Kid Zone programs. Parishioners elect board members. The Board meets on the 3rd Tuesday of the month at 7:00pm. Parishioners are invited to run for the Board of Education. Nominations begin in February. If you are interested, please contact the Director or one of the Board members.

President	Jeanne Meyer
Vice President	Greg Youell
Secretary	Joyce Snowden
RE Advisory	Jaime Bizal
School Advisory	Chris Shouse
Special Projects	Nicole Neesen, Eric Grandgenett



BUILDING SECURITY PROCEDURES

1. All Visitors will check in at the R.E. 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. A security guard will be on duty on Wednesday evenings to help children remain safe with the large number of people attending parish events in the building and on the grounds.
4. **All outside doors to the building will be secured by a card reader security system.** Please contact the R.E. Office for details. The R.E. Office will have the capability of letting visitors enter the north school commons doors.
5. St. Stephen the Martyr is a smoke-free, gum-free, pet-free facility.

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 our web site at www.stephen.org/reled. The general calendar for 2011-12 is located in the back of this Handbook.

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 all catechists to earn Level I and Level II Catechist Certifications through the Archdiocese of Omaha. We also encourage catechists and parents to attend other enrichment opportunities throughout the year, including classes and speakers offered through St. Stephen's Adult Education and the St. Cecilia Institute. The Catechist Formation section of eConnect also provides catechists with the basics of faith formation and the opportunity for self-directed professional development.

CIRCLE OF CARE

Circle of Grace is the combination of programs of the Archdiocese of Omaha that provide for the protection of children and young adults. Included in the Circle of Care is: *Circle of Care Certification*: training and background checks for all clergy, lay ministers, paid staff and volunteers with regular contact of children and young adults (formerly Safe Environment training), *Circle of Grace* training for all children in Kindergarten through 12th grade in parish schools and religious education programs, and the *Anti-Pornography Task Force*, which is working to educate people and combat pornography, while providing resources to help those directly or indirectly affected by pornography.

CIRCLE OF CARE CERTIFICATION FOR ADULTS (formerly 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 Circle of Care (formerly Safe Environment) training and complete a background check before being allowed to work with children. Dates and forms to register for Circle of Care training are available in the R.E., Parish and School offices. Circle of Care (formerly Safe Environment) certification is good for 5 years. **Recertification can now be completed on-line through the Archdiocese of Omaha's Learning and Training Center at <http://lms.archomaha.org/>. Volunteers must complete recertification procedures before their certification expires. There is no 'grace period' for Circle of Care certifications.** If a Circle of Care 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 recertification class and background check. 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 Circle of Care, please contact the D.R.E. or pastor.

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 Packet' from the

archdiocese of Omaha is available on the program information page of the R.E web-site at www.stephen.org/reled. For more information, please contact the Pastor or Director of Religious Education.

CLASSROOM SIZE

In accordance with the Board of Education Policy # 4020, team catechists who are teaching in Gr. 1-8 will have a maximum of 15 students in their class. Individual catechists teaching alone in Gr. 1-8 will have a maximum of 10 students in their class. Classrooms can exceed the maximum number of students with permission of the Director of Religious Education.

Team catechists who are teaching in the Sunday School program at the Kindergarten level will have a maximum of 15 students in their class. Individual catechists teaching alone in the Sunday School Program at the Kindergarten level will have a maximum of 10 students in their class.

Team catechists who are teaching at the Introductory and Pre-K level will have a maximum of 10 students in their class. Individual catechists teaching alone in the Sunday School Program at the Introductory and Pre-K level will have a maximum of 7 students in their class.

CODE OF CONDUCT

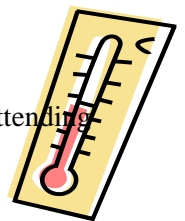
Catechists and Religious Education volunteers, as Christian role models for our youth, must adhere to the St. Stephen the Martyr Code of Ethics (pg. 3) and the Archdiocese of Omaha Code of Conduct. The Pastor and/or Director of Religious Education reserve the right to remove any catechist or volunteer who violates any part of these codes from their volunteer position in St. Stephen's R.E. program.

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 have 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. Head lice – students may return after treatment with head lice shampoo.
5. Vomiting – students should remain home until 24 hours after an episode.
6. 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.



CURRICULUM FOR SUNDAY SCHOOL- GR. 12

Sunday School students use Our Sunday Visitor's *Sharing Our Faith* curriculum (for 3- year olds) and *Allelu!* (for pre-school students). Both series use Old Testament stories to build a relationship with God and a foundation in scripture, prayer and tradition in our youngest students.

Call to Faith from Our Sunday Visitor is used in both Religious Education and the parish school for students in Kindergarten through Grade 8. *Call to Faith* 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.

Call to Faith 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. *Call to Faith* provides catechesis that is content-centered, liturgical and connected to the lectionary. Parents and catechists now have on-line access to *Call to Faith EConnect*, a web-based tool with resources that will enhance the *Call to Faith* K-8 program. (*Please see 'EConnect' for more information.*)

High School youth (grades 9-12) gather in the Gonderinger Parish Center for 'Life Teen' on Sunday evenings from 7- 8:45 pm. Life Teen provides a vibrant Eucharistic spirituality and faith experiences that help lead teens closer to Christ. Life Teen is centered on the Eucharist, Scripture, Liturgy, Doctrine, Sacraments and Social Justice Teachings. All high school youth (whether public, parochial or home schooled) are invited to become involved with Life Teen.

Middle School youth (grades 6-8) may also attend Edge, our Middle School Youth Ministry group, on Tuesday evenings from 6:30- 8 pm in the Dining Room.

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 Stop, Think, and Plan card is available. This card is used when a student has been given a verbal reminder and is not able to choose correct behavior. A Stop, Think, and Plan card is placed on the student's desk. This is a signal that the student should remove him or herself from the group and think about what actions are appropriate. The catechist confers with the student to learn the plan the student will use to 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 complete the card and conference with the D.R.E. 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.

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.

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 advocates or advances the use of illegal drugs, or any tobacco products.
5. Dress (clothing) and other personal items which promotes liquor or tobacco products including clothes, which displays the logo or trademark of any brand(s) of alcohol or tobacco.
6. No dog collars or chains are to be worn on billfolds, clothing, and/or around any part of your body (neck, arm, leg, etc.) other than standard cosmetic jewelry.
7. Oversized baggy pants may be worn ONLY with a belt that secures the waistline above the hips.
8. Hats and caps are not to be worn in the parish building.
9. 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 the dress standards will result in disciplinary action.

eCONNECT

OSV Curriculum's *Call to Faith eConnect*, is a web-based tool for whole community catechesis. Through eConnect, parents and catechists will have access to on-line resources that will enhance the *Call to Faith* K-8 elementary program. These resources include: multimedia catechetical support, extra activities for children, chapter reviews, additional Scripture options, family activities, adult formation and more. Please visit www.calltofaithConnect.com/StStephenTheMartyrOmahaNE to register.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Students are not allowed to bring electronic devices (CD players, iPods, cell phones, etc.) to class or to church related activities. **If a child is found using any electronic device, the device will be confiscated and a parent will need to pick it up from 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.



ENROLLMENT POLICY

In accordance with Board of Education Policy #4000, 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 Sunday School program. 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.

EMERGENCY INFORMATION

Emergency information is on file in the Religious Education Office. The information must be kept current at all times.

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. Fire drills will be held yearly, and 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 situation.



FAMILY CONNECTION

The Family Connection is a weekly E-newsletter used to communicate Religious Education program information and activities with parents. The Family Connection is distributed by email. Current and previous Family Connections are also available on the Newsletters page of our website at www.stephen.org/reled. Hard copies of the newsletter are available on request in the R.E. Office.

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. (See Family/Parish objectives for pre-school – high school at the end of this handbook. Also, see eCONNECT and CURRICULUM.)

FIELD TRIPS

Before planning 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 Director of Religious Education and/or Pastor. "Proposal for Field Trip" forms are available in the R. E. Office. All Safe Environment, Archdiocesan and Parish guidelines must be adhered to at all times.

These include, but are not limited to:

1. Providing adequate supervision for students.
2. Waiver by all adults and parents/guardians of students taking any field trip of all claims against the Archdiocese and/or St. Stephen's parish or Religious Education program for injury, accident, illness, or death occurring during, or by reason of, the field trip.
3. Proper insurance for all students, personnel, equipment and vehicles.
4. Valid licensing and insurance for all drivers and their vehicles.
5. Inclusion of proper first aid kit and fire extinguisher.
6. Permission slip in a written form from each student's parent/guardian.
7. All children must be buckled individually into a seat belt and all children up to age 6 must be in a booster seat while riding in a car.

FIRE AND SEVERE WEATHER

Fire drills will be held at least once a year to allow classes to practice exiting the building in the quickest, safest manner. 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.

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 should include allergies, hyperactivity, diabetes, seizures, hearing problems, or medication.

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.

HOURS: OFFICE

The Religious Education Office is open: Monday – 9 am-3 pm, Tuesday – 9 am-6:30 pm, Wednesday –10 am-8:00 pm, Thursday – Closed for Planning, Friday/Saturday – Closed, Sunday-8:30 am- Noon.



HOURS: CLASSES

Sunday School classes are one hour in length and are held on Sunday morning during the 9am and 10:30am Masses.

Kindergarten classes are one hour in length and are held on Sunday morning at 9 am and 10:30 am, Tuesday evening at 4:15 pm and 5:30 pm and Wednesday evening at 4 pm and 5:30 pm.

Classes for Gr. 1-8 are one hour in length and are held on Tuesday evening at 4:15 pm and 5:30 pm and Wednesday evening at 4 pm, 5:30 pm, and 7 pm. Other activities like retreats, speakers, etc. may be scheduled outside of class.

Students in grades 6-8 can also attend Edge, Middle School Youth Ministry, on Tuesday evenings from 6:30-8 pm in the Dining Room.

High School students meet for Life Teen on Sunday evenings from 7- 8:45pm in the Gonderinger Parish Center.

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.

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.

The Mass is the focus of our public worship of God and the focus of our parish worshipping community. We expect families to regularly attend Mass. Changes to the New Roman Missal will give us additional opportunities to catechize on the Mass this year.

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.

PARKING PROCEDURE

All vehicles must enter the North parking lot by the West Drive and exit via the East Drive. With the security system, students may only be admitted to the building at the north school commons doors. No dropping off or picking up is allowed at the South or East doors to the school, or the entrances to the Worship Space, as there are no monitors to keep your children safe. 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 Sunday School, 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.

REIMBURSEMENT

Requests for reimbursement for items purchased for R.E. or parish use must receive pre-approval from the parish Business Manager. Any request for reimbursement that is not pre-approved will be denied and can be considered a donation to the parish.

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 and for the children of catechists.

All students entering the Introductory Sunday School program shall be 3 years old on or before September 15th of the current year. Students enrolled in Kindergarten must be currently attending Kindergarten in a local school.

REFUND

In accordance with the Board of Education Policy # 4005, 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 30 classes. 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.

R. E. ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The mission of the R. E. Advisory Committee is to support the Director of Religious Education in the development and integration of effective religious education practices. Through research, evaluation and recommendations, the Advisory Committee 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 committee is a subcommittee of the Board of Education. The Director is the chairperson and responsible for selecting committee members and providing progress reports to the Board of Education. Please contact the Director or any B.O.E. member for additional information.

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.

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.

Preparation for First Reconciliation and First Eucharist is a 2-year program, beginning in first grade. The sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Eucharist are received for the first time in the second grade. (Board of Education Policy #5005)

Confirmation preparation is also a 2-year program, beginning in the seventh grade. Candidates in both seventh and eighth grade are required to participate in retreats, special events and complete Stewardship (service) hours. The sacrament of Confirmation is received in the eighth grade. (Board of Education Policy #5010.)

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.

All candidates for sacraments (Reconciliation, First Communion and Confirmation) must provide a copy of their 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 have not received Baptism, Reconciliation, or First Communion can receive preparation through the Rite of Christian Initiation for children. This is provided free of charge. Children who have been baptized but have not received Reconciliation or First Communion prepare for the sacraments by attending regular R.E. classes and also receive individual preparation with their parents. Preparation for sacraments will involve the family. Please contact the Director of Religious Education if your child needs special preparation for the sacraments.

SAFE ENVIRONMENT (see *CIRCLE OF CARE*)

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 Emergency Handbook is available in the Religious Education office. Security Cameras are installed at all entrances, 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.

SMOKING

State laws and parish policy prohibit students carrying and/or using tobacco products on school property or at parish sponsored activities. 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.

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. (Policy #4025)

TUITION

The pastor and Finance Committee approve the fee for tuition. Tuition (but not sacrament preparation fees) for the children of catechists, 3-hour office volunteers and babysitters is waived. Tuition can be paid through the following methods:

- Option 1 – Payment in full at the time of registration.
- Option 2 – Electronic Funds Transfer- payments made from account monthly. All EFT payments must be paid in full by April of 2012.
- Option 3 – Tuition Assistance Form: Completion and remittance of the form and acceptance by the Tuition Assistance Committee.
- Option 4 – Waived Volunteer Position: Tuition for a family is waived for the following volunteer positions: catechist, coordinator, and childcare or 3-hour office volunteer. Sacrament preparation fees are not waived.

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

In accordance with the Board of Education Policy #1085, while St. Stephen the Martyr Parish has debt outstanding for the construction of permanent facilities and is maintaining a positive cash position, the Religious Education program tuition will not exceed 75% of the projected direct costs of the program for the succeeding budget year. Teachers will continue to pay no tuition; however, costs per pupil will be determined using the number of paying students. Out of parish students will pay tuition at twice the 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.

When the parish debt is retired, the tuition allocation for both the Parish School and the Religious Education programs will be reviewed, with a reduction in the tuition percentage the desired goal.

Also in accordance with the Board of Education Policy # 4010, all past years' owed fees must be cleared and financial arrangements made for the current year with the director of religious education before registration of students for religious education can proceed.

VOLUNTEER PARENTS/VISITORS

Visitors are always welcome and encouraged to visit the classrooms. 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.

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 '[Weather Information](#)' page of the parish web-site 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.**

