

St. Stephen Catholic Church

Parent Handbook



2017-2018

ST. STEPHEN CATHOLIC CHURCH

**PO Box 662
601 FM 2268
Salado, TX 76571**

Office Hours: Monday-Friday, 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM

Parish Office: 254-947-8037

Fax: 254-947-8091

e-mail: office@saintstephenchurch.org

www.saintstephenchurch.org

Rev. Jude Uche, M.S.P. Pastor; 254-947-8037

Masses: Saturday, 5:30 PM in English

Sunday, 9:00 AM in English; 11:00 AM in Spanish

Laura Snyder, Director of Faith Formation

(home) 254-947-3382 or (cell) 254-913-2239

FAITH FORMATION PROGRAM

ST. STEPHEN CATHOLIC CHURCH MISSION:

We are a Catholic Christian Community
We pray together
We fellowship together
We grow in faith together
We share in God's love together
We work together as one family for the greater honor and glory of God.



FAITH FORMATION MISSION:

We are a worshipping community which seeks to live its Catholic faith based on Christian values. This parish is unified in diversity, committed to community service and called to extend God's love to everyone. Using our living faith, we will strive to motivate children and families to embrace the Catholic tradition, through excellence in religious education and commitment to the community, so that it might now and always enrich every aspect of their lives. We will provide them with the education and examples necessary to become faithful disciples of Jesus Christ in a loving and caring Christian community and in keeping with the vision statement of the Austin Diocese; and all those who are called to serve in the catechetical ministry of the church will work together to carry out our specific religious education goals:

- Provide quality educational resources for all children, youth and adults;
- Meet and respect children and youth at their individual levels of understanding and faith development;
- Integrate prayer, Scripture and service;
- Welcome and involve parents in the faith formation of their children;
- Provide instruction and preparation for the receiving of the sacraments of Baptism, Reconciliation, Holy Eucharist and Confirmation; and
- Provide opportunities for service to the community at large through a variety of different programs.

REGISTRATION:

To register a student for Faith Formation classes a parent/guardian must complete a current registration form. A copy of the baptismal record is required for students participating in sacramental classes.

FAITH FORMATION CLASSES: *A donation for supplies and materials is strongly encouraged.*
\$40 per student, \$75 per family

SACRAMENTAL CLASSES: *A donation for supplies and materials is strongly encouraged.*
\$30 First Reconciliation/Communion Classes
\$30 Confirmation Classes

PROGRAM INFORMATION:

The St. Stephen Faith Formation program currently serves more than 200 students. The program is open to all students age 4 years – high school. Classes are divided by grade level. Each class is taught by an experienced catechist and one co-catechist.

Faith Formation classes meet on Wednesday evenings. Sacramental classes generally meet on Sundays. A Snack will be served every Wednesday evening for all students and their parents. The snack is prepared by both parents and volunteers and may consist of chips, fruit, nachos or something similar. Donations are always accepted.

ACTIVITY	TIME
Preschool/Kindergarten (Ages 4, 5)	Wednesday: 5:30 - 6:30 PM
Primary (Grades 1, 2, 3 & 4)	Wednesday: 5:30 - 6:30 PM
<i>Dinner</i>	<i>Wednesday: 6:30 – 6:45 PM</i>
Intermediate (Grades 5 & 6)	Wednesday: 6:45 – 7:45 PM
Junior High (Grades 7 & 8)	Wednesday: 6:45 – 7:45 PM
HS Youth – F.I.A.T. (Grades 9, 10, 11, 12)	Wednesday: 6:30 – 8:00 PM

CATECHISTS

All of our Catechists are volunteers. Without their many hours of love and devotion, this program could not exist. Many of our catechists have students in the program. We are also indebted to those who teach who do not have children in the program, who generously give of their time and talent.

EMERGENCY CLASS CANCELLATION:

In case of inclement weather of snow or ice, we will follow Salado I.S.D. emergency closings unless otherwise announced. If you have any questions about cancellation, please call the parish office at 947-8037 before bringing your child to class.

ATTENDANCE:

We have your child for one hour a week. It is important that you make every effort to bring your child to class. Regular attendance at classes is an important factor in deepening a child's understanding of our triune God through the study of Scripture, prayer, Church teaching, and community.

ILLNESS:

A child should not be sent to classes with a fever. A child who has been sick and stayed home from school should not attend classes until free of fever for 24 hours.

ARRIVAL and DISMISSAL:

Please bring your child to their classroom at the time of class and/or the Parish Hall for food. St. Stephen will provide food each Wednesday evening from 6:30-6:45 in the Parish Hall for all students and their families.

All students in grades 4yrs – 4th will be brought to the Parish Hall after class. For the safety of your children, we ask that you pick them up from the Parish Hall at the end of their class and/or at the end of the food break at 6:45 PM. Please take the time to get out of your car and walk to the Parish Hall. Older students will be dismissed to their classrooms from the Parish Hall after the snack break.

WE CANNOT BE RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY STUDENTS WHO ARE NOT PICKED-UP AT THE END OF CLASS AND/OR SNACK BREAK. YOUNGER STUDENTS WILL NOT BE SUPERVISED AFTER 6:45 PM AND PARENTS WILL BE CALLED TO PICK THEM UP.

COMMUNICATION:

Each month we will send home a parent newsletter. All important information, calendar reminders or changes will be communicated to you through them. We will also make any timely announcements in the church bulletin.

Periodically, you will receive information from your child's catechist. Go over this information with your child so you may both review what your child is studying in class.

We are here to serve the faith formation needs of our children, youth and adults. If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions, please feel free to share them with your child's catechist or call Laura Snyder @ 913-2239.

EXPECTATIONS:

Parents:

The Faith Formation programs offered at St. Stephen are meant to support the parents in their responsibility as the first educators of the Faith. Family involvement is critical in the faith development of your child.

- Ensure that your child(ren) attend classes regularly and on time.
- Communicate any special needs or circumstances that may affect your child(ren) within the classroom.
- Be an active part in your child's learning and become involved in your child's classroom activities.
- Talk with your child(ren) about their lessons after each faith formation class.
- Help your child learn their prayers and attend Mass regularly each Sunday.

Students:

- Behave in a Christian manner at all times showing respect and being cooperative with adults and other students.
- Actively participate in classroom activities and discussions.
- Attend class regularly and complete any classroom activities.
- Come dressed to class in a way that does not distract from the main focus - The Teachings of Jesus Christ.

Catechists:

- Provide a loving, Christian atmosphere within the learning environment so that children will be able to grow in their faith

HEALTH CONCERNS and MEDICATION:

Any health concerns should be brought to the attention of the Director of Faith Formation during registration. Parents or guardians should know that a confidential appointment with the Director can be made to discuss any special needs or medical needs. If a child is diagnosed with a medical condition after registration, please inform the Director and catechist as soon as possible.

Regarding medication, catechists and other personnel in our religious education program **can not** dispense or administer medication to students. This includes any pain medication like Tylenol or Advil. If your child requires medication, please administer it before or after class or stay with your child to give out the medication at the appropriate time.

DISCIPLINE AND PROBLEM SOLUTIONS:

All students are expected to share in the faith learning experiences of the parish program. If a student's behavior disrupts the learning process for him or herself or for others, the steps listed below will be followed to ensure that class participation may continue.

1. At the first incident the student will be reminded of expected behavior and the consequences of misbehavior. (Refer to posted classroom rules)
2. After the second incident, the student will be sent to the office for a discussion with the Director about appropriate behavior.
3. After returning to class, if inappropriate behavior continues, the student will be sent to the office to do his or her religious education assignment. The student's parent/guardian will be contacted.

At steps 1-3, the student will be allowed the opportunity to rejoin the class if an understanding can be reached as to how all involved best may continue to learn and grow in their faith.

VOLUNTEERS:

Volunteers are most welcome but must have the approval of the Director of Faith Formation. Sufficient orientation training will be given for the activity in which they will be engaged.

Volunteers must be approved by the Diocese of Austin through their Ethics and Integrity in Ministry program.

**Diocese of Austin
The Catholic Church of Central Texas**

**Policy on compliance
with Ethics and Integrity in Ministry policies
effective July 1, 2003**

In order to safeguard the children and vulnerable adults whom we serve,
and to honor our privilege and responsibility of sharing in the ministry of Jesus

Christ, the Diocese of Austin issues the following policy:

After July 1, 2003, ALL volunteers and employees serving in the parishes and schools of the Diocese of Austin must be in compliance with the diocese's Ethics and Integrity in Ministry policies. Specifically, all who serve minors (those under the age of 18) or vulnerable adults (those who are uniquely vulnerable to abuse because of physical or mental disabilities) must complete the Application for employees and Volunteers immediately upon being assigned to ministry. They must also attend a "Protecting God's Children" Workshop within 90 days of submitting the application.

FIRST RECONCILIATION & HOLY COMMUNION

- The age for the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation & Holy Communion will be the age of reason, or generally 7 years of age.
- Parents are the primary educators of children in the Catholic faith and should take an active part in their child's First Reconciliation & Holy Communion preparation
- Parents should make every effort to attend Mass with their children on a regular basis to give witness to the faith and to fulfill their weekend Mass obligation as laid out by Pope Paul VI.
- Families should make every attempt to register in the parish – This may be done at the same time as registration for the Faith Formation classes for your convenience.
- Students must attend the required Faith Formation classes on Wednesday nights in addition to the required Sacramental classes.
- A Parent/Guardian must present a copy of their Baptismal Certificate of the student to receive First Communion for our records *if not done previously*.
- Students will be prepared to receive both the sacraments of First Reconciliation & Holy Communion.

CONFIRMATION

- Students must attend the required Faith Formation classes in addition to the required Confirmation classes.
- Students must already have received the Sacrament of Baptism, Reconciliation, and First Communion.
- A Parent/Guardian must present a copy of their Baptismal Certificate of the student to receive Confirmation for our records *if not done previously*.
- The age for the celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation will be the early years of high school, between 14 and 16 years.
- A minimum of two years of formal faith formation in a parish or Catholic school program precedes preparation for the celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation.
- Students must have successfully completed the studies in the faith formation program at St Stephen's or another parish if transferring in and be recommended by Teacher/D.R.E./Deacon. This includes all requirements of the Faith Formation program. [If non-parishioner, must have letter of permission from proper pastor and letter must include that requirements for the proper parish have been satisfied with regard to Diocesan and Parish norms of the proper parish.]
- Families should make every attempt to register in the parish – This may be done at the same time as registration for the Faith Formation classes for your convenience.
- Parents should make every effort to attend Mass with their children on a regular basis to give witness to the faith and to fulfill their weekend Mass obligation as laid out by Pope Paul VI.

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) for Children and Youth

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) adapted for Children and Youth serves the needs of young people between the ages of seven and seventeen who:

- Have not been baptized
- Have been baptized into a non-Catholic Christian faith tradition and wish to become Catholic

RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) is a process for those who wish to inquire about and/or join the Catholic Church. Preparation for becoming Catholic and sacramental initiation into the Catholic faith (celebrating the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist) are part of the RCIA process. The primary goal of the RCIA faith journey is faith, conversion to Christ, and discipleship (in the context of the Catholic Christian community). For those not yet baptized, it is ideally a one year process, or longer.

For children/youth, the RCIA process is adapted to accommodate their age and developmental level. Members of the St. Stephen community walk with the young people as companions and sponsors. Children/youth, parents, and sponsors attend sessions together and often worship together. During their time in the RCIA children and youth reflect together on the Sunday scripture readings, grow in understanding of Catholic beliefs and practices, share and listen to faith stories, and recognize their call to the Catholic faith community. The process involves formation in the Gospel teachings, as well as Christian service.