



Advent 2018

AT ST. STEPHEN CATHOLIC CHURCH

Dear Friends in Christ,

Advent is often one of the most beautiful times of the year, as the snow falls for the first time and decorations abound. It also carries the distinction of being part of the darkest time of the year, with short days and long nights. The Advent Season, which runs from December 2nd until Christmas Eve, is a time filled with many things: food, family, celebrations, and travel to name a few.

The liturgical Season of Advent isn't quite the same as the season of Christmas that began a while ago in our stores and decorations. It isn't the same as Christmas trees and green and red everything. Rather the Season of Advent is a time of preparation for the coming (the Advent) of Jesus the Savior. During Advent we prepare our hearts and lives for Jesus' coming, the hidden coming of Christ into the hearts and souls of believers, in preparation for His Second Coming in Glory.

Advent is a time of hope. We hope for the salvation from the power of sin and death that God has promised. But our hope is not only for the future, since Jesus has already come, but also for the present. Our hope is filled with the presence of Jesus who has already come once to bring us salvation.

Advent is a time of joy. Our God has come to save us: we are filled with joy. Sometimes the Advent and Christmas seasons can be hard, especially for those who don't have many loved ones around with whom to share this season. Joy and sorrow don't cancel out, joy is a fruit of the Holy Spirit; meaning it is a fruit (a result, a gift of God) of the Holy Spirit who dwells in our hearts since baptism.

Advent is a time of waiting. We await the goodness of God. It is a time of expectation of the goodness of God. Again, we await the fulfilment of something already given – the fullness of God's love in Jesus Christ. These days are days of waiting upon the Lord, as the ancient Israelites awaited a savior, and as Mother Mary awaited the birth of her Son, Jesus.

I'd like to invite all of us to take some time for silence and prayer this Advent Season. Just as we set aside time for many things, set aside some time for silence and prayer to enter into the hope, and joy, and waiting of Advent.

Yours in Christ,
Fr. Scott Nolan

Advent Schedule

LITURGICAL & SACRAMENTAL DATES & TIMES

DAILY MASS SCHEDULE

Monday through Wednesday

8:30 a.m., Chapel of the Parish Office

Friday, 9:00 a.m., School Gym*

*Mass will be celebrated in the Chapel of the Parish Office on December 28, 2018 & January 4, 2019.

WEEKEND MASS TIMES

Saturday, 4:30 p.m., School Gym

Sunday, 8:30 and 10:30 a.m., School Gym

SOLEMNITY OF THE IMMACULATE

CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

Friday, December 7, 2018 (Vigil), 5:30 p.m., School Gym

Saturday, December 8, 2018, 8:30 a.m., School Gym

THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD (CHRISTMAS)

Monday, December 24, 2018 (Vigil)

4:00 p.m., 7:30 p.m., 10:00 p.m., School Gym

PLEASE NOTE: There will be no Midnight Mass this year.

Tuesday, December 25, 2018, 10:00 a.m., School Gym

FEAST OF ST. STEPHEN

Wednesday, December 26, 2018

9:00 a.m., Chapel of the Parish Office

SOLEMNITY OF MARY, HOLY MOTHER OF GOD

Monday, December 31, 2018 (Vigil)

5:30 p.m., School Gym

Tuesday, January 1, 2019, 10:00 a.m., School Gym

RECONCILIATION

Tuesdays from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m.

in Father Nolan's Office

Located at 723 Rosewood Avenue Southeast

Saturdays from 3:30 to 4:00 p.m.

in the Konrad Room

Located in the Lower Level of the School

FAITH FORMATION & YOUTH MINISTRY

FAITH FORMATION

Meets in the Family Center unless otherwise noted.

December 2, 2018: 9:30 a.m.

December 9, 2018: 9:30 a.m.

December 16, 2018: 9:30 a.m.

December 23, 2018: No Faith Formation

December 30, 2018: No Faith Formation

MIDDLE SCHOOL YOUTH MINISTRY

Meets in the Youth Room (basement of the Parish Office, located on Rosewood Avenue Southeast) unless otherwise noted.

December 2, 2018: XLT @ IHM, 7:00 p.m.

December 8, 2018: 10:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Movie Retreat

December 9, 2018: 6:00 p.m.

December 16, 2018: 6:00 p.m.

December 23, 2018: No Youth Group

December 30, 2018: No Youth Group

HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH MINISTRY

Meets in the Youth Room (basement of the Parish Office, located on Rosewood Avenue Southeast) unless otherwise noted.

December 2, 2018: XLT @ IHM, 7:00 p.m.

December 9, 2018: 7:30 p.m.

December 16, 2018: 7:30 p.m.

December 23, 2018: No Youth Group

December 30, 2018: No Youth Group



From the Finance Council

Advent 2018

Dear Parishioners,

Warm holiday greetings from Father Scott and your Parish Finance Council! We hope that all of you will take time to enjoy this Advent Season with your families and friends and to reflect upon the coming of Christ at Christmas.

This letter provides a year-end update and an appeal to help your parish financially. Last year, our parishioners responded generously to this appeal and we thank you again for your generosity. We continue to closely monitor expenses and exercise careful stewardship with the donations our parishioners provide. However, as you can see from the weekly financial reports in the bulletin, we are carrying a deficit to our budgeted collections for the new fiscal year, currently over \$48,000. During this time of giving, we ask that each of you remember your Parish and prayerfully consider making a special year-end offering to St. Stephen to assist us catching up this deficit.

There is no better time than the present to engage more fully with your faith and your parish community. "Each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace" (1 Peter 4:10). Why not consider sharing your faith through teaching religious education, participating in our active social committee, or lending your business acumen to the finance council or education board? In addition to your time and talents, please also consider increasing your weekly offering as we move into 2019. A small increase by many makes a substantial impact as we continue our work to secure the future of St. Stephen Parish.

We all have many blessings, and the community that we enjoy at St. Stephen is one of those special blessings. We appreciate everything that all of you do to help make St. Stephen what it is, and we pray that 2019 will be a wonderful year for all of you and for our Parish!

Yours in the Peace of Christ,

Father Scott Nolan

St. Stephen Finance Council:

Andrea Bernard

Phillip Boettjer

Chris Chappus

Tom Curran

Rosanne Mack

David Strong

Mike Zago

**"Each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as
good stewards of God's varied grace."**

1 Peter 4:10

Stewardship

GIVING OF OUR TIME, TALENT, AND TREASURE

#GIVECATHOLICWM ON #GIVINGTUESDAY

What is #GivingTuesday? What does it have to do with us at St. Stephen parish? It is a global day dedicated to giving back, especially after the commercialism and consumerism of Black Friday and Cyber Monday. It is a time to think about giving rather than receiving.

And giving back is what we do every day as Catholic Christians. So why not participate with millions around the world during this secular event to support our own ministries?

#GivingTuesday, now in its sixth year, happens the Tuesday following Thanksgiving and is an opportunity for communities, churches, families, and individuals globally to come together and to simply celebrate generosity for 24 hours.

This year, Bishop Walkowiak is encouraging Catholics to participate by supporting parishes, schools, and ministries right here in West Michigan. You are being asked to #GiveCatholicWM on #GivingTuesday. It is our own local link to this day of giving back.

#Giving Tuesday is about giving of your time and talent, as much as it is about giving of your treasure. The encourage all Catholics to put their faith into action, a global movement has been launched - *Uprise: Our Catholic Generosity Commitment*. The goal of the movement is to encourage Catholics to focus on service through the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. For more information, visit CatholicUprise.com

How can you participate on #GivingTuesday?

- Donate to St. Stephen at ststephenparish.com/donate anytime from midnight to 11:59 p.m. on November 27.
- Make the Uprise Commitment as a family. We are in need of volunteers to support our many ministries such as Altar Servers, Eucharistic Ministers, Knights of Columbus, and Family Promise Coordinators.
- Post a status or photo on your social media accounts explaining why you support giving within our diocese. Use the hashtags #GivingTuesday and #GiveCatholicWM.

ANNETTES CHRISTMAS FOOD BASKETS

Thank you to everyone who donated goods to and financially supported the Thanksgiving Food Baskets. We delivered baskets to more than 20 needy families in the Greater Grand Rapids area. The Annettes began collecting for the Christmas Food Baskets at the Thanksgiving day Mass on Thursday, November 22. Kindly bring canned goods, boxed meals, and other non-perishable items with you to Mass during Advent. Baskets will be delivered on Saturday, December 22. Drivers are needed! If you are available that morning, please contact Lora Bennett in the Business Office at lorabennett@ststephenparish.com or (616) 243-8998 ext 203.

GIVING TREE

For many years, it has been a St. Stephen tradition to help families in need with our Giving Tree project. This year we are helping several families from Bethany Christian Services and our community. Before Thanksgiving, you saw two "trees" with paper ornaments. Each ornament represents a gift to someone in need. We ask that you take an ornaments, purchase and wrap the gift, tie the paper ornament onto the gift, and bring it back to church the weekend of December 8 & 9. The sponsor of each family will then be responsible for delivering the gifts to the family. If you have questions about this program, please contact Carole McDonald at (616) 304-3248 or Maria Allen at (616) 581-2500. Thank you, in advance, for your generosity!

RETIREMENT FUND FOR RELIGIOUS

Aging religious need our help. Thousands of senior sisters, brothers, and religious order priests spent years working in Catholic schools, hospitals, and agencies - often for little pay. Their sacrifices leave their religious communities without adequate savings for retirement and eldercare. Your gift to the Retirement Fund for Religious collection helps provide prescription medications, nursing care, and more. Please give to those who have given a lifetime when we take up a second collection the Second Weekend of Advent, December 8 & 9, at all Masses.



Renew + Restore + Rejoice

BUILDING THE FUTURE OF ST. STEPHEN PARISH

CAMPAIGN BACKGROUND

For more than five years, St. Stephen has been working on a plan to ensure the long-term success of our parish. In addition to replacing some much-needed infrastructure and financial reserves, we are excited about the visible changes to our church and school:

- **Revitalized and refreshed sanctuary**, infused with Catholic symbolism, that welcomes prayerful worship
- Comfortable new **space for community gathering and celebration**
- **Updated and upgraded classrooms** to support our 21st-century learner

Our three-year campaign officially launched February 25, 2017. Demolition inside the church began in August 2018 and is currently scheduled to be wrapping up in April 2019. For updates on progress and pictures of the renovation process, keep an eye on our Facebook page: *St. Stephen Catholic Community*.

EVERY CONTRIBUTION COUNTS

Thank you for your continued support of the Renew + Restore + Rejoice campaign. As we watch construction progress, we remember how truly blessed we are, and reflect on our campaign prayer:

*All-knowing God of **Renewal**, You created me and led me here to serve and to grow; Thank You for the renewal You create in me each day.*

*Lord of **Restoration**, help me pursue Your love and Your call to hope for our community. In flame my desire to be part of your plan as Jesus taught, "Thy will be done."*

*Oh God of my heart, I **Rejoice** in You! I seek You now; Speak to me through Your Holy Spirit.*

Jeremiah 29:11-14

Please contact Lora Bennett in the Business Office with any questions at lorabennett@ststephenparish.com or call (616) 243-8998 ext 203.

TRIBUTE OPPORTUNITIES

We have created a series of tribute gifts for donors to honor a special person in their life (a relative, friend, or anyone you choose). It is a beautiful way to remember someone, or your own family, in perpetuity. Though each donor to our campaign will be listed on our donor wall in the community gathering space regardless of the amount of the gift, tribute gifts will be more personal and more visible. We invite you to visit ststephenparish.com/capital-campaign/make-a-pledge to find out how you can designate your generous gift as a tribute.

PAVE THE WAY TO OUR NEW CHURCH

A unique opportunity is available to leave your mark on St. Stephen and solidify your legacy as part of the Renew + Restore + Rejoice story. Sponsorship bricks are available for \$250 each, with a limited number available. Bricks will be 8 in. x 8 in., allowing for six lines of text. Sponsorship forms are available in the parish office or you can download your copy from ststephenparish.com/capital-campaign/make-a-pledge.

Yes, I will support the Renew + Restore + Rejoice Campaign

Name _____

Email _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Signature _____

(I understand this is a statement of intent and may be altered as circumstances warrant.)

Pledge Amount

\$ _____

My check is enclosed

Please have a member of the parish office contact me about a payment schedule



Submit your pledge form in the collection basket or to the parish offices



Forming Our Faith

PREPARING FOR THE BIRTH OF OUR SAVIOR

LADIES ADVENT BY CANDLELIGHT

Ladies of all ages are invited to attend *Advent by Candlelight* on Thursday, November 29 at 6:30 p.m. in the Family Center. Please bring a dish to pass. Kindly RSVP to Brittany Renne in the Faith Formation Office no later than Monday, November 26 at (616) 243-8998 ext 205 or email brenne@ststephenparish.com.

BEST ADVENT EVER®

Advent is meant to be a time of preparation for the coming of Jesus at Christmas. But very often, the world distracts us in a hundred different ways. For most Catholics, Advent is just an afterthought. Rediscover the joy of Christmas with BEST ADVENT EVER®, a free email program that will help you slow down and focus on what matters most during the busy holiday season. Each day of Advent, you will receive short, inspirational videos, practical tips, real-life encouraging stories, and more! Visit bestadventever.com/almostchristmas today.

THE 177 PROJECT

Come join some of the most talented Catholic artists in the country for an evening of Eucharistic Adoration and music as *The 177 Project* visits St. Jude Catholic Church on December 6 at 6:45 p.m. Doors open at 6:00 p.m. The evening will center around a Holy Hour. Upon conclusion of the Holy Hour, you will have the chance to enjoy a FREE concert. You will also have an opportunity for confession, pray for others, hear about the importance of (and even respond to) vocations, say the rosary, and engage with local and national ministries. Tickets are FREE! Order now from www.the177project.com/dates/. Contact Brittany Renne for more information at (616) 243-8998 ext 205 or email brenne@ststephenparish.com.

CONSECRATION TO THE HOLY FAMILY

To help strengthen the families of our parish, the St. Stephen Knights of Columbus Council #15691 invite our parish community to consecrate themselves to the Holy Family and devote themselves to the ideal model of familial love set by Jesus, Mary, and Joseph after every mass the first weekend of Advent (December 1 & 2). You can prepare your family for the consecration the week leading up to the event by praying together every day as a family, fasting from something, and going to confession. Contact Grand Knight Earl Burhans with any questions at (269) 330-1872 or earlkal55@aol.com.

TINY THOMISTS:

FOR FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

We are so excited to announce that we have partnered with the Dominican Institute to provide families with young children a new way to share their Catholic faith! It works with the ebb and flow of constant activity and allows families to ground themselves in short, 5 - 10 minute blocks of Catholic prayer time that can be infused in your every day life. Just head over to www.dominicaninstitute.com/shop/tiny-thomists-parish-level-access/ and enter the following password: 3rE245Te. You'll have access to a private parenting community, coloring pages, family games and activities, arts and crafts ideas, plus much, much more!

OTHER RESOURCES FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES

Help focus your family on the true reason for the season.

The Giving Manger created by Allison Hottinger and Lisa Kalberer, \$39.95, www.thegivingmanger.com

The Giving Manger helps families shift the focus of Christmas back to giving. A piece of straw is placed in the manger for each kind deed or act of service performed. On Christmas Day, the Baby is placed in the manger filled with service and love. As your family works together to give gifts of service you will find your hearts and home filled with more joy during the holiday season than ever before.

The Donkey in the Living Room by Sarah Cunningham \$49.99, Smile.Amazon.com

Begin a new family tradition this Christmas with *The Donkey in the Living Room* nativity set and picture book. You'll hear the story of the Nativity told from the animal's perspective. Hear from a new animal each day the 12 days leading up to Christmas.

The Shepherd's Treasure Book/Doll Set and Advent Cards \$43.95, www.theshepherdstreasure.com

An Elf on the Shelf® alternative that will have your kiddos doing acts of service and focusing on the true meaning of Christmas. Each day, kids discover their Shepherd in a different spot along his journey with a new Advent card that features a bible verse and note from their shepherd that will teach kids to truly seek Jesus long after Christmas is over.

Celebrate the Season

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES AND OTHER EVENTS

NEW! FRIDAY MORNING PLAY GROUP

All parents and kiddos not yet of school age are invited to join our Friday Morning Play Group! This fun group will meet every other Friday morning from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. in the Youth Room of the Parish office and periodically for special family-themed events. Join us during Advent on Thursday, December 6 for the 177 Project at St. Jude and Friday, December 7 for our regularly-scheduled group get-together. For more information and to join the group, please email Brittany at brenne@ststephenparish.com.

NEW! PARISH MOM'S GROUP

St. John Paul II put it best when he said, "In the family women have the opportunity to transmit the faith in the early training of their children. They are particularly responsible for the joyful task of leading them to discover the supernatural world. The deep communion uniting her with them allows her to guide them effectively to Christ." We can't, and are not expected to, do it alone! Come join our Mom's Group for prayer and companionship every other Thursday evening - moms of all ages are encouraged to join! During Advent, we will meet on Thursday, December 13 at 7:00 p.m. in the Parish Office. For more information, please email Brittany at brenne@ststephenparish.com.

SUPERGRADS ANNUAL CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON

All seniors of the parish (ages 55+) and guests are invited to attend the Annual SuperGrads Christmas Luncheon on Wednesday, December 12. We will begin with Mass in the Chapel of the Parish Office at 11:00 a.m. When Mass concludes, we will head to Pietro's (located at 2780 Birchcrest Drive Southeast). Please enter through the back door. Each person attending will be responsible for their own bill. Please call Donna Francisco at (616) 307-1734 or the parish office at (616) 243-8998 ext 201 to reserve your spot before December 5!

ST. STEPHEN SCHOOL CHRISTMAS PROGRAM

The Annual School Christmas Program will be held Wednesday, December 19 at 6:30 p.m. at St. Paul the Apostle Catholic Church. Children in Kindergarten through 6th grade will be performing their favorite Christmas songs!

BREAKFAST WITH SANTA

Grab your kids and join us Saturday, December 15 from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. in the Family Center to for a morning of fun hosted by the St. Stephen Home & School Board. You can even visit with Santa! We will have crafts, activities, and a delicious breakfast - prepared by our very own Knights of Columbus Council #15691. There is no cost for this event, however goodwill donations are encouraged. If you have any questions or would like to volunteer your time and talent to make this morning a success, please contact Dale Wood at dalewood@gmail.com.

WELCOMING NEW PARISH CHOIR MEMBERS FOR ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS

Are you looking for a way to experience greater joy in your heart and give of your time and talent during the special seasons of Advent and Christmas? The parish choir is always accepting new members! We rehearse in the Music Room in the lower level of the school from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. every Wednesday. All interested must be able to sing in tune and work as a member of a team. Please contact the Choir Director, Barbara Witham McCargar at barbara.mccargar@aquinas.edu.

CHILDREN'S CHOIR FOR CHRISTMAS

If your child loves to sing or just has a love for music, we'd love to have them join the Children's Choir! This is a wonderful opportunity for your children to minister to others through music. The Children's Choir rehearses every Wednesday from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. in the Music Room in the lower level of the school. Please contact Children's Choir Director, Olivia Vargas, for more information and for a full schedule at ovargas@ststephenparish.com.

ST. STEPHEN SCHOOL

EARLY CHILDHOOD OPEN HOUSE

Are you interested in sending your young children to St. Stephen School? Please attend our Early Childhood Open House on January 10 from 6:00 to 7:00 p.m. This open house is for families to learn about our top-notch Preschool program for 3 and 4-year-olds. Know a family that might love St. Stephen? Help us spread the word! Contact Monica McGuire at (616) 243-8998 ext 206 for more information.



St. Stephen Catholic Church
723 Rosewood Avenue Southeast
East Grand Rapids, MI 49506

NONPROFIT
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
GRAND RAPIDS, MI
PERMIT NO. 711

Electronic Service Requested

Solemnity of Mary - January 1
Epiphany - January 6
Early Childhood Open House - January 10
Msgr. Alt Dinner - January 26
Catholic Schools Week - January 28 - February 1
Ash Wednesday - March 6
Spring Break - April 1 - 5
Palm Sunday - April 14
Holy Thursday - April 18
Good Friday - April 19
Holy Saturday - April 20
Easter - April 21
Confirmation - April 23
First Communion - May 5
Graduation Mass & Brunch - May 19
Pentecost - June 9
Assumption of the Blessed Virgin - August 15



**COMING IN
2019!**

For more information on these events and to view the parish calendar
please visit www.StStephenParish.com