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Contact: Maria Zone
Director of Communications
Archdiocese of Hartford
(860) 541-6491
Maria.Zone@ahct.org

**Two Hamden Catholic Schools Will Become One:
*St. Rita and St. Stephen Unite in 2017-2018 Academic Year***

HAMDEN, Conn. (March 13, 2017) – [Saint Rita School](#) on 1601 Whitney Ave., and [Saint Stephen School](#) on 418 Ridge Rd., located approximately one mile from each other in Hamden, will become one school, effective in the upcoming 2017-2018 academic year. Rev. Thomas W. Hickey, pastor of Saint Stephen Church, announced the decision on Monday evening at a meeting with school employees, board members, and parents at Saint Stephen School. Both parish-owned schools also notified their communities by electronic communications on Monday.

According to Rev. Hickey and Rev. Philip J. Sharkey, pastor of Saint Rita Church, the combined school will educate pre-K through grade eight students at the Saint Rita building, which is the larger of the two school buildings. Currently, 317 are enrolled at Saint Rita School and 150 students attend Saint Stephen.

“After careful reflection,” said Rev. Hickey, “we have determined that it is best for Saint Stephen School to integrate its students into Saint Rita School. This was a difficult decision, but one that was made with the long-term interest of the students at heart. Both schools are vibrant communities with rich traditions of quality Catholic education. However, we have been looking at growth and viability projections ten years into the future, and decided that it was better to combine the schools now, while we both are strong and healthy financially.” Rev. Hickey emphasized, “It is important to note that neither school is failing. The decision to move to the Saint Rita location was made because it can accommodate both school populations and still have the room to house more students.”

“We hope to make the transition from one school building to another as smooth as possible for our students, and are committed to preserving the traditions, cultures, and best practices of each school in order to make students as comfortable as possible,” said Rev. Sharkey.

Patricia Tiezzi, principal of Saint Rita School, will continue in this role at the combined school. Saint Stephen School principal Maria Testa will join the St. Rita leadership team as a vice principal, and Sr. Anne D’Alessio, ASCJ will continue to serve as a vice principal. Mrs. Testa assured the Saint Stephen School community that she will be highly involved in assisting students through the transition and ensuring that the “values and traditions of Saint Stephen’s will become a part of their new school community as it joins with Saint Rita’s.”

“I look forward to working with Mrs. Testa and know that she will be a great addition to our leadership team. The entire Saint Rita community will join me in welcoming Saint Stephen students and their families with open arms,” said Mrs. Tiezzi. “Our goals are the same; to

provide outstanding education within a Christ-centered and nurturing environment, and to prepare our students to be innovative thinkers and morally responsible citizens. The students always come first.”

The decision to become one school came as a result of the [pastoral planning process](#) occurring throughout the Archdiocese of Hartford. Decisions regarding the parishes in Hamden are still under consideration.

FAQs About Saint Rita School and Saint Stephen School in Hamden

March 13, 2017

Q: What are the benefits of Saint Rita and Saint Stephen becoming one school?

A: Bringing together the two parish-owned schools will ensure that Catholic elementary education will remain strong and vibrant in Hamden in the future. Students will benefit from combined academic resources, experienced faculty, and a blending of school traditions and cultures.

Maintenance costs and monthly expenditures will be radically reduced by having one school building versus two.

Q: How was the decision made to house both schools in one building?

A: The discussion arose during the pastoral planning process. The local pastors and the Office of Pastoral Planning of the Archdiocese of Hartford consulted one another regarding how the seven Hamden parishes could best serve the faithful. They had conversations about how to make Catholic education sustainable, and ultimately decided that having one combined Catholic school in Hamden was a viable answer. The parish trustees were consulted prior to the decision to move forward with this plan.

Q: What changed since assurances were made indicating that Saint Stephen School would remain open?

A: The timeline for the implementation of the pastoral plan was not clear at the beginning of the school year. We knew that Saint Stephen and Saint Rita parishes would be combined in some fashion, but we did not know when or exactly how that would take place. Although not confirmed, plans have evolved in recent weeks, and indicate that the prospect of a single new pastorate with two schools is simply not feasible.

Q: Why was the Saint Rita School building chosen to house the combined school?

A: The main reason why the Saint Rita building was chosen is because it can accommodate both student populations: 150 students from Saint Stephen and 317 students from Saint Rita, and still have room to accommodate new students.

Q: What will the name of the combined school be?

A: One result of the pastoral planning process will be the determination of the name of the parish, and this most likely will become the name of the school. In the meantime, the schools and parishes will use their current names.

Q: Will transportation be an issue for students?

A: Since the schools are approximately one mile apart from each other and students currently share the buses, transportation should not be an issue. Busing will continue to be provided in the same manner as in the past since both schools are located in the Town of Hamden. The only difference will be in the school drop off.

Q: What will the tuition be?

A: Tuition at the combined school will be as follows:

K-8 Tuition: \$4,705 (Catholic students), \$5,454 (unaffiliated students)

Fees: Textbook and technology fees are included in the tuition and there is a \$150 Home and School Association assessment which is capped at \$350 per family.

Pre K tuition: varies depending on the hours attended.

Before and After Care are both available.

Saint Stephen School will provide tuition assistance of \$500 per student for those from Saint Stephen School who enroll at Saint Rita. This will help cover any change in costs as Saint Stephen students transition to a new school. Tuition assistance may also be available from Saint Rita School to those qualified families who apply through Smart Aid (the Smart Tuition program).

Students who apply for and receive scholarships from the Foundation for the Advancement of Catholic Schools (FACS), and the CEO Foundation will continue to receive those funds as those scholarships follow the students to their new school.

Q: What will the school day/hours be?

A: The school day at the combined school will run from 8:15 a.m. to 2:50 p.m. with a 12:15 dismissal on early dismissal days.

Q: How will Saint Stephen students be introduced to Saint Rita students?

A: The Saint Stephen students will visit the school on the following dates: Grades K to 3 will visit on March 20 during the school day. Current Pre K parents are also invited to visit during the day on March 20 with their child, providing their own transportation. Grades 4 to 7 will visit during the day on March 22. An Open House for parents will also be held on March 22 from 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. (with a presentation/welcome at 6:00 p.m.) for all grades. Parents will be receiving detailed information on these activities.

These events will allow students and their families to explore the school, meet new friends, and familiarize themselves with their new academic “home” which includes a designated gym, a science lab, daily hot lunch program, full time nurse, and two classes at each grade level.

Q: What will become of the educational resources, technology, and furnishings at Saint Stephen School?

A: The educational resources and textbooks, technology, furnishings, and extra-curricular/athletic supplies currently being utilized at Saint Stephen School will be transferred over to Saint Rita for the use of all the students.

Q: Who will be the principal of the combined school?

A: Current Saint Rita Principal Patricia Tiezzi will remain in her position as principal. Saint Stephen Principal Maria Testa will join the leadership team as a Vice Principal, and Sr. Anne D’Alessio, ASCJ will continue to serve as a Vice Principal at Saint Rita.

Q: Will teachers from Saint Stephen School be on the faculty at the combined school?

A: Teachers from Saint Stephen School will be given priority status in hiring at area Catholic schools and for any open positions at Saint Rita School.

Q: Will students require new uniform?

A: In order to feel part of the new combined school community, all students will use the Saint Rita uniform. Part of the \$500 in funds provided from Saint Stephen School for its students’ tuition will help offset the cost of new uniforms. Uniforms can be purchased from Dennis Uniform. Contact Anne Lynch at (203) 795-5457 or review the website at www.dennisuniform.com. Saint Rita also offers a uniform exchange program at no cost, which will be available to Saint Stephen families.

Q: What will happen to the Saint Stephen School building?

A: The parish will determine the future use of the building.

Q: Why should my child continue in Catholic school education?

A: As a Catholic school parent, you well know the benefits of a faith-based education. These include a safe, nurturing environment, strong Catholic identity, academic rigor, personalized instruction, and an emphasis on Christian morals and character development.