



Our Ministry & How it Works

Stephen Ministers are called by God to extend Christian care to those who are in the midst of trial and stress. Jesus is the model for this loving care. Stephen Ministers are trained to provide caring, confidential, and non-judgmental listening and support. Their role of care giver allows them to accompany and support their care receiver through difficult times. They are not counselors, nor are they in a position to fix problems.

Some examples where a Stephen Minister can provide caring spiritual support include (but are not limited to) the following crisis and life change experiences:

- death of loved one
- terminal illness
- hospitalization, nursing care
- marital separation, divorce
- traumatic accidents
- loneliness
- relocation
- physical/emotional abuse
- life changes/loss in general (aging, health, coping)
- birth of child, parenting challenges
- aging children (leaving for college, military, marriage)

When an adult (18+) person in need consents to receiving care from a Stephen Minister, they are then matched up with a Stephen Minister (of the same sex). They meet with their Stephen Minister one-on-one weekly for about an hour. Duration of the caring relationship depends on the need and often runs anywhere from three-six months, to a year, and sometimes more. Although a Stephen Minister from the care receiver's home church is made available first, there can also be situations where a care giver is provided from another church in the alliance. Either way, both the care receiver and the care giver are provided with the opportunity to accept the assignment.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT STEPHEN MINISTRY

Who are Stephen Ministers?

Stephen Ministers are trained lay ministers who have undergone 50 hours of ministry training, are regularly supervised by their peers, and feel a special call to use their God-given gifts for listening and caring to help those in times of distress. Once trained, they are paired in a one-to-one relationship with someone who will benefit from their weekly one-hour meetings in which lay care and prayer are offered.

What are some kinds of needs people have in our congregation or community that would benefit from one-to-one Christian care through a Stephen Minister?

- Those who are grieving the loss of a loved one
- People who are hospitalized
- Individuals who are terminally ill and their families
- People who are experiencing divorce (before, during, and after)
- Parent who have children leaving the home for college, military, marriage or work in another area
- People who are lonely
- New member to the congregation and community
- Family members who have someone in a nursing home and family who serve as caregivers
- Inactive members
- Parents and families of people with disabilities
- Those who are homebound or in a nursing home
- People facing birth-related issues such as infertility, adoption, and unplanned pregnancy
- People who have suffered a significant financial setback
- People who have lost their jobs
- Single parents
- People preparing to retire, recently retired, or who have been forced to retire early
- People in the process of moving away from our community
- People affected by disasters (natural and human-caused)

Who are Stephen Leaders?

Those members of the congregation who have attended a one-week Leader's Training Course (LTC) to learn how to direct their church's Stephen Ministry. Our Stephen Leader team includes: Joanne Reindeers, Joanne Werner and Jeff Miller.

How long does it take to become a Stephen Minister?

Stephen Ministers receive 50 hours of training, broken down into approximately 20 2 ½ hour training sessions. Each session uses an adult education format that combines a variety of teaching methods. Once trained and commissioned as a Stephen Minister, you will be "active", meaning you can be assigned to one care-receiver. Stephen Ministers make a three-year commitment to the program, and while active, will only be assigned to one care-receiver at a time.

Can anyone become a Stephen Minister?

Stephen Ministers have gifts for caring. They listen, care, and have great empathy. They are patient, dependable, nonjudgmental, and don't try to fix things or tell people what to do. They can keep things confidential, and they have time to commit to this ministry. Not everyone fits this description, but we believe all of us have unique gifts for serving. If not Stephen Ministry, we can help direct you to a ministry that fits your God-giving gifts.

Do care-receivers have to be members of Shepherd of the Hills?

No. Stephen Ministry can be a wonderful way for our congregation to reach out with Christ's love to hurting people in our community who have no church home.

Who knows about the caring relationship?

Stephen Ministry is a confidential ministry. The only people who know a Stephen Minister has been assigned to a person are the Stephen Leader who made the care-giving assignment (the Referrals Coordinator), the Stephen Minister involved, and the person who has requested the Stephen minister. Under very rare circumstances, the pastor who works with Stephen Leaders may be consulted. Stephen Ministers do not reveal the identity of their care receiver even to other Stephen Ministers. Of course, a care receiver may choose to tell others about the relationship, but the Stephen Minister will tell no one.

How long does a caring relationship last?

It depends. Relationships are monitored regularly through peer group supervision. Some may last only a few weeks, but others may continue for two years. Each is different.

What does a caring relationship include?

Meeting once a week for about an hour in a consistent location for a ministry of listening. Caring relationships do not involve the Stephen Minister running errands, delivering meals, or other types of things that our Helping Hands volunteers or deacons are equipped to do.