What Is Stephen Ministry?

Check out the Stephen Ministry by the Numbers booklet for a brief overview of Stephen Ministry.

Bear one another’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2, NRSV).

Stephen Ministry is the one-to-one lay caring ministry that takes place in congregations that use the Stephen Series system.

Stephen Ministry congregations equip and empower lay caregivers—called Stephen Ministers—to provide high-quality, confidential, Christ-centered care to people who are hurting.

How Stephen Ministry Works

The best way to understand how Stephen Ministry works is to learn about three groups of people involved in this ministry: Stephen Leaders, Stephen Ministers, and care receivers.

Stephen Leaders

Stephen Leaders—direct the overall ministry in the congregation.

Stephen Leaders establish and direct Stephen Ministry in a congregation. They—
- build awareness of Stephen Ministry within the congregation and community
- recruit and train Stephen Ministers
- meet with potential care receivers to assess their needs
- match care receivers with Stephen Ministers
- provide Stephen Ministers with ongoing supervision and continuing education

People learn to serve as Stephen Leaders by attending a Leader’s Training Course—a one-week conference that introduces the resources used to lead Stephen Ministry, develops key skills, and gets people excited about this caring ministry. Most congregations begin with two to four Stephen Leaders, typically including a pastor, possibly another church staff person, and one or more lay leaders.

Stephen Ministers

Stephen Ministers—Lay caregivers trained in the congregation by Stephen Leaders.

Stephen Ministers are congregation members trained by Stephen Leaders to offer high-quality, one-to-one Christian care to people going through tough times. A Stephen Minister usually provides care to one person at a time, meeting with that person once a week for about an hour. Twice a month, Stephen Ministers gather with their Stephen Leaders for supervision and continuing education.
Care Receivers

Care Receivers—People going through tough times that are being cared for by Stephen Ministers.

Care receivers are people—congregation members and others in the community—who receive care from a Stephen Minister. These are people struggling through a difficult time in life—experiencing grief, divorce, job loss, chronic or terminal illness, or some other life crisis.

Some important guidelines for this caring relationship protect both the care receiver and the Stephen Minister:

- The relationship between a care receiver and a Stephen Minister is confidential.
- Men are matched with men; women with women.
- When a care receiver’s needs exceed what a Stephen Minister can provide, the Stephen Ministry team makes a referral to an appropriate mental health professional or other community resource.

The Blessings of Stephen Ministry

Pastor Dennis Apple—passionate about Stephen Ministry

Stephen Ministry multiplies blessings throughout the church and community.

- Congregations receive a practical and powerful way to respond to Christ’s commandment: “Love one another as I have loved you” (John 15:12 RSV).
- Pastors have a team of gifted, trained and committed lay caregivers ready to minister to hurting people (information for pastors).
- Laypeople nurture and use their gifts in meaningful ministry, growing spiritually as they serve others.
- People who are hurting have a compassionate companion—a caring Christian friend who provides emotional and spiritual support.

A Vibrant, Lasting Ministry

You’ll find Stephen Ministry in congregations from more than 160 Christian denominations, across the U.S. and Canada and in 24 other countries.

Stephen Ministry is built to last—going strong for over 20 or even 30 years in hundreds of congregations.

Since Stephen Ministries was founded in 1975:

- More than 12,000 congregations have enrolled in the Stephen Series.
- More than 65,000 pastors and lay leaders from those congregations have been equipped at Leader’s Training Courses.
- More than 600,000 laypeople have received Stephen Minister training.
- More than one-and-a-half-million people have had a Stephen Minister to walk with them, providing one-to-one Christian care during tough times.

Next Steps

- Learn how to begin Stephen Ministry in your congregation
- Request a free packet of information about Stephen Ministry
- Attend a half-day Stephen Ministry Introductory Workshop
How to Begin Stephen Ministry in Your Church

**Step 1: Enroll Your Congregation (a One-Time Step)**
Your Stephen Ministry begins when your congregation enrolls in the Stephen Series. Enrollment gives you access to training, resources, and ongoing support from the Stephen Ministries organization.

- If you’d like information on how to enroll, or if you have any questions, call us at 314-428-2600.

**Step 2: Train Stephen Leaders at a Leader’s Training Course (LTC)**
The pastors and lay leaders who will lead your Stephen Ministry attend a one-week Leader’s Training Course. They return home inspired and equipped to establish and direct your Stephen Ministry.

**Step 3: Recruit and Train Stephen Ministers in the Congregation**
After the LTC, your Stephen Leaders recruit, select, and equip a team of lay caregivers to serve as Stephen Ministers.

**Step 4: Match Stephen Ministers with People in Need of Care**
Your Stephen Leaders match Stephen Ministers with people in need of care. Each Stephen Minister meets with his or her care receiver for about an hour a week to provide one-to-one Christ-centered care. Men are matched with men; women with women.

**Step 5: Provide Support and Supervision for Stephen Ministers**
Your Stephen Ministers gather together twice monthly to receive the guidance, support, and encouragement they need to provide high-quality care. They also participate in continuing education to enhance their skills.

**A Vibrant, Lasting Ministry!**
Your congregation enrolls just once but continues to repeat steps 2 to 5—as your Stephen Ministry grows and becomes a vital, lasting ministry in your congregation.

**Next Steps**
- Request a free packet of information about Stephen Ministry
- Attend a half-day Stephen Ministry Introductory Workshop
Experience a Sample of Stephen Minister Training and Learn How Your Church Can Begin Stephen Ministry

Stephen Ministry Introductory Workshops are half-day events where you and others from your congregation can:

- catch a vision for lay caring ministry;
- experience a sample of Stephen Minister training; and
- learn the basics about Stephen Ministry—how it works, the benefits it offers, and how to bring Stephen Ministry to your congregation.

You’ll come away with a clear understanding of the difference Stephen Ministry makes and a vision for getting it started in your congregation.

Attending one of these workshops is not mandatory for beginning Stephen Ministry—but they are an excellent way to get your questions answered and learn what Stephen Ministry is all about.

Three Engaging Sessions in each Workshop

Workshops take place on Saturdays from 9:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M. or Sundays from 2:00 P.M. to 6:00 P.M. and are hosted by Stephen Ministry congregations.

Each workshop has three sessions:

SESSION 1: Ministering to Those Experiencing Grief
- Sample the quality of Stephen Minister training firsthand
- Develop grief ministry skills you can put to use right away

SESSION 2: An Introduction to Stephen Ministry
- Explore the life-changing value of this ministry
- Discover how to bring Stephen Ministry to your congregation

SESSION 3: How to Care in a Distinctively Christian Way
- Learn to integrate faith into everyday caring and relating
- Experience the Christ-centered nature of Stephen Ministry
Who Should Attend?

Each participant receives an informative packet of materials. Every congregation receives a set of DVDs with inspiring videos to build support for beginning Stephen Ministry.

- Pastors and church staff
- Lay leaders and decision makers
- Caregivers and care giving teams

Cost: $15 per person or $50 for a group of four or more from your congregation or organization

Workshop Dates and Locations

Stephen Ministry Introductory Workshops are hosted at Stephen Ministry congregations across the United States.

- See the nationwide schedule of upcoming workshops.
- Use your state or zip code to search for a workshop in your area.

Three Ways to Register

Take advantage of the group rate and bring a team of leaders and caregivers from your congregation.

1. Register Online (using a credit card)

Locate the workshop you wish to attend, click on “Register,” and complete the online registration form.

2. Register by Phone

Call the Stephen Ministries Center at (314) 428-2600 (Monday to Friday, 8 A.M. to 5 P.M. Central Time).

3. Register by Mail or Fax

Download a registration form (in PDF format), fill it in, and mail or fax it to Stephen Ministries. Instructions are on the form.

If you cannot attend but would like to learn more about how to begin Stephen Ministry in your congregation, call us at (314) 428-2600 to request a free information packet.

How to Get the Most from This Workshop

- Pray for the Holy Spirit to gather a team of people who would benefit from this workshop.
- Share your excitement about coming to the workshop.
- Ask others to prayerfully consider attending with you.
- Encourage them to explore the Stephen Ministries website, write down questions they may have, and bring those questions to the workshop.

For more information, see http://www.stephenministries.org