

Stephen Ministry

God works through Stephen Ministers in our congregation to support and help our members, their families, friends and acquaintances. As people experience crises or special needs in their lives, trained Stephen Ministers are there to listen and provide caring Christian support.

What does Stephen Ministry offer?

The program provides one-to-one caring ministry by trained lay-members of our congregation. It is an extension – not a replacement – of pastoral care for those experiencing difficult circumstances in their lives. A Stephen Minister visits another person regularly and dependably and offers Christian support.

Why is Stephen Ministry so effective?

When people experience loss, grief or other threatening changes in their lives, there is a need for an *empathetic listener* – someone to listen to feelings. There is also a need for a supportive person who can help to sort out options and perhaps to suggest other community resources.

Unfortunately, family and close friends often become too emotionally involved to best serve these needs. A Stephen Minister is trained to reach out and to be a caring friend. Stephen Ministry emphasizes God as the *curegiver*. Our Stephen Ministers are *caregivers* (not caretakers). A Stephen Minister is *not* a professional counselor or psychologist, a social worker providing physical services, an expert in law, finance, church doctrine, etc. A Stephen Minister is a caring presence.

What about confidentiality?

Confidentiality is the basis of all Stephen Ministry relationships. Everyone receiving care can be assured that their identities – and what is shared in a caring relationship – will remain private.

Where are Stephen Ministers used?

Stephen Ministers help and support people in many different situations. These needs include, but are not limited to: the homebound and, those with disabilities, those in separation or a divorce, households experiencing birth or adoption, those with a job loss or financial setback, the hospitalized, the terminally ill and their families, those who are depressed, those grieving a death or serious loss, and those in spiritual crisis.

How to request a Stephen Minister?

If you or someone you know would like to request a Stephen Minister, call Rev. Bill Roth at the Church office at 704-376-8584. Stephen Ministry assignments are made only after consultation with the people involved.