

Frequently Asked Questions about Stephen Ministry



Why the name Stephen?

In Acts 6, Stephen was among those chosen to provide caring ministry to those in need. Since Jesus' time, caring ministry has been a hallmark of the Christian faith community.

Who are Stephen Ministers?

Stephen Ministers are members of your congregation trained to provide one-to-one, Christ-centered care. They have a compassionate heart for those who are hurting, and they're equipped with caring ministry skills by your congregation's Stephen Leaders. A Stephen Minister typically has one care receiver at a time and meets with that person once a week to listen, care, pray, encourage, and offer emotional and spiritual support.

In what types of situations do Stephen Ministers provide care?

Stephen Ministers provide care to individuals facing difficult times in life—grief, cancer, divorce, financial difficulties, hospitalization, chronic illness, job loss, disability, a spiritual crisis, or other life struggles.

How does Stephen Ministry benefit pastors?

Stephen Ministry supports your pastor by deepening, expanding, and extending the caring capacity of your church. A team of Stephen Ministers, along with a pastor, provides ongoing care for more people than the pastor could provide alone. This also frees your pastor to invest more time in other important ministry areas.

Who are Stephen Leaders?

Stephen Leaders are the lay leaders, church staff members, and pastors who are equipped to oversee Stephen Ministry in your congregation. Stephen Leaders have gifts and skills in areas such as leadership, teaching, and organizing people, along with a heart for caring ministry.

How many Stephen Leaders should we have?

It depends on the size of your congregation and the scope of your ministry. Most congregations begin with two to four Stephen Leaders and then periodically train more to expand and strengthen their team.

What is the Bridge Leader's Training Course?

The Bridge Leader's Training Course (BLTC) is a live, interactive online training experience through which lay leaders, church staff, and pastors are equipped to serve as Stephen Leaders. They learn the Stephen Ministry System so they can start and lead Stephen Ministry in your congregation.

Does the BLTC train people to become Stephen Ministers?

It doesn't—the BLTC trains people to be Stephen Leaders, the ones who lead Stephen Ministry in your congregation. Those Stephen Leaders then train members of your congregation to serve as Stephen Ministers and provide care.

Do Stephen Ministers care for people outside their congregation?

Yes. Stephen Ministers often provide care for people in the broader community, enhancing and expanding outreach in a powerful way.

Will people commit to training and serving as Stephen Ministers?

Yes—and more than 600,000 have done so since 1975. People are eager to use their God-given gifts in meaningful ministry to others while they grow spiritually and learn to use their skills in all relationships.

How many congregations have Stephen Ministry?

More than 13,000 congregations have Stephen Ministry—representing over 190 denominations, all 50 states, all 10 Canadian provinces, and 30 other countries. Many of these congregations have had Stephen Ministry going for over 30 years.

What does the Stephen Ministry logo mean?

The Stephen Ministry logo represents a care receiver's journey from brokenness toward wholeness through the cross of Jesus. In this way, it illustrates "Christ caring for people through people."



What is enrollment?

Enrollment begins a relationship between Stephen Ministries and your church. After paying a one-time enrollment fee, with no annual dues or subscriptions, your congregation will receive many benefits, including:

- A step-by-step system for an effective lay caring ministry

- Access to high-quality training and resources
- Free ongoing consultation and support

Will Stephen Ministry work in my situation?

Stephen Ministry works well in congregations of all sizes, demographics, and styles, including—

- Congregations with fewer than 100 members and more than 10,000.
- Congregations in urban, suburban, and rural communities.
- Congregations that are mainline, evangelical, traditional, contemporary, missional, and non-denominational.
- Congregations founded in the 1700s and in the current decade.

Stephen Ministry works in so many different situations because two factors are constant for every congregation:

1. There are always many more people in need of care, both in the congregation and in the community, than a pastor alone can care for.
2. There are always gifted laypeople capable of providing high-quality Christian care—if they're trained and organized to do so.

What is the Stephen Ministries organization?

Stephen Ministries St. Louis is a not-for-profit Christian education organization founded in 1975. Our staff carries out our mission to "equip God's people for the work of ministry" (Ephesians 4:12). Helping congregations get involved in Stephen Ministry is a major way we accomplish this mission.