



Stephen Ministry at Cary Presbyterian Church

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

What is Stephen Ministry?

Stephen Ministry offers a proven and effective way to organize, equip, and supervise a team of congregation members – called Stephen Ministers – to provide high quality, one-to-one, Christ-centered care to people in the congregation and the community experiencing life difficulties.

The name *Stephen* comes from St. Stephen, the first layperson commissioned by the Apostles to provide caring ministry to those in need. (Acts 6)

Stephen Ministries is an independent, not-for-profit, Christian organization based in St. Louis. It was founded in 1975 by the psychologist Rev. Kenneth Haugk. More than 12,000 congregations from 160 Christian denominations are now involved, and are located in the US and 24 other countries.

Cary Presbyterian Church, under the leadership of David Voss, Peg Giesbrecht and Linda Finfrock, commissioned its first class of Stephen Ministers in 1999.

What Types of Needs Does Stephen Ministry Meet?

Stephen Ministry provides emotional and spiritual care for people dealing with a wide range of difficulties, such as

- Grief
- Medical crisis
- Job loss
- Divorce or breakup in relationships
- Family caregiver stress
- End of life
- Financial difficulties
- Major life transition (retirement, move to assisted living, blended family, empty nest)

Who is Involved in Stephen Ministry?

- Stephen Leaders are pastors and lay leaders who receive extensive training by the Stephen Ministry Leader's Training Course to provide ongoing leadership for the congregation's Stephen Ministry program. They are Len Clark, Linda Oglesby, Kimberly Markham, Denise Peoples, Donna Adkins, JerryLyn Luckie and Jeanne Bolick.
- Stephen Ministers are congregation members trained by their Stephen Leaders to offer care to people who are hurting. Stephen Ministers undergo 50 hours of initial training, followed by twice monthly continuing education and supervision. A Stephen Minister typically has one care receiver at a time and meets with that person once a week for about an hour. CPC has 18 active Stephen Ministers.
- Care receivers are individuals in the congregation or community who are going through a crisis or life difficulty. Potential care receivers first meet with a Stephen Leader, who assesses their needs for care and matches them with a Stephen Minister (men are matched with men, women with women). The caring relationship lasts for as long as there is need.

Confidentiality is a cornerstone of Stephen Ministry.

- The only people who know the identity of a care receiver are the Stephen Leader referrals coordinator, the Stephen Minister and the care receiver.
- While Stephen Ministers receive supervision twice a month, they do not use the names of their care receivers or any identifying details.

What does the Stephen Minister do?

- The Stephen Minister is trained to listen and provide caring support. They do not offer advice. If additional support, such as transportation or meals, is needed, they make referrals to other programs such as the Deacons.

FAQs

- I don't feel right asking for a Stephen Minister when my problem is so trivial compared to others. Shouldn't we save our Stephen Ministry resources for those who are truly in need?

Answer: It is normal for people to compare their situations with those of others. Stephen Ministry is designed to help people deal with a wide range of difficulties, none of which is too small. We have plenty of Stephen Ministers available to meet the church's needs.

- I have a friend who could benefit from a Stephen Minister but she doesn't go to CPC. Is she still eligible?

Answer: We provide Stephen Ministers to congregation members and others in the community.

- I would like to request a Stephen Minister but am reluctant to meet with one who is a member of our church. What options are there?

Answer: CPC coordinates with other churches that have Stephen Ministry programs. We can match you with a Stephen Minister from a neighboring church.

- Given the current COVID-19 and variants numbers, I don't want to meet with a Stephen Minister in person. Do the meetings have to be in person?

Answer: While it is optimal for the Stephen Minister and care receiver to meet in person, we recognize the need for safety and comfort. The care receiver can request meetings via Zoom, FaceTime, telephone, outside when weather accommodates. They can also request that their Stephen Minister wear a mask.

How do I make a referral to Stephen Ministry?

- If you would like to request a Stephen Minister for yourself, please contact one of the two Referrals Coordinators – Jeanne Bolick (919-616-4675) and Len Clark (919-612-4302).
- If you know someone who might benefit from having a Stephen Minister, please ask that person's permission to give their name and contact information to one of the Referrals Coordinators. The coordinator will then contact that person directly to explain the program and assess their needs.