

Frequently Asked Questions about Stephen Ministry

What Exactly is Stephen Ministry?

Stephen Ministry is a ministry in our parish in which trained and supervised lay parishioners from St. Elizabeth and St. Dominic, called Stephen Ministers, provide one-to-one Christian care to individuals facing life challenges or difficulties.

Who is Involved?

Stephen Leaders are the ones who oversee and direct our Stephen Ministry. They will recruit, select, train, organize, and supervise our Stephen Ministers. They will also identify people in need of care and match them with a Stephen Minister. We have three Stephen Leaders: Father Wheeler, Linda Herman, and Susan Ellis.

Stephen Ministers are the caregivers. They will have engaged in 50 hours of training in Christian caregiving, including general topics such as listening, feelings, boundaries, assertiveness, trust, and confidentiality (an extremely important principle in this program). Their training will also cover specialized topics such as ministering to the divorced, bereaved, hospitalized, etc. A Stephen Minister will listen, understand, accept, and pray for and with the care receiver (see below) who is working through a crisis or tough time.

Care Receivers are the recipients of Stephen Ministers' care. They are the people from our parish who are experiencing difficulties due to divorce, grief, loss of a job, loneliness, hospitalization, terminal illness, or any number of other life difficulties. Stephen Ministers usually meet with their care receivers once a week for about an hour for as long as the care receiver will benefit by the relationship.

Are Stephen Ministers Counselors?

Stephen Ministers are not counselors; they are trained lay caregivers. Their role is to listen, pray, and care....not to give advice or counsel.

Why the Name Stephen?

The name **Stephen** comes from St. Stephen, who was the first lay person commissioned by the apostles to provide caring ministry to those in need as recorded in Acts 6 of the Bible.

How Can Someone Become a Stephen Minister?

Begin by attending an informational meeting on either March 10 or March 11 when the Stephen Leaders will present more information about the program and responsibilities of the Stephen Minister. Stephen Ministers make a two-year commitment to train and serve. The first training class will begin in spring of this year.

What is Our Priest's Role in this Program?

Father Wheeler will always be the primary caregiver. But there is no way a priest can meet all the needs for care. God has called all of us, not just priests, to minister to one another. "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." (Galatians 6:2)

Where Did It All Start?

Kenneth Haugk, a pastor and clinical psychologist, saw the critical need for caregiving in 1975. He started this program with 8 Stephen Ministers, but by 2010 the program had grown to 60,000 Stephen Ministers!