



Stephen Ministers are congregation members who are recruited, selected, trained, and commissioned to provide one-to-one lay caring ministry to persons in crisis or with other needs for care. They participate in Supervision Group twice a month. They initially commit to serve for two years including training and may renew their commitment.

What Stephen Ministers Do

A defined cluster of activities make up a Stephen Minister's job description.

Pray

Stephen Ministers pray daily for their care receivers and strive to worship God always in word and deed. They reveal the love of God to those who most need to see it.

Care for the Care Receiver

Stephen Ministers are assigned to care receivers—people in crisis who need caring support. Stephen Ministers care for those in moderate difficulties. The Stephen Minister's care helps the care receiver resolve the difficulty and achieve growth.

Most Stephen Ministers meet once a week with their care receivers for about an hour at a time. They may also check in with the care receiver by telephone, particularly when the care receiver is going through a difficult time.

Stephen Ministers use special skills to care for their care receivers. Among the most important are the following:

Listening. Most care receivers need someone simply to listen—really listen—as they talk through their difficulties.

Dealing with feelings. Stephen Ministers reflect the care receiver's content, feelings, and ideas and ask open-ended questions to help the care receiver recognize, express, and accept his or her feelings.

Sharing distinctively Christian caring resources. Stephen Ministers may share a prayer, a Bible verse

Stephen Minister

Ministry Description

Faith Lutheran Church

or story, or other caring gestures that the care receiver would welcome.

Remaining process-oriented. Stephen Ministers do not try to fix the care receiver or his or her problems; they focus on the process of caregiving and rely on God to achieve results.

Relating assertively. Stephen Ministers respect both the needs of the care receiver and their own needs as well.

Maintaining boundaries. Stephen Ministers set appropriate boundaries in the caring relationship, helping the care receiver remain as independent as possible while being there for the care receiver as needed.

Recommending professional care when necessary. Stephen Ministers are not trained to care for those who are suicidal, severely depressed, abusive, or homicidal, or who are abusing drugs or alcohol. If Stephen Ministers recognize that their care receiver's needs exceed the care they are able to provide, they see that the care receiver receives professional care.

Maintain Confidentiality

Stephen Ministers understand that confidentiality is crucial in any caring relationship. The care receiver needs to know that what he or she says to the Stephen Minister will remain in confidence. Stephen Ministers maintain confidentiality and encourage other Stephen Ministers to do the same.

Help Identify People in Need of Stephen Ministry

Stephen Ministers act as ministers of referral, helping to find people who would benefit from the care of a Stephen Minister.

Participate in Twice-Monthly Supervision and Continuing Education Sessions

Stephen Ministers participate faithfully in Small Group Peer Supervision and continuing education, coming prepared to every supervision session unless illness or emergency makes attendance impossible. Supervision provides Stephen Ministers with support, guidance, and accountability for their caring relationships. There are no unsupervised Stephen Ministers.

Help the Congregation Understand and Appreciate Stephen Ministry

Through their service, Stephen Ministers help the congregation appreciate Stephen Ministry and encourage members to become ministers of referral who help those in crisis receive the care they need.

How the Congregation Supports the Stephen Minister

The Stephen Minister has responsibilities, and so does the congregation.

Training

Through its trained Stephen Leaders, the congregation supplies Stephen Ministers 50 hours of training for this ministry before they are assigned a care receiver, and further supplies continuing education twice monthly as long as the Stephen Ministers serve. The training is comprehensive, and Stephen Ministers can feel confident in their skills for this ministry.

Commissioning

The congregation formally commissions Stephen Ministers at one or more worship services. This allows the community to recognize their efforts, affirm and support their ministry, and pray for them as they begin their caring ministry.

Supervision

Small Group Peer Supervision provides Stephen Ministers with encouragement and assures that no Stephen Minister will ever have to carry the responsibility for his or her care receiver all alone.

Prayers

Stephen Ministers rely on the prayers of the congregation for keeping God's presence foremost in their caring ministry. Sometimes the going will be tough for both caregivers and their care receivers; the Stephen Ministers will need the additional support of knowing that others are lifting their needs as caregivers to God in prayer.

Stephen Leaders

By accepting Stephen Ministry as part of its overall ministry, a congregation agrees to supply the resources that allow for the training of Stephen Leaders. These Stephen Leaders in turn provide

guidance for Stephen Ministers. They train them and ensure that the Supervision and continuing education sessions progress smoothly. They are available to consult with Stephen Ministers when they have questions, face challenges, or suspect that the care receiver's needs exceed the care they are able to give. Stephen Leaders offer support, advice, and affirmation to the Stephen Ministers and ensure the smooth operation of Stephen Ministry in the congregation.

Recognition and Appreciation

The congregation recognizes and appreciates Stephen Ministers for the service they give the congregation.