

Q&A Answers to the Most Frequently Asked Questions about the Stephen Series®

■ Why is it called the Stephen Series?

Stephen was one of the first laypeople commissioned by the Apostles to provide caring ministry (Acts 6). *Series* describes the steps a congregation follows to implement the caring ministry system, which is commonly called *Stephen Ministry*.

■ How many congregations are using Stephen Ministry?

More than 11,000 congregations are enrolled, with hundreds more enrolling each year. They represent more than 150 denominations and come from all 50 United States, 10 Canadian provinces, and 24 other countries. Many congregations have had Stephen Ministry going strong for 20 or 30 years—or longer.

■ What size congregations are involved?

Stephen Ministry congregations range from fewer than 100 members to more than 10,000. Churches of any size have opportunities to care for hurting people in the congregation and community.

■ What are Stephen Leaders?

Stephen Leaders are pastors and lay leaders who direct Stephen Ministry in their congregation. They attend a one-week Leader's Training Course (LTC) where they learn how to effectively lead their congregation's Stephen Ministry.

■ What are Stephen Ministers?

Stephen Ministers are laypeople who receive Christian caregiving training in their congregation and then provide one-to-one Christ-centered care to hurting people. Each Stephen Minister typically has one care receiver at a time and meets with that person once a week.

■ What types of caregiving situations are Stephen Ministers used in?

Stephen Ministers provide high-quality, one-to-one Christian care to individuals facing a variety of crises or life challenges—people who are experiencing grief, divorce, cancer, financial difficulties, hospitalization, chronic illness, job loss, disabilities, loneliness, a spiritual crisis, or other life struggles.

In addition to caring for *members* of the congregation, Stephen Ministers can provide care to *nonmembers*, reaching out to unchurched people in crisis.

■ How does Stephen Ministry benefit pastors?

Pastors tell us that Stephen Ministry deepens, expands, and extends the caregiving capacity of their congregations. A team of Stephen Ministers, together with a pastor, can provide *ongoing care* to *more people* than the pastor ever could alone. This frees pastors to invest more time in other important ministry areas.

Pastors also experience deep satisfaction in equipping laypeople for meaningful ministry that helps them grow in Christian maturity.

■ Who should attend an LTC?

LTCs train Stephen *Leaders*, the individuals who will lead your congregation's Stephen Ministry. Stephen Leaders have gifts and skills in areas such as leadership, teaching, and organizing people—and a heart for caring ministry.

Most congregations begin with two to four Stephen Leaders, often including a pastor. Although lay Stephen Leaders can provide much of the ongoing leadership, Stephen Ministry works best when a pastor has attended an LTC and knows the ministry inside out.

■ Are Stephen Ministers trained at an LTC?

No, LTCs are for Stephen Leaders. Stephen Ministers—lay caregivers—are trained *in the congregation* by their congregation's Stephen Leaders.

■ How many Stephen Ministers should a congregation have?

This varies widely with a congregation's size and situation. Some congregations have as few as six or seven Stephen Ministers. Others have 20, 30, or even more. Start by asking, "How many people in our congregation and community need the kind of care Stephen Ministers provide?"

■ Can you tell me a little about the Stephen Ministries organization?

We are a not-for-profit, Christian education organization founded in 1975. Our staff of about 40 carry out our mission to help congregations "equip God's people for the work of ministry" (Ephesians 4:12). The Stephen Series is a major way we accomplish this mission.

■ What is enrollment?

Enrollment begins a long-term relationship between the Stephen Ministries organization and the congregations we serve. Congregations pay a one-time fee (with no annual dues after

that) and receive many benefits, including:

- a step-by-step system for an effective lay caring ministry;
- access to high-quality training and resources; and
- free ongoing consultation and support.

■ When should our congregation enroll?

You can enroll *any* time before sending your first leaders to an LTC, but we encourage congregations to enroll at least three months before the event when possible. That way your future Stephen Leaders will have plenty of time to register and begin using the Stephen Ministry Getting Started Kit. If you do plan to enroll *right before* the LTC, let us know in advance so we can save space for you.

■ What is the meaning of the logo?

The Stephen Series logo symbolizes that we are all broken people and that we are only made whole through the cross of Jesus.

■ Will people commit to training and serving as Stephen Ministers?

Yes—over *half a million* people have trained and served as Stephen Ministers since 1975. Laypeople are eager to use their caregiving gifts in meaningful ministry to others—and many choose to serve beyond their initial two-year commitment.

