



“My experience having a Stephen Minister is one I will always cherish. During the time of my husband’s lengthy illness my Stephen Minister was always there for me. She provided an opportunity for me to share my innermost feelings and not feel guilty. My Stephen Minister allowed me time to cry when I needed to or just talk as much as I wanted to. Sometimes she did not offer advice...but just listened to what was in my heart, offering kind words to get me through the moment. Whenever I needed to call, day or night, she was there...never making me feel as if I was imposing. After my husband’s death, my Stephen Minister was right there for me...allowing me to express my feelings and help me through some long days. I would recommend to friends, family and anyone going through difficult times to seek out the Stephen Ministry Team at Castleton UMC. You will find caring servants who are willing to walk the journey with you.”

**Need a friend who listens, cares, prays,
supports and encourages?**

Call 284-0834 if you do!












STEPHEN MINISTRY

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

The Stephen Ministry program at Castleton United Methodist Church began in 1984. Since that time, more than 100 members of our congregation have completed the 50-hour training program and been commissioned Stephen Ministers. Castleton Stephen Ministers have provided “caring relationships” to over 300 church members.

So Who Might Benefit?

Times arise in all our lives when we may need the care and compassion of another person. As a Christian friend, a Stephen Minister can provide encouragement and support to help others (primarily members of our congregation) through difficult times. “Times” which could involve:

-  *Hospitalization or a serious illness.*
-  *Grieving after a death.*
-  *Difficulties surrounding a job loss.*
-  *Issues connected with a separation or divorce.*
-  *Struggles within the family.*
-  *Problems facing the elderly.*
-  *Loneliness or discouragement.*
-  *Spiritual crisis or feelings of abandonment.*
-  *Any other difficult circumstance which calls for God’s help to people who are hurting.*

The ministry is named for Stephen in the Bible, the first lay person appointed by the Disciples to “go out and help the needs of the people.” The extensive training equips lay persons to provide distinctively one-on-one Christian care to those experiencing difficulties in their lives. That care encompasses these guidelines:

Stephen Ministers Must Be:

- ☿ Confidential
- ☿ Non-judgmental
- ☿ Dependable
- ☿ Good listeners
- ☿ Christian friends

Stephen Ministers Are Not:

- ☿ Professional counselors or therapists
- ☿ Ordained ministers
- ☿ Problem “fixers”

So how does the program actually work?

Once a request for help is received, Stephen Leaders at CUMC match the people requesting care with a Stephen Minister of the same gender. Typically, the care giver and receiver meet for an hour a week often in person but sometimes by phone.

Stephen Ministry is not a fix-it program... but a talking and listening program. Our role: To serve as a Christian friend who listens, cares, prays, supports and encourages... for as long as the need exists.

CUMC Stephen Ministers also provide other services:

- ☿ Nineteen Stephen Ministers are involved with the hospital follow-up team...calling parishioners who have recently been released from the hospital to wish them well and check on any special needs.
- ☿ Sixteen volunteer to call those who have lost loved ones...then send them four “*Journeying Through Grief*” booklets throughout the year.
- ☿ Congratulatory calls and offers to help with special needs also go to parents of new babies (about 20 new births per year).

What Castleton UMC “Care Receivers” say about our program:

“My Stephen Minister helped me by building my self esteem, letting me share my feelings and being a great listener.”



“My Stephen Minister has enriched my life and given me stability, given me joy and made my life more enjoyable.”



“My Stephen Minister got me through some very tough times during my illness. My faith is stronger because of my Stephen Minister which has helped me become closer in my personal relationships.”



“During an extended health crisis, my Stephen Minister kept me going with prayers and confidential concern allowing me to feel quiet peace. Caring helps cope!”



“During a difficult time in my life, I thought I didn’t need a Stephen Minister to help me through my sorrow. But I was wrong. My Stephen Minister was a sounding board for me and I was able to express many of my inner feelings that could not be discussed with anyone else. Over time, our relationship became one of trust and understanding and the healing process began to take place.”