

STEPHEN MINISTRY AT VIENNA PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Questions and Answers: The Real Truth

The following questions have been asked by one or more people, so this is an attempt to give some answers that may help in your decision as you consider your involvement as a Stephen Minister.

Question: How much of my time will it really involve?

Answer: The actual training involves 50 hours, including two weekend retreats, over six months. The involvement as a Stephen Minister will include one visit (approximately one hour) per week with the person for whom you are caring. You will also be expected to attend two meetings per month for support and ongoing educational opportunities.

Question: How much money will this cost?

Answer: There is a financial cost **only** for training materials, \$50 (*subject to change*).

Question: Will I have to spend money on the person for whom I am caring? [We call this person the “care receiver” and you, the Stephen Minister, are the “caregiver.”]

Answer: No, you are not expected to spend any money whatsoever on the care receiver. You are not expected to personally provide any other needs, such as transportation or childcare. As the caregiver, you may at times assist the person to make contacts in order to arrange for such services.

Question: Will my phone be ringing constantly?

Answer: Each Stephen Minister normally works with only one care receiver at a time. Therefore, contacts are really at a minimum. The Stephen training will assist you in managing too many phone calls or excessive demands in a loving, assertive manner, if that situation would arise. However, it most likely will not.

Question: Will our pastor still help and counsel people?

Answer: Most definitely! The Stephen Ministers will work closely with Pastor David and the Stephen Leaders Team to provide people with additional help.

Question: What if I get in “over my head” – for instance, with a person who threatens suicide?

Answer: The Stephen training helps you to know exactly when and how to request professional

help and to terminate a relationship, when necessary, in a gentle manner. The ongoing support group, the Stephen Leaders, and our pastors are also there to help you to make such decisions. Also, you will not be assigned people who might be in those situations.

Question: How will I personally benefit from this experience?

Answer: You will learn many skills that will be invaluable in your personal life, as well as to you as a Stephen Minister and as a leader at VPC. Also, the satisfaction of helping another person is a blessing almost impossible to describe.

Question: Do I have to stop being a Stephen Minister after two-and-a-half years?

Answer: No, many people decide to recommit after two years for an optional third year, and beyond. Some people take a year off and then begin again. That will be a decision made by you and the Stephen Leaders.

Question: Who will be the care receivers?

Answer: Members of this congregation who are experiencing times of life crisis or transition, and also other people within our community who may turn to us for help.

Question: What if the care receiver doesn't really want me to help?

Answer: Our pastor or the Stephen Leader will make the initial contact. The care receiver will have agreed to meet with you and will be waiting for your first visit.

Question: Are other people as apprehensive as I seem to be about this undertaking?

Answer: Probably so! But the training will eliminate much of this fear because you will not only learn "what to say," but most important, "how to listen."

Question: How do I apply?

Answer: Fill out the application form in this packet. You will then have an opportunity to meet with a few of our Stephen Ministers and Stephen Leader to ask questions and make your final decision.