

# **Berkey Avenue Mennonite Fellowship Stephen Minister Job Description**

## **Overview**

Stephen Ministers are participants in the congregation who are recruited, selected, trained and commissioned to provide one-to-one lay Christian caring ministry to persons facing a life transition or challenge. They participate in a Supervision Group twice a month—even when they currently have no care receiver assigned. They initially commit to serve for two years, including their 50 hours of training, and may renew their commitment.

## **What Stephen Ministers Do**

The following defined cluster of activities makes 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. Their 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 a care receiver is going through a rough time.

Stephen Ministers use their spiritual gifts and skills they acquire in their initial training and in continuing education, to care for their care receivers. Among the most important skills are:

*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 their feelings.

*Sharing distinctively Christian caring resources.* Stephen Ministers may share a prayer, a Bible verse or story, or other caring gestures that a care receiver would welcome.

*Remaining process-oriented.* Stephen Ministers do not try to fix the care receiver or his/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 them 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 they recognize that their care receiver's needs exceed the care they are able to provide, they see that the care receiver is put in contact with professional help.

### **Maintain Confidentiality**

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

## **Participate in Twice-Monthly Supervision and Continuing Education Sessions**

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

## **How the Congregation Supports the Stephen Minister**

### **Stephen Leaders**

By accepting Stephen Ministry as part of its overall ministry, the congregation agrees to supply resources that allow for the training of Stephen Leaders. These Stephen Leaders, in turn, provide guidance for Stephen Ministers. They train them and ensure 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 the congregation's Stephen Ministry. The Stephen Leaders are accountable to the congregation through the Caregiving Commission.

### **Training**

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

## **The Stephen Minister's Spiritual Gifts**

According to the experience of other Stephen Ministry congregations, the following five gifts emerge as most valuable to Stephen Ministers:

*Faith (I Corinthians 12:9)* An unshakable trust and deep conviction that God faithfully and reliably keeps promises. Christians with this gift have a profound belief and confidence in their relationship with Jesus that is an example to others.

*Mercy (Romans 12:8)* An exceptional ability to perform acts of kindness and compassion—even to those undeserving of it. Their deeds of unmerited love are modeled after God's redemptive sacrifice of Jesus, a gift of loving mercy we did not deserve.

*Living the Faith (I Corinthians 12:28; Romans 12:7; Ephesians 4:11)* Communicate with both words and actions—they live what they teach. Their life is often his/her best lesson, following the example of Jesus, the master teacher.

*Encouragement (Romans 12:8)* This includes the ability to inspire, comfort, motivate, strengthen, affirm and be present with others so that they can meet life's challenges with confidence. It points to the promise of the Holy Spirit's presence and the hope that is ours in Christ.

*Knowing (I Corinthians 12:8)* Having a deep, personal relationship with Jesus and sharing the insights gained from it with others. They communicate much more than facts when they talk with people about Jesus. They share in ways that make Jesus personal and real to others.