



We are a Caring Congregation

Applying the Stephen Ministry

## FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH MISSOULA

### First Presbyterian Stephen Ministries

The River flows...faith grows...life abounds

Within us...Christ caring for people through people

Among us...all people serving as ministers of referral for those  
in need of care

Beyond us...embodying Christ-centered care for spiritual nurture and growth  
in our broader community

The pastors of First Presbyterian Church (FPC) Missoula, in their desire to provide continuous ongoing care for this body and outreach to others in the community have decided to implement the Stephen Ministry. Stephen Ministry is designed to equip the saints for the work of providing Christian care-giving to people who are experiencing life challenges. The crisis may be loss of a loved one, chronic or acute illness, divorce, moving to a new location, postpartum blues, loss of job, or any other crisis which may occur. The care will be provided by trained lay people who have committed to 50 hours of training plus regular bimonthly supervision and continuing education sessions. The key to successful ministry is strict confidentiality and supervision. Only the pastor, Referral Coordinator, and care-giver will know the name of the care-receiver. During supervision sessions no name of any care-receiver will ever be revealed so the utmost confidentiality can be maintained. This allows God, the cure-giver, to work in a loving non-judgmental atmosphere. The pastors see this ministry as an extension of their care to the body of Christ.

## **Types of needs for Care**

### **Crisis Care**

Crisis care is the caring ministry people think about first in describing pastoral care. Persons in crisis come readily to mind as possible care receivers for Stephen Ministries. Persons in crisis may be dealing with: hospitalization, terminal illness, death of a loved one, unemployment, divorce, severe financial setback, natural disaster, aftermath of a fire.

### **Follow-up Care**

People commonly need follow-up care in recovering from a major life crisis. Recovery will often include a number of additional crisis flare-ups, life aftershocks following a major earthquake. Failing to deal with these subsequent crises can leave the person even more broken or trying to cope in unhealthy and unhappy ways.

Often when people go through a crisis they receive a lot of attention and support. The church, family, neighbors, and others will be there to help. But what about a couple of months later? Typically the level of attention, support, and care drops off, but the person's need for care may well grow.

The needs for follow-up care can be easy to miss. Care receivers may be reluctant to admit that they need to deal with these additional issues and thus do not see help, even from friends or family members. Congregations can miss these opportunities for care because of the urgent need to concentrate caring energies on new crises. That's why the follow-up care that Stephen Ministers provide is so valuable. They focus on one care receiver, so their attention can't be drawn away by another need for care. They also continue the caring relationship for as long as the care receiver needs it.

### **Chronic Care**

Chronic care is for a long-term problem; chronic illness or suffering can be like a crisis that never ends. Chronic sufferers have to learn to live with major problems that can detract significantly from the quality of life. Needs for chronic care are prevalent.

Chronic sufferers experience unique problems. Research has indicated that suffering a chronic incurable condition can be similar to being treated for chemical dependency. For example, a stigma or shame can be attached to being chronically ill. People can feel that they have somehow brought this on themselves.

Persons in need chronic care include those who are: disabled, in nursing homes, homebound, experiencing chronic pain, living with degenerative diseases.

## **Preventative Care**

Preventative care helps people anticipate and prepare for potentially difficult upcoming events. It is based on the belief that the negative impact of crises can be lessened or even averted by talking through feelings and clarifying expectations prior to an anticipated event. This can help individuals come to a realistic picture of what an upcoming event will be like and to prepare for it emotionally, physically, and spiritually. Preventative care is proactive care, and can be used in situations such as: a woman expecting her first child, an executive approaching his or her retirement, a young man getting married in two months, a 19 year old goes off to college or the military. People often think of these as wonderful life events, but for some they can become difficult times of personal crisis. Stephen Leaders, pastors, and others need to develop a caring vision to be able to see the need and opportunity for preventative care in various life events.

## **Supportive Care**

Supportive care is caring for the caregiver. A Stephen Minister can provide vital support to anyone facing the challenge of caring for a loved one who is going through a life crisis or transition. Persons who need supportive care include: man caring for his dying wife, woman considering placing her elderly parent in a long-term facility, parent of a special-needs child, son or daughter supporting a parent through the death and funeral of the other parent.

In discovering needs for care Stephen Leaders need to look beyond the most obvious needs to see how one individual's crisis can become a crisis for others. Frequently attention is so focused on the person who clearly needs care that others who are in pain do not receive the nurture and support they need. Stephen Leaders sometimes refer Stephen Ministers to those who stand beside people in crisis, helping those caregivers remain strong.