

In 2018 at First UMC Clover we finally initiated Stephen Ministry after a long period of anticipation and preparation. Our trained volunteers have been serving with Mike Bono out front as our Stephen Leader. Mike has undergone 50 hours of training to become our congregational Leader, and has since trained 6 others in equally extensive preparation to serve in this caring capacity.



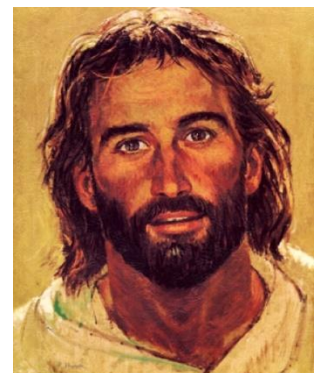
**What is Stephen Ministry? And what are Stephen Ministers?** *Please take a Stephen Ministry brochure while you are here at church, and also to take a few moments perusing the information on the bulletin board in the lobby! There is SO much to know about this wonderful ministry of friendship and support.*

Stephen Ministry is primarily about compassion. It is a lay ministry of caring for others in their times of crisis or during particularly challenging situations which may include health problems, life threatening illnesses, divorce, loss of a loved one, loneliness, job loss, discouragement, aging, miscarriage, relocation, incarceration, recovery, questioning, spiritual crisis, caregiver exhaustion, parenting struggles, relationship challenges and many other circumstances. Stephen Ministers are our everyday friends and family from right here in the congregation, people who have gone the extra mile to spend 50 hours in training and who then commit to regular weekly visits with care receivers offering support and encouragement. Stephen Ministers serve in the spirit of pastoral and shepherding care through times when others need a spiritual friend and companion. Usually they have experienced their own share of hardships, disappointments and suffering, and they approach this service with humility and love, acknowledging their own imperfections and brokenness. Our Stephen Ministers have worked very hard to be ready for this first year of serving their church and we are grateful and proud to have them.

**CONFIDENTIALITY is paramount.** Our Stephen Ministers are *in covenant with their care receivers*, so no one will even know they are sharing this journey with you, *unless you want them to*. The goal of a Stephen Minister is to serve by listening and providing sustained compassion and support to others in times of need, and to keep all sharing confidential. Even the other Stephen Ministers will not know, without your express permission, that you are receiving their support and care through your difficult time or circumstance. Your experience with a Stephen Minister is completely private; it's for your benefit and healing.

**Stephen Ministry is.... Christ Caring for People through People.**

There is so much need for mutual caring in any given congregation That is why there are thousands of Stephen Ministry congregations across all denominations! As the priesthood of all believers, Christians have varieties of gifts in the Spirit. *If you believe you are gifted with the heart for listening, encouraging and caring for others through difficult times, you may want to become a Stephen Minister yourself.* There are no prerequisites other than the gifts and graces to serve in this way and a willingness to learn. We will have another training season beginning in the Fall this year.



Please contact Rev. Meg Wilkes to talk about becoming a member of the next Stephen Ministry training event! And/or if you are interested in learning more about yourself or someone you love receiving care from a Stephen Minister please contact Rev. Meg Wilkes. Call 222-3496-ext 17 or email [mwilkes@cloverfumc.org](mailto:mwilkes@cloverfumc.org)