



A Vision for Beginning Stephen Ministry in Our Congregation

Leader Guidelines and Script

A Presentation You Can Use in Your Congregation to Build Support for Beginning Stephen Ministry

This is a script for a vision-building talk—incorporating video, a group exercise, and discussion activities—that you can present to people in your congregation to help them:

- see the need for and value of Stephen Ministry;
- recognize the significant difference Stephen Ministry can make in people’s lives and in a congregation; and
- understand the basic steps for beginning Stephen Ministry in your congregation.

Possible audiences include your governing board and other decision makers, your pastor(s) and church staff, and large and small groups of congregation members—whomever you are hoping will catch “a vision for beginning Stephen Ministry.” The entire presentation takes around 40–45 minutes, but you can lengthen or shorten activities to fit the time available.

The scripted words you’ll speak aloud are double-spaced. You can follow the script as written or adapt the words to fit your speaking style and situation.

Four Resources for Presenting “A Vision for Beginning Stephen Ministry in Our Congregation”

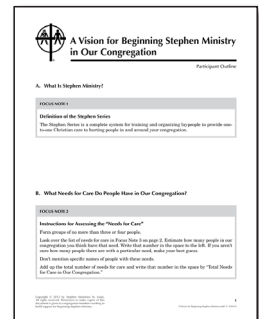
This section describes four resources you can use in presenting this vision-building talk to groups in your congregation.

1. Leader Guidelines and Script.

These 12 pages contain scripted material for guiding others through “A Vision for Beginning Stephen Ministry in Our Congregation.” Only the person(s) leading or assisting with the presentation needs a copy of these pages.

2. Presentation Outline.

Make copies of the Presentation Outline for every person attending your vision-building talk. The four-page hand-out will help them follow along, offer room for taking notes, and provide instructions for the “Needs for Care” activity.



3. Turn Your Prayer List into a Care List

brochure (optional). Participants might also benefit from having this brochure, which offers a concise overview of Stephen Ministry. The *Stephen Ministry Vision-Building Kit* includes 12 copies of this brochure. To request additional copies, call Stephen Ministries at (314) 428-2600.





4. Video Clips. We suggest showing two—and possibly three—video clips at key times during the presentation. Here is what we recommend:

- During Part A on page A–4, show one of the four care receiver stories (each is around 3 minutes) from the DVD *Four Stephen Ministry Care Receivers*.
- During Part E on page A–10, show the video *Steps to Beginning Stephen Ministry* (length 2:40) from the DVD *Steps to Beginning Stephen Ministry*.
- During Part F on page A–10, possibly show one other video that you believe would be good for your group to see. This might be from one of the DVDs mentioned above or from the DVD *Nine Short Videos by Stephen Ministry Congregations*.

Contact Stephen Ministries if you need copies of these DVDs.

Tip for Using the DVDs in Your Presentation: You may find it helpful to have another person operate the DVD player and play each video at the appropriate time. Give that person a copy of the Leader Guidelines and Script along with the DVDs. Point out the places in the script where you will be showing each video. The person can then follow along in the script, have the right DVD in the player, and cue up each of the video clips so they are ready to play at the proper times.

How to Publicize Your Presentation “A Vision for Beginning Stephen Ministry in Our Congregation”

Depending on the audience or venue for your presentation, you may find it helpful to publicize it in advance—in your church newsletter or bulletin, on the congregation’s website or Facebook page, during announcements at worship services, and in other ways. Here’s a short description you can adapt.

A Vision for Beginning Stephen Ministry in Our Congregation

Stephen Ministry is a highly effective caring ministry already used in thousands of congregations. Through Stephen Ministry, congregation members receive training to provide emotional and spiritual care to people experiencing grief, divorce, illness, job loss, hospitalization, and other life difficulties.

You are invited to an interactive presentation that will show you how Stephen Ministry works and the difference it makes in people’s lives. We’ll also explore the needs for care in our congregation and learn how we can begin Stephen Ministry in our congregation.

Time: _____ Date: _____

Location: _____

For more information contact: *[Contact person’s name, phone number, and email.]*

Have Questions or Want More Ideas?

If you have questions about the presentation or would like additional ideas for building support to begin Stephen Ministry in your congregation, call us at (314) 428-2600 and ask to speak to one of our Stephen Ministry consultants. We’ll be happy to talk with you.

A Vision for Beginning Stephen Ministry in Our Congregation

Leader: Depending on whether or not your presentation is part of another meeting, you may want to open with a prayer. You can use this one, or offer one of your own.

Let's begin with prayer.

Good and gracious God, we ask that your Spirit move among and within us and give us a vision of the ministry you want us to do. Inspire, challenge, and encourage us as we explore how to equip people for caring ministry in our congregation. We ask this in the name of Jesus, who calls us to love others as he has loved us. Amen.

Leader: Feel free to adapt the scripted material throughout the presentation, so that the words flow naturally for you.

A. What Is Stephen Ministry? (5 minutes)

Welcome to this introduction to Stephen Ministry. I'm glad you're here.

I'd like to take a moment to define Stephen Ministry. Please look at Focus Note 1 on page 1 of your outline.

Leader: Go right into reading aloud the definition in Focus Note 1. ("The Stephen Series or Stephen Ministry is a complete system . . .")

FOCUS NOTE 1

Definition of the Stephen Series

The Stephen Series [*or Stephen Ministry*] is a complete system for training and organizing laypeople to provide one-to-one Christian care to hurting people in and around your congregation.

Stephen Ministry provides the training, tools, and support that will help our congregation train a team of lay caregivers—called Stephen Ministers—who would then provide one-to-one, Christian care to people experiencing grief, divorce, job loss, hospitalization, and other life difficulties.

A good way to understand what Stephen Ministry is all about—and the significance of the care that Stephen Ministers provide—is to hear from someone who has received care from a Stephen Minister. Let’s watch a short clip.

Leader: Show “*Getting Me Plugged into My Church*” or one of the other care receiver videos on the *Four Stephen Ministry Care Receivers* DVD now. (Each is around 3 minutes long.)

Thousands of congregations of all types and sizes are using Stephen Ministry. It works in so many different situations because all congregations—including ours—share two common characteristics:

- First, there are people who are hurting and who would benefit from one-to-one, Christ-centered care—many more people than pastors alone can care for.
- Second, there are laypeople with the gifts and potential to provide that care—if they are trained and empowered to do so.

Stephen Ministry brings these two groups of people together in a powerful way.

B. What Needs for Care Do People Have in Our Congregation? (15 minutes)

So let’s think about the first of these characteristics: people who are hurting and need care.

We’re going to spend a few minutes exploring the needs for care in our congregation. The instructions for this activity are in Focus Note 2 on page 1 in your outline—so you can follow along as I read them.

Leader: Read Focus Note 2 aloud, including the boldface italicized text, which does not appear in the participant version.

FOCUS NOTE 2**Instructions for Assessing the “Needs for Care”**

Form groups of no more than three or four people.

Don’t move into groups quite yet—I’ll tell you when.

Next, in your groups . . . Look over the list of needs for care in Focus Note 3 on page 2. Estimate how many people in our congregation you think have that need. Write that number in the space to the left. If you aren’t sure how many people there are with a particular need, make your best guess.

The point of this activity isn’t to get an exact number—just a rough estimate.

Back to Focus Note 2. . . . Don’t mention specific names of people with these needs. ***It is important to preserve confidentiality—which is an essential part of Stephen Ministry!***

When we’re about done, I’ll ask you to . . . Add up the total number of needs for care and write that number in the space by “Total Needs for Care in Our Congregation.”

First, let’s form groups of three or four. Go ahead now and form a group with people sitting near you.

Leader: Assist people as necessary to help them quickly form groups.

Next, select a leader for your group—someone to guide the discussion and help your group move through the list of needs. Go ahead and choose your leader.

Leader: Pause a few seconds while they select leaders.

Now, turn to page 2.

In your group, go through the list of needs for care in Focus Note 3. Look at each category and mark down the number of people in our congregation you think have such a need. And remember, it’s important to preserve confidentiality, so don’t mention anyone by name. You’re simply looking for the number of people who might need certain types of care, not a list of names. So don’t worry about getting an exact count—just write down your best estimate.

You'll have around five minutes to work through the list, so you'll need to work fairly quickly. I'll tell you when a minute is left so you'll have time to total your numbers. When you're done, we'll talk about this together.

Go ahead and begin.

Leader: Go to the leader instructions just after the end of Focus Note 3 to continue the presentation.

FOCUS NOTE 3

Needs for Care That Stephen Ministers Can Meet

- _____ Those grieving the loss of a loved one
- _____ People who are currently or recently have been hospitalized
- _____ People being treated for cancer
- _____ Individuals who are terminally ill
- _____ People who are experiencing divorce (before, during, and after)
- _____ Parents who have children leaving home for the military, college, marriage, or work in another geographical area
- _____ New congregation or community members who are experiencing transition difficulties
- _____ Parents and families with children who have disabilities
- _____ People recovering at home or in a rehabilitation facility after an illness or injury
- _____ Those who are homebound or reside in an assisted living facility or a nursing care center
- _____ Family members of someone (nearby or far away) who is homebound or resides in an assisted living facility or a nursing care center
- _____ People with a chronic illness or a long-term disability
- _____ People facing infertility, adoption, an unplanned pregnancy, or the birth of a child
- _____ People who have lost their jobs or experienced a significant financial setback
- _____ People experiencing significant job-related stress
- _____ Family members of deployed military personnel
- _____ People changing their living arrangements in some way, such as moving to a new home, downsizing to a smaller home, or moving into an assisted living facility

- _____ People who are preparing to retire, who have recently retired, or who have been forced to retire early
- _____ People affected by natural disasters, accidents, or violence
- _____ People experiencing spiritual crisis
- _____ People with other critical needs or major life transitions that you know about
- _____ Family members or caregivers of those experiencing a life difficulty
- _____ **Total Needs for Care in Our Congregation**

Leader: Even though you said “five minutes,” give participants up to seven minutes to work through the needs in Focus Note 3.

- Encourage them to move quickly through the list so they can make it through all the items. (Sometimes people can get bogged down on the first few items and not make it through the whole list.)
- If any groups seem to be getting slowed down by trying to come up with exact numbers, remind them that an approximation or a best guess is fine for this activity.
- Walk around to see how groups are progressing. At the end of five minutes, ask how many people need more time. Add more time as necessary for people to finish—up to seven minutes total.
- When one minute is left, ask the groups to total their numbers.
- End the exercise when most people are done or after seven minutes—whichever comes first. Ask for their attention and continue.

Let’s find out how many needs for care you’ve discovered.

Leader: Invite people to share the *total* number of needs their groups discovered. Thank each person who shares and then quickly move on. Spend less than a minute on this.

The numbers may vary widely from group to group—and that’s okay. The purpose of the activity is *not* to get an exact count; it’s to help people realize how many people are hurting and could benefit from the kind of care Stephen Ministers provide. This activity is an eye-opener for many people—they begin to see that there are many more people in need of care than they had previously imagined.

The needs for care in Focus Note 3 are situations when many people would benefit from having a Stephen Minister—a trained, confidential caregiver who would provide emotional and spiritual support. Probably *every one of us* experiences times in life when we would benefit from this kind of care.

Leader: At this point you will be about 20 minutes into the presentation.

C. Can Stephen Ministry Meet Needs for Care in Our Community as Well as in Our Congregation? (1 minute)

Let's move to letter C on page 3 in your outline. When we worked through that list of needs, we were thinking primarily of people in our congregation.

What if we did the activity again, but *this time* thought about people we know who have no church home—friends, neighbors, relatives, or people at work—who are going through a difficult time? How much larger might our list be then? And wouldn't these people benefit from having a Stephen Minister too?

Stephen Ministry is a great way for a congregation to care for members in need. But it's also a powerful way to reach out to people in the community and minister to them during critical times in their lives.

D. What Might Happen If Needs for Care Go Unmet? (5 minutes)

Now look at letter D. There, you'll see a very important question:

What might happen if needs for care go unmet?

In other words, what do you think might happen if people have needs for care—like the ones in Focus Note 3—and they *don't* receive any care?

I'd like to hear from some of you. What do you think could happen?

Leader: Keep the discussion moving. Involve as many people as you can.

Here are some key points to possibly weave into the discussion:

- A major reason that people drop out of the church or become inactive is because they needed or expected to receive care during a difficult time—but didn't receive it.
- People who don't receive care may think God doesn't care about them and may experience a faith crisis.
- When people don't receive needed care, their situation can get worse. They may become depressed, lose their jobs, or experience severe relationship difficulties with loved ones.
- People in crises may turn to drugs, alcohol, or other unhealthy ways of coping if they don't receive care.

End the discussion after two or three minutes.

In order to be the church Jesus calls us to be, to follow his command to “love one another as I have loved you” (John 13:34), we need to recognize and then meet the needs for care in our congregation and community.

Our pastor(s) will always be on the front lines of providing this care—but considering the number of people who need care, it's impossible for the pastor(s) to provide *all* the care to *all* the people who need it.

Stephen Ministry offers a very practical and effective solution: Increase the number of people we can care for by equipping a team of congregation members to provide quality, Christian care.

Take a look at page 4 in your outline—the very last page. **[Pause briefly while they turn to that page.]**

A great way to understand the role of Stephen Ministers is to think of them as “The After People.”

Stephen Ministers walk alongside people *after* a crisis.

- *After* the funeral . . .
- *After* the loss of a job . . .
- *After* the cancer diagnosis . . .

It's during these "after periods" in life that many people really struggle. It's also a time when Stephen Ministers can be especially valuable.

A Stephen Minister comes alongside a person in the midst of a crisis and then meets with that person regularly—to listen, to care, to pray, and to encourage—for as long *after* as needed. In Galatians 6, verse 2, St. Paul writes: "Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ." That's exactly what Stephen Ministers do—they bear another's burdens as they walk alongside a hurting person.

E. How Our Congregation Can Begin Stephen Ministry (4 minutes)

Now turn back to page 3 and look at letter E.

You may be wondering how Stephen Ministry works and how we can get it started in our congregation. Let's watch a short video that describes that process.

Leader: Play the "Steps to Beginning Stephen Ministry" DVD. (2:40)

If you have provided people with *Turn Your Prayer List into a Care List* brochures (the optional handout), you can also refer them to the third (green) column on the inside of that brochure—prior to showing the video.

When the video concludes, you will be approximately 30 to 35 minutes into the presentation.

F. A Vision for Stephen Ministry in Our Church (5 minutes)

We're at letter F on your outline.

Leader: You have several options for sharing this vision. Here are a few ideas:

- Tell participants why you are so passionate about Stephen Ministry. If possible, share a personal story, experience, or testimony you have connected to Stephen Ministry.
- Talk about your congregation's mission or vision statement and then point out the specific ways that Stephen Ministry aligns with your mission or vision statement and would help to carry it out.
- If you have someone in attendance who trained and served as a Stephen Leader or Stephen Minister at another congrega-

tion—or who has received care from a Stephen Minister—you might invite that person to share a brief testimony about his or her experience.

- Show an additional video from a DVD that you think would connect well with your particular group. Possibilities include—
 - ▶ Another of the four care receiver testimony videos on the DVD *Four Stephen Ministry Care Receivers*
 - ▶ The video featuring Pastor Dennis Apple (“College Church, Olathe, KS”) on the DVD *Nine Short Videos by Stephen Ministry Congregations*
 - ▶ The video “McLean Bible Church, Vienna, VA” on the DVD *Nine Short Videos by Stephen Ministry Congregations*
 - ▶ Another video from the DVD *Nine Short Videos by Stephen Ministry Congregations* that you think would resonate well with your audience

After sharing a testimony or video about Stephen Ministry, tell people your vision for Stephen Ministry—describing the difference it would make in your congregation. Here is one possible way you could do that:

I’d like to share a vision with you.

- Imagine our congregation as a place where nobody has to suffer alone. When someone experiences a crisis, a caring Christian friend comes alongside to help bear the person’s burden and offer support for as long as needed.
- Imagine our congregation as a place where laypeople who have gifts for caring are equipped and empowered to use those gifts in meaningful ministry to others.
- Imagine our congregation as a caring community that is able to reach out to more and more people and offer them God’s love.

Together we can make that vision a reality.

G. Next Steps (5 minutes)

Where do we go from here? What are the next steps we should take?

Leader: Customize the presentation at this point based on your specific situation and goals. You might do the following:

- Describe what the next steps are for your congregation.
- Tell your audience what action you would like them to take or what decisions your congregation needs to make.
- Encourage them to visit www.stephenministries.org, where they can read more about Stephen Ministry and watch more videos.
- If you feel comfortable doing so, answer any questions to the extent you are able to do so.
 - ▶ If you provided people with a *Caring That Changes Lives* brochure, you may find it helpful to refer to that brochure as you answer questions since it provides a good overview of Stephen Ministry.
 - ▶ The document “Q&A: Answers to the Most Frequently Asked Questions about the Stephen Series” (in the *Stephen Ministry Vision-Building Kit* or at www.stephenministries.org/SSdownload) will be a helpful reference document for you.
 - ▶ If someone asks a question you don’t know the answer to, that’s okay. Just tell the person that it’s a good question and that you will find out the answer and let him or her know.
 - ▶ Write down those questions and call Stephen Ministries St. Louis at (314) 428-2600. One of our consultants will be happy to answer your questions and possibly direct you to additional resources to share.

Leader: Offer a closing prayer or benediction. You may use this one, or offer one of your own.

Heavenly Father, the needs for care are so many. They may overwhelm us, but they do not overwhelm you. Give us faith, wisdom, and courage as we seek to meet those needs with the love of Jesus and by the power of your Spirit. Amen.



A Vision for Beginning Stephen Ministry in Our Congregation

Presentation Outline

A. What Is Stephen Ministry?

FOCUS NOTE 1

Definition of the Stephen Series

The Stephen Series is a complete system for training and organizing laypeople to provide one-to-one Christian care to hurting people in and around your congregation.

B. What Needs for Care Do People Have in Our Congregation?

FOCUS NOTE 2

Instructions for Assessing the “Needs for Care”

Form groups of no more than three or four people.

Look over the list of needs for care in Focus Note 3 on page 2. Estimate how many people in our congregation you think have that need. Write that number in the space to the left. If you aren't sure how many people there are with a particular need, make your best guess.

Don't mention specific names of people with these needs.

Add up the total number of needs for care and write that number in the space by “Total Needs for Care in Our Congregation.”

FOCUS NOTE 3

Needs for Care That Stephen Ministers Can Meet

- _____ Those grieving the loss of a loved one
- _____ People who are currently or recently have been hospitalized
- _____ People being treated for cancer
- _____ Individuals who are terminally ill
- _____ People who are experiencing divorce (before, during, and after)
- _____ Parents who have children leaving home for the military, college, marriage, or work in another geographical area
- _____ New congregation or community members who are experiencing transition difficulties
- _____ Parents and families with children who have disabilities
- _____ People recovering at home or in a rehabilitation facility after an illness or injury
- _____ Those who are homebound or reside in an assisted living facility or a nursing care center
- _____ Family members of someone (nearby or far away) who is homebound or resides in an assisted living facility or a nursing care center
- _____ People with a chronic illness or a long-term disability
- _____ People facing infertility, adoption, an unplanned pregnancy, or the birth of a child
- _____ People who have lost their jobs or experienced a significant financial setback
- _____ People experiencing significant job-related stress
- _____ Family members of deployed military personnel
- _____ People changing their living arrangements in some way, such as moving to a new home, downsizing to a smaller home, or moving into an assisted living facility
- _____ People who are preparing to retire, who have recently retired, or who have been forced to retire early
- _____ People affected by natural disasters, accidents, or violence
- _____ People experiencing spiritual crisis
- _____ People with other critical needs or major life transitions that you know about
- _____ Family members or caregivers of those experiencing a life difficulty
- _____ **Total Needs for Care in Our Congregation**

C. Can Stephen Ministry Meet Needs for Care in Our Community as Well as in Our Congregation?

D. What Might Happen If Needs for Care Go Unmet?

E. How Our Congregation Can Begin Stephen Ministry

F. A Vision for Stephen Ministry in Our Church

G. Next Steps

Visit www.stephenministries.org for more information about Stephen Ministry and to watch more videos about Stephen Ministry in action.

Stephen Ministers: The After People

People often ask, “What exactly is a Stephen Minister?” One way to put it is that Stephen Ministers are the *After People*.

Stephen Ministers are there:

- . . . **after** the phone call you hoped you’d never get.
- . . . **after** the funeral, when everyone has left and the emotions you’ve held at bay come crashing in on you.
- . . . **after** the relationship falls apart and the bottom falls out of your life.
- . . . **after** the doctor says, “I’m sorry, but there’s nothing more we can do.”
- . . . **after** the nursing home director shakes your hand and says, “Welcome to your new home.”
- . . . **after** the last child honks the horn, waves, and drives away—and the house suddenly seems empty.
- . . . **after** the gavel comes down, the handcuffs go on, and your loved one is led away.
- . . . **after** the baby arrives, demanding more of you than you ever dreamed possible.
- . . . **after** you find a pink slip with your final paycheck.
- . . . **after** your family and friends have heard your story one too many times, but you still need to talk it out.

Stephen Ministers are the After People. They are ready to come alongside you—or your friends, neighbors, coworkers, or relatives—and provide comfort and support for as long *after* as needed.

www.stephenministries.org