



“We are all broken people and it is only through the cross of Jesus that we can be made whole.”

#4 Building Blocks #1 (Pastor) & #2 (Stephen Leaders)

(by Myron & Kendra Kirkpatrick)

The Pastor: Think back to the pyramid in our previous letter. In any Stephen Ministry Church, the top block of the pyramid is the Pastor, and it will be no different here. In the Methodist Church, Pastors serve for a limited period (generally five to seven years) before they are reassigned by the Conference or retire. During the time a Pastor is assigned to a church, it is “theirs” and although MUMC has a strong lay tradition and a Staff-Pastor/Parish Relations Committee, the Pastor is still in charge and the things that happen during that time are going to reflect their beliefs and leadership skills. Now for a bit of history.

Looking back to the early 2000’s, we are told that several MUMC lay members became interested in Stephen Ministry and that the Church was enrolled in the St. Louis based organization in April 2006 (**20th anniversary is coming up!**). Following that, an unknown number of people were trained as Stephen Leaders and Ministers over the summer and commissioned in October 2006. And this first group really hit the ground running, as **10 additional** Stephen Ministers were trained and commissioned in February 2007. As the years passed, the Ministry was very active and strongly supported by both Pastors and the congregation through mid-2013. The 12-year decline we are now trying to reverse began when MUMC was then assigned a pastor who, for reasons unknown, was very negative toward the Stephen Ministry concept, followed by a Pastor who, in addition being stymied by the challenges of the Covid pandemic, had, at best, a lukewarm interest in the program. The moral of all this is that **a supportive Pastor is essential to a thriving Stephen Ministry**. Fortunately, **congregational** interest in the program has remained strong through thick and thin. In fact, there are still five known members of the original Stephen Ministry classes who remain active in the Church’s Care Ministry and related work today, and who can attest to the past role and success of Stephen Ministry in our congregation.

Which brings us to today. Pastor Malakai arrived on the scene in July 2024, and although he has not previously been in a Stephen Ministry Church, he is very invested in both the spiritual and physical care of his congregation – a perfect Pastor to learn about and play a strong role in the reawakening of MUMC’s Stephen Ministry. And best of all, **he is both interested in and supportive of this effort**. Pastors have many responsibilities, but the good thing about Stephen Ministry is that how deeply an individual Pastor becomes involved is up to him or her. In the coming weeks we will be working to help Pastor Malakai more deeply understand Stephen Ministry – what it is and isn’t, how it works, the role we hope he will play, and the clear benefits that having a Stephen Ministry brings to both the Pastor and the congregation. So we feel like we have building block #1; we just have to work on it a bit!

Stephen Leaders: Building block #2 of the Stephen Ministry pyramid is Stephen Leaders – the people who organize and administer a Stephen Ministry, serving as the link between the Pastor and the Stephen Ministers who work directly with Care Receivers. This is what we are now working to become. It’s kind of boring, so to be brief, Stephen Leaders, *working*

hand in hand with the Pastor and other church and ministry leaders, perform the following tasks (and others) to create or reboot a Stephen Ministry and keep it running effectively:

A Stephen Leader's Job Description in a Nutshell –

- Develop and administer an ongoing effort to promote awareness of the Stephen Ministry program in the church and the community;
- Identify, select and train teams of Stephen Ministers and Lookouts, matching the size of these teams to need as closely as possible;
- Assess and select Care Receivers or recommend alternative care;
- Pair Stephen Ministers 1:1 with selected, same-gender Care Receivers;
- Through biweekly peer Supervision meetings, monitor the progress of each Care Giver/Receiver pair over time, supporting the Stephen Minister as necessary;
- Conduct an ongoing continuing education program for the Stephen Ministers;
- Oversee the closure of Care Giver/Receiver relationships as the need for further care diminishes;
- Encourage others to train as Stephen Leaders as the number of Stephen Ministers to be supervised grows;
- Maintain (under lock and key) all Stephen Minister and Care Receiver files, accessible only to the Pastor and the senior Stephen Leader(s);
- Develop and administer the Stephen Ministry's annual budget;
- Finally, as a team matures, Leaders may take on a Care Receiver themselves if necessitated by demand and if they are experienced and emotionally mature enough to handle both administrative and care giving tasks.

As a Stephen Ministry program grows, Stephen Ministry–St. Louis recommends that a 1:5 ratio of Stephen Leaders to Stephen Ministers be maintained to assure the highest level of Receiver care. As a general rule, Stephen Leaders are expected to serve at least three years in this role. After that time, a Leader may go inactive, retire, or move back into a caregiving role as a Stephen Minister.

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Want to Read More? *We began posting these letters and other Stephen Ministry information on the MUMC website under the menu heading Ministries/Stephen Ministry in January 2026. Following is a list of the items posted to date and the link to each one on the MUMC website. Press “Control” and click on the link you are interested in to read it online. Call attention to any broken links by emailing us at mk65517@gmail.com and please be patient as this is all a work in progress!*

Statement of Mission, Vision, & Core Values: <https://umcmesquite.org/stephen-ministry-mission-vision-core-values/>

Letter #1, Stephen Ministries is Returning to MUMC! <https://umcmesquite.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/1.-Stephen-Ministries-is-Returning-JAN-2026.pdf>

Letter #2, The Reawakening of Our Stephen Ministry Has Begun! <https://umcmesquite.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/stephen-2-2.pdf>

Letter #3, Stephen Ministry – the Six Basic Building Blocks: <https://umcmesquite.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/3.-Six-Basic-Building-Blocks-26-0212.pdf>