

ON Broadway

Ann Arbor Christian Reformed Church Newsletter

December 2016

Getting to Know Stephen

Roy Glover

Stephen Ministry is a one-to-one caring ministry that takes place in congregations whose desire is to equip and empower lay caregivers, called Stephen Ministers, to provide high-quality, confidential, Christ-centered care to people who are hurting.

Why the name Stephen? The answer is found in the book of Acts where we learn that it was Stephen, a deacon in the first century church, who was chosen to provide caring ministry to those in need. And, since the time of the Apostles, caring ministry has been considered a hallmark of the Christian faith community.

Stephen Ministry began in our church ten years ago when three members agreed to be trained as Stephen Leaders. Over the intervening years these individuals have provided ministry training to twenty members of the congregation. And, in turn, these trained individuals have gone on to provide care to twelve needy individuals.

To better appreciate how a Stephen Ministry program works, there are three important ministry groups that you need to understand: **Stephen Leaders, Stephen Ministers/Care Givers and Care Receivers.**

Stephen Leaders: are individuals who work to establish and direct Stephen Ministry in a congregation. Their job is to build awareness of Stephen Ministry within the congregation and community, recruit and train Stephen Ministers (care givers), meet with potential care receivers to assess their needs, match care receivers with care givers and provide care givers with ongoing supervision and continuing education.

Stephen Ministers/Care Givers: are congregation members trained by Stephen Leaders to offer high quality, one-to-one Christian care to people going through tough times. A Stephen Minister provides care to one person at a time, meeting with him or her on an arranged basis for whatever amount of works best for both of them. Periodically, Stephen Ministers meet to review their work and receive support from other Stephen Ministers and their local Stephen Leaders.

Care Receivers: are congregation members and others in the community who receive care from a Stephen Minister. They are people who are struggling through a difficult time in life, experiencing grief, divorce, job loss, chronic or terminal illness, or some other life crisis. Important guidelines for this caring relationship are designed to protect both the care receiver and the Stephen Minister. For instance the relationship between a care receiver and a Stephen Minister is confidential. Men are matched with men; women with women. And in the event that a care receiver's needs exceed what a Stephen Minister can provide, the Stephen Ministry team is encouraged to refer the care receiver to an appropriate mental health professional or other community resource.

The following is an excerpt taken from the testimony of a Stephen Ministry care receiver. It will allow you to understand the impact a Stephen Minister can have on the life of someone in need.

"As it turns out (and this is God-led for sure), we have been a great match. My Stephen Minister has been a wonderful listener and I have been able to share many things that were weighing me down. I found a stable place of acceptance and love. It's a place where I don't have to face my issues alone. This has been extremely healing and strengthening for me. In addition, I have gained a good friend! I am so thankful for our time together and praise God for the wonderful and unexpected ways that He has worked in my life!"

If you'd like more information about our church's Stephen Ministry program please feel free to speak with either Marilyn Dahms or Lillian Kuiper. Either of them can answer any questions you might have about the ministry. You should know that we are always looking to identify and train people interested in becoming Stephen Ministers. If one of those interested people happens to be you, we would love to have you join us in this caring ministry.

From the Health Ministries Committee: A Space for Grief

Betsy Ventura

Living with Cystic Fibrosis is hard. I am reminded daily that my body does not work properly and that to continue to live, I must fight. Some days I become weary. Some days I feel sad. I've been learning lately to give myself space for grief. Grief is unpredictable. It can be triggered by an event or a period of intensified struggle, and sometimes it surges up unexpectedly.

I've had a few times recently where grief has darkened my day. These dark days have traditionally made me feel guilty. I regularly see quotes such as these:

"Someone out there is praying for all the things you take for granted."

"Remember, no matter how many problems you have, there is always someone who has more."

These sentiments surely have a place in our world. In our consumerist culture it is easy to be in a perpetual state of discontentment and lose sight of all our blessings. We complain about minor inconveniences. We take things for granted. Many of us, including me, have not suffered the extreme hardships of hunger, violence, abuse, or the loss of worldly possessions that are rampant in parts of our world. It is important to remember that and to retain a proper perspective.

Sometimes when a wave of grief hits me, it brings with it a big dose of guilt. The voice in my head berates me. You have no right to be upset. So many are suffering so much more. Many CF patients struggle far more than you do. Remember all those healthy years you had. You have a loving husband, a beautiful son, a supportive family, true friends, a wonderful home. Look at all you can still do. And the list goes on.

It's true. I am abundantly blessed and I know it. However, the pain in my life is real too, and sometimes I need space to grieve that. Sometimes I need to pour out my heart to

God, lamenting the pain, explaining my hurts, expressing the sadness and disappointment. Grieving doesn't have to be angry and bitter. It doesn't have to indicate that I'm not trusting God, or that I feel sorry for myself, or that I'm not accepting my situation. Grieving doesn't necessarily mean that I'm not thankful. It is possible to be grateful for all the good in my life, all the blessings, all the wonderful things that have come out of my challenges, even to be thankful for the challenges themselves while allowing myself to mourn the pain, the loss, and the ongoing adversity. Some specific struggles have endured for years with ups and downs, times of hope and times of despair, bends in the road, minor bumps and major setbacks. At times I feel tired and bruised. There is chronic hardship in my life that will never leave me. Barring a miracle, there is no end in sight on this side of eternity. It's hard. It's sad. And so I grieve.

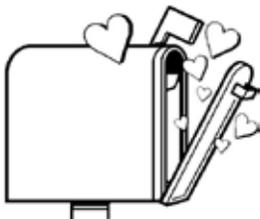
Tears can be cleansing—a discharge of the pain bottled up within me. It's as if their release waters the soil of my soul, making way for acceptance, joy, and peace to bloom once again. When I take my hurts to God, I find the grace I can't always extend to myself. There is no guilt there, no pointing finger, no accusations, only the reassurance of God's love and His presence. There is the reminder that while I will continue to struggle, I will never struggle alone. There is healing in that place of grief.

I felt compelled to write this. It's definitely for me. This is something God is working out in my heart. Grief is a gift I'm learning to accept without guilt and without comparison. But perhaps it's for you too. Maybe you need to give yourself some space to grieve. Maybe it's time to stop pretending that your pain doesn't exist, isn't that bad, or doesn't matter. Maybe you need to allow those tears to fall so that true acceptance, joy, and peace might thrive in your life again. Maybe you need to hear God whisper to you how much He loves you, how much He cares, and how through it all, He will never leave you or forsake you.

"Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning." Psalm 30:5

Project Window

Elaine Henke



This is a letter writing ministry to women at the Huron Valley Correctional Facility. We are given names of women who might be receptive to this and we are asked to send a letter, note, or card at least once a month.

My pen-pal has been incarcerated for 20 years and has a life sentence. Can you even imagine how difficult that must be? I quote from her last letter to me. "You asked

what you can do for me, your friendship means the world. I can't find the words to thank you enough for taking time out and sharing your life with me." This is such a small gesture and it encourages your pen-pal so much. We only use our first names and the church address when we write. When they write back Carolyn puts it in our mailbox.

In Matthew it speaks of visiting those in prison and we are doing just that with our letter writing. If you are interested in this ministry or have questions please contact Elaine Henke.

Contemporary Loaves and Fishes

Mary Staal

I strongly dislike articles and stories that make me feel guilty. This article is not one of those. Its purpose is to educate you, encourage you, and invite you to celebrate one of God's modern-day multiplications of the loaves and fishes!

In order to observe one example of how this multiplication is working today, we're going to visit a typical iZosh meeting. First, however, let me give you a little background. In 2012 several women from Huron Hills Church, having been seriously affected by their reading of Nicholas Kristof's book *Half the Sky*, decided to join together to take action. Motivated by their Christian faith and their concern for the plight of women in developing countries, they formed iZosh, modeled on a savings group concept. (The term "iZosh" in Amharic means "compassionate support of a woman".) According to the group's website, "iZosh has provided funds for small loans which have empowered women in third world countries to circumvent ancient cultural practices detrimental to their well-being, avoid cultural oppression and exploitation, and go on to educate succeeding generations to do the same."

The organization's vision statement includes the following concepts:

1. To understand and not judge
2. To pool resources to invest in women in extreme poverty regardless of their faith or beliefs
3. To honor the dignity of all women
4. To welcome all women into the organization who agree with its mission regardless of their faith or beliefs

As we begin our visit we enter the uniquely decorated hallway of Huron Hills Church where colorful fabrics, clothing, jewelry, trinkets, and household goods from a variety of countries are attractively displayed. The walls are lined with a number of women's photos and short descriptions of their work, their families, and their reasons for wanting a micro loan. Under each woman's picture is a basket. From another basket filled with "voting stones," we watch as women pick up three stones and place one in the basket of each proposed recipient they select to receive a loan. This is the first round of voting.

Following this, we step into a large auditorium filled with round tables, a small stage, and an array of tasty treats and drinks. We pick up a sampling of snacks and seat ourselves at one of the tables. We introduce ourselves and are drawn into a discussion of a few

chapters of a book previously assigned and are told that at other sessions there may be a video on the topic for the evening. In the center of the table is a basket for members' dues which will be collected and handed over to the treasurers—the only women who ever see the amounts given. On the small stage a U-M dancer performs an interpretive dance, picturing for us the pain of bondage and the longing for freedom. Other women at the table tell us that there are musical presentations at some of the meetings.

Then, the speaker for the evening is introduced. Let's say our speaker is Mercy Niwe, Program Management Officer for Economic Development with World Vision. (Other times the speakers have been authors or filmmakers who have produced books or films on topics relevant to the iZosh mission, and sometimes they have been local women who are involved professionally with women's issues.)

After the speaker has finished, each table receives a packet of information about several additional women seeking loans. Members and guests discuss the pros and cons of each possible recipient and come to a consensus about which one to choose. Someone at each table then announces to the entire group which proposed recipient her table has selected. This is the second round of voting and includes both members and guests.

All this time the treasurers have been counting the money received. Finally, the totals are announced to great applause. Then, the "computer geniuses" begin sending out the funds (through the MFIs) to those women chosen in both the first and second rounds of voting. There is a joyful celebration in the auditorium with the clanging of cowbells, shaking of gourd rattles, and cheerful shouts each time another woman's loan is funded. At the last actual session about \$13,000 was loaned to about 50 women, making a grand total of \$132,345 since 2012 to 311 women. This is how God works through iZosh. What an extravagant evening!

"...The beauty of iZosh is the combined power of women locally coming alongside our sisters globally..." (website)

To learn more about this organization, including pictures of and information about recipients, supporting comments from distinguished leaders, lists of relevant books, and answers to FAQs, check out iZosh.com or talk to someone from AACRC who is a member.

Christian Reformed World Missions

Sean Newman
for the Missions Team

Words of wisdom from CRWM's Joel Hogan, from CRWM's **Advocate** newsletter.

Joel Hogan, Christian Reformed World Missions' international program director, will be retiring by the end of 2016. Joel has served in his current role since 2001. He also served as a church planter in the Philippines for 17 years and taught Bible at a Christian school in North America. We asked Joel to share some of his wisdom from these 32 years of experience in missions as it pertains to being a missional church. Here are four major ways he shared to help mission-minded churches.

Self Evaluate

Look at Acts 1:8, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Now ask yourselves how your church is doing on these 'ands.' How is your church doing mission among its own people who come through your doors (Judea)? In your wider community (Samaria)? And how about to the ends of the earth? You can't call yourself a missional church if you are only serving your Jerusalem.

Listen

God's will can be made known through prayer and discernment. See how God's passions match up with your own church's passions. Then find a way to follow that passion and turn it into mission.

One unique passion in our own church is ministry with a church in Monrovia, Liberia. The pastor at that church has connections to our church, and many people in our congregation are excited about this ministry.

Engage

Ask yourselves how you can get engaged in support for the ministry itself. This goes way beyond monetary support. How can you be involved in meaningful intercession?

Also, get people informed about missionaries or projects not just by distributing their most recent prayer letters (which we hope you are doing) but also by sending out further information. For example, if your church is working among the Fulani people in West Africa, send out information once in awhile about who the Fulani people are, what their culture is like, and why they need your support.

Another important aspect of support is visiting the field. Send youth teams or individuals to visit missionaries and see the work firsthand. This is the greatest way to understand and be familiar with the ministry.

Take Ownership

If your church is doing all these other things, this last one should be easy. But if your church is truly committed to answering God's call to take part in these ministries, they shouldn't be an addendum to your budget but a built-in commitment.

This can also be the danger of having a global missions council—it might make your church see its missions as something separate, rather than a ministry of your entire church. Make sure your council finds ways to get members of the congregation as involved as possible.

Tour to England

Witte Travel announces a tour of the cathedrals of England, July 16-26, 2017 (with optional extension in London), with Dr. Randall Engle, tour host. Imagine music cascading off stone walls throughout English Cathedrals. Think of sitting in a pew with splendor and beauty surrounding you. Now is the time to make that dream a reality. Join Randall Engle, PhD, on a trip to visit England's heritage. Highlights included a private tour of Lambeth Palace and archives; a private organ tour at Westminster Abbey, a concert at Royal Albert Hall and attendance at the Southern Cathedral Festival. Along the way eat fabulous food, and stay in luxurious accommodations. Optional lectures will be offered on the history and origins of the Church of England and its worship and music. For further information, visit www.wittetravel.com.

CAP Thanksgiving Meals

Last Sunday, November 20, 110 Thanksgiving meals were delivered to CAP in Detroit.

We Tutored—God Blessed

Norman Fichtenberg

People from other nations filled our church for seven Tuesday evenings during September and October for the 2016 Fall Tutoring Program at AACRC. With the assistance of International Students Incorporated, we invited students, visiting scholars and their families in Ann Arbor to participate in English tutoring, ESL for children and an American Culture class. Thirty-six Americans (mostly from AACRC) served 97 guests from around the world during 371 separate tutoring and teaching sessions. The number of internationals served this fall represents an increase of more than 50% relative to last year.

We thank God for blessing this outreach by bringing so many wonderful internationals to us. These included 22 children who had great fun learning English from Margaret Baker and her highly specialized team of Zannah Baker and Eliza Van Ee as well as (at various times) Ross Weener and Joyce Wang. The feedback from parents reflected a high appreciation for the cross-cultural experience their children received in the class. Jim Carlson taught the American Culture class as well as an additional History of Early Western Civilization class on Thursday evenings. The latter was offered to all the internationals at the beginning of the Fall Tutoring Program. By popular demand of the students, Jim's class was extended beyond the number of sessions that was originally planned.

God's blessings on our hospitality also extended beyond the seven weeks of tutoring in September and October. Many relationships between Americans and internationals that began during the tutoring are continuing as friendships that will, hopefully, last as long as our guests are in Ann Arbor and, some cases, even after they return to their homelands. Additional relationships were created by invitations from more than 25 American families to over 45 internationals for dinner at their home. God's blessings also included the establishment of Conversation Partnerships and Bible study relationships between more than 35 internationals and Americans.

Therefore, through the Fall Tutoring Program, God provided our congregation with a bountiful harvest of connections with guests from other nations. As we are grateful to God for these many blessings, we are also trusting God to bring fruit from these relationships in the months and years to come.



International Students, Inc.

Larry Champoux

Praise the Lord for a good turnout at our Thanksgiving dinner on Friday, November 11. About 20 Americans and 70 internationals enjoyed plenty of food and friendship. At the end of the dinner I took about 7 internationals on a tour of the church we were in and this resulted in some great discussions about God. Pray that I can find host families for the students that requested dinners in American homes during the holidays.

The statistics for international students coming into the USA is collected by the Institute of International Education. The new school year statistics are in and you can read them at <http://www.iie.org/Who-We-Are/News-and-Events/Press-Center/Press-Releases/2016/2016-11-14-Open-Doors-Data> . An eye-opening statistic is that Saudi Arabia is now the third largest sending country (behind India and China). Oh Lord, raise up more laborers who can help us reach the Saudis!

This may sound silly, but we need wisdom to know what small gift to send in our Christmas mailing. Pray that God would guide us a good idea. We greatly appreciate

all who pray or give financially or volunteer their time to help us reach internationals. So we love to give a special thanks at Christmas time, but it can be costly to send something to 800 people!!.

Mission Training in Ann Arbor

Larry Champoux of International Students Inc, pointed out this upcoming mission training that will be held in Ann Arbor starting in January.

Consider signing up for the Perspectives classes. Perspective classes run about 15 weeks and cover the theme of world missions and your role in what God is doing in the world today. These are high quality classes that can be taken for college credit or audit the class for a lower price. A different Mission leader or professor comes from all over the USA each week to give the lesson. Go to <http://perspectives.org/> then click on classes, then select ANN ARBOR and you will all the information there. They start in January and will be held Saturday mornings.

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