



st. thomas episcopal church

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Dear Members of St. Thomas Church,

Our parish is in the midst of exciting happenings in a new ministry. In January, a group of four people — Maryanne Whitcomb, Marcia Liebich, Helen Morgus, and I — went to a week-long training course in Anaheim, where we learned how to implement and lead Stephen Ministry, a program of lay caring ministry. Our instruction trained us as Stephen Leaders and taught us how to train and supervise others as lay Christian caregivers.

The Stephen Leaders now seek men and women of St. Thomas who are willing to answer Christ's call to serve as Stephen Ministers, beginning with 50 hours of stimulating and useful training in Christian caring skills. This training will be led by the Stephen Leaders and will include a variety of topics such as listening, Christian assertiveness, maintaining boundaries in caregiving, and grief. The training is distinctively Christian and focuses on God as the one who heals as we care.

When the Stephen Ministers have completed their training, they will be commissioned and ready to begin their ministry. Working under supervision, each Stephen Minister will be available to meet weekly for an hour with an individual who has requested care. There are many reasons such a request might be made such as bereavement, single parenting, job loss, terminal illness, hospitalization, loneliness, and problems associated with parenting or aging.

Stephen Ministers commit to at least two years for training, service, and regular supervision. Many Stephen Ministers enjoy their ministry so much that they choose to serve beyond the two years.

While being a Stephen Minister requires commitment of time and effort, it also brings joy and fulfillment. It may be one of the most rewarding challenges you will ever embrace. In addition, you will bring the skills you learn in training to your everyday relationships with family, friends, neighbors, and coworkers.

Think and pray about this opportunity. If you decide you would like to be a Stephen Minister, please contact me (or any of the other Stephen Leaders) to talk about how you can get started. If we agree that you would be well-suited to be a Stephen Minister, you will be invited to take the training course. Training will run from early fall to late spring, with a break for Christmas (exact dates to be determined).

I am excited to see what God is going to do in the lives of those who undertake this ministry, the lives of those who receive care from our Stephen Ministers, and the community as a whole.

Faithfully yours,

The Rev. Kenneth H. Brannon
Rector