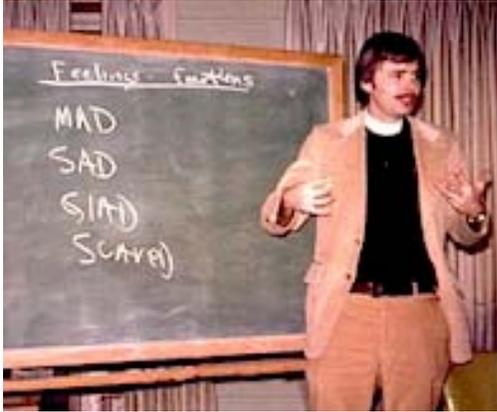


# History of Stephen Ministries

## The Beginning



Dr. Haug drew on his background as a pastor and clinical psychologist to train nine congregation members to be the first Stephen Ministers.

**Dr. Kenneth C. Haug**, founder and Executive Director of Stephen Ministries, describes the beginnings of Stephen Ministry and the Stephen Ministries organization:

It was 1974. Fresh out of seminary and graduate school in clinical psychology, I had high hopes for providing pastoral care to people in my congregation and community. That's where my gifts were. That's why I felt called to the pastoral ministry—to bring Christ's love to hurting people.

But reality quickly set in. There were so many needs and only one of me. And only so many available hours in a day. I had a church full of needs, but also a church full of people. So the solution was obvious: "equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12 NRSV). Stephen Ministry was born.

I trained nine lay caregivers in that first class. A secretary. A teacher. An insurance agent. A businesswoman. A student. An executive. A homemaker. A beautician. A retiree. They were "ordinary" church people, but I was immediately impressed by the seriousness they put into their training and the enthusiasm they showed at the opportunity to be involved in hands-on ministry.

After I assigned each of them to a care receiver, I was equally impressed by the care they provided—and the joy they discovered as they saw Christ working through them to bring hope and healing to another person.



The first Stephen Ministers were commissioned on March 16, 1975. Since then, more than 600,000 Stephen Ministers have been trained.

Dr. Haugk’s experiment was a success—laypeople really could provide quality caring ministry. But the story doesn’t end here. Two of the first Stephen Ministers recognized that “Stephen Ministry” was too valuable and important to be limited to one congregation, so they encouraged Dr. Haugk to figure out a way to offer it to other congregations. On November 3, 1975, Dr. Haugk and his wife Joan, a registered nurse and clinical social worker, founded the Stephen Ministries organization.

## The Early Years

For the next few years, the Haugks—along with a few seminary students—travelled to congregations throughout the Midwest and trained Stephen Ministers. This quickly proved to be inefficient, since they could visit only a limited number of congregations, and these congregations were then dependent on the Haugks to train additional caregivers.



The first LTC was held in 1978 with 14 Stephen Leaders in attendance. Since then, more than 70,000 pastors and lay leaders have trained as Stephen Leaders.

So in 1978, Stephen Ministries held the first [Stephen Series Leader's Training Course \(LTC\)](#) and trained the first Stephen Leaders—ministry leaders within a congregation who then returned home to recruit, train, and supervise their own Stephen Ministers. Since then, Stephen Ministries in St. Louis has specialized in “training the trainers” through the Stephen Series ministry system.

## The Stephen Series

Today, more than 12,000 congregations and other organizations have enrolled in the [Stephen Series](#). They represent more than 170 Christian denominations and come from all 50 United States, 10 Canadian provinces, and 29 other countries. More than 70,000 pastors, other staff, and lay leaders have been trained as Stephen Leaders. They, in turn, have trained more than 600,000 laypersons as [Stephen Ministers](#). These Stephen Ministers have provided one-to-one Christian care and support to more than a million [care receivers](#) in Stephen Ministry caring relationships—and ministered to millions more in less formal ways.

## Other Resources

The Stephen Series (Stephen Ministry) is the best-known resource offered by the Stephen Ministries organization—but it is only one of many.

Over the years, pastors and lay leaders asked for additional high-quality resources to enhance ministry, promote spiritual growth, and strengthen congregations. So the Stephen Ministries program team subsequently developed

many other books and courses to strengthen the ministry of individuals and congregations. These include:

## **Books**

- *Christian Caregiving—a Way of Life*
- *Speaking the Truth in Love: How to Be an Assertive Christian*
- *Don't Sing Songs to a Heavy Heart: How to Relate to Those Who Are Suffering*
- *Journeying through Grief*
- 
- *Cancer—Now What? Taking Action, Finding Hope, and Navigating the Journey Ahead*
- *Antagonists in the Church: How to Identify and Deal with Destructive Conflict*
- *Leader Killers: How to Deal with Antagonists in Your Organization*
- *Biblical Equipping: God's Word in Your World*
- *Me, an Evangelist? Every Christian's Guide to Caring Evangelism*

## **Courses**

- *Discovering God's Vision for Your Life: You and Your Spiritual Gifts*
- *Caring for Inactive Members: How to Make God's House a Home*
- *Caring Evangelism: How to Live and Share Christ's Love*

The Stephen Ministries program team continues to develop new resources to meet the ministry needs of individuals and congregations.

## **Our Home**



The Stephen Ministries Center in St. Louis, Missouri.

In 1997, after two decades of moving from office to office, Stephen Ministries moved into its permanent home, the Stephen Ministries Center. (The move-in day happened to be November 3, the 22nd anniversary of the founding of Stephen Ministries.) The 38,000 square-foot office and warehouse facility gives Stephen Ministries the capacity to serve the church much more effectively for decades to come.

## **The Future**

God isn't done with Stephen Ministries yet. We have been blessed with a talented, committed staff—researchers, writers, teachers, project managers, and customer support staff—who are continually developing new resources, in addition to supporting and delivering the life-changing ministries and resources we already offer.

We look forward to empowering high-quality, Christ-centered ministry—through individuals and congregations—for generations.