

Stewardship Month 2021



Commitment Sunday
October 31, 2021

GIVING TIME...by faith

During the 1999-2000 Broughton High School year, a bright young man sat in the front row of my AP English class. Though he was witty and smart, he was also kind and caring. Today, that bright young man, now a husband and father of three, devotes his life to service. So, time marches on; and now Matt Ashburn has given ME an assignment---a nearly impossible one, I might add: Describe stewardship as a Stephen Minister.

Christian stewardship often evokes thoughts of finance. And, of course, money is indeed important for a well functioning church. Yet, being a Stephen Minister calls for a different kind of stewardship, that of giving time. Stephen Ministers are often called the “after people.” We appear after the diagnosis, after the funeral, after the crises. Author Ernest Hemingway once wrote, “The world breaks everyone and afterward many are strong at the broken places.” Thus, a Stephen Minister’s role is to help in times of darkness, in times of distress, to walk beside a fellow Christian.

I am blessed to serve as a Stephen Minister at HBUMC. In this role, I have drawn closer to our church and its members. Spending time with Care Receivers is truly a gift. Members I have not known before, I know now. Crises I have not encountered before, I have faced now. Learning to simply be present, to care, to listen is a gift which blesses me in all my relationships.

I have never met a finer group than the Stephen Ministry Team at Hayes Barton. Led by Becky Balentine and ably assisted by associate pastors, Stephen Ministers fulfill Christ’s charge “to be our brothers’ keepers.” This ministry embodies Christian love and reminds us that we can all use our God given talents. Though Stephen Ministry has taught me many things, I highlight three:

Listening is often more important than speaking. When Mother Teresa was asked what she said when praying, she famously answered, “I listen.”

Compassionate silence is indeed golden. An ultimate irony of language is that some experiences are too deep for words. I used to wonder how people could just sit without speaking. Finally, I understand just being present can be comforting. Stephen Ministers do not offer advice; rather, they imbue compassionate silence.

Perfection is the enemy of happiness. There is only one perfect God; the rest of us are imperfectly human. Trying to deal with life’s vicissitudes requires love and friendship. The best walk is not alone; it is with God in Christian fellowship. Stephen Ministers offer this. So, what is stewardship as a Stephen Minister? Perhaps Luciano De Crescendo hinted at an answer when he said, “We are each of us angels with only one wing. And we can only fly embracing each other.”

Lynne Misenheimer
Stephen Ministry

