

THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST IN KEENE

STEPHEN MINISTRY



REVIVAL SUNDAY

Sunday, October 5, 2008
10:00am

OUR STEPHEN MINISTRY TEAM

Stephen Ministry Coordinator: Cathy Jay

Stephen Leaders: Jim Bothwell, Betty Christiansen (in training), Jeff Hixson, Anne McCune,

Stephen Ministers: Peg Barrett, Jeannette Bergeron, Dianne Patenaude, Frank Van Wely

Our *Stephen Ministry Team* invites you to a special reception in our Church Parlor immediately following this service of worship to enjoy refreshments & fellowship. Please also take a few moments to watch our *Stephen Ministry* video & look over our displays. Those who think they might like to become Stephen Ministers should also take a *Stephen Ministry Discernment Packet*.

RE-COMMISSIONING OF STEPHEN MINISTERS

Presentation of Stephen Leaders and Stephen Ministers

Opening Remarks

Dear Brothers and Sisters: You have been equipped to serve as Stephen Leaders and Stephen Ministers at *The United Church of Christ in Keene*. Hear now these words in Scripture:

2 Corinthians 1:3-4 “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of all mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.”

The Requests

Brothers and Sisters: each of you has been comforted by God with the Good News of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection. Now we ask you to join in the work of serving our Lord and those in our congregation and neighborhood who need comforting. As God has responded to your needs, we ask you to consciously strive to increase your sensitivity and responsiveness to the needs of others. As God in Christ has been a friend to you in troubled times, we ask you to be a friend to those who are burdened under the stress of daily care. As you are patiently listened to when you turn to God, we ask you to be a patient listener in this hurried world. As God in Christ has broken down the barriers that separated you from God, we ask you to heal divisions wherever you find them, always striving to make people whole. As the Spirit of Christ has given you skills and abilities from your birth, we ask you to use your skills and talents to pray for and help those whom you serve. As you have known God’s care, we ask you to help this congregation grow as a caring community through this ministry of care. As the presence of the Risen Christ has been revealed to you through faith, we ask you to share your personal experiences of faith with those around you so that they too may celebrate the presence of the Risen Christ in our world today.

The Vows *(first addressing the Stephen Leaders & Stephen Ministers)*

PASTOR: Are you prepared to meet these requests?

RESPONSE: Yes, with the help of God.

PASTOR: Are you prepared to nurture the skills you have learned and to use them in serving others: to support, encourage, build up and comfort people in all their needs?

RESPONSE: Yes, with the help of God.

(addressing the congregation)

PASTOR: Now, we ask you, the members of *The United Church of Christ in Keene*, to open your hearts to the ministry of these people and to pray for them, that they may be effective servants of Christ. Are you prepared to meet this request?

CONGREGATION: Yes, with the help of God.

PASTOR: We also ask you to accept their ministry when you need help, to allow these individuals to work with you as you face struggles in your life, that you might receive

support and help from your Christian brothers and sisters. Are you prepared to meet this request?

CONGREGATION: Yes, with the help of God.

(again, addressing the Stephen Leaders and Stephen Ministers)

PASTOR: And are you prepared to serve as Stephen Ministers of *The United Church of Christ in Keene*?

RESPONSE: Yes.

PASTOR: Will you accept each other's ministry when you yourselves need help?

RESPONSE: Yes, with the help of God.

The Blessings

(Each individual Stephen Leader & Stephen Minister kneels as our pastors & deacons offer a laying on of hands saying:)

_____, we hereby commission you as a Stephen Minister of
The United Church of Christ in Keene,

(A pastor anoints the Stephen Leader/Minister with oil as a Deacon reads one of the following blessings. Each Stephen leader/minister receives a candle, lit from the Christ candle to take the Light of Christ's care & compassion out into the world.)

May you, as a life-affirming human being in Christ, share His ever-abundant love with others, that they and you may grow in His wholeness.

May the Lord Jesus, who has graciously called you His disciple, strengthen you with His Spirit for your ministry in and to the world.

May the peace of God free you from burden and enable you to share God's love with those around you.

Our Lord Jesus touched the lives of people in many ways. May He shower His love upon you and sustain you in the ministry which lies before you.

Jesus said, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Know He is with you in every situation.

Blessed is the person whose strength is the Lord; may you ever find strength in Him for your ministry and life.

Stand firm on the foundation of Jesus Christ, and He will be faithful to you.

As God has loved us in Christ Jesus, may God bless you as you share that with others.

Go into the world in peace, have courage, and love and serve the Lord, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

In Christ, you are a new creation. May His redeeming love bring you peace in your service to His people.

May God bless you richly, that you might be a blessing to others.

May the God of all peace keep you sound in body, mind, and spirit and strengthen you for the ministry to which you have been called.

May the Spirit dwell in you, filling you with joy, peace and courage for all your endeavors in Christ's service.

Commendation

Because you have promised to faithfully serve the Lord Jesus and His people as Stephen Leaders and Stephen Ministers, I commend you to the care and guidance of the Holy Spirit as you, in turn, care for

others. Use the skills you have learned, releasing the gifts and talents God has given you, that you might be a blessing those you meet and care for. Continue to study. Reflect upon the situations you encounter. Pray for the people whose lives you are privileged to share. Be free to share your own joys and needs with others, so that you might receive in return the same kind of care and love you offer to others. And act boldly and without fear, certain that Christ is with you.

Prayer

O God, we ask You to take our sisters, Cathy, Anne, Betty, Dianne, Peg, and Jeannette; as well as our brothers, Jeff, Jim, and Frank into Your care. You have blessed them with particular gifts and talents, and have provided them with an opportunity to learn more about helping others. May they serve this ministry of love empowered by the Holy Spirit — quick to serve, patient in listening, and willing to share themselves with others. Give us thankful hearts for them, O God, and show them in times of stress and satisfaction, a special measure of Your mercy and joy. Keep them strong in the faith You have given them for the sake of Jesus, who cares for all of us in every way forever. Amen.

Dismissal

Go in peace. Serve the Lord faithfully, and your neighbors lovingly, as Stephen Leaders and Stephen Ministers in *The United Church of Christ in Keene*. Amen.

STEPHEN MINISTRY **at our United Church of Christ in Keene**

Stephen Ministry at UCC Keene began in 1995 under the leadership of Gladys Johnsen & Melvin Morgan. In all, 22 Stephen Ministers have been trained & commissioned to serve among us. In 2006, during a difficult time of transition in our church, the program was temporarily suspended.

This spring, Ann Plumley & Gordon Ellis (at the request of many at Gordon's *Heart Speaks to Heart* gatherings) met with Stephen Leaders & Stephen Ministers interested in reviving our program. At that meeting, they presented a proposal to ask Cathy Jay, a local psychotherapist & spiritual director, to coordinate of our revived *Stephen Ministry*. The idea was well-received & Cathy was sent to *Stephen Ministry Leadership Training* in Texas. Since her training, Cathy has worked (with Gladys & Mel's support) to revive *Stephen Ministry* here at our UCC Keene. Today, we celebrate its revival & re-commission our Stephen Leaders and Stephen Ministers. This is our church's ministry. All of us need to pray for it, use it, refer people to it & be open to serving in it.

If you would like to explore receiving the care of a Stephen Minister, OR, if you wish to explore becoming a Stephen Minister, please contact Gordon, Ann or Cathy. A training program for new Stephen Ministers begins in January.

Since she began, we have paid Cathy barely a pittance; she has volunteered countless hours. We very much want to compensate her at least a little more, as well as send others to Stephen Leader training. You can help in 2 ways:

- A. Make contributions to UCC Keene & designate them for *Stephen Ministry*.
- B. Increase your church pledge for our new 6-month (1/1/09 – 6/30/09) pledge campaign.

Thank you for supporting *Stephen Ministry*. It will strengthen our church & our ministry of care & compassion.