

TEXAS STEPHEN MINISTRY NETWORKING GROUP

“To equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.” (Ephesians 4:12-13)



Our Stephen Ministry founder, Dr. Kenneth Haugk, selected this scripture as the words that should greet people as they enter the Stephen Ministry Headquarters Building in St. Louis. Our **TSMNG** Leaders also believe this scripture is appropriate as we welcome our Stephen Ministry churches and their individual Stephen Ministers with our first **TSMNG** Newsletter and the expansion of our program, member benefits and care-giving. Praise the Lord and bless each one of our Stephen Ministers and the care that they give.



ONE NATION UNDER GOD: INDEPENDENCE DAY...July 4, 2006

Only two defining forces ever offered to die for us – Jesus Christ, and our American military personnel. One died for our souls, the others for our freedom. Please pray for our troops.



IN THE BEGINNING:

The **TSMNG** was formed in early February, 2005 at the Stephen Ministry Leadership Training week in Corpus Christi. Eight Stephen Ministers bonded during the first session and decided to sit together throughout the conference. They agreed to stay in touch and help nurture each other whenever needed.

The group met for breakfast and prayer on the last day. There were five Texans and three Stephen Ministers from out of state. The Texans asked the out of state Stephen Ministers to stand up, raise their right hands and be sworn in as Honorary Texans. Many of the people in the restaurant became quiet as the ceremony began and cheered loudly when they were pronounced **“HONORARY TEXANS”** and members of **TSMNG**. During that last day, six more SM Leaders joined **TSMNG**. **TSMNG** now has 35 Stephen Ministry Churches.

The original **TSMNG** members are Vernon Bennett, The Lakeway Church, Austin; Bill Dunn, First UMC, Kerrville; Mary Fahy, Sugar Land First UMC, Sugar Land; Jerry Martin, St. John’s UMC, Georgetown; Phyllis Miller, Highland Presbyterian, Lancaster, Pennsylvania; Bette Range, Sugar Land First UMC, Sugar Land; Theresa Wadding, Crossroads Community, Henderson, Nevada; and Connie Wilkus, Evangelical Free, Naperville, Illinois. Each member of this group is still a member of **TSMNG** and three are on the **TSMNG** Leaders Team.

MEMBER BENEFITS:

Our basic benefits for members are a quarterly Newsletter; a web site at The Lakeway Church; basic information on **TSMNG** and Regional Groups; Team e-mail addresses to receive your questions, suggestions and complaints; Regional Prayer Lists for serious cases; lists of recommended speakers and religious books; updates on Headquarters activities and meetings; the shared experiences of our Stephen Ministers; and any other information or activity that will help provide better care to our care-receivers, church, family and friends...as the Lord leads us. Please offer any suggestions on expanding the program.

MEET YOUR TSMNG LEADERS TEAM:

1. Coordinator Vernon Bennett, Austin, 512-261-3895; vern@austin.rr.com;
2. Austin Regional Leader Jeanne Heffern, 512-260-9585, jhheffern@yahoo.com
3. Houston Regional Leader Bette Range, 281-499-5044, brangel@msn.com
4. San Antonio Regional Leader Lyn Greenwald, 830-285-2344, lpgreenwald@gvtc.com
5. Waco Regional Leader Carol Linda, 254-772-9349, clinda@saintmatthewwaco.org

We look forward to hearing from each of you.

**TSMNG REGIONAL LEADER'S REPORTS:**

1. **AUSTIN:** Jeanne Heffern, 512-260-9585, jhheffern@yahoo.com

We recently mailed out informative letters to **Austin area SM churches** with return postcards regarding re-establishing our dormant **Austin Networking Group**. At least 9 area churches have favorably responded so far. First order of business is to decide on a good meeting date to discuss ways to re-establish the program and decide which direction our local networking should take. Please call me if you have any questions, suggestions and preferred meeting dates in September. We need you to help us support you and your SM program. Thanks. Jeanne.

2. **HOUSTON:** Bette Range, 201-499-5044, brangel@msn.com

The **Southwest Stephen Ministry Networking Group** has 10 active churches and 4 inactive churches. We are working on building up the number of churches that attend our meetings. We meet quarterly on Saturday mornings from 9 am – noon. The speaker at our last meeting in April was Dr. Mazie Leftwich, a Licensed Mental Health Professional Counselor. She discussed divorce, job loss, death and trying to start and/or maintain support groups. This was an excellent program.

Our next meeting will be **July 22, 2006** at **Christ UMC, 3300 Austin Parkway, Sugar Land, Texas**. We will brainstorm regarding how we can get more churches to join our group and TSMNG. We will also plan the meetings for the next year. The next meeting on **October 14, 2006**, will be at **Grace Fellowship UMC**. The speaker will be Dr. John Townsend, co-author of the Boundaries books.

If you are in the Houston area, please call me or come visit with us. Thanks, Bette

**HOSPITAL/NURSING HOME VISITS:**

The Lakeway Church in the **Austin area** had recently commissioned their second SM class and did not have many care-receivers at the time. The church lost a Pastor and requested that church members help visit their church members and their relatives in hospitals and nursing homes. The SM Leaders agreed to ask for volunteers from the second class to help make these visits and several SMs volunteered. Stephen Ministers from the first class also decided to participate. The Stephen Ministers learned a lot and received a huge blessing from their visits. Their efforts received great appreciation from the members being visited, their families and the church. Thanks, Vernon

STEPHEN MINISTRY SUNDAY:

The First UMC of Boerne hosts an annual Stephen Ministry Sunday. Stephen Ministers participate in most of the church functions...singing, taking up collections, giving devotions, etc. This church gets several new care-receivers each year because of this SM service. Please contact Lyn Greenwald, 830-285-2344, lpgreenwald@gvtc.com for further information. Thanks, Lyn The **Lakeway Church** in Austin, TX will hold their first Stephen Ministry Sunday in April 2007 and will add the commissioning of their third Stephen Minister class and recognition of all inactive SM members of their church. This annual program is highly recommended for all Stephen Ministry churches.

**WEB SITE...COMING SOON!**

The **TSMNG** documents and SM information will be located on The Lakeway Church web site approximately mid- September, 2006.

Use lower case: www.lakewaychurch.net, then enter: **stephen_ministry.htm**

The information currently there refers to the Stephen Ministry program at The Lakeway Church. **TSMNG** will be at the same location with different headings. We will also list all available information on Regional SM Groups and welcome updates and scheduled meetings as submitted by their leaders. We plan to have a large amount of information on the web site and use this site for our central posting of information available to all SM churches in Texas. The Lakeway Church is upgrading their web site now, partially because of our **TSMNG** program, and advised us that it will be state of the art.

MEMBER COMMUNICATIONS:

Please contact us whenever you have a question, suggestion or complaint...or just want to get acquainted. You will receive a reply by e-mail, letter or phone call. We will also be listing the best items we receive on our Web Site and in our Newsletters. Please send your questions, suggestions and complaints to your Regional Leader if you live in the Austin, Houston, San Antonio or Waco areas. SMs in the rest of Texas should contact the **TSMNG** Coordinator **Vernon Bennett**, vern@bennett.com, 512-261-3895,

TSMNG PRAYER LISTS:

Starting in September 2006, we will establish one **TSMNG** Prayer List in each of our current regional areas plus one other list for statewide **TSMNG** members outside those areas.

AWARENESS PROGRAM:

We began our Awareness Program about two months ago by providing a flyer explaining the **TSMNG** program to about 160 Stephen Ministers and businessmen at a weekend Stephen Ministry Headquarters workshop in Austin on Breakthrough Churches. St. Louis was very helpful in allowing us to distribute the flyers and meet during breaks. We had ten churches join **TSMNG** because of this publicity at the workshop.

We have mailed some letters to non-member SM churches and will continue our statewide mailings from September 1, 2006 until March 30, 2007, if necessary. Each of our member churches has a list of existing **TSMNG** churches. We would appreciate if

you would contact any Stephen Ministers you know throughout Texas, whose Stephen Ministry church is not on our member list, and brief them on our TSMNG program. Another major help would be for you to forward to us any SM church e-mail addresses you may know or could locate to your Regional Leader. This would be very helpful to our Awareness Program. Please e-mail or call one of our Team and give us your information about your contact with a non-member church. Thank you.

SM HEADQUARTERS ASSISTANCE:

Stephen Ministry Headquarters has provided us with their Master List of SM churches in Texas...397 in all. Some are no longer active. They also provided the list of 13 Regional Groups. Some are no longer active. It is very reassuring to your TSMNG Team to know that we always have exceptional suggestions, encouragement and support just by calling St. Louis. Thank you.

CARING MINISTRY WORKSHOPS:

SM Headquarters will be holding several **Introduction to Stephen Ministry** workshops in Texas starting this fall to help churches form Stephen Ministry Programs. Three are scheduled at this time...

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| 1. Houston Region | First Baptist Church | 9/23/06 |
| 2. Houston Region | Wilshire Baptist Church | 10/21/06. |
| 3. Plano Region | Resurrection Lutheran Church | 10/28/06. |

The exact meeting times will be available later. Please discuss this with any churches in your area that do not have a SM program and recommend that they attend. Please visit headquarters web site, www.stephenministries.org for more information.



STEPHEN MINISTERS' EXPERIENCES:

A Pastor and the Stephen Ministry Leader met with an active member of their church to see if she would like to become a Stephen Minister. She replied that she did not believe that God was calling her to do so. Three days later she received a Fed Ex envelope with this message:

"MARY, THIS WILL CONFIRM THAT I AM CALLING YOU TO BECOME A STEPHEN MINISTER. GOD."

She started laughing, then began to cry for about 20 minutes and then fell on her knees and prayed a long time. She got up and called her Pastor and told him that the Lord had called her to become a Stephen Minister, but that he did NOT go through Fed Ex. This lady gave her testimony before 500 plus Stephen Ministers attending the 2005 Leader's Training Program in Corpus Christi and received loud applause and many Texas size AMENS.



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(NOTE: Stephen Ministers' personal experiences will be a regular feature of our Newsletters. We will also place select personal experiences on our Web Site, with permission from the member. We would love to receive and share your good or bad Stephen Ministry experiences. Please contact Vernon Bennett, Coordinator, 512-261-3895, vern@aubin.rr.com)

WHY BE A PART OF TSMNG?

- T** is for training Stephen Ministers to be the very best they can be when relating to their care receivers.
- S** is for sharing Christ's love to people in crisis.
- M** is for ministering to those who feel alone and afraid amidst their troubles.
- N** is for networking Stephen Ministry throughout Texas
- G** is for God's infinite wisdom and guidance that we seek.

Texas Stephen Ministry Networking Group

is a group of dedicated Stephen Ministers who are deeply committed to enhancing Stephen Ministry throughout our state. We solicit your prayers and ideas as we work together to strengthen Stephen Ministry among Texas congregations.

Networking can only be enhanced through communication among our churches as to what is being done to equip your Stephen Ministers in continuing education, supervision, etc. Your input is vital for our networking team. We want to hear from you and be accessible in every way.

Why reinvent the wheel when so many of our churches have excellent Stephen Ministry programs already in place? It is in the sharing of our ideas, experiences and programs that networking will come full circle. For example, a church in Waco already has in place a Hospital Visitation Guidelines procedure written for their Stephen Ministers who do hospital visitation. Our congregation was interested in starting such a ministry, and we contacted them to use their guidelines. It doesn't mean that you have to do everything exactly as they do it. It just simply gives you direction and ideas to formulate your own hospital visitation program. This is how your networking group envisions networking throughout Texas. Major information such as the above can be placed on the TSMNG web site for all to view and learn. Information can also be easily passed along through e-mails as opposed to meetings. But, meetings are still viable tools in coming together, sharing ideas and fellowship with other Stephen Ministers.

Please say "YES" when you receive an e-mail or follow-up call from the **TSMNG**. Your congregation will greatly benefit from being a part of this exciting network of Stephen Ministers. Please keep **TSMNG** in your prayers as we grow together in seeking God's will and direction for this ministry. God bless you all. Carol Linda, Waco Regional Leader.

**GOD'S TELEPHONE NUMBER:**

"Call to me, and I will answer you and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know." Jeremiah 33:3

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

2 Thessalonians 3:12