



# 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***

**MARCH, 2007**

**VOLUME 1, NO. 3**

The role of the TSMNG is to coordinate assistance to member churches in order to nurture and enhance their Stephen Ministry. TSMNG is a focal point where Stephen Ministries can share challenges and solutions, provide resources and encouragement, as we all strive to be the best Christian care givers we can be. Praise the Lord!



## Unveiling the NEW TSMNG website...

Jeanne Heffern from Austin said it well in the last newsletter "Through networking, we grow stronger."

And now we have another tool available to us to stay in touch and share information with one another... our *website*.

With the help of a professional web designer who also hosts websites, we got off to a very quick start in mid January. A very kind and talented lady by the name of Ruth Boyd in Austin ([www.websitelink.com](http://www.websitelink.com))

volunteered to assist us in publishing our website. She purchased and donated the domain name, [www.tsmng.org](http://www.tsmng.org), hosting services and design services. Also she offered some greatly appreciated advice.

The website is a work in progress. As time goes on, it is our hope that it will contain articles and other resources that will be a benefit to starting, maintaining, enhancing, or reviving a Stephen Minister program in your Congregation or Parish.

If you have ideas, please share them with me. And if you have a challenging situation, give Vern a call and we will try to help find the resources for you.

*Shirley Siler, TSMNG Assistant Coordinator*

### **WELCOME SHIRLEY SILER**

After an AASMN meeting, Shirley told me that she believed the Lord was asking her to work with TSMNG on our website. I accepted. She has done an exceptional job. She agreed to do this newsletter and designed our cover.  
Thank you Jesus. *Vern Bennett*



# A CARE RECEIVER'S EXPERIENCE

I'm fine, just fine. I can control my emotions and take whatever life throws my way. Why is everyone so concerned about me? I've always cried when I'm happy (remember the Coke commercial "I'd like to teach the world to sing, in perfect harmony"...), when I'm sad (when Max, our Shih Tzu broke his jaw and had to be euthanized...), saying hello (airports are great places to witness reunions of friends or lovers...), saying goodbye (airports again, a hotbed of emotion...) or commercials about family (maybe because I'm so close to my own family). Now wasn't any different.

So what if my husband wants a divorce, my mother has Alzheimer's, my father has heart disease/COPD and is on oxygen 24 hours a day. They live 1200 miles away and he can no longer take care of her and refuses to consider alternative care. I work full time at two jobs, one being a business I bought to bring my husband and I closer but it had the opposite affect - I can't quit my full-time job to grow the new business - I have to support us. At church, I'm a greeter and a Stephen Minister. I also volunteer at a couple of nonprofits, community is very important to me. Dad got pneumonia, Mom went into a nursing home on their 55<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and Dad died 4 ½ months later.

I'm fine, just fine. And even if I wanted a Stephen Minister, I don't have time to meet once a week.

Well, I made time...

And it changed my life...

We didn't waste any time getting started. Because I had been through the SM training, I knew the roles pretty well and took full advantage of my 60 minutes per week. Pray, trust, have a non-judgmental listener, discuss feelings. Say the hard things that you've never told anyone in your life and know that they won't be repeated. And when things went a little off track, we assertively discussed it and got back to business. In addition to the healing (Thank you Laura, for your time, patience, kind and loving words, and prayers), I believe that the experience has made me a better caregiver to others.

God, through blessing me with a Stephen Relationship, helped me accept and understand several life changing events. I foolishly believed that I was in control, of events and emotions. Since then, even when things are going great, as they are today, I'm not in control at all. God is. And Praise the Lord for that.

Assertively reach out to others if you suspect that they might benefit from having a Stephen Minister. A simple "Have you considered a Stephen Minister?" can plant the seed. I never would have requested a Stephen Minister on my own and resisted the idea for many, many months. Thank God for my very caring persistent friends, who recognized my need and encouraged me to seek the help through Stephen Ministry.

*Shirley Siler, St Luke's on the Lake in Austin*

"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you." Matthew 7:7 (WEY)



# Regional News

## AUSTIN AREA STEPHEN MINISTRY NETWORK (AASMN)

### LEADER'S REPORT

Jeanne Heffern, 512-260-9585

[jheffern@yahoo.com](mailto:jheffern@yahoo.com)

## DALLAS AREA STEPHEN MINISTRY ALLIANCE (DASMA)

### LEADER'S REPORT

Shirlene Lucy, 214-695-8315(c)

[Shirlenelucy@msn.com](mailto:Shirlenelucy@msn.com)

The second meeting was held on January 14, 2007 at the Covenant United Methodist Church.

The website, [www.stephenministrynetwork.org](http://www.stephenministrynetwork.org), was demonstrated and the agreement was unanimous to put it into production.

The question came up: "Why are we here and What value will this networking group bring to my church and Stephen Ministers/Leaders?" Responses were:

- We are here to LEARN from each other, SHARE resources, and SUPPORT each other when necessary.
- The more resources that we have through sharing, the stronger we are and the better ministry we can give to our Stephen Ministers, Care Receivers and potential Care Receivers. These resources will include support groups, curriculum, speakers, etc.
- The website will be used as a communication tool.

We discussed: "Working together to support Stephen Ministry churches in the vicinity of Austin Texas" to be our motto. We set our purpose to be Learn, Share & Support, which is in line with our motto.

It was agreed that a Steering Committee should be formed to consider the behind the scenes activities, such as: Contacting other Stephen Ministry churches not yet reached, handling for area wide network meetings details, and scheduling Area-wide Events of interest to the Stephen Series enrolled congregations in the Austin Area. Shirley Siler from St. Luke's on the Lake, Episcopal and Tom Winn from Peace Lutheran agreed to join Jeanne Heffern.

If you are from the Austin area and would like to be part of this steering committee, please contact Jeanne Heffern, [jheffern@yahoo.com](mailto:jheffern@yahoo.com) to volunteer.

The Dallas Area Stephen Ministry Alliance has been restructured and has been meeting about a year and a half now. We meet quarterly on the first Wednesday evening of the quarter (January, April, July and October, except when it conflicts with Independence Day, etc., when it will be postponed by a week) at 7 p.m. at Northway Christian Church, 7202 W. Northwest Highway, Dallas, in Room F-103. Phone 214-361-6641 for more information.

Our meetings have so far been "brainstorming events." We have focused on all the major aspects of Stephen Ministry such as Referrals, Continuing Education, Supervision, Training and Awareness, even special problems that the Coordinator might encounter. No matter what the topic of the evening is, we always allow time for representatives from every church to speak about any concerns and/or solutions they have.

Most of our churches are fairly new to Stephen Ministry, but a couple have been at it for 15 years or more. No matter what the topic, I always learn something helpful at every meeting.

At the last meeting we decided to occasionally ask a speaker to present a program. One topic we are working on is to have a nurse from the Visiting Nurse's Association give us a short overview of what they do and how we can help minister to people for whom they care.

Our meeting attendance has dropped off but our hope is to rejuvenate the program and encourage more people from more congregations to attend.

When you talk, do not say harmful things,  
but say what people need – words that will  
help others become stronger.  
Ephesians 4:29

**HOUSTON AREA STEPHEN MINISTRY  
NETWORKING GROUP  
LEADER'S REPORT**

Bette Range, 201-499-5044  
[brange1@msn.com](mailto:brange1@msn.com)

The Houston Area Stephen Ministry Networking Group is putting together a list of speakers we can share through out the city. We are asking our churches to email Bette Range with any speaker and their topic who are willing to speak at different churches. This list will then be distributed to all our churches.

Any time a church has a workshop they want to advertise to the whole city they can email Bette Range the flyer and she will email it to the list of Stephen Ministry churches.

In February, our group met at Grace Fellowship United Methodist Church in Katy, Texas to hear Dr. Townsend talk about boundaries. It was an all day affair. He talked about boundaries of all kinds. It was a great workshop. A wonderful time to network.

Out next meeting will be in April and we hope to have John Bremer talk about Disaster Preparedness. Date TBD. In April we also will be discussing the areas the churches need help and share those areas that are working well and what they are doing to make it work.

We are trained to help our care receiver but we are also trained to help each other improve on what we are doing in Stephen Ministry in our churches and this is one of our goals in Houston.

**PLANO STEPHEN MINISTRY ALLIANCE  
(PLASMA)  
LEADER'S REPORT**

Connie Westfall  
[Connie.westfall@careministryintl.org](mailto:Connie.westfall@careministryintl.org)

The Plano Stephen Ministry Alliance meets on the second Thursday of each month at Grace Community Church, 4501 Hedgecoxe Road, in the Youth Center, Plano, from noon to 1:30. They brown bag lunch. Next meeting is on May 10. Everyone is welcome!

**SAN ANTONIO AREA STEPHEN MINISTRY  
NETWORK  
LEADER'S REPORT**

Connie Linville, 210-696-1033  
[Clinville@Arz.ee.xom](mailto:Clinville@Arz.ee.xom) or [clinv@uumcsatx.org](mailto:clinv@uumcsatx.org)

The January San Antonio Area Stephen Ministry Network was held at University United Methodist Church, 5084 DeZavala Rd., San Antonio, TX 78249 with Connie Linville facilitating. There were 7 churches represented.

The meeting was opened with a devotion and a prayer. We were very fortunate to have Vern Bennett, head of TSMNG, speak to us about the formation of TSMNG and the support that is being developed through out the state of Texas. He was most gracious answering many questions that were presented to him.

The majority of Stephen Ministry churches in the San Antonio area are utilizing their non-assigned Stephen Minister's by having them visit hospitals, homebound and nursing homes. Many of these Stephen Ministers have found that this is their calling and all that they wish to do as a Stephen Minister. This arrangement is working out extremely well.

The subject of helping the dieing Stephen Ministry churches was discussed and tabled for the next area meeting. For one reason or another, trying to rejuvenate these dieing Stephen Ministry churches seems to be extremely difficult.

We continuing to share training schedules, enabling those who currently wish to become a Stephen Minister can do so without waiting for several more months. Recently, University United Methodist Church had 4 individuals attend Alamo Heights United Methodist Church training sessions because they did not want to wait 6 months until UUMC started their training. It worked out very well.

The meeting was ended with the sharing of ideas, suggestions and a prayer.

*It is with great regret that I must resign as chairman of the San Antonio Stephen Ministry Network effective June 30, 2007. Life has become too busy for me to give it the necessary attention it commands. However, I am very pleased to announce that Dell Porth has very graciously agreed to take my place. He will be a great asset to the program. -Connie*

## REVIVING DORMANT NETWORKS

Stephen Series congregations across the United States are building networks with each other to help enhance their individual lay caring ministries. There are three levels of networks: The first is the regional or area level, secondly the state level, and thirdly the national level. Here in Texas we are fortunate to have access to all three levels.

A network is a support system. Stephen Leaders from Stephen Series congregations network and link together to share ideas, exchange views and give/receive support and encouragement from other Stephen Series congregations. This gives Stephen Ministry congregations expanded opportunities to tap into each other's resources and to discover what's working and what's not. It is an excellent tool for enrolled congregation leaders to use to enhance their Stephen Ministry, which directly benefits their Stephen Ministers.

Sometimes a network may become dormant, due to a variety of reasons. One of these networks was the Austin Area Stephen Ministry Network. However, with the kick-off of a new statewide network movement (TSMNG) a growing revival has begun within the Austin Area, and many other regional areas in Texas are starting to follow suit. The Austin Area Stephen Ministry Network has had two re-organizational meetings and is in the process of forming a steering committee and developing a regional website: [www.stephenministrynetwork.org](http://www.stephenministrynetwork.org). It is planned that this website, once up and fully operational, will be the main contact linking the Austin area together to create instant support and help to any Stephen Series enrolled congregation no matter their needs.

The major source of all networking is The Stephen Series in St. Louis, Mo. They provide the national network for us by freely sharing ideas, materials, advice, and resources in written form that all Stephen Leaders can easily access with their passwords. Also for a nominal cost,

Stephen Ministries St. Louis can provide the Stephen Leader organizing the network movement with the names, addresses and phone numbers of all Stephen Series congregations in and around the area. The only requirement is that all networks uphold the terms of their individual congregational enrollment covenants and for each member church to maintain their strong sense of separate congregational ownership. St. Louis also offers resource items to be available at all your network events. Contact customer service at Stephen Ministries St. Louis at least one month in advance to make arrangements for materials to be shipped for display and sell at your resource table.

Many networks have already been established. Within the Leader's Manual under Section R, "Relationship With Stephen Ministries", there is a module (R-4) entitled "Networking with other Stephen Ministry Congregations", that is filled with information and suggestions. Also located in the same module is the document (R4[2]), "Existing Stephen Series Networks", which is very helpful. This document is a handout at Leader's Training Courses and is updated annually in the Stephen Leader Resource Packet each Leader receives from Stephen Ministries St. Louis yearly. As you form a new network, contact Stephen Ministries St. Louis so that they can update their list and keep abreast of new developments to pass on. Stephen Ministry St. Louis also asks all existing networks to continue to contact them periodically for information so as new congregations enroll in your area, they can be instantly invited to network. Once a network is formed and registered with St. Louis, all that is needed to obtain this type of follow-up information is for the Stephen Leader of record with the network to call and request it.

*Jeanne Heffern, Austin Regional Leader*

## A Special Gift

January 28, 2007, I drove to Corpus Christi to attend the Stephen Minister Leadership Training Conference (LTC). I was joined by about 290 additional lay and ordained leaders from around the country and the world! The conference was incredibly well organized and informative.

I was honored by the confidence placed in me by the existing Stephen Minister Leaders at my church who selected me and funded my trip. The day before I left for the conference I had a special delivery personally brought to my house -- a Stephen Minister notepad and personal notes from all my fellow Stephen Leaders wishing me Godspeed to the conference.

Although still recovering from a recent surgery, I had been determined to participate in the conference which I had delayed for a year. As an experienced Stephen Minister and Supervision Facilitator, I was prepared to gather information on topics of particular interest to me, e.g., how to better recruit and screen potential care receivers, marketing the program, topics for continuing education, and how to create wonderful retreats. There was abundant information and I met my goals in these areas.

While at the conference, I did not feel well and suffered from guilt over not being able to do more. Mid-week I was called to the resource center. I assumed an error had been made on a purchase order. Imagine my surprise when I found a gift awaiting me. As I unwrapped the cuddly Stephen Minister teddy bear emblazoned with the saying "Stephen Ministers are Loyal," a book bag to carry all my purchases, and a personal note of encouragement, I had tears in my eyes. The other Stephen Minister Leaders had me wrapped in their love.

The conference was wonderful, but the greatest thing I learned is what a difference an affirmation or a small act of kindness can make. I promise to carry this learning to my work with my fellow Stephen Leaders and Stephen Ministers. Truly the "little" things mean the most. I hope you will consider this as you continue to grow your own Stephen Ministries.  
*Carol Gans, Stephen Minister Leader  
The Lakeway Church, Lakeway, Texas*

Don't let yesterday take up too much of today...Will Rogers.

## YOUR TSMNG LEADERS TEAM

**Coordinator** Vernon Bennett (Austin)  
512-261-3895; [vern@austin.rr.com](mailto:vern@austin.rr.com)

**Assistant Coordinators:**

Shirley Siler  
512-423-3026, [Shirley@ztechinc.com](mailto:Shirley@ztechinc.com)

Ace Hopkins  
512-261-4170, [acekje@aol.com](mailto:acekje@aol.com)

**Austin Regional Leader** Jeanne Heffern  
512-260-9585, [jheffern@yahoo.com](mailto:jheffern@yahoo.com)

**Houston Regional Leader** Bette Range  
281-499-5044, [brange1@msn.com](mailto:brange1@msn.com)

**Waco Regional Leader** Carol Linda  
254-772-9349 [clinda@saintmatthewwaco.org](mailto:clinda@saintmatthewwaco.org)

We look forward to hearing  
from each of you!

## THANK YOU LYN ANELLO

**Lyn Anello has been the San Antonio Regional Leader for TSMNG for the past two years. Lyn provided logic, creativity, teamwork and vision in our program. She also prayed for and nurtured each one of us as we juggled our home, family, church and TSMNG duties and challenges. She recently advised she could no longer perform her TSMNG duties because she is moving out of the area.**

**Lyn, we will continue to pray for you and wish you the best of luck in the future.  
Vernon Bennett, Coordinator**