

Stephen Ministry on Hiatus for Discernment

Through this past year our Stephen Leaders have been in conversation about the sustainability of this program at PMC. They have consulted with Kristen and Rod as pastors and other previous participants of the program. This summer and fall, two of our people in leadership have needed to step away from these responsibilities, leaving only one Stephen Leader to help guide the program.

With these considerations and in consultation with the Leadership Table, PMC Pastors and SM Leaders have decided to call a hiatus or pause for the Stephen Ministry program at PMC in 2024. What this means is that we will not take on any new care receivers. Those that are in current relationships will be continuing these relationships until they come to an end naturally. Our current Stephen Leader (Joleen) has agreed to continue working with active Stephen Ministers who need supervision. Pastor Kristen will also be working on creating some pastoral care options that will be available for people in the congregation while the Stephen Ministry program is not available.

As we put the Stephen Ministry on hold for a period of time this next year, we will use that time to do some discernment on whether we have the resources to continue this program. Right now the biggest difficulty is getting people to volunteer to make this program run since it takes so much time from people who are involved. In February and March we will let the congregation know about this hiatus and make a call for engagement and feedback. We will be creating a small group to work on this discernment with pastoral support, and we hope to engage as many voices as we can. There will be a variety of ways you can share any thoughts or input you have, as we hope to have lots of conversations and also create a questionnaire that people can fill out. If you have more questions or would like to talk with someone, always feel free to reach out to Kristen (kristen@portlandmennonite.org), Joleen Classen (joleenclassen@me.com), or Pastor Rod (rod@portlandmennonite.org). Additionally, feel free to pass this information along to any others at PMC who have an interest in the Stephen Ministry program. We will carefully consider the many needs involved and do this in a prayerful way.

The Stephen Ministry program has been a major force for good in the congregation, and we know how important this program has been to so many people, including the ways it has supported PMC pastors in our work. The discernment group and PMC leadership and staff will work carefully, take our time in discernment, and listen to where God is calling us today. A big thank you to all who have participated for the time and energy they put into the program! We will work at finding the best way to move forward for PMC.