



# buzz

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## Charter Stephen Minister Completes Service

After serving our congregation as a Stephen Minister for eleven years, Len Harms recently completed his ministry. Len was trained as one of the first four Stephen Ministers when the congregation began its Stephen Ministry program in 2009. During a portion of his tenure he served as a Group Supervision Facilitator—guiding monthly structured sharing among a group of his fellow Stephen Ministers.



Asked what influenced him to become a Stephen Minister, Len stated, “I was relating to someone who was challenging as a friend. I thought (being trained in) Stephen Ministry would be helpful in knowing how to talk with him. However, after my training I knew that he would not be best served by Stephen Ministry. The realization of what I had committed to came to me later, but I knew that Stephen Ministry was a good fit.”

Reflecting on how serving as a Stephen Minister impacted his spiritual understanding/journey, Len shared, “The most relieving moment for me during training was hearing with clarity these words: ‘You are the care giver—God is the cure-giver.’ In this ministry I came to understand that healing comes in many forms. It could be an actual healing from a disease; it could be making it through the day successfully; it could be changing one’s perspective; it could be saying aloud to someone else your deepest fear; it could be only for that moment, but you have that moment to draw on at a later time. There is a lot

See **Len Harms** continued on back

## Response to Waterford’s accepting Paycheck Protection Program money

At the May 17th Zoom congregational meeting, you were informed that the church has applied for and received a PPP loan from the US Government Small Business Administration COVID-19 response legislation. We appreciate the engagement and feedback we received during the meeting and in subsequent communications from Waterford members. Your concerns have been incorporated into current and future conversations in MLC and Facilities and Finance as we discern the best ways forward and navigate our new “normal” together as a congregation. We are also grateful for the trust expressed in Waterford leadership in these uncertain times.

We want you to know that the decision to apply for the PPP funds was made in the brief window they were available and when our offerings were in significant decline, \$26K behind expenses at the end of our fiscal year. Decision-making rationale included the many uncertainties of this COVID-19 time period, as well as the fact that as individuals, we live in the US legal system, pay taxes, and have received stimulus checks from the government. There was an awareness that other Mennonite congregations, organizations, and agencies had also applied for these funds. It seemed like the most appropriate and prudent decision at the time.

Over the next four to six months, we will have the opportunity to assess the impact of COVID-19 on our congregational finances as well as a better understanding of how our members and the local economy have been impacted. A clearer understanding of the financial situation at Waterford will allow us to better assess the budget cuts that

See **MLC Response** continued on back



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## Len Harms (cont. from front)

of mystery in healing.” Len continued, “I was awed by the privilege of entering into another person’s life so intimately and the courage they modeled in allowing me to do so. One of my last spiritual insights was realizing the motivation for change and the possibility for healing that come when two people encounter each other deeply in the spirit of Christ. Stephen Ministers should never dismiss the fact that they are present. That is the care giving; what happens in each other’s presence is God’s work of healing.”

Len stated the most challenging aspect was, “Trusting that what I am doing is making a difference. There were times when I asked my supervision group to tell me why I am doing this. What do they see and hear from me that indicates purpose? Their responses were very helpful as were the contacts made with my care receivers by the Stephen Leaders.”

Asked what skills were best exhibited by a Stephen Minister, Len shared, “A Stephen Minister must be able to hold confidences in all situations, be able to identify care-giving roles which you learn through the training, know how to listen actively as you practiced in training, be able to self-reflect and to differentiate your care receiver’s needs from your own, be able to trust process, and know that the foundation of this ministry is Christ at work among us.

For those in the congregation who have been reluctant to consider becoming a Stephen Minister due to it’s highly structured organization, Len advised, “Trust the ministry. It has been carried out in many congregations throughout the country. It is built on very practical knowledge about human nature and what one needs to maintain direction as a Stephen Minister, and what is most effective with a care receiver. As I served, I referred back to the training manuals at times and realized that every topic that I

sought help with was somewhere in those books. The ministry has survived the test of time.”

Len summarized his experience by stating that, “I strongly believe in Stephen Ministry and think that it was a good fit for me. All who have been part of my numerous supervision groups were helpful at one time or another. I found those relationships spiritually enriching.”

— Stephen Leader Team

## MLC Response (cont. from front)

were approved as well as the possible need for new ministries as a result of the pandemic. The Facilities and Finance Ministry Team along with the MLC will lead an assessment of whether having this money will enable us to not only honor our financial commitments for payroll and facilities, but also to honor our giving to local and global ministries that are in need.

We look forward to working with the congregation to address these challenges together. We also value continuing to hear your feedback as we discern the best ways forward in our Waterford community. Thank you for your commitment to Waterford and to our mission to minister to the needs of our local and global community as well as to one another.

— Rachel Stoltzfus, on behalf of  
MLC members: Cynthia Bontrager, Jason Herrmann, Andrew Hartzler, Becky Bateman, Anne Lehman, Carlos Romero,