

Hello Norwell UCC! I am Rev. Peter Strobel (I am not super formal so Peter, or Pastor Peter is fine). For most of my life I have been a product of the Midwest. I was born in Kansas City, MO and grew up in the suburbs of Kansas City, KS, where I was baptized and raised in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA). I got my B.A. in history from Doane University, in Crete, NE. That is where I encountered and fell in love with the UCC. In the four years that I sang with and toured America and South Africa with the Doane Choir, I was inspired by the Rev. Dr. Jim Keck of First Plymouth Congregational Church in Lincoln, NE, as well as the thirty plus UCC churches we visited for concerts and home stays. These experiences helped me discern a call to ministry which led me to apply to, and then attend Yale Divinity School and Andover Newton Seminary in the fall of 2019.

I did not plan to attend seminary during the pandemic, but we all know what happened in the spring of 2020. For all the tragedy of those times, I count myself lucky to have traveled back to KC to do seminary online, because otherwise I never would have crossed paths with the love of my life, Allie. We met on Bumble during the pandemic, started dating, and have been together since. I have yet to find someone as kind and gentle, yet mischievous and brilliant as my wife. I proposed to Allie in December of 2021, married her a few months later (one week after graduating in New Haven!), and then immediately moved to Des Moines, IA to start work at Plymouth Church (10/10 do not recommend graduating, getting married, and then moving in less than a month).

During my time at Plymouth Church, I have done a bit of everything. I have done the classic roles of preaching, teaching, pastoral visits, and presiding over weddings and funerals, but have also stretched to be less conventional. While the church lacked a Pastor of Children and Families, I revamped and taught Confirmation. I also introduced LEGO ministry to give kids and teens a hands-on way to experience scripture and enjoy church outside of Sunday School. Once we got a Pastor of Children and Families, I shifted gears to support and chaperone the teen Matins choir during their summer tour, and then restarted and led the young adults program. My role as an associate pastor has been defined by asking, "what needs to be supported or uplifted in this moment?" And that is what leads me to Norwell UCC.

When I first saw Norwell UCC's profile, I immediately picked up you are an energetic and strong congregation, ready to answer God's call to the here and now. As I read through your five-year plan, learned more about Norwell UCC's history, and browsed through all you have done since the 1960's, I knew I wanted to be part of your congregation. I had opportunities to see other churches that are doing great things, but what makes Norwell UCC special is your commitment to answering questions of the here and now through a commitment to your kids, teens, and their families. Without discounting your past, I have a feeling the best is yet to come.

While other churches have a narrative of decline, I believe the aftermath of the pandemic and world events have us situated to be more relevant and uplifting for young people than ever before. I am looking forward to being part of your lives so that through mission trips, retreats, conversations over coffee, cheering on the sidelines of your events, sharing music, and worshipping together we will create a beacon of joy to draw in and uplift the community. I am already chomping at the bit to prepare a program year and get to know each member of the congregation. I look forward to seeing you towards the end of April. Until then, I am holding you all in my prayers and hope you may have a blessed Holy Week.

Blessings,

Reverend Peter Strobel