

# Have you met Seth Patterson?



**Since August 1, 2016, Seth Patterson has served Plymouth Congregational Church in a variety of ways,** first as Director for Children and Youth Ministry and most recently as Director for Spiritual Formation & Theater. Seth, his spouse Nora Montañez Patterson and their daughter Nery moved to Minneapolis from Chicago, where Seth was working at the University of Chicago. Since 2014 he has also been the Project Manager for the Chicago Commons Project at the University of Chicago. This program brings early- and mid-career clergy together in a two-year cohort to stimulate relationships, expand imaginations and deepen resilience in the difficult work of ministry.



Seth moved around a bit as a kid, living in Minnesota, Maine, Chicago and finally in Youngstown, Ohio, where he says he grew up. He again moved to Minnesota to attend St. Olaf College, where he was fortunate enough to study in Cuba, Switzerland, Israel, Palestine, Egypt, India, Nepal, Hong Kong, China and South Korea. He graduated with a degree in theater and philosophy.

Immediately after college he moved to Boca Raton, Florida, to work on a Master of Fine Arts (MFA) in theater performance at Florida Atlantic University. He completed his degree in 2004 and then worked for a year at the Milwaukee Repertory Theater in Wisconsin. Subsequently he was as a professional theater artist in Minneapolis and St. Paul, working as an actor, director, teacher and producer.

In 2012 Seth and his wife Nora moved to Chicago so that he could attend the University of Chicago Divinity School in pursuit of his Master of Divinity (MDiv). There he studied Greek and Bible, theological ethics, pastoral care and theology. He co-founded a student group called Becoming Allies that worked with straight, white men to understand their privilege before listening to their marginalized peers and acting on their behalf. He graduated in 2015 with a thesis entitled *Dismantling White Supremacy: A Prophetic Approach* which he ultimately presented publicly as a play.

After receiving his MDiv, Seth worked at the University of Chicago as the Associate Director for Chapel Life at Rockefeller Memorial Chapel. At this multi-faith center for arts and spirituality he was the associate minister for a Sunday morning congregation, Christian chaplain for the office of Spiritual Life and oversaw all live performance in the 1000+ seat space.

In 2016 Seth and Nora returned to Minneapolis and Seth began working as the Director of Children and Youth Ministry at Plymouth. Here he began to create structures to help maintain and rebuild the excellent children and youth programs that Plymouth has offered. In his time at Plymouth,

participation by both young people and adults has increased and meaningful experiences have continued.

In January of 2018 Seth inherited many of Paula's previous responsibilities when she became Acting Senior Minister, and Seth became the Director of Spiritual Formation & Theater. In this new role Seth began to function as part of the clergy team, helping plan and lead worship, preach and do pastoral care. He oversees all education at Plymouth for people of all ages. Additionally, in these two years he helped create the structure and partnerships of Wednesday night's 100 Hands, helped bring a new Sunday morning schedule into reality, facilitated congregation-wide discussions, helped build the Sundays @ 10 programming, and brought Academia ELZE and zAmya Theater into our building. He is the liaison to the Boards of Spiritual Formation and Fine Arts; the Sunday Forum, Spiritual Exploration, Climate and Environmental Justice, Children Youth & Family and Theater Committees; and the Racial Justice Initiative. He has taught or co-taught several classes and book studies on a variety of topics.

In 2019 Seth, along with two partners, founded Theater 45°. This theater ministry is focused on stories that explore the sacred as well as asking the question of who is currently speaking prophetically. Last fall their inaugural series, *Step Back Listen Up*, brought 6 important partners into our chapel with over 500 people in attendance over 6 weeks. He is helping to bring new and varied theatrical voices into The Conn and other Plymouth spaces while also solidifying existing relationships.

Seth is approved for ordination pending call in the United Church of Christ.



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***From Mary Kay Sauter,  
Chair of the Search Committee for Spiritual Formation and Theater:***

Our committee began our work in September 2019. We completed the profile and the job description and had the profile distributed nationally through the UCC, United Theological Seminary and Plymouth's web site. We received 10



profiles: six women and four men. Our deadline was January 31. We held extensive conversations and eventually a matrix that helped us narrow down the candidates to two. We interviewed each of them for 90 minutes. The candidates each met with Nina, Beth and

Paula, and representatives from the Deacons, the Board of Spiritual Formation and the Committee for Children Youth and Families (CCYF). All wrote thoughtful and relevant impressions of the two. Given the information from these interviews we decided on February 25 to unanimously recommend to you Seth Patterson for the position of Minister for Spiritual Formation and Theater. His experience, his knowledge, his delight in this ministry, his commitment to Plymouth and its ministries, and his competence all led us to the decision that he is the best candidate for this position.

It was also a joy to work with the people who comprised this committee. Anne Seltz asked at our first meeting if she could take minutes and wrote Flame articles. Jane Gerber asked if she could write and edit profiles and job descriptions and has extensive HR experience. Renée Macomber had connections and knowledge of the workings of the Board of Spiritual Formation and the CCYF. Ryan French has extensive HR experience and artfully created the questions for our interviews. Bill Davini has tech experience and helped us in all the computer work. Emily Moses-Thompson was our youngest member, and her knowledge and wisdom of Plymouth was very helpful. We discussed, we disagreed, we built consensus, we joked, we trusted each other.

We did our research, asked questions, and with great integrity and thoroughness made our decision to recommend Seth Patterson to you. The Search Committee is available for questions.