

SCOTT PHILLIPS BIO

The direction of my life and sense of calling was set in place in the small town of Minden, Nebraska, where I was born and raised. I was part of a loving, close-knit family that dove into community life in many ways; school participation and volunteering (my father was a middle school teacher and wrestling coach), neighborhood groups, and life at Westminster United Presbyterian Church. My memories of that church are formative...participating in community service and fellowship events, forming relationships and feeling loved by both young and old, and learning about faith and life from Sunday School teachers and pastors who became close friends and life-long mentors. I loved the sense of community in Minden and still seek that sense of shared purpose and mutual care.

I attended Sterling College in Sterling, KS because it felt very comfortable. It was a tight community in a small town and I enjoyed the people I met there. When I started at Sterling, I told people I wanted to be an accounting teacher. My first college level math class took care of that idea, and the faculty and community at Sterling helped me ask foundation questions about my loves and passions. I graduated with a degree in English Education and, more importantly, a larger stable of lifelong friends.

My next stop was in Lincoln, Nebraska because I wanted to give college teaching a try. I graduated in 2001 with a degree in 20th Century British and American Literature. That year I moved to the Kansas City Area for 3 excellent reasons:

- 1) I had free rent with my former roommate in Lincoln and several friends who lived in the area
- 2) I had a job at the University of Missouri-Kansas City as an Academic Advisor and Instructor
- 3) I had met Julie and fallen head over heels. She was from Suburban Los Angeles...and we decided that Kansas City was a good compromise. A large city in the Midwest.

Lincoln further sharpened my sense of call. I loved reading, analyzing, and teaching...but I was still hesitating with the increased publication demands of academia and wasn't quite sure that teaching at a University would provide a lot of interaction with people and community building.

I was right. My job at UMKC was rewarding in a lot of ways, but I missed personal interaction that was centered around something other than schedule building and academic concerns. The answer came when Julie and I started worshipping at Parkville Presbyterian Church and volunteering with the youth group. I had met Brian Ellison through a mutual friend, and we had gotten to know several members of the church well. It felt like that community of service and care I so deeply loved. I started to express a growing sense of call. Then they did something amazing, loving, and risky; they offered me a one year paid internship to see where that sense of call led. Julie and I got married in the summer and we moved up north. I worked at Parkville primarily with the Youth, but also doing the variety of work that ministry entails (teaching, visitation, meetings). I loved it.

I left for the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary in 2003 and had an excellent experience that prepared me for both the practical challenges and theological development the parish would require. I was able to see many different contexts and encounter diverse views on what it meant to be the Church.

I started my first call in 2006 at First Presbyterian Church in Berthoud, CO. They were incredibly patient with me as I "learned the ropes" and were generous when our son Josh was born in 2008. They

embraced us as family and I learned a lot about the sometimes hard realities of ministry (staff disputes, economic concerns, conflict management, etc.) We moved to Westview Presbyterian of Longmont, CO in 2011 and enjoyed the community mission-oriented nature of that congregation as we helped the church and city through a massive flood in Longmont and the operation of a community food pantry on site. Even though we had grown close to the Westview community, I decided to step down as Head Pastor in late 2017. A storm of overworking, anxiety, and other stresses led me to a point where I felt that I needed to intentionally step away to reconnect with family and, quite honestly, reassess my sense of call and what types of ministry might best encourage good habits and healthy practices moving forward.

Over the months, I not only worked on my PIF, but also talked with friends and neighbors about other nonprofit and church-based opportunities. I did some contract writing and help with some local funerals and weddings. What I found out is that I missed those moments of community and service. I didn't miss the *act* or preaching or the *act* of teaching. I missed the connections those actions inspire and grow. I missed being a shepherd and gardener; helping to connect people in community and provide light, life, and hope. And so, after long talks with family and friends, we started opening the door for the possibility of a return to ministry. I felt strongly that I need to feel a powerful sense of call if we were to step into parish ministry again. We were extremely picky; I applied to grand total of two churches in my two months of "looking"...Northminster was one of them. We are excited about the possibilities of Northminster because it feels strongly about community connections, fostering a sense of family, and (most importantly) is passionate about sharing God's love and hope. It is in a place we love and mirrors our loves, callings, and priorities. We are excited that this might be God's next step for us.