

Queer Pastoral Residency Program Profile:
Pastoral Residency at First Church Somerville

Church name: First Church Somerville

Street address: 89 College Ave. Somerville, MA 02144

Supplemental web links: <http://www.firstchurchsomerville.org>

Additional ecumenical affiliations (e.g. denominations, communions, fellowships): None

Conference: Southern New England Conference

Association: Metropolitan Boston Association

UCC Conference or Association Staff Contact Person:

Alex Shea Will

sheawilla@sneucc.org

Summary Ministry Description:

In a short paragraph, reflect on where your church is going and what it might look like when you get there. What do you need to get there? Who are you seeking to join you on this part of your church's faith journey?

First Church Somerville is in a good and healthy place on its spiritual journey. Many know us as the church of "Drag Gospel" and we are proud of our longstanding commitment to being on a forefront of LGBTQ celebration. We are a church that is vibrant, young, and pretty Queer. We are also a church who went through a difficult transition period, re-envisioned our future, and are living into being a community with an even wider and more extravagant welcome. We have worked hard to reorganize our governance structure and bylaws and create systems of leadership that encourage and support collaboration and transparency. For the last two years we have been enjoying our collaboration with our new Lead Pastor, Jenn Macy, and have been blessed by the leadership of Michael Streib, our first Queer Pastoral Resident. Our church is currently undergoing a construction project to become more accessible after a successful fundraising campaign. We just voted to partner with Somerville Homeless Coalition; renting out the first floor of our building as an overnight shelter to help SHC increase their emergency shelter capacity in our city. We continue to work on strengthening our children and youth programming and love building our capacity for real intergenerational connection. Our congregation is growing, we see new visitors almost every week, and while numerical growth is not our ultimate goal- we look forward to increasing our visibility in our community so the people who need our community can find us. We have a collaborative music program and a dedicated and collaborative Music Director. We look forward to increasing our creativity, joy, and spiritual depth in worship in the years to come.

Somerville lives to make God's expansive love and justice real through radically inclusive sanctuary, authentic connection, spiritual exploration, and transformative community engagement”.

Our strengths include; a dedicated and commitment lay leadership including a dedicated leadership team, enthusiasm for Justice and Outreach, a brand new Christian Education program, and a strong desire for community connection. Our growing areas include; finding new ways to help new people integrate into our community life, helping our small but mighty older population connect and feel supported, growing our young adult programming, strengthening our community engagement, and continuing our work on being actively anti-racist in all we do.

We imagine the Queer Pastoral Residency not only as a way of seeking a new pastor to serve our community, but a way for us to become more authentically who God created us to be. We have experienced this through the success of our first round of the residency and look forward to seeing what our new resident will bring.

One of the ways that our community lives into its core identity is by authentically welcoming people as they are and as they are becoming. It is something that comes naturally to us as a whole. The result? We have a very Queer congregation. The “critical mass” of Queer people in our membership makes us fertile ground for a new, queer, pastor to explore their ministerial identity and gain pastoral experience in a setting without experiencing the “othering” that could happen in a less diverse setting. Our hope is that this accomplishes many things, but primarily we hope the Queer Pastoral Residency is a launching pad for a healthy, long, and faithful career in pastoral ministry. And, we hope that the resident leaves their mark on our community in a way that helps us be more faithful, creative, and welcoming for generations to come.

We are seeking a Queer person who is close to ordination or “ordainable pending call”. We expect that the resident will have completed seminary and CPE and be in process to become ordained within the UCC (or a sibling denomination) if they are not already “ordainable pending call”. We are particularly hoping to call someone with a marginalized Queer identity that would make it difficult for them to thrive in their first call in another setting due to the lack of systemic support in the local church community. An excellent candidate would be faithful and flexible, collaborative and creative, detail oriented and organized.

What we value about living in our area (2 – 3 sentences):

Somerville and the surrounding area is dynamic with people of varying religions, ethnicities and cultures. Somerville is a sanctuary city for undocumented community members and made national headlines as the first community to offer health benefits

to multiple partners for polyamorous city employees. Community-wide events such as weekly farmers markets, festivals, concerts and more are abundant. The Somerville area is filled with many people committed to social justice and the work of equality.

Current size of membership: 100

Languages used in ministry (other than English): None

Position Title: Pastoral Resident

Position Duration: 2 years, Full Time

Compensation: \$67,500 total compensation

Scope of work:

- Preach at least 1 time monthly.
- Provide a children's moment when not preaching.
- Serve as a member of the worship planning team and attend weekly staff meetings.
- Serve as pastoral support for the Justice and Outreach, Communications, and Fellowship committees helping to set direction and provide assistance with programming as needed.
- Lead adult education classes.
- Oversee our tween and teen Youth Groups and Confirmation Class.
- Provide pastoral care to the congregation in collaboration with the Lead Pastor for both individuals and in group settings, including our Community Coffee Hour.
- Manage administration responsibilities such as collaborating with other staff to maintain the membership database, social media development, and welcoming new members to the church.
- Attend Deacon's meetings.
- Collaborate with the Lead Pastor in providing an FCS presence at Somerville and surrounding community events. Be a liaison between the church and other community organizations, people, and resources.
- Share responsibility with the Lead Pastor in performing weddings and funerals.
- Be engaged in the Southern New England Conference in collaboration with lay leadership to promote the full inclusion and celebration of LGBTQ people in the local church.
- Engage in personal study and prayer to foster your own faith and to improve skills so as to lead, teach, and preach better.

Core Competencies:

(List three core competencies that you imagine could be foundational in your next minister's relationship with the church. For example, a church seeking a pastoral care minister might hope to call someone who is caring, sensitive and sociable, while a church seeking an executive minister might want an organized, detail-oriented and time-conscious person.)

Faithful - We are seeking a pastor who loves God and people well and who is able to express that faith in word and deed.

Collaborative- We are seeking a pastor that is able to be creative, flexible and work well as a member of a team.

Creative - We are seeking a pastor who will help us to think outside the box and help us connect well with people of all ages and in all stages.

Who is God calling you to become as a congregation?

First Church Somerville is emerging from a time of transition and listening carefully to God to see who we are being called to be. We are a congregation built on the spirit of radical welcome, a deep sense of openness and vulnerability and a commitment to social justice. We have a strong sense of who we are and what we are passionate about.

We believe that God is continuing to call us to be beloved community for those who are already in our church community and for folks who have not yet found a spiritual home. We want our community to be actively anti-racist and anti-bias so we are even more welcoming to people of color, queer people, transgender and gender nonconforming people, people in non-traditional relationships, and people with disabilities. We want all people not only to feel comfortable coming in the door but to be fully integrated and visible and to expand our church culture and ways of doing things beyond white, middle class, cisgender, able-bodied norms. We have helped make this a reality by training our leadership, and our congregation, in non-violent communication and anti-bias practices.

With God's help, we hope to be a safe space for all, including the wounded and unconnected in our community. We hope to be an avenue for them to connect with God, perhaps after having been disenfranchised by Christianity in the past or without having had any prior relationship with Christ. We want a church that represents and welcomes people from all walks of life, and that contains and celebrates all of these stories and histories.

In addition to creating community within the walls of our church, our congregation

has been called to extend the progressive Christianity we celebrate at FCS beyond our walls. Our congregation is committed to addressing issues of social inequality, racism, and poverty. We have participated in social justice work through financial contributions, community engagement and advocacy with our mission partners, as well as direct service initiatives. Most recently, we have been enhancing our relationship with the Somerville Homeless Coalition and getting to know them as an outreach partner. In March 2024 we voted to enter a formal partnership with Somerville Homeless Coalition to share our building and resources. They move in the summer of 2024. We are also tending a relationship with our local Department of Children and Families offices. Over the last 18 months we have provided over 150 “Sweet Cases” to children emergently entering foster care and created menstrual kits later this summer to support teens entering care. We have several foster families in our community and we hold a monthly support group for foster and adoptive families that is very well attended and advertised to the community by local agencies. We have been a financial supporter of “Youth on Fire” (an outreach program for homeless LGBTQ youth) for many years and we look forward to being both a financial supporter and continuing to provide them with hands-on support. Last Pride Sunday we spent the afternoon making “hot summer weather” kits for Youth on Fire that helped support more than 70 homeless LGBTQ youth last summer. We collected mittens and hats for them over Christmas and they were the financial beneficiary of this year's “Drag Gospel Festival.” With God’s help we hope to strengthen and refocus our justice and outreach work in order to maximize our impact on the issues we care about.

We have emerged from several years of transition and into a more joyful and hopeful moment in our congregational life. While there are still obstacles, we are proud of the work we have done and excited for the work to come.

Specify language requirements or culturally-specific capacities preferred in a next ministerial leader, and why those matter to the congregation’s sense of calling.

Our church strongly values the use of inclusive language in our worship services. We are looking for a Pastor who is comfortable using inclusive language. We often use “they” pronouns for God, or no pronouns, during the liturgy, as well as many other metaphors and signifiers. We have told scripture stories in which Jesus is referred to with male pronouns, gender-neutral pronouns, or no pronouns at all. We exercise care in the choosing of our hymns, and in the images we print in our bulletins. This is related to our central focus on radical welcome to “people of all sexual orientations, all colors, all genders, all body shapes and sizes, and all abilities” as we state in our welcome each week. We have church members who are trans* and many church members exploring their gender identity. We take pronouns seriously and also flexibly, encouraging kids and adults to use church as a safe space to explore their identity with playfulness and support. We all have our pronouns as banners (removable and

changeable) on our name tags and wear them each week during service. We also have many polyamorous members and we use expansive language about family and relationships.

We are meant to live in relationship with one another which requires compassion, accountability, respect, and love. We seek a pastor who is good at relating and communicating across all ages with people of diverse identities from lower to high economic access, from a variety of racial/ethnic backgrounds, from monogamous to monogamish to polyamorous, across the sexuality spectrum, with fixed or flexible gender identities.

Based on what you have learned about who your church is, who your church's neighbor is, and who God is calling the church to become, describe four areas of excellence from *The Marks of Faithful & Effective Authorized Ministry* that your next minister will display to further equip the congregation's ministry in these areas.

Out of all eight of these important aspects of ministry, our church holds Justice & Mercy as the highest priority. It's central to our understanding of God's call, even when it makes us uncomfortable. We are working on our own blind spots as a predominantly white congregation by committing to being anti-racist in all of our spaces; meetings, bylaws and governance and worship. We are looking for a minister who will join us in the discomfort of looking inside ourselves to see how we participate in injustice and will engage in action to work towards justice.

We have been blessed with many fantastic preachers who give moving sermons that we end up pondering for days and listening to again. We treasure Sunday sermons and the road signs of wisdom that remind us how to better walk the often-challenging path of love, justice, and mercy that God calls us to walk. Sacred Stories are a pillar of First Church Somerville. As part of this foundation, we have a "children's moment" at the beginning of every service to share some piece of that week's message in a way that's engaging and accessible to a wide variety of kids. It is crucial that our children are brought into the sharing of sacred stories and that their understanding of God is scaffolded with educational programming.

We make room for a minister to have a Spiritual Foundation and an Ongoing Spiritual Practice, as well as self-care that feeds their sacred storytelling and other work as part of their work week. We want our minister to model for us active prayer and "nurturing spiritual practices."

We are also at a significant point in the life of our church where we are about to experience change (possible new community collaborations, a new resident). We need a minister who will help in the ongoing Strengthening Inter - and Intrapersonal Assets

in our community as we focus on creativity while we increase stability and allow for growth.

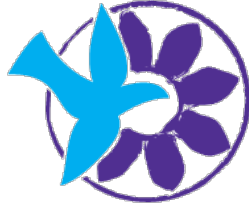
Describe how God is calling you to reach out to address the emerging challenges and opportunities of your community and congregation.

First Church Somerville had a complex last decade. Between two complicated pastoral transitions and a pandemic, we have had a lot of opportunity to reflect on our weaknesses and celebrate our strengths.

We feel particularly well equipped to explore all that God has in store for us in the next decade of our church life and we are excited to continue the Queer Pastoral Residency as a way to help our church, queer pastors, and the UCC thrive.

Closing Remarks:

We know that God will guide us to the right Pastoral Resident for this moment in time. We are praying for you (yes, YOU) in your discernment and hope that our ministry together will be filled with holy surprises and steadfast love.



Queer Pastoral Residency Program - Application and Instructions

(This application form is for those who do not have a UCC Ministerial Profile. If you have a UCC Profile, please follow the instructions on the Ministry Opportunity listing to have your profile sent to the QPR team.)

Please send the following documents by email to QPR@firstchurchsomerville.org, or by postal mail to: First Church Somerville, Attn: QPR, 89 College Ave., Somerville, MA 02144, **to be received no later than 5:00 PM Wednesday, May 15, 2024.**

- Completed Application Form.
- A current resume.
- Two letters of reference. Please have two people write a letter about your gifts for pastoral ministry and your potential as a Pastoral Resident. Letters should be sent directly to the church (by mail or email)
- Two phone references. Please list two different people whom we can contact and who can also reflect on your gifts for pastoral ministry and your potential as a Pastoral Resident.

Essay questions (500-750 words each). Candidates may choose to answer these questions in writing or verbally in either audio or video form (Please keep written answers to the 500-750 word limit, and audio/video responses to 3 minutes each.)

- Describe your call to pastoral ministry and how you see the Queer Pastoral Residency Program supporting you in your ministerial formation. If you identify as having a marginalized identity, how has that impacted your journey to find your first call?
- Share a recent moment in ministry that was particularly faith-filled or fulfilling.
- Reflect on one of the Marks of Faithful and Effective Ministry* that is particularly present in your ministry, and another that you hope the Pastoral Residency Program will help you develop further. *The Marks of Faithful and Effective Ministry are widely used across the United Church of Christ for

pastoral preparation, formation and discernment. They can be found at:
<http://uccfiles.com/pdf/THE-MARKS-OF-FAITHFUL-AND-EFFECTIVE-MINISTERS.pdf>

APPLICATION

Your Name:

Pronouns:

Email:

Mailing Address:

Phone number:

UCC Member In Discernment (MID) Information: (Please Check One)

- MID (Please provide conference and association.)
- Not a MID in the UCC
- Not yet approved for ordination

Please give additional relevant details:

If you have ever been in a discernment process in any other association/conference or denomination, please tell us where and what led to your transfer.

Written References: To be sent directly to First Church Somerville.

1. Name:

Email:

Relationship to you:

2. Name:
Email:
Relationship to you:

Phone References: Please list two additional people we may contact to learn more about your ministry.

1. Name:
Email:
Phone:
Relationship to you:

2. Name:
Email:
Phone:
Relationship to you:

Is there anything you'd like us to know about these references?

NOTE: Your application, resume, and references may be sent under separate cover, as they are ready. Note: All materials should arrive at First Church Somerville by 5 PM Wednesday May 15, 2024. We look forward to hearing from you!