Senior Pastor Candidate Packet

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Letter to Our Future Pastor

Dear Brother in Christ,
We are delighted that you are interested in partnering with the congregation of Seven Hills Presbyterian Church in the work of the Gospel. Here we have endeavored to provide an honest reflection of who we are as a church, the city to which we are called, and our hopes for the future. Nothing would please us more than for you to be the shepherd we are seeking. While we do not yet know you, we pray for your wellbeing. As we learn more about you, we hope to build one another up through discernment and empathy. Finally, we welcome you to join us in praying for wisdom and illumination, as we seek God’s will for our church.

Sincerely,
Seven Hills Presbyterian Church
Pastoral Search Committee

Timothy Wiggin (Chair); Caitlin Schuman (Vice-Chair); Dave Van Norstrand (Secretary); Mitchell Calbert; Erin Frey; Bethany Lundell Garver; Israel Moreno; Justin O’Brien; Geren Stone
WHO WE ARE

The foundation of Seven Hills Presbyterian is the strong belief that the gospel of God’s amazing grace changes everything: ourselves, our families, our communities, our cultures, our cities, and our world.

FROM THIS FLOWS OUR VISION

Seven Hills Presbyterian exists to see our lives, our neighbors, and our city transformed by the true story of God’s amazing grace.
CONGREGATIONAL VALUES

Seven Hills Presbyterian Church is located just outside of Boston and attracts a group of authentic people with a range of backgrounds, church experiences and walks of life. What unifies us is a love of Jesus and the desire to see his grace and truth transform and renew. This is embodied in our core values:

Gospel—Centered

We hold fast to the truth that without Jesus saving work we are hopelessly lost, but because of Jesus we are found, loved, and accepted. We insist that it is not simply God’s role to save us and then our role to work really hard to justify His efforts. Rather, in everything we do, we cling to Paul’s words that it is God who works in us, “both to will and to work for His good pleasure” (Phil 2:13). Because of this great freedom in Christ, we have good news to share with our friends and our family. We work hard inside and outside the home to bring order out of chaos. And we laugh and play in His beautiful creation, because we know that it is God who will bring His good work in us to completion on the day of Jesus Christ.

Community—Formed

From all eternity, God is in a perfect loving community within the Trinity. Therefore, when God transferred us from the domain of darkness to the kingdom of His beloved Son, He did not merely save us into an individual relationship with Him. God saved us into a community of believers who reflect His character. It is within this community that God sanctifies us, as we live together in brokenness and continual reliance on God’s grace. Because community is essential to God’s work in us, it is the lifeblood of our Church. This is evident throughout our ministries. Central to this core value are our Community Groups which create opportunities for us to live out our gospel-centeredness in everyday life.
City—Engaged

Our location within urban Boston has richly blessed us with a congregation with many talents and passions. We know that God blesses us so that we can be a blessing both inside and outside our church. Our vision is not just renewal within our congregation, but also in the city of Somerville, a city that greatly values art, justice, and civic engagement. Such engagement has manifested in many church ministries and events. We work through ordinary means to share the good news of Jesus.

* We invite you to read the words of our congregation collected from an August 2021 survey on the experiences and hopes for Seven Hills. Unless otherwise attributed, all quotes are from anonymous survey participants.
Our Story

“One of the things that is really wonderful about our young church is its small size. In a church plant, the intimate size, the shared mission, and the needed tasks bind together the whole church family, from the oldest adult to the youngest child. Between the community groups, members serving in the nursery, teachers and teaching assistants in the classrooms, youth leaders, church leaders, music and art ministries, and the overlap in most of the ministries, the children are known and loved by their whole community. What we lose in institutional programming, we gain in life-giving relationships.”

—Christine Stone
Children’s Ministry Director
What drew you to begin attending Seven Hills?

**Themes:**
- Warm & authentic people
- Proximity
- Neighborhood focus
- Launch of church plant

**Select Quotes:**
- “Everyone from the church was very welcoming - pastors, leadership, congregation members. This conveyed a healthy & open church culture. (In addition to good biblical teaching & worshipful posture toward God, etc.)”
- “ARTS MINISTRY! Also friends associated with the church, the warm environment, the heart of the community.”
- “Proximity to home and desire to be a part of a local neighborhood based church.”

### HISTORY

Seeking to reach our neighbors with the good news of God’s grace, Christ the King Church in Cambridge and its leadership sought to plant new churches around the greater Boston area. As part of this movement, in 2013, David Richter the founding pastor of Christ the King Somerville (later Seven Hills Presbyterian Church as described below) and his family were called to Somerville to plant a church in this dynamic, urban context. David, along with a core team of families and individuals, began meeting to pray and work together towards launching a church that would serve as a beacon of grace and hope in Somerville.

After several months of seeking God’s direction and planning, Christ the King Somerville (CTKS) was launched in the fall of 2014. A strong desire to follow God’s calling, a warm sense of community, and an active trust in God’s good plans for our city were evident amongst those who started CTKS.
Over time, the church grew with new members and ministries as we sought to see our lives, our neighbors’ lives, and the city of Somerville transformed by God’s grace. An emphasis was placed on the development of robust Community Groups which focus on developing deep connections among members of the church, and praying for and caring for each other’s spiritual wellbeing. Our congregation includes many growing families, singles, and graduate students. We have celebrated numerous marriages, births, baptisms, graduations, and ordinations. Our closely-knit group has also grieved together and encouraged each other through challenging times. Much love has been poured into serving our surrounding community seeking to build relationships demonstrating the beauty of God’s grace and love.

“The church has helped me beyond words in learning how to shepherd my children and teach the Bible and the gospel to them daily.”

Since the seed was sown for our church plant, we have been blessed with very engaged assistant pastors and staff. We are committed to training and cultivating future lead pastors. Our current pastoral assistant serves an important role in the life of our church by frequently preaching, leading worship, and spearheading several ministries.

Somerville is an incredibly dynamic environment with many people coming and leaving each year. In this context, we welcomed many new members, but also wished farewell to many who have been called elsewhere for reasons such as work or family. Each member of the church has been a blessing and many remain friends even through time and distance. In February 2020, CTKS reached a point in our growth where we were able to transition from being a church plant to being a fully established and self-governing church. As part of this transition, CTKS was renamed Seven Hills Presbyterian Church to reflect the seven hills of Somerville and our desire to be a church for our city.
As the COVID pandemic hit our communities, in March 2020 we transitioned from in-person to online services. Most ministries went through significant efforts to adjust to the new reality. While it was not an easy time, God’s favor and work in our church did not dwindle. Our church felt a renewed calling to care for each other and for those in our surrounding community. Ministries such as our Needs Team and Prayer Ministry evolved to find new and creative ways to reach out and invite people in. We saw our leaders’ compassion, commitment, and creativity come together to keep a strong sense of connection during a time of social disconnection. Over time, we have been able to return to meeting in-person weekly for church services and finding various ways to meet together for community group and fellowship whether outside at a local park or connecting remotely online.

"I see people again and again going above and beyond to care for each other at personal cost. That has really shown me how God nourishes and supports his people beyond what we are capable of."

The pandemic has resulted in shifts and transitions in the urban community. One of the changes that we have seen is several members move away from Somerville. We have said goodbye to those who lovingly served in positions of leadership and had been a part of our history from those first days of our church.

In the spring of 2021, David Richter accepted a new call to serve as the senior pastor of City Church of East Nashville in Tennessee. We are thankful for the ways in which God blessed our community and our families through the work that David and his wonderful family did in Somerville. As a result of this transition, Seven Hills Presbyterian formed a pastoral search committee of nine church members. We trust that God is working in our church and in Somerville, and we are excited to see His work as we enter a new chapter of our church’s story.
LEADERSHIP

We give thanks for our stable, committed leaders, and we are hopeful for our next pastor to cultivate new elected leaders as a priority.

**Elected Leaders**

- David Van Norstrand, Elder
- Geren Stone, Deacon
- Madeline Clark, Deaconess

**Staff**

- Will Clark, Pastoral Assistant
- Paige VanNorstrand, Women’s Discipleship Director
- Christine Stone, Children’s Ministry Director
- Sara O’Brien, Music Director
- Holly Wiggin, Administrator
Our Ministries

“Learning deep community with people over time, sticking with a vision of care and discipleship, pressing in through hard times and weariness, and seeing Christ throughout scripture have been long-lasting themes. I have learned so much about the Bible as a whole big story of God’s love for his people.

“I’ve seen ‘iron sharpens iron’ in action through longer term relationships within this Christian fellowship.”
Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.
—Hebrews 13:1-2

Children’s Ministry
“The children serve together with the adults in ways that are less accessible and less needed in a larger church. Children join with the adults in setup, clean up, snow shoveling, offering, greeting, outreach, and service in ways that are beautiful and profoundly biblical. What can feel siloed in large organizations is instead an organic togetherness of our children in the life of our church. The moments that we can see that God is at work in our children and building his kingdom through the relationships at our church are the most life-giving to me.” —Christine Stone

Prayer Team
“Learning endurance in prayer has been a gift and a challenge. It’s wonderful to have the accountability and shared weight of bringing requests to the Lord week after week. Praying with others is a reminder that prayer is powerful and mysterious, and we get to participate in the work of the Almighty Creator simply by speaking our hearts to him and listening to his words to us in prayer.”
—Paige VanNorstrand

Meals Ministry
“To feed someone physically and emotionally is a very tangible and immediate way to care for others, especially when they are at their most vulnerable.” —Lisa Crounse

Men’s Discipleship
Fellowship. Casual. Hospitality.
“I always enjoy when we have opportunities to get groups of men together. The most meaningful moments are when spaces of connection are created for men in our church who may not know each other well as a means of building community.” —Will Clark
Artist Fellowship Group
“The most life-giving moments in my field of ministry are the moments when I see people touched and inspired toward God. Sometimes they are inspired through one another’s art. At other times it may be through each other’s stories and experiences. I love seeing people light up, connect with, and relate to each other. Additionally, moments are always life-giving when I get to engage in art! I love any excuse to dance or sing!” —Aseneth Castaneda

Racial Justice Team
“In our Racial Justice group I found our IDI (Intercultural Development Inventory) process to be encouraging as so many folks in our church participated and so deeply desire to grow individually and as a collective group. We have had several discussions that have been life-giving to me with people becoming vulnerable with each other particularly in our book discussion.” —Becca Stone

Music and Audio/Visuals Team
—Sara O’Brien

City and Needs Team
“A bright spot of my time leading the City Team is the Benevolence Box resource drives we did to gather resources for the Somerville Family Learning Collaborative (SFLC), Homeless Coalition, and Project Soup. I loved driving around and picking up donations, and seeing a physical representation of our community’s generosity and desire to serve.” —Will Clark

Women’s Discipleship
“Being a partner, encourager, co-question-asker, and behind-the-scenes prayer friend is a sacred position that I treasure. I learn from and am so encouraged by the spiritual path each of the women I meet with walks. I love that I get to see the fruit God is developing in hearts over time and point it out as the story unfolds. It’s a gift to connect women with one another, to develop a shared community of people who need encouragement, steadfast love, a place to belong, and a place to wonder/ doubt/ seek. It is a gift to bring women together in small groups or large groups and help them to see their need for one another and their joy in one another.”
—Paige VanNorstrand
Seven Hills is in the heart of Somerville, Massachusetts—a diverse, eclectic, densely populated city of predominantly two-family and three-family houses sprinkled with small yards, parks, public art, local businesses, and weather-worn “Bathtub Mary” statues. Nicknamed The City of Seven Hills, Somerville sits on four square miles of traditional Wôpanâak (Wampanoag) territory just two miles north of Boston and has a population of over 80,000. The texture of our city illustrates stories of change marked by immigration, innovation, transience, and evolving cultural identities. We believe Grace changes everything, making Somerville and our neighbors a special place for our church to welcome people in and share God’s redeeming love.
WHERE WE LIVE

Since its incorporation, Somerville has continued to be home to many immigrant communities, urban “streetcar suburb” households, young professionals, and college students. Over half of Somervillians were born outside the United States, and more than 50 languages are spoken in our schools, with the district’s primary languages being English, Spanish, Portuguese, and Haitian Creole. Somerville’s diversity celebrates art, culture, and creativity; only New York City has a higher concentration of artists. Cultural events, markets, and festivals like ArtBeat, PorchFest, and Open Studios happen throughout the year. The front of our church building has become an urban stage for artistic welcome and worship.

Our city is highly mobile.

Somerville is home to Tufts University and adjacent to Harvard University, MIT, and many institutions of higher education. In 2014, one in six Somervillians moved to the city within the previous year. The majority of households are renters, and too many experience housing cost-burdens. With the MBTA Green Line Extension (GLX) opening in 2022, more people and families will face the possibility of displacement, and even homelessness, due to rental hikes and uncertain consequences of a rapid demographic shift.

With these challenges in mind, Seven Hills formed a CityTeam to engage the church in civic involvement, mercy ministry, and social justice efforts. We partner with other churches through CityServe Somerville, which collectively seeks to promote Gospel-driven love and care for our community. We strongly and unequivocally oppose all racially motivated violence against our brothers and sisters from the Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities, and launched a Racial Justice Group to address structural racism in our city and lives. The work of the Racial Justice Group began with an in-depth Intercultural Development Inventory. Also recognizing the immense burden of COVID-19, we formed a Needs Team to respond to requests from within and beyond our church so as to better serve our neighbors.
Somerville city streets stormed by Paul Revere on his famous “Midnight Ride” are today paraded by activist street musicians known as HONK! bands. What was a Ford Motor Company assembly plant, is today a national model for mixed-use, smart growth development and urban riverfront revitalization. At a glance, renewal abounds; and still, power, conceit, inequity, and secularism seem to be the most apparent drivers. This provides both a need and an opportunity for our church. The story of change in Somerville highlights God’s ultimate plan for our church in this dynamic place we call home.

“God has used our church to help me feel more connected to the area and to reach our city.”
What We Hope for Our Church

Forming a Christ-centered community that is outward-facing (concerned with the needs of the city and emphasizing a mission of engaging with the city/people where God has placed Seven Hills).

That we find ourselves...that we learn who we really are, how we should serve and do it well, and that we grow in numbers. I really really really hope this includes being more multi-cultural and connecting with our diverse community in an authentic and meaningful way.

My biggest hope is that we could stabilize with a larger community that is invested in caring for each other and our neighbors, and that the way we care for each other would radiate the grace that we receive from Christ.
TO BE A CHURCH THAT IS...

Communally Led

The heart of Seven Hills Church is to see each member understand how the Lord has uniquely equipped them to serve and take the initiative to actively “encourage one another and build one another up” (1 Thessalonians 5:11). We deeply desire that our church culture is a healthy one of joyful welcome, mutual service, and communal healing.

“God has given me relationships with wonderful people who have continued to be an encouragement through all the difficult struggles of my life. I have developed friendships with people who are not afraid to push me outside my comfort zone and confront me when not acting according to my faith.”

Evangelistically Bold

A huge felt need for the Spirit surrounds our church and our city. People lean into “spiritual but not religious” pursuits, yearning to give themselves up to something more. One might consider “work-ism” one of the dominant pursuits. Work-ism is an inconspicuous part of the fabric of our community that exploits its followers and gives them nothing back, creating aching needs for meaning, community, acceptance, peace, and rest. Our work is good, but it is not God. Our church exists to point people, who are hungry for these things, to Jesus: the Bread of Life. Somerville is a deeply unequal city. In the midst of perpetually rivalling interests, our church hopes to be unifiers and peacemakers. As a church in the city of Somerville, we have grown relationships, created space for seeking truth, celebrated people coming to faith, and their being baptized.
**Spiritually Strong**

Whether questioning Christianity, embracing the faith, or navigating a long history in the church, every member and community representative at Seven Hills is on a path of spiritual development. Our desire is to see each member of our community nurtured, challenged, and growing in their walk with God.

**Biblically Grounded**

Since its inception, Seven Hills Presbyterian Church has put a central emphasis on Biblical, Gospel-driven preaching. The Word of God should be the anchor and the fulcrum for pastoral exhortation through the changing cultural moments and current events. Biblically-driven, expository explanatory preaching has characterized our pulpit, and should continue to do so in the years to come.

**Administratively Organized**

Led by a team player who displays an eagerness to work with and alongside others, our church and our pastor exhibit a humble willingness to learn, grow, and submit to proper authority. We hope to be led by a shepherd who is punctual, completes tasks on time, and stays until tasks and events are concluded. Our pastor will be willing to joyfully pitch in and help when needed (even when tasks are outside his specific scope of responsibility). Exercising good organizational skills and ability to prioritize tasks, our church’s pastor should be able to function independently when needed: self-directed, resourceful, and highly motivated.

**City Focused**

“Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper” (Jeremiah 29:7). God has a heart for the city. Here, cultural divides can be shattered: igniting conversions, transforming lives, and bearing witness to the power of God’s love. When the Israelites were uprooted from Jerusalem, their homeland, and exiled into Babylonian captivity, they were told by God to pray for their new (temporary) city. If their city prospered, they would too. As a church, the Lord has placed a burden on our hearts for our city, her surroundings, leaders, and people.
Vibrant Fellowship

“By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35). At Seven Hills Presbyterian Church, our deepest desire is to love God with all our hearts, souls, and minds; and to love one another as He has loved us. Pressures and anxieties of life in the city are a daily reality. However, we believe God uses the Christian community to provide a sanctuary where we can be revitalized and strengthened. We also believe that the love we have for one another can influence others in our city toward faith in Jesus Christ.
What We Hope for in a Pastor

Grace changes everything. I love our vision statement, because it is true, and it becomes visible in how we care for others in our city, in our church, and in our sermons. God’s grace is the cause, motivation, and energy fueling all that we do.

I would love to see a pastor who exudes belief in the gospel, is an excellent communicator, who is not bound by the [traditional] culture of the PCA, who is gentle and steadfast, and who loves people and having fun.
Seven Hills Presbyterian seeks a senior pastor who displays the leadership qualifications listed in *1 Timothy 3*, along with strengths in the following areas:

**Spiritually Developing the Congregation**

Seven Hills has a variety of programs to help explore hard questions of belief and doubt, and their implications for our life together. We are seeking a Pastor who will help shape and steer our public ministries and the staff alongside him, and who will take an active interest in walking with us as we wrestle with life’s challenges, wade through wicked problems, and work out our faith through honesty, fear, and trembling.
Empowering Lay Leaders

We are prayerfully pursuing a leader for our church who will believe in partnering with his flock, who will courageously call us to action despite the many pressures of modern life in Boston. He will prioritize training and support for the whole church (men, women, youth, elderly) to flourish in formal and informal ministry roles. We seek to equip all members to serve and lead alongside our pastor, with the hope that our pastor never feels overly burdened to solely carry the ministry of the church. We believe that as God grows us in service, he will grow us in love for each other, our communities, and our city (John 13:34, 35; 1 John 3:16-18).

I would hope our new pastor would continue... to explore new ways to engage women [roles] in the life of the church (within our denominational structures).

Leading Church Administration

In recognition of our church’s current size and dynamic urban context, we place a high value on an administrative vision that cultivates and applies the ideas and skills of both professional staff and volunteers in an atmosphere of mutual accountability and shared leadership. Over the last few years, we have witnessed the development of an arts ministry, a racial justice team, partnership with the local homeless coalition, a community easter egg hunt, as well as our music team’s participation in Somerville’s PorchFest. Whatever God has in store for His church in this next chapter, we will benefit greatly from servant leadership that involves, strengthens, and provides accountability and feedback for its staff and volunteers.

Evangelizing our Neighborhood

Evangelism is at the heart of our mission as a church in a city with rocky and parched easy soil. Our evangelical outreach requires a leader with a heart for the City and the skill to teach and encourage our members in sharing the gospel.
Proclaiming the Word

We are prayerfully pursuing a leader for our church who will believe in partnering with his flock, who will courageously call us to action despite the many pressures of modern life in Boston, and who will prioritize training and support for the whole church (men, women, youth, elderly) to flourish in formal and informal ministry roles. We seek to equip all members to serve alongside our pastor, with the hope that our pastor never feels overly burdened to solely carry the ministry of the church. We believe that as God grows us in service, he will grow us in love for each other, our communities, and our city (John 13:34, 35; 1 John 3:16-18).

Serving the City

Because we believe that the gospel of God’s amazing grace changes our communities, our cities, and our world, Seven Hills Presbyterian seeks a pastor who will promote and engage in civic involvement, mercy ministry, and social justice efforts throughout Somerville and its neighboring urban communities. We are looking for a pastor with concern for the wide range of social challenges and struggles facing our neighbors. We hope for a leader who will dedicate his time and skills to help church leaders to build upon the church’s work with local groups like the Somerville Food Security Coalition, Somerville Homeless Coalition, and CityServe Somerville. Our leader will encourage and energize the City and Needs Teams in their tasks of identifying areas of needs and hardship and alleviating burdens in our community.
To apply for the position as Senior Pastor of Seven Hills Presbyterian Church, please send the following to pastoralsearch@sevenhillschurch.org

- Cover Letter
- Resume
- Responses to the following candidate questionnaire. While the topics are weighty, please attempt to limit your total response to one or two pages overall.

1. Briefly describe your spiritual journey.
2. How would you outline your philosophy of ministry?
3. What part of serving the church energizes you? What do you love most about pastoring?
4. What are some ways that you take care of yourself spiritually and what are some of your struggles in this area?
5. If you were to take this position, how do you see your story intersecting with our story?
6. Why do you think you and your household would be a good fit for Somerville? What considerations do you have about living in this area?

For fullest consideration, please apply by **November 30, 2021**.