Internship Opportunity with Berks County Community Foundation

A Project for Sacred Places
Reading, Pennsylvania

Architecture/Historic Preservation and Communication Internships Available

Since Berks County’s earliest days, congregations have shown their devotion to God and religion through the construction of churches and other places of worship both large and small. According to research conducted by local genealogists, at least 77 congregations have practiced in the City of Reading since 1751. Hundreds more were created in the countryside.

The cost to maintain these places of worship is difficult for some congregations to bear. There is a risk that structures, art, and architectural details of historical significance could be lost as these structures fall into disrepair. To address that issue, Berks County Community Foundation launched a project in 2019, with support from Partners for Sacred Places, to create a comprehensive inventory of these buildings and their treasures.

Due to the global pandemic, the program was suspended in 2020 and 2021. Now, in 2022, the Community Foundation plans to hire two summer interns to continue A Project for Sacred Places with the following goals:

1. Continue project to identify, inventory, assess, and map all existing current and former places of worship of historical significance within the City of Reading and begin expanding to relevant structures in the inner ring suburbs.
2. Research the current owner/administrator of each building and request a meeting and tour
3. Conduct a visual exterior inspection of the facility and categorize it (i.e. still a church, a different business, for sale, abandoned).
4. Document the current physical state of the facility (exterior and interior) such as architectural style, building materials, unique features, and present condition.
5. Create an inventory of significant historical, artistic, and architectural features in each facility, as well as dimensions, materials, quality of light and state of current use/disuse.
6. Document any existing community partnerships for each facility and review any assessments that have been conducted regarding use of space for other purposes.
7. Combine current and past data into a final report and presentation and build upon existing website.

In order to complete the tasks outlined above, the Community Foundation seeks two graduate or upper-level undergraduate interns who will work together on the project over a 14-week period. Each intern will bring different skills related to the project and they will need to work together to bring it to completion. The Community Foundation will train the interns regarding information collection, but the interns will be expected to be self-motivated and able to work independently to accomplish much of the project.
At the end of the project period, the inventory will be shared with community leaders and the board of the Community Foundation to determine how best to ensure that buildings and items of historical significance are preserved or used for unmet needs in the community.

**Qualifications:**

All interns:

- Spanish speaking ability highly desired
- Personable, able to work well with others
- Able to read a map
- Comfortable making phone calls and meeting new people
- Genuinely curious and observant
- Ability to understand the broader historical context of the dates and locations uncovered
- Ability to identify items that may be of historical significance during site visit
- Ability to conduct research
- Superior writing skills to draft a final narrative report that captures the information that is gathered
- Willingness to help with research, scheduling and other tasks as needed

In addition to the qualities listed under “all interns,” other requirements include:

**Communication intern:**

- Ability to maintain a spreadsheet that captures all relevant information collected through joint research and on church site visits
- Ability to manage project outreach, including the scheduling of site visits with the churches and fellow interns
- Ability to lead the inquiry into each congregation’s capacity and health
- Ability to produce accurate written materials that will be posted online
- Basic to intermediate photography skills

**Architecture/Historic Presentation intern:**

- Familiarity with the Secretary of the Interior Standards for historic rehabilitation
- Familiarity with best practices for architectural documentation
- Familiarity with American architectural history
- Familiarity with the materials/characteristics of major architectural styles

**Timing:**

The internships will run from Tuesday through Friday each week beginning on May 17, 2022 and ending on August 19, 2022. There is some flexibility on these dates to accommodate different academic schedules. Regular office hours are 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. with one unpaid hour for lunch. However, flexibility will be
required depending on the scheduling of site visits. For example, some of the congregations do not have staff available to meet on a weekday, so it may be necessary for the interns to visit in the evening or on a Sunday. In those cases, weekday hours will be adjusted accordingly. Interns are expected to spend 30 hours per week working on the project.

Compensation:

This is a paid internship. Each intern will be paid $17 per hour, not to exceed 30 hours per week, during the 14-week period. These temporary positions do not qualify for health or other benefits. Interns will be provided with a parking space if needed. The Community Foundation does not have company vehicles - mileage for visits from the Community Foundation’s headquarters to religious buildings will be reimbursed based on standard mileage rates.

Location:

The interns will be based at Berks County Community Foundation headquarters at 237 Court Street, Reading, Pennsylvania. While the positions require flexibility to visit places of worship, interns are expected to be based in the Community Foundation office. This is not a remote position.

Equipment:

Interns are asked to bring their own laptop computers to use during the project period.

Application:

To apply, please send resume, cover letter, and unofficial transcript to KevinL@bccf.org.