

Organization

Beloved Community Church, UCC
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Contact Person

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Organization description: Beloved is a small, diverse, quirky, dynamic, justice-oriented United Church of Christ congregation. For two decades, we've occupied a rapidly evolving corner where the South Avondale, East Avondale, and North Avondale neighborhoods intersect. We practice our faith through worship, prayer, study, activism, hospitality, and care for one another and the broader community. The COVID era has forced us to change our methods, but our commitment to one another and the well-being of the world is undiminished.

Internship Summary: There are two possible project options for 2021 interns in Religion, Community, and Social Change: *Spatial Justice* and *Innovative Leadership in Voluntary Organizations*. An intern would be expected to select one of these areas. If there were more than one intern interested in one area, they could work as a team.

Spatial Justice: Edward W. Soja writes about the idea that "justice, however it might be defined, has a *consequential geography*." An intern in this area would immerse themselves in the academic literature on spatial justice, describe Beloved's current work within that framework, and develop layered visions for the ongoing work. This would include (but is not limited to) examinations of gentrification, environmental injustice, the enduring legacy of racial segregation and redlining, and contemporary privatization in Birmingham - contrasted with our faith-rooted effort to embody a radically different ethic.

Innovative Leadership in Voluntary Organizations: Churches and civic organizations have historically relied on volunteer leadership from within their ranks, yet the cultural and economic pressures of postmodern neoliberal capitalism have shifted demands and expectations of time for most people. What do ethical leadership and participation mean in a consumer-driven society - and how is this applied in the context of an economically-diverse faith-based organization? In our particular context, this would by necessity include a focus on the impact of differentials of cultural power such as race, socioeconomic status, dis/ability status, age and generation, sexual orientation and gender identity and their intersections.

Internship details: These topics weave together theoretical research with applied engagement. An intern would be expected to delve into existing academic and popular literature, while

applying their own creative engagement to problem-solving within this particular context. This would involve a fieldwork component (in the space and the neighborhood, conditions permitting, and online, for the context of community - as a congregation, we continue to meet on Zoom). It would also involve conversations or interviews with key stakeholders in the congregation and the broader community. The end product could be organized according to the intern's goals - paper, presentation, chart of ideas, and or other format. Regardless of methodology and organization, it would be designed to offer both accessible background knowledge and ideas for innovative application going forward.

Intern qualifications: Interns would need to be independent, self-directed workers with an energetic commitment to the possibility of a better world. They would also be wise to have a capacity for nuance and a tolerance for complexity. While they need not be actively religious, they must have a respect for diverse faith commitments and diverse people.

Supervision: Rev. Jennifer Sanders, Beloved's Coordinating Pastor, will supervise the interns, providing an initial orientation and opportunities twice a week for check-ins and discussion with individuals or intern teams. These conversations can take place via Zoom or socially-distanced in person, according to the needs of all involved and current COVID conditions.

To apply: Send a resume and a statement of interest to Rev. Jennifer Sanders at heartholds@gmail.com. Follow-up conversations will take place on Zoom.