

**Old North Foundation  
dba Old North Church & Historic Site  
Job Description: Research Fellow**

**The Organization**

The enduring fame of Old North began on the evening of April 18, 1775, when church sexton Robert Newman and vestryman Capt. John Pulling, Jr. climbed the steeple of Old North Church and held high two lanterns as a signal from Paul Revere that the British were marching to Lexington and Concord by sea across the Charles River and not by land. This fateful event ignited the American Revolution. Old North Church is Boston's oldest surviving church building and welcomes 150,000 visitors each year as one of the Freedom Trail's most visited historical sites.

Old North Church, built in 1723, sits at a paradoxical intersection of freedom and unfreedom. To many, our steeple is an icon of American liberty and independence. Yet, the steeple (and the building itself) was built with the proceeds of human trafficking, and early congregants who used Old North as a social nexus enriched the church with their wealth generated through the enslavement of Africans and their descendants. Old North's complicated past is a leading example of the complexity of our shared national history, and can shine a light on ways that historical events and institutions contribute to inequities that persist today.

The [Old North Foundation](http://www.oldnorth.com) (ONF) inspires active citizenship and courageous, compassionate leadership by interpreting and preserving the Old North Church & Historic Site. The Foundation serves a wide audience by creating meaningful experiences through educational outreach, site-specific programming, and historical analysis. The Old North Foundation of Boston, Inc. was established in 1991 as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization independent of Christ Church in the City of Boston (the Episcopal congregation of Old North Church). Learn more at [www.oldnorth.com](http://www.oldnorth.com)

The Old North Foundation believes that:

- Bravery, patriotism, and active citizenship come in many forms. These acts can inspire both large-scale and local change.
- Education and respectful dialogue are key to building a more perfect union that reflects the promise of liberty and justice for all.
- Becoming an anti-racist organization will require active engagement with the legacy of slavery at Old North Church and the ongoing burdens of slavery and racism in our country.
- By preserving and sharing history, space, and stories, we shape our future.

**The Position**

Reporting to the Director of Education, the Research Fellow will play a critical role in helping the Foundation prepare for Old North Church's 300th anniversary in 2023, and the 250th anniversary of the lantern signals in 2025. This research fellowship will be mainly, though not exclusively, focused on better understanding the experience of Black people, free and enslaved, at Old North Church from its establishment in 1723 onward. Utilizing the church's extensive archives at the Massachusetts Historical Society and other archival collections around the Boston-area such as the Massachusetts State Archives, Boston Public Library, Boston Athenaeum, and New England Historical Genealogical Society, and building upon the research of Chernoh Sesay and Jared Ross Hardesty, the Research Fellow will seek to answer questions such as:

- How did the experience of "membership" at Old North differ between White and Black congregants, not only in the colonial era but also over time?

- For Black members of the church, what were the social, practical, and spiritual benefits of belonging to the church congregation?
- Can we cross-reference church archival materials with other archival resources to better understand and share the lives and experiences of Black congregation members?
- Do the records reveal specific practices of teaching free and enslaved Black congregants to read, write, or other education?
- How many congregants were enslavers? Can we begin to quantify how much their philanthropy, derived from the proceeds of enslavement, sustained the church?
- What was the position of the clergy, vestry, and congregation regarding the abolition of slavery in the period leading up to the Civil War?
- What can we learn about Black membership in the congregation from the period after the Revolutionary War and into the 19th and 20th centuries?

As a member of the Education Department, the Research Fellow will have the opportunity to experience public history within the context of Boston's Freedom Trail and Boston National Historical Park.

Deliverables will include:

- Documentation and analysis of findings
- Monthly blog posts discussing research findings
- A public event at the conclusion of the fellowship to present findings
- Supporting the Director of Education's production of a timeline of the church's history that will be displayed on campus in 2023.
- The Research fellow will supervise 1-2 graduate student interns per semester.

The ideal candidate will have demonstrated a passion for American colonial history and the experiences of free and enslaved Black citizens in the 18th and 19th centuries. This person will excel in independent research, and have the skills necessary to analyze and present findings.

Position Type: Full-time one-year position with the option to extend for a second year if funding allows.

Salary: \$60,000 for post-Doctoral candidates, \$50,000 for post-Masters candidates. ONF offers health and dental benefits. A relocation stipend of \$2,500 will be offered to candidates relocating from a distance of 100 miles or more.

To apply:

Please send a cover letter and resume to Catherine Matthews, Director of Education, at [jobs@oldnorth.com](mailto:jobs@oldnorth.com). Applications will be accepted until the position is filled.

The Old North Foundation is an equal opportunity employer and welcomes a diverse pool of candidates in this search.