WELLS FOUNDATION

The Wells Foundation addresses community needs by supporting innovative efforts to alleviate poverty and homelessness. Grant recipients for 2015 include Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative and their creative and effective Nicollet Square supportive housing for homeless youth, Saint Stephen's Human Services including Street Outreach to the homeless, the Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans, Emerge after school programs for children in affordable housing, the Simpson Housing children and youth services program, Avenues for Homeless Youth, and Full Cycle, which provides bicycles and job training and experience. For a full list of grant recipients, visit our website at www.wellsfound.org.

One highlight for 2015 was the fourth annual Honoring Our Veterans Concert November 8, featuring the University of Minnesota Health Sciences Orchestra with Conductor Stephen J. Ramsey and guest artist Elise Molina. The concert was inspiring and uplifting, well attended, and raised over $8000 to assist veterans who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Funds were given to the Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans and Saint Stephen’s services for homeless veterans.

Another highlight is the decision of the Wells Foundation to partner with Saint Mark’s and the Episcopal Church of Minnesota in supporting the Episcopal Community Services/Community of the Beloved, a new intentional community whose members will live, and work with established service agencies, in North Minneapolis.

James Davies, President

DOWNTOWN PARTNERSHIPS

Downtown Collaboration Ministry is an effort of two faith communities, Gethsemane and Saint Mark’s, to collaborate to meet the needs of the downtown neighborhood and their shared contexts. Deacon Rena Turnham, currently serving at both congregations, is a “bridge builder” between the two faith communities and also with the downtown neighborhood. The central focus of this one–year diaconal ministry appointment and pilot is to facilitate innovation and to create space to discern new co-ministry “experiments and expressions” in the downtown neighborhood. Since September, a core congregational leadership team from each faith community comprised of Dean Paul Lebens-Englund, Vicar Phil Boelter, Warden Jim Huber and Warden Maggie Brickson has been working with Deacon Turnham to define project scope and to call and gather people from both congregations to begin the discernment and work phase. Beginning in late January, four people from each congregation (yet to be named), as well as Deacon Lowell Johnson (Saint Mark’s) and Deacon Vant Washington (Gethsemane) will carry this work forward into the next phase. Deacon Turnham will participate as well as be the project manager, and Rachel Babbitt, ECMN’s Missioner for Mission, will be the facilitator.

The Reverend Rena Turnham, Deacon, Downtown Partnerships

EPISCOPAL SERVICE CORP

The Reverend Lisa Wiens Heinsohn, Transitional Deacon, is on the leadership team preparing to launch Circle of the Beloved in Minnesota. Circle is the Minnesota chapter of Episcopal Service Corps, a national organization which creates intentional communities of young adults who follow Jesus through lives of service, justice, and prayer. At 425 Oak Grove, Circle will create such a residence in fall 2017. Young adult residents will commit to simple living in solidarity with the poor, prayer, vocational discernment, and involvement at Saint Mark’s and other faith communities; and they will serve in local agencies who seek to address injustice in Minnesota, particularly the opportunity and achievement gaps between people of color and white people. Circle of the Beloved will recognize and deepen kinship across lines of difference, and will act as a catalyst for transformation and reconciliation for Saint Markans, Loring Park neighbors, and marginalized people in our communities.

Saint Mark’s is working to deepen its relational impact with neighbors in Loring Park, to reclaim the power of following the way of Jesus, and to connect what happens Sunday morning with what happens in our everyday lives and in our outreach ministries. Circle of the Beloved will support all of these goals, by living the connections between faith, spiritual practice, and social justice, and teaching us what they learn. In essence, Circle residents will be a cadre of ministers to the neighborhood and to Saint Mark’s, continually bringing us together, informing us about mutual gifts and needs, and transforming the way we understand and practice God’s mission.

The Reverend Lisa Wiens Heinsohn, ECMN School for Formation Intern