



## **Our Vision**

An inclusive community where no one is marginalized and everyone is valued and supported.

## **Our Mission**

We provide safe spaces that connect people and create community.

We offer programs that address basic needs and foster dignity, wellness and hope for all.

Belong Ottawa brings together three day-programs that have for many years been Community Ministries of our Diocese; Centre 454, St Luke's Table, and, of course, The Well, which is located in the basement of St John the Evangelist. Other Community Ministries of our Diocese are Cornerstone Housing for Women, the Refugee Ministry Office, the Ottawa Pastoral Counselling Centre, and Centre 105, a day program located at Trinity Church in Cornwall. Belong Ottawa is funded by the City of Ottawa, our Diocese, and many generous individuals and group donors, including many parishes of our Diocese.

Each Belong Ottawa location caters to a unique demographic while maintaining an inclusive policy of welcoming everyone. Centre 454 primarily focuses on providing assistance to individuals experiencing homelessness and actively dealing with addiction. The Well extends its support to women, gender-diverse individuals, and their children, with most participants coming from low-income backgrounds, along with men in the evenings. Currently, over 50% of The Well's female participants are asylum seekers within the shelter system. St. Luke's primarily serves low-income individuals residing in rooming houses.

### **Current State of the Street in Ottawa**

Ottawa is currently confronting a confluence of challenges. The current housing crisis has been exacerbated by an influx of asylum seekers to the city since last summer, contributing to over one-third of new intakes at city shelters. The shortage of safe, supportive and affordable housing has left approximately three hundred individuals a night without shelter; many resorting to sleeping on the streets each night. Additionally, the city is in the midst of an opioid crisis. The increasing toxicity of substances on the illegal market is likely driving the recent rise in deaths; July witnessed the highest rate of overdose in Ottawa within the past three years. Among the greatest risk factors are those who are facing housing insecurity or experiencing homelessness.

### **Our hope for Today**

Belong Ottawa at The Well is currently seeking to expand its operating hours on Friday evenings until 8 PM. In addition, we would like to be open for 7.5 hours on Saturdays and Sundays, the exact times to be determined in consultation with St John's.



### **Belong Ottawa at The Well**

The Well opened in 1984 at St Luke's with two paid staff. It operated six days a week, Monday to Friday and Sunday afternoons, averaging 30-40 daily, and moved to St John's in 1990. The Well is currently open Monday to Thursday from 8 AM to 8 PM, operating with women's only programming in the morning until the lunch hour when it is open to everyone. Before the pandemic, The Well saw an average of about 60 women a day; with the extended hours, those numbers have more than tripled.

### **Programs and Services**

Belong Ottawa at The Well operates a community kitchen program in collaboration with external organizations such as Wabano, Causeway, and Youth Futures, offering paid internships to individuals seeking valuable workplace experience. Our centres also offer in-reach services, on-site support for Ontario Works (OW), the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), Housing Help, SASC Ottawa, and referrals to the Royal Ottawa and Addictions Counselling. Additionally, The Well hosts community learning workshops to provide skills training for participants.

The Well also offers an extensive social and recreational program encompassing various community activities, such as tending to multiple community gardens, organizing outings to movies, museums, and cultural events, hosting community barbecues, a fashion show, and preparing special holiday meals.

### **Changing Needs, Growing Demand**

Over the last few months, the number of participants in our meal programs has tripled. This reflects the increasing challenges people face with food insecurity. We are actively seeking ways to expand our services to meet this growing demand, including at the Well on Friday evenings until 8 PM and 7.5 hours on Saturdays and Sundays. The Well prepares and distributes 500-800 meals daily through our three programs and community partners. These prepared meals are typically depleted within an hour of distribution.

