# NEW LOCAL NONPROFIT FOCUSED ON MENTAL WELLNESS IN FAITH COMMUNITIES

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Pilot Project Launched with Eight Congregations

**San Antonio, TX, January 10, 2024** – The H. E. Butt Foundation is seed-funding [The Congregational Collective](https://hebfdn.org/congregational-collective/), a new nonprofit aiming to make San Antonio’s faith communities safe places for people seeking mental wellness.

Rebecca Brune has joined The Collective as executive director. Previously, Brune was an executive leader with Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute, a Dallas-based organization focused on building equitable mental health systems.

Research suggests that a high percentage of people experiencing mental health challenges turn to clergy who are not equipped to meet the need or make proper referrals, delaying the onset of professional assistance. The Collective intends to fill this gap.

The H. E. Butt Foundation will provide up to $15 million over the next five years to ensure a successful start for The Collective.

“We are excited to grow congregational capabilities in supporting mental health and wellbeing,” says Rogers. “Mental health issues are growing at epidemic proportions. We hope this investment will be catalytic.”

“I am thrilled to have an opportunity to lead this important work and highlight the tremendous contributions that faith communities are already making to address mental wellbeing,” says Brune. “Thanks to this targeted investment, we have an opportunity to be laser-focused on measuring the impact and value of training congregations to deliver evidenced-based mental health interventions.”

“Becca is a force in this space,” adds Rogers.  “We couldn’t be more pleased to have her in this critical leadership role.”

Rogers hopes that other funders will show strong support for this groundbreaking endeavor. Already, Methodist Healthcare Ministries joined as a strategic partner with two grants totaling $250,000 to help in the formation of The Collective and to help shape an evidenced-based model.

“Methodist Healthcare Ministries proudly supports The Collective and we are hoping the research we fund will lead to a better understanding and implementation of the mental health models that can positively impact the communities we serve,” said Jaime Wesolowski, President & CEO of Methodist Healthcare Ministries. “We believe this partnership and research will lead to concrete solutions and frameworks that can be replicated in other communities to advance efforts to promote health equity, giving more and more of our community members a chance to reach their fullest potential for health and life.”

The Collective’s pilot project launched in October 2023 focused on eight area churches representing a range of denominations and demographics across San Antonio. The goals:

* equip congregations to become community leaders in mental health and wellness
* help faith communities partner—with each other and with local and national mental health institutions—to build support systems, networks, and ministry tools
* create a hub of educational resources, training, and cross-sector relationships all focused on mental wellness.

The San Antonio-based congregations participating in the pilot include El Templo Cristiano Assemblies of God, Family Life International Assemblies of God, First Baptist Church, Grace Northridge Anglican Church, St. Dominic’s Catholic Church, St. Paul’s Catholic Church, St. Paul’s Lutheran Church, and University Methodist Church.

Each congregation has identified at least five team members, including a designated team lead and navigator role. The navigator will be certified in evidence-based training for non-clinical providers and receive a stipend to support the role part-time for 12 months.

The pilot is designed to test and study resources for scale. The Collective has also pulled in two partners with training experience in this space: Spiritual First Aid, a certificate program based at the Humanitarian Disaster Institute at Wheaton College in Illinois, and Sanctuary Mental Health Ministries in Vancouver, Canada.

Other partnerships are in the works that will connect the Collective to the regional healthcare system.

For more additional information about The Collective and its plans for 2024, visit congegationalcollective.org or email info@congregationalcollective.org.

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