



First Congregational UCC, Albuquerque WISE Congregation for Mental Health Covenant

We, the people of First Congregational UCC, Albuquerque, are graced by the gifts, stories, and experiences of all our members. We care about the whole person: body, heart, mind, and soul. We affirm the deep and constant movement of God's Holy Spirit, seeking to bring us to the fullness of life, and we affirm this includes those of us living with mental health challenges. We know these challenges can profoundly disturb our feelings, thoughts, and behavior. We believe all people are beloved by God, and a person with a mental health challenge must be seen as a person first. Jesus said the greatest commandment is to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind, and to love your neighbor as yourself." He made no distinction between various members of society; he did not show any partiality. He included all people in this commandment.

Sometimes, individuals with mental health challenges, brain disorders, mental illnesses, addictions, and trauma feel cut off from God and do not feel included. It is our calling to communicate to all individuals that God loves all of us equally, even when we do not feel the love of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Those of us with mental health challenges have gifts to be offered in our faith community, and we want everyone to feel fully Welcomed, Included, Supported, and Engaged in the life, work, and leadership of our church. That is the goal of declaring ourselves a WISE Congregation for Mental Health.

By doing so, we heed our call to nourish and support every person's spiritual and personal journeys and to generously minister to one another's needs. Moreover, in doing so, we enter into covenant with the United Church of Christ Mental Health Network and the growing number of UCC congregations who are choosing to declare themselves WISE congregations.

Call to Action

As a WISE congregation, we declare our intention:

To create a *Welcoming* environment for people with mental health challenges and their families:

- By being open, accepting, welcoming, and non-judgmental toward all.
- By educating ourselves and offering educational opportunities to help our whole congregation understand the issues surrounding the mental health challenges such as mental illnesses/brain disorders, addictions, and trauma and the implications of this covenant.

- By making an effort to reduce social stigma and by pledging to examine our own attitudes and preconceived notions about mental health challenges and mental health and to confront our own inherent stigma.
- By actively welcoming those with mental health challenges into our faith community and providing a safe environment in which people can tell their stories and share their journeys.

To *Include* people with mental health challenges in the life, work, and leadership of the congregation:

- By committing to recruiting, nominating, and supporting persons with mental health challenges to serve on teams and in leadership positions within the congregation.
- By pledging to be open to hiring persons with mental health challenges when calling clergy and other staff.

To *Support* people in our congregation who have mental health challenges and their families:

- By reaching out to those suffering from brain disorders/mental illnesses, addictions, and trauma in the same way we reach out to those living with other illnesses.
- By offering companionship and compassion for individuals and families living with mental health challenges.

To demonstrate our intention to *Engage* with other organizations that work at the intersection of mental health and faith/spirituality/religion:

- By welcoming and encouraging outside groups who deal with mental health challenges, brain disorders/mental illnesses, addictions, and trauma to use our church facilities.
- By engaging with other organizations to find opportunities to be in shared mission, ministry, and advocacy together. This includes working with our church's Mental Health Ministry team, ABQ FaithWorks (which is based at First Congregational UCC, Albuquerque), the UCC Mental Health Network, and the UCC Disabilities Ministry.

By this declaration and its adoption by a vote of the congregation, we join in the ongoing commitment to being **Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive, and Engaged** with all of God's people.