



UCC Mental Health Network

Welcoming • Inclusive • Supportive • Engaged

The Mental Health Network is a ministry in ecclesiastical covenant with the United Church of Christ. We are a nonprofit 501c organization. WISE is the keystone program administered by the MHN, though we offer many other resources. Some of these include a recent video series on intersectionality for church use and a partnership with Columbia University on a Youth Leading Youth Online Anti-Bullying campaign.

WISE is the UCC's elegant boots on the ground response to the fact that at least 1 in 4 individuals suffer from mental illness and the multitude of family and societal fall-out and suffering that ensues.

The acronym is Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive, and Engaged around issues of mental health advocacy and justice.

We currently have 64 churches who have gone through the somewhat rigorous process to achieve certification. Not all are UCC. We have several Presbyterian and Jewish synagogues that undertook and now proudly display their alliance with us. We also have nonprofits seeking our certification as well.

As with almost anything that has richness and depth, the WISE ministry began with a personal story. First Congregational UCC in Boulder Colorado experienced a double suicide in 2007, and out of that tragedy Rev. Alan Johnson and a dedicated team of individuals sought a meaningful and practical way to impact communities that are often stymied by stigma, inertia, lack of resources, to really open up and get serious about bringing God's love and presence to the most terrible moments of person's life.

At various times and degrees, we are ALL the mentally ill, but you can be in a church for decades and think you know the people sitting around you, and truly have no idea of the emotional struggles they have locked inside.

So WISE attempts to change that. The overriding principle is that we don't just talk and hand-wring, we DO! A church wanting to be WISE must assess the needs of their congregation and community and implement targeted activities and programs that address the specific struggles in their midst. It's an ongoing mission, led by a team drawn from the congregation and is in touch with a member of our Board, which is their liaison. Our goal is to allow the culture and individuality of the church to direct the process and we allow wide latitude as the journey toward becoming WISE unfolds.

After a church has created a WISE team, implemented mental health programs, educational resources, and ministries targeting the specific needs of its congregation and surrounding community it may decide its ready to write a covenant about its commitment to a permanent mental health ministry. This covenant is also done in collaboration with the national liaison. Once the covenant is ready it is voted on by the congregation. This should be the last step toward certification if communication has been ongoing

with the national board. The Mental Health Network certifies the church as WISE, they receive a certificate, a listing on our website, and inclusion in our growing national family.

We are extremely proud of this ministry, as we are all our ministries. We are excited to bring our vision and opportunities to the Annual meeting of the Southern California Nevada Conference.