

Mountain View United Church WISE Covenant for Mental Health

We, the people of Mountain View United Church of Aurora, Colorado, know we are graced by the gifts, stories, and experiences of all our members, including those living with mental health challenges such as, but not limited to, mental illnesses, brain disorders, addictions, and trauma. We know these challenges can profoundly disturb our feelings, thoughts, and behavior. 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. We believe that all people are beloved by God, and if a person has a mental health challenge, that person has a right to 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." God made no distinction between various members of society; God did not show any partiality. God included all people in this commandment.

Sometimes individuals with mental health challenges such as 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. People 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. We, the people of Mountain View United Church of Aurora, Colorado, vote to continue to be a welcoming, inclusive, supportive and engaged (WISE) congregation for mental health.

Call to action:

We pledge to create a welcoming environment for people with mental health challenges and their families:

- We pledge to educate ourselves and offer educational opportunities to help our whole congregation understand the issues surrounding mental health challenges such as mental illnesses, brain disorders, addictions, trauma and the implications of this covenant.
- In an effort to reduce social stigma, we pledge to examine our own attitudes and preconceived notions about mental health challenges and mental health and to confront our own ingrained stigma.
- We pledge to actively welcome those with mental health challenges into our faith community and provide a safe environment in which people can tell their stories and share their journeys.

We pledge to include people with mental health challenges in the life, work, and leadership of the congregation:

- We commit to recruiting, nominating, and supporting persons with mental health challenges to serve on teams and in leadership positions within the congregation.
- When calling clergy and other staff, we pledge to be open to hiring persons with mental health challenges.
- We pledge to support people in our congregation who have mental health challenges and their families.
- We pledge to reach out to those suffering from mental illnesses, brain disorders, addictions, and trauma in the same way we reach out to those living with other physical illnesses.
- We pledge to offer companionship and compassion for individuals and families living with mental health challenges.

We pledge to engage with other organizations that work at the intersection of mental health and faith/spirituality/religion:

- We pledge to welcome and encourage outside groups who deal with mental health challenges to use our church facilities.
- We pledge to engage with other organizations to find opportunities to be in shared mission, ministry, and advocacy together. This includes mental health ministry programs in the United Church of Christ, United Methodist Church, and Presbyterian USA denominations.

This vote affirms that we join in the process of always becoming more welcoming, inclusive, supportive, and engaged with all of God's people.

Covenant Entered Into by Unanimous Vote of the Congregation on May 21, 2017