

A WISE Congregation for Mental Health For all with mental health challenges and their loved ones

We, the people of Pilgrim-St. Luke's and El Nuevo Camino UCC 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." 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 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, Pilgrim-St. Luke's and El Nuevo Camino, 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 by:

- Educating ourselves and offer 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.
- Making an effort to reduce social stigma and pledging to examine our own attitudes and preconceived notions about mental health challenges and mental health and to confront our own ingrained stigma.
- Actively welcoming 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 by:

- Committing to recruiting, nominating and supporting persons with mental health challenges to serve on teams and in leadership positions within the congregation.
- 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:

- 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 physical illnesses.

- Offering 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:

- By welcoming and encouraging outside groups who deal with mental health challenges, brain disorders/mental illnesses, addictions, and trauma to use our church facilities.
- 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, the UCC Mental Health Network and the UCC Disabilities Ministry.

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

(Voted 5/19/19)