



Becoming a **WISE Congregation for Mental Health**

mhn-ucc.org

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Greetings from ...



Mountain View is an ecumenical church in Aurora, Colorado affiliated with the Presbyterian Church (USA), The United Church of Christ, and The United Methodist Church.



We are proud members of the Denver Presbytery and the first WISE ecumenical congregation in the U.S.



The **UCC Mental Health Network** was created in 1992 to help all congregations become communities of radical belonging that reduce stigma and actively include individuals living with mental health challenges, substance use disorders, and other brain differences into the life, leadership, and work of the congregation. www.mhn-ucc.org

UCC MHN enthusiastically supports the PC USA's Mental Health Network



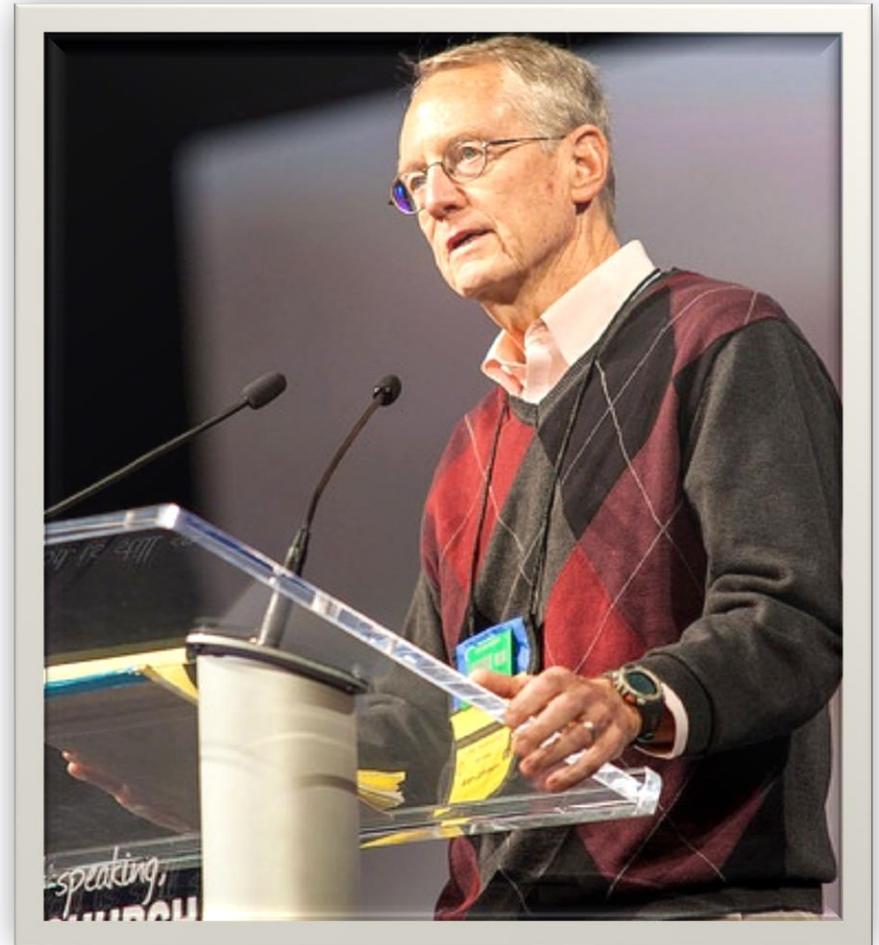
Becoming a **WISE** Congregation for Mental Health means . . .

Covenanting to become, and intentionally remain, sacred places of radical belonging that are WISE: Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive & Engaged *with* individuals experiencing despair and/or living with mental health challenges, substance use disorders, and brain disorders.

Why we need WISE Churches

"Many people living with mental illness are shunned, feared and discriminated against. . . . Consequently, they are not included in the network of care our congregations normally extend to a member who is ill. They struggle through alone or with the help of a few close family members they trust to keep their illnesses secret."

*Alan Johnson
UCC MHN Chair*



We need WISE Congregations for Older Adults

- **One in four older adults** experiences some mental disorder including [depression and anxiety disorders](#), and [dementia](#). This number is expected to double to 15 million by 2030.
- Depression affects **seven million older Americans**, and many do not receive treatment.
- The number of older adults with [substance abuse problems](#) is expected to double to five million by 2020. SAMSHA estimates **one in five older adults** currently experiences misuse of alcohol and prescription medications.
- **Two-thirds of older adults** with mental health problems do not receive the treatment they need. Current preventative services for this population are extremely limited.
- Untreated substance abuse and mental health problems among older adults are associated with poor health outcomes, higher health care utilization, increased complexity of the course and prognosis of many illnesses, increased disability and impairment, compromised quality of life, increased caregiver stress, increased mortality, and higher risk of [suicide](#).
- **People aged 85+ have the highest suicide rate of any age group.** Older white men have a suicide rate almost six times that of the general population.

✓ Reality Check

Mental Illness and Substance Use Disorders are often called the “No Casserole Conditions.”

Where are your Casseroles?

- **How does your congregation show up in practical ways for people struggling with mental health, substance use issues, or brain disorders?**
- **Would you like to do more to share Christ’s love with everyone struggling?**

You are ready to become WISE



Fulfilling all the WISE steps ensures that a faith community has engaged in education on mental health challenges; examined its overt and unconscious stigma around mental illness and brain differences; and voted to proclaim itself a community of radical belonging for individuals and families living with mental health challenges.

Ten Steps to Becoming a WISE Congregation

1. Consult with your pastor/faith leader
2. Form a **WISE Team**
3. Connect with the **PC USA Mental Health Network** and **UCC Mental Health Network** at www.ucc-mhn.org and examine available resources
4. Develop an approach that offers education and worship that challenges stigma and leads to the congregation's vote to become a **WISE Congregation for Mental Health**
5. Draft your **WISE Covenant**
6. Involve your church's leadership in engaging the **WISE Covenant**
7. Vote on your **WISE Covenant**
8. Certify and celebrate becoming **WISE**
9. Publicize
10. Turn to the future

Good First Step: Host a Mental Health First Aid Class



Mental Health First Aid is an 8-hour course that teaches you how to help someone who is developing a mental health problem or experiencing a mental health crisis. The training helps you identify, understand, and respond to signs of addictions and mental illnesses.

For more information:

www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org

Good Next Step: Companionship Training

Companionship is a ministry of presence, a relationship responding to isolation and suffering and supportive of healing and recovery. *Companionship* welcomes the stranger, building a circle of care with individuals who are facing emotional and mental health challenges. *Companionship* is rooted in our natural capacities as human beings to be sensitive, compassionate, and concerned.

Pathways to Promise, an interfaith ministry with PC USA involvement, provides Companionship trainings to presbyteries and congregations. For more information, go to:

www.thecompanionshipmovement.org.



Other Steps to Become a WISE Congregation

- * **Begin speaking about mental health challenges and substance use disorders during community prayer times.**
- * **Invite mental health community experts to speak about mental health in your church.**
- * **Read the *Comfort My People* report by the PC USA.**
- * **Host a mental health book study group: *Blessed are the Crazy* and *The Lifesaving Church* are two good books to use.**
- * **Start a mental health support group or host a NAMI group at your congregation.**
- * **Invite in psychologists and peer support specialists to discuss trauma & PTSD.**
- * **Begin hosting regular mental health education sessions at your congregation.**



**Take 5 For
Mental Health!**

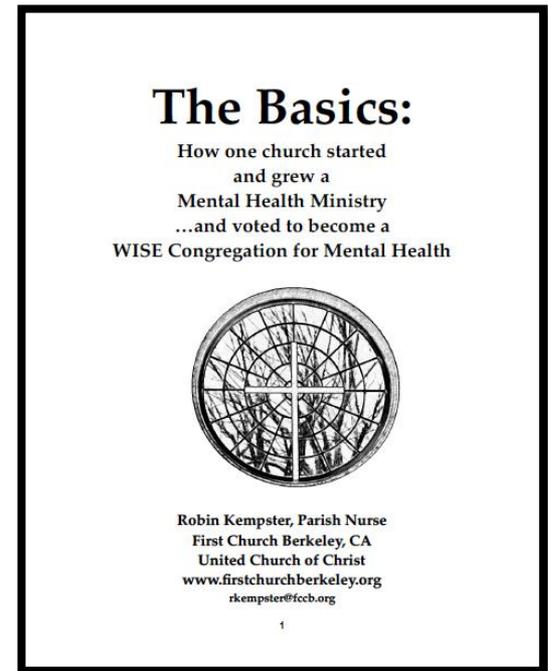
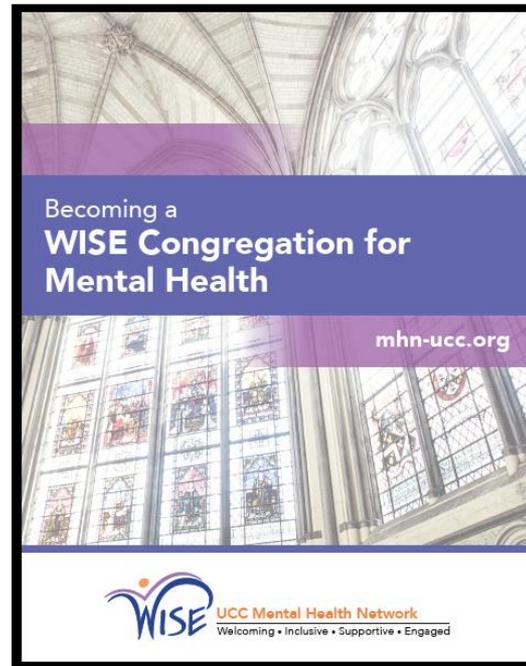
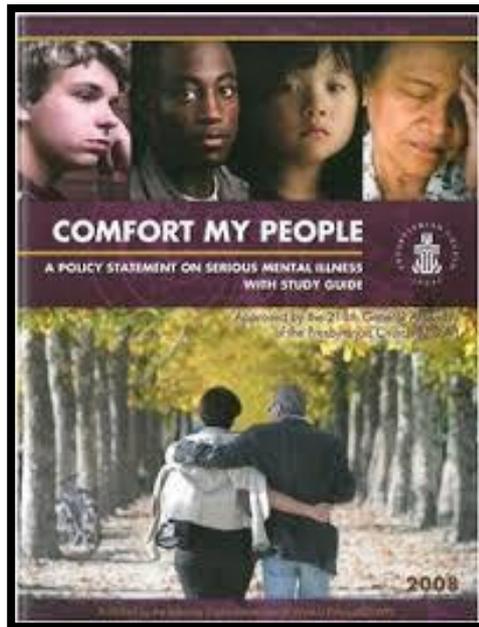
*Learn something new about
Mental Health in less than 30 minutes!*

Supporting the Mental Health of LGBTQI Youth
July 2 @ 11:30 am • Church Library • Snacks Served!

LGBT youth between the ages of 10 to 14 are five times more likely to attempt suicide than heterosexual youth while 20% of transgender people report having made a suicide attempt. MVUC can help lower these grim statistics by being a faith community where all youth feel accepted and supported. Come learn ways to educate ourselves on the challenges facing LGBTQI youth and community resources we can offer LGBTQI young people and their families.

Contact Amy with questions at amy@mountainviewunitedchurch.org

For More Ideas . . . www.mhn-ucc.org





UCC Mental Health Network

Welcoming • Inclusive • Supportive • Engaged

How can I help your church become WISE?

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