**A WISE Congregation for Mental Health**

**-for all with mental health challenges and their loved ones-**

We, the people of EBENEZER UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST, Sheboygan, Wisconsin, 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.

In Mark 12:30-31, 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 with all your strength. The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.” Jesus 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 feel cut off from God and do not feel included. Ebenezer UCC has discerned a call to communicate to all individuals that God loves all of us equally, even when we do not feel the love of Christ through the Holy Spirit in our lives. We believe that 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 EBENEZER UCC.

We, the people of EBENEZER UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST, Sheboygan, Wisconsin, openly affirm that we will continue to be a welcoming, inclusive, supportive ​ and ​engaged ​ (WISE) congregation for mental health.

**Call to action:**

We aspire to create a ​***welcoming*** ​ environment for people with mental health challenges and their families by:

* Educating ourselves and offering educational opportunities to help our whole congregation understand the implications of this covenant along with the issues surrounding mental health such as: cognitive challenges, brain disorders, addictions, emotional challenges and trauma.
* Examining our own attitudes and preconceived notions about mental health challenges and confronting our own ingrained misconceptions in an effort to reduce social prejudices.
* 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.

We aspire to ​***include*** people with mental health challenges in​ ​the life, work and leadership of the congregation by:

* Recruiting, nominating and supporting persons with mental health challenges to serve on teams and in leadership positions within the congregation.
* Being open to hiring/calling persons with mental health challenges.

We aspire 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 aspire 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 for shared mission, ministry and advocacy including working with Ebenezer UCC’s WISE Ministry team, the UCC Mental Health Network and the UCC Disabilities Ministry.

This positive vote will affirm that we will continue on the journey of always becoming **more** welcoming, inclusive, supportive, and engaged with **all** of God’s people.

(For Vote at Ebenezer UCC Annual Meeting January 31, 2021)

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