

**A WISE Congregation for Mental Health
Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive and Engaged
For all with mental health challenges and their loved ones**

Opening: We, the people of Mt. Hope United Church of Christ, Whitsett, North Carolina, 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 anxiety disorders, major depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, brain disorders, substance abuse, addiction, trauma, Alzheimer's, and grief. We know these challenges can profoundly disturb our feelings, thoughts, and behavior. With those seeking help with psychiatric issues turning first to a house of worship, Mt. Hope United Church of Christ seeks to lift the stigma of mental illness. 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. Furthermore, we believe 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 feel cut off by 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 to 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, Mt. Hope United Church of Christ of Whitsett, North Carolina, vote to continue to be a welcoming, inclusive, supportive, and engaged (WISE) congregation for mental health.

Call to action:

Welcoming

- We promise 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.
- In an effort to reduce social stigma, we promise to examine our own attitudes and preconceived notions about mental health challenges and to confront our own ingrained stigmas.

Inclusive

- We commit to recruiting, nominating and supporting persons with mental health challenges to serve on teams and leadership positions within the congregation. We will not discriminate based on mental health challenges.
- When calling clergy and other staff, we promise to be open to hiring persons with mental health challenges when they have the skills needed and are qualified for the position.

Supportive

- We promise to reach out to those suffering from brain disorders/mental health challenges, addictions and trauma in the same way we reach out to those living with other illnesses.
- We promise to nourish and support every person's spiritual and personal journeys and to generously minister to their needs.
- Furthermore, we promise to offer companionship and compassion for individuals and families living with mental health challenges.

Engaged

- We promise to educate 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.
- We promise to welcome and encourage outside groups who deal with mental health challenges, brain disorders, addictions and trauma to use our church facilities.
- Furthermore, we promise to engage with other organizations to find opportunities to be in shared mission, ministry and advocacy together. This includes but is not limited to working with our church's Mental Health Ministry team, the UCC Mental Health Network, UCC Disabilities Ministry and Behavioral Health Centers in our community.

This vote affirms that we commit to being a WISE Church: We will continue to nourish and support every person's spiritual, mental and physical well-being. Our actions will demonstrate our commitment to becoming more welcoming, inclusive, supportive and engaging with all of God's people, including those with mental health concerns.