



United Church of Christ
**MENTAL HEALTH
NETWORK**

HOW TO BECOME A WISE FAITH COMMUNITY FOR MENTAL HEALTH

The Ten UPDATED Steps for WISE Certification

The WISE (Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive, and Engaged) Congregation for Mental Health Resolution was adopted at the United Church of Christ General Synod in 2015. The United Church of Christ Mental Health Network then developed the WISE Certification process.

Our experiences walking with 35+ faith communities on their WISE journey have inspired us to update the WISE process a bit, adding a call to discuss intersectionality and mental health while also offering congregations more resources through their WISE Liaison. In addition, each organization walking through the WISE process receives the support of an MHN Board Member (or another person certified by the MHN) who can offer information, advice, and encouragement. To find out more, please reach out to the UCC MHN at our WISE email address: wise@mhn-ucc.org.

1. Consult with your minister/rabbi/imam/faith leader:

- In many faith communities, a lay committee guides the congregation through the WISE process. Letting your faith leader know about your interest in WISE certification, inviting them to participate, or committing to keeping them informed as you move ahead is a necessary first step.

2. Form a WISE Team

- Invite individuals and families living with mental health challenges, substance use disorders, neurodevelopmental differences, and brain disorders--as well as people from a wide variety of racial, ethnic, gender, and sexuality identities to be part of your WISE team.

3. Connect with the UCC Mental Health Network

- The MHN is here to support you and your faith community every step of the way! Send an email to wise@mhn-ucc.org if you have questions, or start the process by filling out our Start WISE Form <https://www.mhn-ucc.org/start-wise-process-here/>. You will receive a warm welcome from MHN's WISE Team and then meet your assigned WISE Liaison, who will support you and your community throughout your WISE journey.



For more information, please contact
the MHN via email wise@mhn-ucc.org
Visit www.mhn-ucc.org

4. Develop an approach that leads to a vote to become WISE for Mental Health

- Consider the impacts of the intersectionality of race, ethnicity, immigration status, sexuality, gender identity on mental health and access to culturally appropriate health care.
- Discuss how the congregation may provide appropriate mental health resource information for LGBTQIA2S+ individuals and their families

5. Draft your WISE Covenant & share it with your WISE Liaison

- You can find sample draft WISE Covenants on the website at www.mhn-ucc.org.
- Review your draft WISE Covenant with your WISE Liaison

6. Involve your leadership in engaging the WISE Covenant

- Offer all the members of your congregation, including leadership, the opportunity to read, comment, and ask questions about your covenant.
- Listening sessions and presentations are common ways for sharing draft covenants within an organization.

7. Adopt your WISE Covenant

- MHN honors that every faith community and faith tradition has its own way of adopting covenants: use the method that works for your community. For example, within the United Church of Christ and many mainline Protestant congregations, a vote of members at an annual or specially called meeting is the way to adopt a covenant. In other faith communities, a board or council may make the final decision.

8. Certify and celebrate becoming WISE

- Inform your WISE Liaison that your organization has adopted its WISE Covenant so that the UCC MHN can celebrate you! You will receive a link to a final form to fill out, where you can attach the final version of your covenant.
- You will be added to the list of WISE Congregations on the UCC MHN website at www.mhn-ucc.org, receive appreciation via the UCC MHN social media channels, receive your WISE certificate in the mail, and be honored at the next UCC General Synod. You can also ask for an MHN Board Member to honor you and share your WISE certification at your faith community or denomination's meeting.

9. Publicize your WISEdom locally

- Connect with local advocacy and behavioral health organizations, like NAMI, Mental Health America, hospitals, mental health systems, your city government, and even your state's health and human services department
- Determine how your congregation will offer financial support to the UCC MHN each year. The WISE certification process is free to all faith organizations, and your donations help us continue to offer WISE and mental health resources to everyone.

10. Turn to the future

- You are now mental health justice leader in your community and a member of the WISE family. UCC MHN will check in with you at least annually to celebrate your WISE ministries. What will you do next to make your community a place of radical belonging for everyone?