**Diamond Bar United Church of Christ**

**W.I.S.E. Covenant**

Diamond Bar United Church of Christ is a church with a storied history of reaching for grace and inclusion no matter the cost to our people. Whether it was standing against the John Birchers in our beginning or later, withstanding a painful break with treasured members during the adoption of ONA, we have consistently reached out to the hurting and the stigmatized to bring them into the embrace of our community.

It is with this spirit that we covenant to become Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive, and Engaged in the mental health of all people and to be leaders in our community for mental health justice and advocacy.

Our mandate comes from Christ’s disregard for the expectations and social mores of his day, and to the astonishment of all, singled out women, the tax collector, leprosy sufferers, and his companions on nearby crosses for direct love and attention.

Our faith tells us that we all share in abundant grace, that God’s tender beckoning into sacred kinship extends to every single individual equally. This includes those with neuro-cognitive and affective experiences and diagnoses, realizing that we all share a rich and complex inner world that is diverse yet familiar.

Our commitment to welcome, include, support, and engage individuals and families in the mental health milieu is an intentional act, and one that we must re-affirm each day, each week, each year as an ongoing expression of faith and justice.

We recognize with gratitude our great good fortune in the richness we have in the people of DBUCC. The day-to-day blessing of loving and supporting one another through the decades has allowed us to witness the mental health battles that we each encounter. We are moved to seek out those with mental health experiences that they may contribute to our rich tapestry of personal connection as well as discovering new aspects of the Sacred in our midst.

We welcome those with mental health diagnoses and realities into all aspects of leadership, from our pastoral staff, Council representatives and committee leaders, to our teachers and office admins. We rejoice knowing that these individuals have a background and sensitivity that allow us a new perspective on humanity.

We particularly lean into social inclusion. People living with mental health experiences are our friends, our retreat companions, our book group attendees, our birthday celebrants. Indeed, they are us. Isolation and loneliness have no place in this relational mandate.

We collaborate with the Tri-Isle Association, the LA County Department of Mental Health and their trainings as well as seek to offer our space to organizations that foster mental health wellness and education.

Our teenagers and youth deserve our special focus. Due to rapid changes in brain and hormonal development, a unique time of judgmental self-assessment, and volcanic emotional cycling, these precious individuals are our most vulnerable. Our WISE team will always have a spot reserved for a youth representative, so that we will keep our pulse on the needs of this population.

We will confront the tendency to avert our gaze from the imminent rise in suicide rates, and instead stare clear-eyed into this most difficult of mental health realities. We know that people very near to us are grappling with the choice of whether to continue to live. We commit to the most up-to-date lay training available, develop referral resources, and learn to be present to those in deep pain, offering a holding space, as well as the patience to sit without answers.

We commit to reaching into the community to minister and advocate for mental health reform. This means being aware of the destructive presence of stigma that still labels and oppresses the mentally fragile and is reductive and damaging to us all. We pledge to be leaders in calling out its presence and fighting it in all its manifestations.

We recognize the sacred role the natural world plays in our mental health. Nature is a tangible element of our being, it is the stuff from which we come and to which we return. We intentionally weave mental health wellness into hikes, retreats, and meditation so that we maintain a connection to our literal roots.

We will prioritize a yearly meeting to assess the current state of our WISE ministry. Each year we will seek a renewed vision and a nimble adjustment to our changing needs. We will follow with communication to the national UCC Mental Health Board to report our ongoing commitment and status.

Most of all, we recognize the grace and love that exists in our relationships, beginning with an awareness of the abundance of God’s joyful delight in us. With this as our birthright and daily experience, we commit to an ongoing evaluation of our own prejudices, passive aggression, and thoughtlessness that contribute to hurting others. We commit to self-care and self-love, knowing that we are loved and valued beyond comprehension.

Our privilege is to extend this clarity and grace to all engagements within DBUCC as well as to radiate out to our community, nation, and world.

With the foregoing as our dedicated platform, and with God’s blessing and guidance, we, Diamond Bar United Church of Christ, covenant to become Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive, and Engaged around mental health in all the ways it shows up in ourselves and one another.

With Visioning and Gratitude,

**Diamond Bar United Church of Christ**

**Inaugural WISE Team 2024**

Rev. Floren“Tino” Cordova--Pastor

Kyle Croker--Youth Representative

Tania DeLaura

Karen Gerloff

John Hoffner

Vicki Hoffner—WISE Team Leader

Kristy Ruud

Phyllis Soto

Margo West