**A Congregation for Mental Health [W.I.S.E]**

**For all with mental health challenges and their loved ones**

We, the people of Rocky Hill Congregational Church — an Open and Affirming Congregation —recognize that a growing number of people face mental health concerns and an accompanying social stigma.

* In 2024, approximately 1 in 5 adults in the United States experiences significant psychological challenges each year.
* Four in 10 youth experience persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness.
* The number of family members, friends, co-workers, and neighbors touched by those facing emotional challenges is much higher.
* Mental health remains surrounded by stigma and, as a result, many individuals seeking help with emotional challenges turn first to a house of worship.

We support our community and will help lift this stigma by offering Welcome, Inclusiveness, Support, and Engagement (W.I.S.E.) to our members and to those in the broader community who have been or are currently impacted by emotional stresses, including mental illness, addictions, trauma, neurodiversity, and brain disorders.

* Jesus said that the greatest commandment is to “Love the Lord your God with all of your heart and with all of your soul and with all of your mind, and to love your neighbor as yourself.”
* Psalm 34:18–20 tells us that “the Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those whose spirit is crushed.”
* We believe that all people are beloved by God, and that those of us struggling with a mental health challenge have a right to be seen as a person first.
* We care about the whole person: body, heart, mind, and soul
* It is our calling to communicate to all individuals that God loves us all equally and that people with mental health challenges have gifts to be offered in our faith community. We commit ourselves to providing and promoting education, activities, and resources for individuals and families and to collaborating with other mental health organizations.

Therefore, we compassionately and joyously extend our church’s welcome and love to members and non-members alike who experience mental illness/brain disorders or are touched by them.

**Call to Action:**

We, Rocky Hill Congregational Church, UCC, commit ourselves to be a *welcoming, inclusive, supportive,* and *engaged* (W.I.S.E) congregation for mental health.

**We pledge to create a *welcoming* environment for people with physical and mental health challenges and their families:**

* We pledge to educate ourselves and offer educational opportunities to help our whole congregation understand the issues surrounding mental health, such as mental illnesses, brain disorders, addictions, trauma, physical and emotional stress, and neurodiversity, and the implications of this covenant.
* In an effort to reduce social stigma, we pledge to examine our own attitudes and preconceived notions about mental health.
* We pledge 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.
* We pledge to explore means of providing accommodations for anyone to aid them in participating in our faith services.

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

* We commit to recruiting, nominating, and supporting persons with mental health challenges to serve on teams and in leadership positions within the congregation.
* When calling clergy and other staff, we pledge to be open to hiring persons with mental health challenges.

**We pledge to *support* people in our congregation who have mental health challenges and their families**:

* We pledge to reach out to individuals and family systems suffering from mental health challenges in the same way that we reach out to those living with other physical illnesses.
* We pledge to offer companionship and compassion for individuals and families living with mental health challenges and to nourish and support every person’s and family’s spiritual and personal journeys.
* We pledge to honor and respect the privacy and dignity of those individuals and families seeking support.
* We pledge to continuously reassess the changing needs for support within our congregation.

**We pledge to *engage* with other organizations that work at the intersection of mental health and faith/spirituality/religion**:

* We pledge to welcome and encourage outside groups that deal with mental health challenges, brain disorders/mental illnesses, addictions, and trauma to use our church facilities.
* We pledge to engage with other organizations to find opportunities to be in shared mission, ministry, and advocacy together. This includes working with our church's Mental Health Ministry team, the UCC Mental Health Network, and the UCC Disabilities Ministry.

This vote formalizes our commitment to being a W.I.S.E. congregation for mental health and affirms that we will continuously explore ways of becoming increasingly welcoming, inclusive, supportive, and engaged with those experiencing or impacted by mental illnesses.