Resolution to become a WISE Conference for Mental Health

Brought by First Congregational Church of Berkeley to the NCNC Conference Council with a request that the Conference Council add this to the Business Agenda for the June 2019 Annual Gathering

10 May 2019

Summary:
Recognizing that mental health issues affect many among and around us, and that people with mental health challenges sometimes suffer deeply and feel cut off from God and from community, this resolution proposes that the Northern California Nevada Conference of the United Church of Christ become a Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive and Engaged (WISE) Conference for Mental Health. To become a WISE Conference for Mental Health is to articulate a commitment to fully Welcome, Include, and Support people with mental health challenges and their loved ones and to Engage the intersections of mental health and spirituality/religion.

Biblical, Theological, and Historical Grounding:
“Love God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with your whole mind... and your neighbor as yourself.” (Mark 12: 30-31)

From the early historic roots of the United Church of Christ and carrying through to our contemporary church bodies, it is part of our denominational identity and theology to offer, show, and practice our love of God by loving our neighbors and ourselves, body, heart, soul, and mind, in practical and life-giving ways. We thereby proclaim as purpose and in action the commandment Jesus offers in the Gospel of Mark.

In the Northern California Nevada Conference and our local congregations, we have opportunities to extend this love with and for those among and around us who bear mental health challenges, who often have experienced isolation, stigma, shame, and loneliness that have added to the suffering already carried. Akin to our denominational commitment to become Open and Affirming in the
life and leadership of the church of those previously excluded from the reach of our love due to sexuality and gender, the action of becoming a WISE Conference for Mental Health attempts both to extend the reach of our love to humans we may have excluded, and to include our own bodies, hearts, souls, and minds in greater fullness as modes of loving God.

The Motion:
Whereas we affirm our tradition as a welcoming denomination,

Whereas we work to strengthen our care for the whole person (body, heart, mind, soul),

Whereas we claim the deep and constant movement of God’s Holy Spirit seeking to bring fullness of life, we are called to proclaim all are beloved, including those living with a mental health challenge. Likewise, those among us with mental health challenges have gifts to offer our faith community, and the community is called to receive them.

Therefore, be it resolved, the Northern California Nevada Conference of the United Church of Christ declares itself a WISE Conference for Mental Health. We Welcome, Include, and Support people with mental health challenges and their loved ones, and we Engage the intersections of mental health and spirituality/religion.

Be it further resolved, the Northern California Conference of the United Church of Christ encourages congregations to develop and adopt covenants to be WISE (Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive, Engaged) Congregations for Mental Health and engage in education and advocacy around the issues of mental illness and mental health.