



## UCC Mental Health Network

Welcoming • Inclusive • Supportive • Engaged

The United Church of Christ has established a Mental Health Network that works to reduce stigma and promote the inclusion of people with mental illnesses/brain disorders and their families in the life, leadership and work of congregations.

### We envision a future in which:

- People with mental illnesses feel welcomed, supported, valued and included seamlessly in the life, leadership and work of their congregations.
- UCC congregations have eliminated stigma, and their members offer true compassion and support for people with mental illnesses and their families.
- UCC churches are collaborating with other faith communities to widen their welcome to people with mental illnesses.

### Our values:

- Jesus has shown us the way to embrace those who are marginalized by society and advocate with and for them.
- Every person has value and worth and deserves love, dignity and respect.
- All people, regardless of mental health or disability status, have something to contribute to the life, leadership and work of their congregations.
- Community matters. A sense of belonging is important to us all, whether we face mental health challenges ourselves or not.
- True compassion in ministry and relationships is based on equality.

### Who are those with a mental illness?

We are your brother, your sister, the man across the street, the person next to you in the pew.

In a given year, one in every four people (26.2%, according to the National Institute on Mental Health) is dealing with a mental illness, also known as a brain disorder.

Approximately 1 in 5 adults in the U.S. experiences mental illness in a given year. The number of family members, friends, co-workers, and neighbors touched by those facing emotional challenges is considerably higher. Yet mental health remains stigmatized. With more than 40 percent of those seeking help with psychiatric issues turning first to a house of worship. During our time in discernment, you can prayerfully consider if you would like Countryside Community Church to work on lifting the stigma of people seeking mental health help by offering welcome, inclusiveness, support, and engagement to our members and to our neighbors in the broader community who have or are impacted by emotional challenges, mental illnesses, and brain disorders. These include, but are not limited to, anxiety disorders, major depression, dysthymia, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, substance abuse and addiction, trauma, Alzheimer's, and grief.

If you would like more information from the United Church of Christ and their Mental Health Network check out their website at [www.mhn-ucc.org](http://www.mhn-ucc.org).

## "Safety" versus Creating Safe Boundaries in Faith Communities

Media misinformation and societal stigma against those living with mental illness encourage us to equate mental illness with danger. Thus, the first questions some faith leaders and congregation members often raise about becoming WISE relate to keeping the congregation "safe." Research and the lived experience of existing WISE Congregations for Mental Health demonstrate that safety is not an issue: offering radical inclusion to everyone, including those with significant mental health and brain disorder challenges, is a sacred activity, but not a dangerous one.

In any given year in the United States, one person in four is living with mental illness. Our faith communities already include and are led by dedicated people contributing to the greater good while dealing with mental health challenges. Further, studies published by the National Institutes of Health explain that even people with severe mental illnesses are less likely to participate in violence; in fact, they are over 10 times more likely than the general population to be victims of violent crime.

While safety is an important consideration for any faith community, most overt concerns about safely welcoming people with mental health challenges reflect worries that people with significant mental health issues will act in ways that make congregation members uncomfortable. Such apprehensions can be effectively addressed by articulating expectations, or boundaries of behavior that every member and visitor should observe for the well-being of the community.

# Resources

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- American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry – [www.aacap.org](http://www.aacap.org)
- Autism in the Congregation: Offering Jesus' Welcome to All Children – [www.adnetonline.org/Blog/Pages/Autism-in-the-Congregation.aspx](http://www.adnetonline.org/Blog/Pages/Autism-in-the-Congregation.aspx)
- Balanced Mind Foundation – [www.dbsalliance.org](http://www.dbsalliance.org)
- Challenging Kids – [www.challengingkids.com](http://www.challengingkids.com)
- Children and Adults with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder – [www.chadd.org](http://www.chadd.org)
- The Child Anxiety Network – [www.childanxiety.net](http://www.childanxiety.net)
- Children's Mental Health Facts: Helping Children and Youth with Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder – <https://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content/SMA16-5012/SMA16-5012.pdf>
- Child Mind Institute – [www.childmind.org](http://www.childmind.org)
- Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health – [www.ffcmh.org](http://www.ffcmh.org)
- International OCD Foundation "OCD in Kids" - [kids.iocdf.org/](http://kids.iocdf.org/)
- Kids in the House –resources for parents on mental health – [www.kidsinthehouse.com/experts/mental-health](http://www.kidsinthehouse.com/experts/mental-health)
- Worry Wise Kids – [www.worrywisekids.org](http://www.worrywisekids.org)

## Youth Mental Health Resources

- Alzheimer's Association: Phone: 1-800-272-3900 - [www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org)
- Alzheimer's Disease Education and Referral (ADEAR) Center: Phone: 1-800-438-4380 – <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/alzheimers>
- Booklet: Caring for a Person with Alzheimer's Disease from the National Institute on Aging – <https://order.nia.nih.gov/publication/caring-for-a-person-with-alzheimers-disease-your-easy-to-use-guide>
- For people caring for someone with dementia – [www.alzheimers.gov](http://www.alzheimers.gov)
- National Family Caregivers Association – [www.caregiveraction.org](http://www.caregiveraction.org)
- Resources on dementia and spirituality: "Spirituality and Dementia" – [www.alz.org/library/downloads/spirituality\\_rl2011.pdf](http://www.alz.org/library/downloads/spirituality_rl2011.pdf)

## Dementia Resources

# Resources

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## General Mental Health Resources

- Anxiety and Depression Association of America (ADAA) – [www.adaa.org](http://www.adaa.org)
- Caring Clergy Project – [www.inmi.us/for-clergy](http://www.inmi.us/for-clergy)
- Interfaith Network for Mental Health – [www.inmi.us](http://www.inmi.us)
- Mental Health America – [www.mentalhealthamerica.net](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net)
- Mental Health First Aid – [www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org](http://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org)
- Mental Health Ministries – [www.mentalhealthministries.net](http://www.mentalhealthministries.net)
- National Alliance on Mental Illness – [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)
- National Eating Disorders (NEDA) - 1-800-931--2237
- National Suicide Lifeline - 1-800273-TALK (8255)  
Veterans Lifeline - Option "1"
- National Institute on Mental Health – [www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)
- Pathways to Promise – [www.pathways2promise.org](http://www.pathways2promise.org)
- Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) – [www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)
- United Church of Christ Mental Health Network – [www.mhn-ucc.com](http://www.mhn-ucc.com)

## A TIME FOR DISCERNMENT

As we begin to move forward and look for settled ministers, three questions have been formulated by the Church Council to help us begin the discernment process:

1. How do we want to be challenged spiritually and intellectually.
2. What is our call to serve?
3. What does it mean to be the Christian partner of the Tri-Faith Initiative?

To get the conversations started, we will be offering:

**Small group meetings** which will take place in homes, on Zoom and at the church.

They will be made up of 6-12 church members who, together, will meet and talk about their hopes and prayers for Countryside as well as answer the three questions (above).

**Learning/listening sessions** are another component of our discernment process.

These will be opportunities to learn about the United Church of Christ, our leadership model and more about the United Church of Christ search and call process.

**Congregational information meetings** will be used as another opportunity to get involved and also to provide feedback from the small groups. Here is where you will receive updates and share in the search and call process for settled ministers

Lastly, we will provide feedback opportunities to respond to the output of our small groups and to allow for the most common themes to come to the surface.

To register for a small group go to:

[countrysideucc.org/register](http://countrysideucc.org/register)