

UCC Designations

Covenants

Open and Affirming

Immigrant Welcoming/Sanctuary

Just Peace

WISE

Accessibility to All

First Church UCC, Phoenix, Open and Affirming Statement

Because we believe all people are beloved children of God, we welcome them into the full life, worship, ministry, fellowship and leadership of this congregation. We do this without regard to age, race, ethnicity, or national origin; physical, mental, emotional ability or disability; gender, marital status, gender identity, or sexual orientation; socio-economic background or circumstance, political affiliation or immigration status.

We, the First Congregational United Church of Christ, Phoenix, Arizona, declare ourselves to be an Open and Affirming congregation. We offer ourselves as an inclusive community in which the Gospel of God's love for all people is honored and practiced. We affirm this church as a place of hope and a community of welcome to all in Christ's name.

Our Prayer is that the variety of the gifts of the Holy Spirit given to those present and those God is yet to call into our midst will make us ever more useful servants of God to our brothers and sisters within our church, our many kinds of families, our neighborhoods and our world.

Adopted Sunday, January 19, 2003.

Amendment adopted February 16, 2014

First Church UCC, Phoenix, Sanctuary

A “sanctuary church” intentionally ministers to the undocumented community, which may include providing physical shelter for those facing detention or deportation.

We designated the “Libbey Parlor” (first room on the west side as you enter the gates from the parking lot) as our “sanctuary suite”. This space already had a ½ bath and living room type furniture. Through the hard work of the Immigration Team and generous donations of our friends and members, we were able to make provision for simple meal preparation and a good night’s sleep.

Our commitment to sanctuary continues through welcoming, advocating, and supporting asylum seekers.

Adopted 2017

First Church UCC, Phoenix, Just Peace Covenant

At First Church UCC Phoenix, we take seriously both the inner work of spiritual development and care, and the outer work of advocating, agitating, and organizing for justice. We care deeply about our call to walk humbly with our God. We recognize that being followers of Jesus is costly, and entails selfless love, conscientious resistance to evil, and renunciation of privilege. We affirm that our interactions with one another are the fullest expression of what we believe, which compels us to act with compassion, embody mercy, nurture hope, and encourage thriving. Therefore, on this day we publicly and prayerfully commit ourselves to our part in God’s vision by proclaiming First Church UCC Phoenix a Just Peace Church. We covenant to work together to bring hope and relief to those Jesus called the least of his sisters and brothers and to restore the integrity of all God’s creation. With God’s help and by Christ’s example we shall actively work for peace and seek justice and liberation for all peoples.

Adopted Dec 13, 2020

First Church UCC, Phoenix, WISE Covenant

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. I Corinthians 12:12

We, the people of First Church, United Church of Christ, Phoenix, Arizona are called to confront the stigma and debunk the myths applied to persons experiencing mental health challenges including mental illness, brain disorders, addictions, neurodiversity, and trauma.

We recognize mental health conditions, first and foremost, are health conditions. Just as we all experience different challenges throughout our lives with our physical health, so do we experience mental health challenges that require treatment, care, understanding and support.

We seek to be an inclusive faith community that cares for the whole person: body, heart, mind, and soul. We believe that all people are beloved by God, and those with mental health challenges and their families are no exception. We choose to follow the example of Jesus who welcomed all and confronted systems that sought to marginalize, exclude, and suppress.

Individuals with mental health challenges can feel cut-off from God and excluded from the church. It is our calling to communicate to all individuals that God loves everyone equally, even when we feel estranged from that love. We commit to creating a welcoming space where people of all ages can be open about their mental health challenges and those of their families by providing a place for them to belong and experience hope.

People with mental health challenges have gifts to offer our faith community, and we want everyone to feel fully welcomed, included, supported, and engaged in the life, work, and leadership of our church.

We, First Church, United Church of Christ, Phoenix, Arizona vote to be a **W**elcoming, **I**nclusive, **S**upportive, and **E**ngaged (WISE) congregation for mental health.

Call to Action:

We pledge to create a WELCOMING community for people with mental health challenges and their families by:

1. Actively welcoming those with mental health challenges into our faith community and providing a safe environment in which people can tell their stories and share their journeys.
2. Educating ourselves and offering educational opportunities to help our whole congregation understand the issues surrounding the mental health challenges including mental illness, brain disorders, addictions, neurodiversity, and trauma and the implications of this covenant.
3. Taking action to reduce social stigma and pledging to examine our own attitudes and preconceived notions about mental challenges and mental health and to confront our own ingrained stigmas, misunderstanding, and bias.

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

1. Committing to recruit, nominate, and support qualified persons who may have mental health challenges to serve on committees and in leadership positions within the congregation.
2. Committing to thoughtful consideration in hiring qualified persons who may have mental health challenges when calling clergy and other church staff.

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

1. Reaching out to those living with mental illness, brain disorders, addictions, neurodiversity, and trauma in the same way we reach out to those living with other medical illnesses.
2. Growing our understanding of the consequences that mental illness and disability have on the members of the diagnosed person's family.
3. Offering companionship and compassion for individuals and families living with mental health challenges.

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

1. Welcoming and encouraging outside groups who deal with mental illness, brain disorders, addictions, neurodiversity, and trauma to use our church facilities.

2. Engaging with other organizations to create opportunities for alliance in our shared mission, ministry, and advocacy. This includes working with our church's mental Health Ministry Team, the UCC Mental Health Network, and the UCC Disabilities Ministry.
3. Speaking in a prophetic voice and working in opposition to injustices committed against persons with mental health challenges, just as we do for any other marginalized person.
4. Advocating for services for all persons with mental illness who are falling through the fraying safety net, including veterans, persons in jails and prisons, persons who are homeless, and vulnerable children and youth.

First Church, United Church of Christ, Phoenix, Arizona, votes to continue to be a welcoming, inclusive, supportive, and engaged (WISE) congregation for mental health.

This vote affirms that we join in the process of becoming WISEer: more welcoming, inclusive, supportive, and engaged with all of God's people.

Adopted Feb 28, 2021

Accessibility to All Covenant

As followers of the teachings of Jesus Christ, who welcomed all people with dignity and compassion, we affirm that every person is created in the image of God. We recognize our responsibility to create a worship and community space that is fully accessible, welcoming, and inclusive to people of all abilities. We, the congregants of First Church UCC, Phoenix commit to becoming a church that is accessible to all. This covenant expresses our ongoing commitment to justice, hospitality, and inclusion for all.

Annual Meeting February 22, 2026