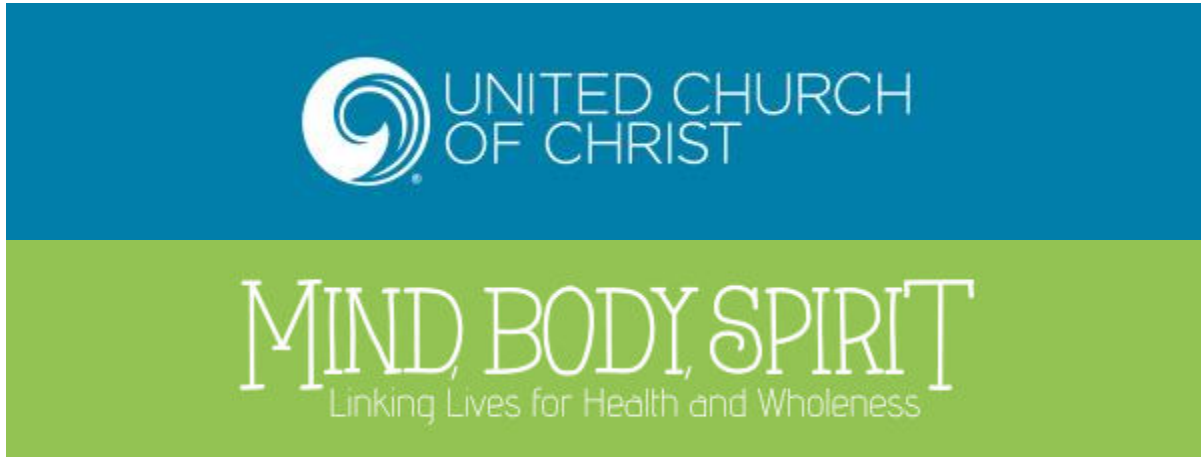


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UCC Wellness Ministries Newsletter

April 2023, Volume 8, Issue 4

REFLECTION:

Can You Act to Make a Difference in the Health & Wellbeing of Our Youth?

Taking scripture as our guide, the Wellness Ministries of the National Setting of the UCC under Justice and Local Church Ministries believes that all individuals are created in God's image and are blessed and loved equally by God. The activities within our ministries vary from congregation to congregation, yet all desire to inform, support, and advocate for measures that support the wholistic health of everyone.

Understanding that [LGBTQ adolescents experience many health-related challenges and disparities](#), the Wellness Ministries Leadership Team has offered through this newsletter effective health promotion strategies for their health, safety, and well-being. We are alarmed because current legislative sessions across our country are now debating the highest number of anti-LGBTQ bills ever introduced in a single legislative period. Many of them place [trans youth at risk of losing gender-affirming health care](#). We join other UCC leaders in encouraging congregations to commit to putting [love and justice into action](#) by responding.

Contact Wellnessministries@UCC.org for more information as you consider how you and your Wellness Ministries can respond and advocate for at-risk youth.



A TIMELY HEALTH TIP

Press Reset on Stress

April is national Stress Awareness Month. Stress can motivate us to prepare or perform. However, when it becomes chronic, it harms our health. Unfortunately, there is no drug to cure stress. But we have a built-in [“stress reset button”](#) that acts as an antidote to stress. It’s called the relaxation response. Deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, and mindfulness slow the heart rate, lowers blood pressure, and decrease oxygen consumption and stress hormone levels. A few minutes several times a day can prevent stress from building up and lead to better sleep, giving you more energy the next day.



WELLNESS MINISTRIES FOCUS

Ensuring that All May Partake

Church activities very often include sharing food and beverages. People with food intolerances or food allergies will avoid coffee hour, church suppers, and other gatherings because there is nothing they can eat or even be exposed to unknowingly. How can we say *all are welcome* when our planned activities neglect the needs of others?

Many people have one or more [food intolerances or sensitivities](#) that affect their digestive system. They must avoid the foods that cause them abdominal pain, upset stomach, diarrhea, gas and bloating, headaches or migraines, heartburn, or nausea. In addition, more than 32 million adults and children in the U.S. have food allergies. A [food allergy](#) causes the body's immune system to react to specific foods. The identified foods must be avoided because allergic reactions can range from mild to severe, with death occurring. People do not outgrow food allergies.

There are several initial actions that a program of Wellness Ministries may take:

1. Educate the congregation about food intolerances or allergies
2. Ask a knowledgeable person to assist in developing a safety plan that addresses the risk and the response when an individual experiences an unexpected response.
3. Display a list of ingredients next to each prepared dish.

LINKS TO THIS MONTH'S NATIONAL HEALTH-RELATED TOPICS

These links provide information from reputable sources that you can use for worship bulletin inserts, bulletin board displays, and newsletter articles.

For April:

- [Alcohol Awareness Month](#)
- [Donate Life Month](#)
- [Irritable Bowel Syndrome \(IBS\) Month](#)
- [Minority Health Month](#)
- [National Humor Month](#)

For those who like to plan farther ahead, here are some for May:

- [Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month](#)
- [Arthritis Awareness Month](#)
- [Lupus Awareness Month](#)
- [National Stroke Awareness Month](#)
- [Women's Health Month](#)

WEB-BASED EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

- [Helping the LGBTQIA+ Community Before Disasters: Preparation and Mitigation Considerations](#) available from DHS Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships Resources
 - [Caring Congregations: What the Pandemic is Teaching Us](#) provided by the Southern New England Conference of the UCC, April 20th, 12:00 – 1:00 pm ET
 - Help Your Ministry Walk Safely in the Spirit - [Protecting Your Congregation from Slips, Trips, and Falls](#) is available from The Insurance Board.
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FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

- [DHS Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnership Resources](#) provides information for places of worship, a First Responder's Toolbox for responding to violence in places of worship, and information about a grant program to fund prevention programs.
 - Reflective Leadership Grants – provide Christian lay or clergy leaders “balcony time” to reflect on accomplishments, broaden perspectives, and discern the next steps in advancing their mission following the multiple pandemics of: COVID-19, racial inequality, economic disruption, and mental distress intensified during the past few years. More information is available at [Reflective Leadership Grants](#).
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UPDATE ON THE ACTIVITIES OF YOUR UCC WELLNESS MINISTRIES LEADERSHIP TEAM:

Your Wellness Ministries Leadership Team meets via Zoom at 3:30 on the second Thursday of the month. The main items we addressed this past month were:

General Synod June 30th - July 4th, in Indianapolis, IN, has the theme of *Making All Things New* and promises to be an exciting time. You may attend in person or virtually. We have been planning the representation of the Wellness Ministries in the following ways.

Voice Without Vote:

We are pleased to report that the UCC Board, sitting as the General Synod Business Committee, voted to recommend to the General Synod that Wellness Ministries be granted a Voice Without Vote at General Synod. Therefore, when General Synod votes to accept this recommendation, two representatives from Wellness Ministries will be able to speak to issues of wellness and healthcare justice.

Workshops at Synod:

Applications for General Synod Workshops are being accepted between now and April 15th. Information is available at: <https://www.ucc.org/applications-for-synod-workshops-open-until-april-15/>

Exhibits:

As at past General Synods, the Wellness Ministries exhibit will assist visitors in understanding how to organize a sustainable circle of care and advocacy.

Luncheon:

On Monday, July 3rd, Wellness Ministries participants will join partner ministries within the UCC at a luncheon sponsored by CHHSM and discuss in small groups *What is our vision for making things new through our ministry?* If you have ideas, please send them to wellnessministries@ucc.org.

Community Care Space:

Synod is a hectic time. We and others concerned about wholistic wellness seek to provide a place for attendees to take time for self-care. A *Community Care Space* will provide a get-a-way for rest. Prayer shawls will be available. Planning continues. Do you have any ideas?

A ***UCC Wellness Ministries Certificate of Recognition and Appreciation*** was awarded for the 1st time during General Synod 33 in 2021. The recipient was the Southern New England Conference of the UCC for their devoted implementation of the UCC Resolution: *Reclaiming the Church's Ministry of Health and Healing*. A Certificate of Recognition will again be presented. More information about the selection process of UCC churches, Associations, and/or Conferences will be in our May newsletter.

The Wellness Ministries Toolkit:

The Beta testing of our new Wellness Ministries Toolkit is just about complete. When the Toolkit launches on the UCC.org website you will be able to review many pages. Since this is a living document after you have accessed Section 1 you will be asked to register. The purpose of registration is so that we can notify you as updates occur in Sections 2 and 3.



Would you like to speak with your Wellness Ministries Leadership Team? E-mail wellnessministries@ucc.org before April 12th, and we will share your e-mail within the group at our next meeting.

KEEP CONNECTED



Visit our [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#) pages: Post comments or share information about your health ministries; join in conversations.

An invitation from the Editors:

- Do you have something you want to share with colleagues?
- Do you have an innovative way you've provided wellness ministries?
- Have a question about health and wellness ministries?

Let us hear about it – you could be featured in an upcoming issue of the newsletter.

Contact us at wellnessministries@ucc.org





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