



MIND, BODY, SPIRIT

Linking Lives for Health and Wholeness



UCC Wellness Ministries Newsletter

August 2023, Volume 8, Issue 8

REFLECTION:

"Do not remember the former things or consider the things of old, I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert." Isaiah 43:18-19

“Making All Things New” was the theme of the 34th biennial General Synod of our United Church of Christ. The logo was designed to encourage people to think about what newness might look like and identify within their own experiences the possibilities for something new.



Since the Spring of 2020, Wellness Ministries have had to identify new ways to continue ministering effectively within our congregations and the communities we serve. All aspects of health and wellness were affected by this pandemic. Self-care became more difficult as we simultaneously tried to serve others in new ways.

The loss of regular routines gave us the time and space to reflect. What different thoughts and actions sprung forth for you? What creative ways did you discover to care for yourself? What ministries did you establish or adjust? What ideas evolved? How are all things new for you?

THE SCOPE OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF WELLNESS MINISTRIES WAS VISIBLE AT SYNOD



Exhibit Hall: The Wellness Ministries display was easily located because of our new banner! We are grateful for the assistance of Bentley deBardelaben-Phillips, Exec. Asso., Justice and Local Church Ministries in creating this tool. Hundreds of people were attracted to our table and engaged in conversation. All left with information about the UCC Wellness Ministries Leadership Team and the resources UCC provides, including the online and pdf versions of our new Toolkit. More people signed up for our newsletter. Others requested we develop additional resources and networking opportunities. The “to-do” list for our Leadership Team grows as the faith-based purpose of Wellness Ministries becomes better understood.

More memorable, and in many ways more important, some individuals returned to our table at times when it was not busy. Each initiated a conversation of a personal nature. Not unlike within

our places of ministry, the opportunity to offer a healing presence can occur at any time and any place. Over five days, we were blessed to serve a number of individuals.

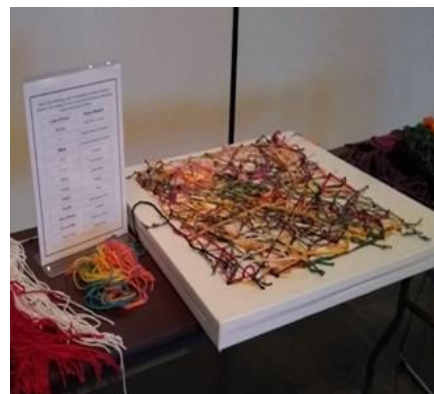
Voice Without Vote: Wellness Ministries was granted *Voice Without Vote*, so we were seated with the Synod delegates during the Plenaries. This status made us available to provide *speakers*, answer questions, and address relevant issues when an issue arose related to health and wellness.

Community Care Space: This Spring, we helped plan a Community Care retreat space for Synod. At Synod, we were part of the implementation team. This quiet getaway space was much appreciated by those made weary by the crowds, and many discussions about the resolutions.

Panel Presentation at Luncheon: Invited to speak on a panel at the Celebrating Disability, Mental Health, Sexuality, and Wellness Justice Luncheon, sponsored by CHHSM, we were asked to answer, "What has the Wellness Ministries of the UCC national setting been doing to make all things new? Our response was:

- We are inquiring, responding, growing, and reaching in new directions.
- We adjusted the name and focus of our ministry from health ministries to Wellness Ministries. Health is generally defined as the absence of illness. The wellness experience is much broader and can occur even while experiencing an illness or injury. Wellness happens when the interrelationship between spirit, mind, and body is healed, even when illness is not cured.
- We reaffirmed our commitment to seek justice and address the wellness needs of all God's children.
- We increased the number of issues in our e-newsletter, *Mind, Body, Spirit*, from 6 to 12 per year. The number of subscribers has risen to 4638 individuals and churches.
- Growth in the number of churches with wellness ministries was reported in the UCC annual survey of churches. Eleven hundred twenty-one churches (1121) now identify themselves as having Wellness Ministries.
- A Wellness Ministries Toolkit was developed and made available for free to assist all congregations in establishing and growing Wellness Ministries. A 200-page book format was also created in response to subsequent requests and is available on a flash drive.
- The Toolkit is a "living" document that will be updated regularly. Established Wellness Ministries will continue to share exemplars so new Wellness Ministries teams can benefit from the collective knowledge base.

Meditation Space: Aly Breisch worked with the UCC Contemplatives to plan a quiet meditation space at Synod. During Synod, she facilitated the room's setup, led a Lectio Divina meditation, and brought a prayer canvas into the Synod Plenary sessions. Attendees were invited to select a strand of yarn representing their prayer request and weave it into the frame. The visual of having so many individual prayers lifted up as one was amazing.



WELLNESS MINISTRIES AND COLLABORATION WITH OTHER MINISTRIES AND GROUPS



During Synod, multiple conversations and shared activities strengthened our connections with colleagues in related UCC ministries. We share the contacts below so they may also become a resource for you.

- [Association of United Church Educators, UCC](#) (AUCE) advocates for excellence in faith formation and education ministries in the UCC for people of all ages. Links to the seven regional groups are on this website. Doing a presentation at a regional conference about a wellness activity is appreciated. E-mail is info@auce-ucc.org
- [Disabilities Ministries](#) is co-chaired by Rebekah Anderson & Rev. Jess Chancey. E-mail is chair@uccdm.org
- [Encuentros Latinx](#) is led by Rev. Rhina Ramos, National Coordinator for Proyecto Encuentros de Gracia y Bienvenida. E-mail is ramosr@ucc.org
- [Gender and Sexuality Justice Ministries](#) provide a collaborative interface between LGBTQIA+ Justice, Sexuality Justice, Women & Gender Justice, and Encuentros Latinx. The Team is led by Rachael Ward, Minister for Gender & Sexuality Justice. E-mail is wardr@ucc.org
- [Mental Health Network](#) is chaired by Bishop Allyson Abrams. E-mail is chair@mhn-ucc.org
- [Minister for Disabilities and Mental Health Justice](#) is Rev. Dr. Sarah Lund. E-mail is lunds@ucc.org
- [Our Whole Lives](#) provides people of all ages with programs that help guide relationships, health, and behavior in the context of faith. E-mail Rev. Amy Johnson, Minister for Sexuality Education and Justice, Gender and Sexuality Justice Ministry, at johnsona@ucc.org
- [Overdose and Drug Use Ministries](#) is led by Erica M. Poellot, Minister for Harm Reduction and Overdose Prevention Ministries. E-mail is poellote@ucc.org
- [The Council for Health & Human Service Ministries, UCC](#)(CHHSM) is committed to advancing the work of all health and human services of the UCC in creating a just, caring, and compassionate world. Rev. Elyse Berry, DMin, is an Associate for Advocacy & Leadership Development. E-mail is berrye@chhsm.org
- [Women and Gender Justice](#) Dr. Sherry Warren serves as Minister for Women's and Gender Justice. E-mail is warrens@ucc.org

Update on the **new** UCC Wellness Ministries Toolkit

Interest in the online Wellness Ministries Toolkit has been high, and there is a rapidly growing community of users. In response to requests for a book version of the Toolkit, a 200-page document is now available in pdf format on a flash drive. Contact peggyatteson@cox.net for more information.



This *UCC Wellness Ministries Toolkit* **replaced** the now-retired *UCC Called to Care: A Notebook for Lay Caregivers* and other resources. The UCC Resources website will be updated very soon.

Several helpful supplemental resources developed for *Called to Care* users have been reduced to 50% off and are quickly selling out. The CTC Handbooks are pocket-size booklets containing scripture and prayers that may be used during visitation. The Caregiving Record Cards are index-sized cards that volunteers might use to record information from a visit.

A TIMELY HEALTH TIP

High heat and humidity remain a significant topic of concern nationwide this summer. Wellness Ministries have responded in several ways.



We are sharing information such as: [Staying Safe in Hot Weather](#) provided by the National Institute on Aging. The information is also available in [Spanish](#).

Checking on the homebound: Are they living within a safe temperature? Do they have access to adequate fluids? Do they have fans? If a fan is needed, a request to the congregation usually turns up a spare one to borrow. In other instances, the loan of a window air-conditioner may be possible.

Churches with air-conditioning or cool finished basements have opened their space to be cooling centers. Volunteers within the congregation act as hosts. Tables may be set up so attendees can play games, drink plenty of water, snack, and relax within a safe community setting.

WELLNESS MINISTRIES HEALTH EDUCATION RESOURCES

For August:

- [National Breastfeeding Month](#)
- [National Immunization Awareness Month](#) (Posters available in English and Spanish)

For September, when you want to plan ahead:

- [Blood Cancer Awareness Month](#)
- [Childhood Cancer Awareness Month](#)
- [Food Safety Education Month](#)
- [National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month](#)
- [National Cholesterol Education Month](#)
- National Hispanic Heritage Month: [Latino and Hispanic American Health](#)



WEB-BASED EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS FOR CHURCHES:



[Best Practices in Transportation for Your Ministry](#) free from The Insurance Board

[Mental Health & Substance Use](#) free from the CHHSM Advocacy Center

NEXT MEETING OF THE WELLNESS MINISTRIES LEADERSHIP TEAM?

August 10th from 2:00-3:00 pm

Please contact us at wellnessministries@ucc.org with ideas or questions by August 9th

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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