



# MIND, BODY, SPIRIT

Linking Lives for Health and Wholeness



## UCC Wellness Ministries Newsletter

February 2024, Volume 9, Issue 2

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### REFLECTION:



#### The Love Shared Through Wellness Ministries

The word "love" and pictures of hearts are found everywhere in February. Boxes of chocolate, jewelry, and special dinners are marketed as ways to demonstrate love.

We who provide Wellness Ministries demonstrate our love by following the directive from Jesus, to love God with all our passion, prayer, intelligence, and energy .... and to love others as well as we love ourselves (Mark 12:30-31a). As we care for one another, we are mindful that

because we love, we support others to be rightly themselves and don't compel them to fit our image.

May we, in Wellness Ministries, continue to demonstrate our love for others by listening to them, not to change them but to understand them, and then join with them to respond to their challenges faithfully.

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## TIMELY HEALTH TIP:

[Home Test to Treat program extends nationwide.](#) The program has been expanded into an entirely virtual community health program offering free testing, telehealth visits, and at-home treatments for influenza (flu) A and B and COVID-19 to eligible participants nationwide. Treatment must begin within a limited window from the onset of symptoms. Providing these services virtually while individuals remain at home expedites the process.

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## WELLNESS MINISTRIES FOCUS:

*Loneliness and the feeling of being unwanted is the most terrible poverty.*

**-Mother Teresa**



Loneliness can affect anyone at any age, and the numbers continue to grow, making it a public health problem. There are six identified types of loneliness. Although experiences vary, each type harms spiritual, mental, and physical health. Wellness Ministries have the opportunity to respond by offering [social connection and community](#).

[The Campaign to End Loneliness](#) identifies loneliness as a mismatch between the quantity and quality of our social relationships and those we want." This experience can cause a person to feel lonely and disconnected from others, even in a group. It differs from social isolation, which is not a feeling but an actual physical state of being alone. Some people choose to physically separate themselves from others, happy to spend time alone. When someone is lonely, it can affect their behaviors, mental health, and physical health, making it a significant public health concern. Additional information is available at [Loneliness: Causes, Impact on Health](#).

[Gen Z is the Loneliest Generation](#), so we must understand them to address this. Learn [How the church can build relationships with Gen Z](#). They are seeking and haven't given up on life's big questions.

A guide to [Measuring Your Impact On Loneliness in Later Life](#) describes four commonly used tools to screen for loneliness. The [UCLA Loneliness Scale 3 online tool](#) is available for self-screening, or you may wish to print out the [UCLA Loneliness Scale 3](#).

[The Bible suggests even God gets lonely. Why don't religious people talk about it more?](#) There is much to be learned from loneliness: prophecy, solidarity, fun, freedom – even creativity. Rather than just working on immediately fixing it when we feel lonely, Pastor Dwight Lee Wolter advises us to see it as a blessing. He recently provided a UCC [Daily Devotional](#) titled, [Befriending Loneliness](#). People, both in the Bible and more recently, have addressed their loneliness in ways that made it a time of blessing. In [The Gospel of Loneliness](#), he invites us to engage loneliness when it occurs and respect it as a spiritual state to be explored, embraced, utilized, transformed, and integrated into the wholeness of life.

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## A PROGRAM IDEA SHARED BY A READER:



*Readers are constantly developing activities supporting body, mind, and spiritual wellness. We will share these ideas and provide a way to connect with providers for more details.*

**"A Healthy Community is a Free Community"** – Shared by the [Christ Congregational Church, Silver Spring, MD](#) – A Just Peace Church. The intersections of health and freedom are underscored by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, who stated,

***"Of all forms of discrimination and inequalities, injustice in health is the most shocking and inhuman. It is more degrading than slums because slums are a psychological death while inequality in health means a physical death."***

The pastors of Christ Congregational Church (CCC) in Silver Spring, MD, Rev. Dr. Matt Braddock and Rev. Aubra Love ([alove@cccsilverspring.org](mailto:alove@cccsilverspring.org)), honored the 95th birthday of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. by welcoming families and guests to a MLK Commemorative worship service followed by health equity "Table Talks." The theme, "*A Healthy Community is a Free Community*," was developed collaboratively with their Health and Wellness Team, the Women of Color Prayer Circle, organized within BCDVI, Inc. Congregational Partnerships, a national educational ministry.

The worship service, featuring guest pulpit preacher Rev. Jason Carson Wilson, addressed health disparities in medical services and resources for Communities of Color who are disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. His powerful sermon stressed the importance of equitable health care for Communities of Color and LGBTQIA+ communities.

Take aways identified by "Table Talk" participants were:

1. Increased awareness of health inequity as a justice issue.

2. Cultivating community and friendships are important to maintaining good health.
  3. Everyone working together for this commemoration.
  4. MLK Worship and Health Equity "Table Talks" were well attended.
  5. Supportive community and healthy food make for better health outcomes.
  6. Commemorating MLK Jr. Day encourages communities to stand together.
  7. Appreciated the emphasis on the lack of quality healthcare access for Black women.
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## UCC WELLNESS MINISTRIES LEADERSHIP TEAM ACTIVITIES



During the monthly meeting in January, implementation of the goals for 2024 through 2025 began. Workgroups comprised of members of the Leader Team and other volunteers are focusing on tasks that will enhance all ministry activities. We welcome your insights and offer the opportunity for a short-term commitment to share your God-given gifts and become involved in a specific project that interests you.

- The updated video explaining Wellness Ministries on the UCC website is almost ready.
- The 150+ people who registered to access the complete Toolkit will be invited to a Zoom discussion in February to share their insights and offer suggestions for updates.
- A working group is forming to update the twenty-two-year-old *Pocket Handbook of Psalms and Prayers* that, in the past, was part of the Called to Care resources.
- A working group has started discussing establishing a podcast and seeking potential interviewees.
- A working group is seeking ideas for Wellness Ministries webinars. What topics would you like? What other ministries might we collaborate with in using this educational format? What are Wellness Ministries already doing within our Conferences that could be available to others?

Contact Peggy Matteson at [WellnessMinistries@UCC.org](mailto:WellnessMinistries@UCC.org) or [peggymatteson@cox.net](mailto:peggymatteson@cox.net)

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## LINKS TO NATIONAL HEALTH-RELATED TOPICS:

Follow these links to find information from reputable sources that you can use for programs, worship bulletin inserts, bulletin board displays, and newsletter articles.



**[Black Heritage and Health](#)** – Many Black/African Americans experience conditions and diseases of the bones, joints, muscles, and skin. Learn about these conditions and share resources and information.

**[Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention](#)** – Youth aged 12 to 19 experience the highest rates of rape and sexual assault by a dating partner. Build awareness and promote safe, healthy relationships. [Dating Matters-Strategies to Promote Healthy Teen Relationships](#)

**[Cervical Cancer Screening Month](#)** Information available in English and Spanish

Feb. 21-27 **[National Eating Disorder Awareness Week](#)** – Understanding that [Eating Disorders are not a Lifestyle Choice](#). They are actually serious and often fatal. Learn about treatments.



**March 1, 2024, [World Day of Prayer](#)** – The genesis of World Day of Prayer (WDP) was in the 19th century when Christian women in the USA and Canada initiated activities supporting women's involvement in missions at home and abroad. WDP has become *a worldwide ecumenical movement of informed prayer and prayerful action from these roots*. This year's theme is **"I Beg You...Bear With One Another in Love** based on Ephesians 4:1-3. Each year women from a different country write the worship and prayer resources. In 2023, before the conflict began in the fall, Palestinian Christian women had completed creating this year's materials. In 2024, we are invited to pray with other women around the world for peace, justice, freedom of religion, and freedom of movement, as well as refugees, persons experiencing homelessness, and all who are sick, dying, and grieving. We are also called to acknowledge our collective role in causing the climate crisis and commit to repairing what we have destroyed. Finally, they ask the global church to be united in treating all with justice and love. [Resources](#) are available to assist in planning.

**[Benefit of Early Colorectal Screening](#)** – Prevent or find it early. Learn about the different types of screening available.

**[Endometriosis - What is It? Why Treat it?](#)** – Recognize possible symptoms and get treatment.

**[Flood Safety Month](#)** - Turn Around, Don't Drown! Materials available in English and Spanish

**[National Nutrition Month](#)** – A [Health Equity Toolkit](#) and other resources support healthy eating.

[Protecting the Ground Water We Drink](#) – Well water and municipal drinking water resources

[Women & Girls HIV/AIDS Risk Awareness](#) – Provides information on prevention, testing, living with the disease, medical care, pregnancy, and more.

## **[Any Month, But Especially Now](#)**

### **[Take A Stand Against Human Trafficking](#)**

Human trafficking involves the use of force, fraud, or coercion to obtain some type of labor or commercial sex act. Every year, millions of children, women, and men are trafficked worldwide – including right here in the United States. It can occur in any community, and victims can be any age, race, gender, or nationality. There are many common myths and misconceptions about human trafficking, [learn the facts](#). Wellness Ministries can lead UCC congregations in helping [end trafficking](#) and support organizations that assist [trafficking survivors build a new life](#)

The Frederick Douglass Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPRA) was introduced in the House by Rep. Christopher Smith (R) in September 2023. This bipartisan legislation would provide \$1 billion over five years to strengthen and expand successful programs enacted by the original TVPRA while adding whole-of-government accountability and strengthening existing laws that prevent trafficking, protect victims, and prosecute perpetrators. The programs funded by the original TVPRA act will expire soon, ending survivors' access to these much-needed services. Tell your member of Congress that you [support the Frederick Douglass Trafficking Victims Prevention and Protection Reauthorization Act of 2023](#).

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## **WEB-BASED EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS:**

[Achieving Equitable Recovery: A Post-Disaster Guide for Local Officials and Leaders](#) is part of FEMA's commitment to supporting the diverse communities that they serve and helping them rebuild stronger than ever. [Register here](#) to learn more about the Equity Guide on Feb 13th at noon ET



### **[The Awakened Brain: The New Science of Spirituality and Our Quest For An Inspired Life](#)**

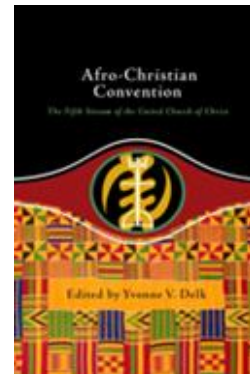
Whether it's meditation or a walk in nature, reading a sacred text, or saying a prayer, there are many ways to tap into a heightened awareness of the world around you and your place in it. Learn more on Thurs., Feb. 22nd at 7:00. [Register now](#).

[Physical Security Performance Goals for Faith-Based Communities](#) provides a set of physical security practices that houses of worship and related facilities can use to reduce security risks to their congregations.

## RESOURCE LITERATURE:

### [Afro-Christian Convention - The Fifth Stream of the United Church of Christ](#)

provides an understanding of the Afro-Christian Convention and our legacy with them as the fifth founding group of the United Church of Christ. This lost piece of our history is now recognized. The faith traditions of ubuntu people may guide our journey toward greater awareness and responsiveness in our work and fellowship. Ubuntu is sometimes translated as *I am because we are; we are, therefore I am* or *humanity towards others*. The book is available from [Pilgrim Press](#).



[Self-care is different from self-comfort.](#) This article explains that the modern understandings of self-care often focus on temporary fixes, not long-term wholeness. Authentic self-care has the end goal in mind. We know that God is with us and invested in the totality of each of us - mind, body, and spirit.

[Sacred Self-Care: Daily Practices for Nurturing Our Whole Selves](#) by Chanequa Walker-Barnes is a seven-week guide to help shift your behaviors and create lifelong habits to care for your whole self: mind, body, and soul. This book is one of two identified for the UCC Join the Movement 2024's All Church Read. The second is [Black Liturgies: Prayers, Poems, and Meditations for Staying Human](#) by Cole Arthur Riley.

**Are you looking for updated health resources within your area?** Seek out your state's Department of Health Healthcare Professional Advisory site. It will provide data about current health concerns and identify resources to assist Wellness Ministries in identifying and addressing local issues.

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## WELLNESS MINISTRIES RELATED CONFERENCES:

[The Council for Health & Human Service Ministries \(CHHSM\) of the UCC](#) is committed to advancing the work of all health and human service ministries of the UCC in creating a just, caring, and compassionate world. We are invited to join them in St. Louis from March 12th to 14th to explore *Innovation as the Gateway to Collaboration*.

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## KEEP CONNECTED:



We are a community of mutually supportive leaders of all Wellness Ministries. Debbie Ringen faithfully posts information on our FaceBook and LinkedIn pages that benefits our ministries. Honor her efforts by connecting with other health ministries and joining in conversations.

<https://www.facebook.com/pg/UCCFCN/posts/>

<https://www.linkedin.com/groups/6951713/>

### An invitation from the Editors:

Do you have something you want to share with colleagues? Do you have an innovative way you have provided wellness ministries? Have a question about health and wellness ministries? Let us hear from you. **Contact us at [wellnessministries@ucc.org](mailto:wellnessministries@ucc.org)**



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