



MIND, BODY, SPIRIT

Linking Lives for Health and Wholeness



UCC Wellness Ministries Newsletter

March 2024, Volume 9, Issue 3

REFLECTION:

Responding With A Desire To Start A Conversation.



"let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for your anger does not produce God's righteousness. James 1:19-20 (NRSV)

Parkside Community Church in Sacramento, California used a unique approach when someone stole yet another flag from the church's front lawn. The church has had about twenty banners vandalized in the past three years. Mostly pride or transgender flags, but also Black Lives Matter banners. During a recent incident when a Pride Progress flag was being torn down, the security camera recorded the face of a young person and someone off camera yelling "Zach, Zach." Despite having a name and a clear picture of the youth, church leaders decided not to file a police report. Instead, they chose to try to start a dialogue.

The new banner reads: "Hey Zach! Do you want to talk about it?" The QR code links to [A letter to Zach](#) in which the Church shares their beliefs and explains why they didn't call the police. To date they have not heard from Zach. However, others have seen the sign, read the letter reached by using the QR code, and responded by calling the church wanting to talk. When this congregation invited Zach to talk, they were demonstrating how their Christian beliefs guide their actions. May we, individually and collectively strive to do the same with every encounter.

TIMELY HEALTH TIP:

On Sunday, February 11th, a shooting occurred at Lakewood Church in Houston. A child and a parishioner were wounded. The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure and Security Agency (CISA) supports efforts to maintain safe and secure houses of worship and related facilities while sustaining an open and welcoming environment. It provides [resources](#) including a [guide](#), a [self-assessment tool](#), trainings, exercises, and other materials focused on a wide range of man-made threats (e.g., bombing, active shooter, vehicle ramming, etc.). CISA also offers a [six-step fact sheet](#) to protect houses of worship by enhancing security against targeted violence. The Department of Homeland Security also provides information on [Safety for Faith-Based Events and Houses of Worship](#).

WELLNESS MINISTRIES FOCUS:



March through June is tree pollen season. This winter's mild weather is ushering in an early start to allergy season especially in Southern states. Trees that give off the most pollen include oak, birch, elm, birch, ash, hickory, poplar, sycamore, maple, cypress, walnut, catalpa, olive, western red cedar, box and mountain cedar, and pecan. Evergreen juniper, cedar, cypress, and sequoia trees are also likely to cause allergy symptoms. Pollen levels are highest in the morning.

A major source of increased pollen is [climate change](#) which is leading to longer growing seasons. The trees are releasing pollen for longer periods during the year and the pollen amounts released appear to be higher and stronger. Climate change is also causing increased carbon dioxide gas in the air, which stimulates trees to make more pollen.

Information Source: The [Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America](#) has information about Tree Pollen Allergy (Seasonal Allergic Rhinitis), ways to prevent exposure to pollen, and treatment approaches.

LINKS TO NATIONAL HEALTH-RELATED TOPICS:



Some Links For March:

[National Nutrition Month](#): This year's theme is "**Beyond the Table**," which addresses the farm-to-fork aspect of nutrition, from food production and distribution to navigating grocery stores and farmers markets — and even home food safety and storage practices. [Resources](#) include downloadable pdf files of tip sheets and activity handouts.

UCC One Great Hour of Sharing March 10, 2024.

[Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month](#). Bring attention to the lifesaving benefits of colorectal cancer screening.

For Those Who Like to Plan Ahead, Here Are Some links for April:

Earth Month and Earth Day (celebrated annually on April 22nd). UCC Creation Justice Ministries offers [Earth Sunday resources](#).

[Sexual Assault Awareness Prevention Month](#). Raise public awareness about sexual violence and educate communities on how to prevent it.

[National Donate Life Month](#): raise awareness about donation, encourage Americans to register as organ, eye and tissue donors and honor those that have saved lives through the gift of donation.

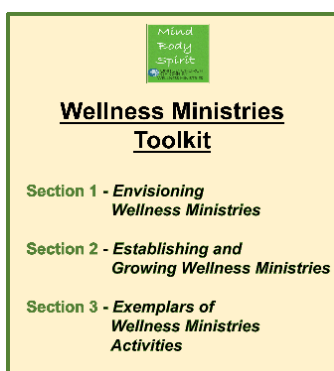
UCC WELLNESS MINISTRIES LEADERSHIP TEAM:

2024 UCC Wellness Ministries Focus:

At the February meeting, the Leadership Team defined its focus for 2024:

- In this time of transition and movement within the National Setting of the UCC, the UCC Wellness Ministries is exploring the role and function of the group within the larger context of health ministries affiliated with the United Church of Christ.
- What does wellness mean to us in the United Church of Christ?
- What are the opportunities we see to build a more integrated and influential wellness movement across the church?
- The next year will be used to invite conversation and generative listening with our colleagues and partners, such as UCC affiliated organizations, churches, leaders, youth, and other stakeholders. Our hope is to find areas of synergy and connection and to build a common agenda around health equity, justice, and wellness.

UCC Wellness Ministries Toolkit:



Registered users of our web-site based *UCC Wellness Ministries Toolkit* were invited to a networking meeting held via Zoom on Feb. 22nd. In the invitation they were asked to consider three questions: What material has assisted you and our colleagues in your ministry? What would you like to have added? What would you like to be different?

Attendees came from 9 different states with ministries ranging from serving multiple small churches to large city churches and two serving their UCC conferences. A major concern identified by the group is the experience of loneliness which is now labeled a public health issue. A wide variety of responsive activities were shared. We learned from each other ways to expand our personal ministries. Many, many notes were taken.

A request was made that UCC Wellness Ministries continue to offer this type of networking session. Consensus was that engaging in such discussions would augment the information currently shared in our monthly newsletter, the Toolkit, and direct contact with members of the Wellness Ministries Leadership Team. A sub-group of the Leadership Team will plan our next networking session. Volunteers are invited to collaborate with us on this. Contact peggymatteson@cox.net

GRANT OPPORTUNITY:

In 2024, Leadership Education at Duke Divinity School plans to award upwards of 30 [Reflective Leadership Grants](#), which provide Christian leaders “balcony time” to reflect on accomplishments, broaden perspectives and discern next steps. The grant welcomes applicants who serve in a range of leadership roles, from project director to senior administrator, and who are working in a variety of organizations, including denominations, seminaries, church-related colleges, consultancies, congregations, Christian nonprofits, Christian social enterprises and others. They are particularly interested in supporting leaders whose work contributes to healing and hope in their communities by strengthening congregations, social services, schools and other organizations.

Application opens: March 18, 2024. [Sign up](#) to be notified when the application is live.

Q&A session 1: March 25, 2024 (1:00 – 2:00 PM ET). [Register here.](#)

Q&A session 2 : April 22, 2024 (1:00 – 2:00 PM ET). [Register here.](#)

Q&A session 3: May 6, 2024 (1:00 – 2:00 PM ET). [Register here.](#)

Application deadline: May 28, 2024 at 11:59 PM ET

Award notification: July 29, 2024

WEB-BASED RESOURCES/PROGRAMS:

- [UCC Lent 2024 Resources](#)
- **Westberg Symposium:** The [2024 Symposium and Conference](#) will be virtual April 15-17, 2024.
- **The Health Ministries Association** is offering *The Cup of Our Life* as a book discussion for 2024. Virtual meetings are held every Tuesday from February 6th -March 26th at 7:00 – 8:15 p.m. ET. There is no cost for sessions & written materials. [Registration and book purchase information.](#)



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your health ministries; join 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**



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