



# MIND, BODY, SPIRIT

Linking Lives for Health and Wholeness



## UCC Wellness Ministries Newsletter

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### REFLECTION



**Self-Care is Not Selfish.** It is important to change the perception of self-care as selfish to understanding it as essential. Approaching our vocations as if they require us to always be readily available is not attentive to self-needs. Self-care means taking the time to do things that help you live well and improve both your physical health and mental health. We often don't realize the importance of rest and rejuvenation until it's too late. When we do not take the time for rest and self-care, an illness, mental distress, or a challenge in our personal lives may be what finally forces us to slow down, re-prioritize, and allocate time and energy for self-care. We should not wait for a crisis to develop a plan for self-care.

The World Health Organization defines self-care as the ability of individuals, families and communities to promote health, prevent disease, maintain health, and cope with illness and disability with or without the support of a health worker. It is interesting to note that this definition of self-care does not describe always acting alone to enhance our health. Sometimes it requires the assistance of others. Asking for help can be a self-care practice.

Self-care activities can range from physical activities such as exercising and eating healthy, to mental activities such as reading a book, solving a puzzle, or practicing mindfulness, to spiritual

or social activities such as worship and prayer, family gatherings, outdoor activities, or enjoying lunch with a friend. It can also mean setting healthy boundaries and limits on our scheduled time.

Airplane flight attendants instruct passengers to “put your oxygen mask on first” before helping others. This safety point can be applied to our self-care practices. Schedule time to breathe. Even just a few minutes of “me time” can help persons reboot. When we are rested and healthy, we have the energy and endurance to help others. One study found that choosing to be alone for even 15 minutes could lead to more relaxation and less stress. Jesus withdrew to solitary places to pray and recharge, so we too must carve out space for rest and reflection. The important thing to remember is that self-care looks different for everyone. It is important for each of us to discern our physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual needs; attend to what will bring rest, renewal, and enjoyment; and support the self-care of others.

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## TIMELY HEALTH TIP: SUMMER SAFETY



### **Excess Heat:**

Many areas of the country are currently experiencing extreme heat days. Extreme heat is a period of high heat and humidity with temperatures above 90 degrees for at least two to three days. Extreme heat is responsible for the highest number of annual deaths among all weather-related hazards. The United States Department of Agriculture's Nutrition section offers information on [water, hydration and health](#). The American Heart Association adds staying hydrated is important for [heart health](#). An educational poster can share information about [symptoms of dehydration](#). The CDC lists [Warning Signs and Symptoms of Heat-Related Illness](#). The American Academy of Pediatrics provides information for parents on Protecting Children from Extreme Heat and also information to [Prevent Child Deaths in Hot Cars](#). A special note about pets during extreme heat: The Humane Society of the United States offers [pet safety tips](#) and the ASPCA also offers [hot weather safety tips](#). The National Weather Service, together with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, recently launched an [online tool](#), NWS HeatRisk, that provides seven-day heat risk forecasts for wherever you are in the contiguous United States. The tool uses weather and health data to determine what temperatures could lead to risky conditions to human health, especially for people who don't have access to adequate cooling and hydration. It presents that risk as five categories arranged on a scale from 0 (green, which denotes little to no risk) to 4 (magenta, or extreme risk). The new tool shows a day's highest and lowest temperature, but also shows the level of heat risk. The tool allows you to put in your address and see a generated location-specific forecast.

### **Boating and Water Safety:**

This is the time of the summer when people are vacationing and enjoying recreational boating, jet skiing, and waterboarding on lakes and rivers. Life jackets save lives. The Red Cross offers

two [picture sets](#) that show how to use a life jacket and when and where to wear a life jacket. Choosing the right life jacket, knowing the “rules of the road” in water navigation, and performing equipment checks can all help to ensure safety. Summer recreation often includes swimming – at pools, lakes, rivers, and the ocean. Key to enjoying time in the water means also practicing [safe swimming tips](#). The American Academy of Pediatrics notes that the toddler years have a higher drowning risk than any other time. Drowning is the leading cause of injury death in children ages 1-4. Preventing unintended, unsupervised access to water is proven to be one of the most effective ways to reduce drowning deaths among young children. This guide offers [tips for children’s water safety](#).

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## WELLNESS MINISTRIES FOCUS



### **Abundant Grace.**

Gardens offer us a sacred glimpse of God’s creating love. Harvesting vegetables that have been watered, weeded, and tended reminds us that our relationships need nurturing in order for them to grow. There is also something very sacred about kitchens where food is prepared. In our busy, fast-paced world that often results in meals made from pre-packaged products, we need to remind ourselves to celebrate the sacred, life-giving activities of food gathering and preparation. A spiritual dimension is added to the nourishment we get from food when we take the time to prepare our meals from fresh foods. We are then connected to those who planted, tended, harvested, and delivered this food to us. When we incorporate spiritual customs in our meal-sharing times, we are brought closer to those joining us at the table.

One church, during the liturgical Ordinary Time of summer, planned a special harvest meal to follow the Sunday worship. On Saturday morning, a few parishioners went to the local farmer’s market and purchased boxes of ripe red tomatoes, cantaloupes, watermelons, okra, eggplant, cucumbers, green beans, sweet potatoes, potatoes, turnips, onions, greens, cabbages, fresh herbs, peaches, blueberries, and bushels of ears of corn. Two hours later dishes were taking shape in the church kitchen. A large bowl of red tomatoes, planned to be a table centerpiece, was as fanciful as a bowl of shiny Christmas ornaments. Large bowls of shredded cabbage were waiting to be made into coleslaw; thinly sliced cucumbers and purple onions anticipated their vinegar brine. Some adults gathered around the sink, peeling potatoes. Children were pulling off corn husks. Aromas arose from the ovens where casseroles of sweet potatoes and brown sugar, eggplant and tomatoes, and corn pudding were baking. Large soup pots simmered with varieties of vegetable soups. Fruit and vegetable salads were marinating and chilling in the refrigerator. The teams made light work of their assigned tasks. A special bond formed as everyone participated in all stages of this meal preparation.

On Sunday morning, during the worship service, the church was filled with wonderful scents – cinnamon, basil, oregano, garlic, and honey. The kitchen volunteers were busy reheating foods in the ovens and on stove tops. Others were preparing the buffet tables in the fellowship hall.

Parishioners had been invited to bring a neighbor, friend, or resident of the adjacent shelter to join the gathered congregation. At the end of the worship service, the tables were covered end-to-end with flavorful, nutritious foods. Members and visitors gathered at tables and broke bread together and reflected on the abundant life promised by Jesus. The shared meal echoed the church's invitation at the start of each Communion service, "Everyone is welcome at God's table". Left-overs were delivered to the town's food kitchen. The Ordinary Time of summer became "Extra-Ordinary". Who can you invite to share the feast?

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## NATIONAL HEALTH AWARENESS TOPICS



### FOR JULY:

**Juvenile Arthritis awareness month:** Juvenile Arthritis (JA) is an umbrella term that described the inflammatory and rheumatic diseases that develop in children under the age of 16. The 6 most common types of JA include juvenile idiopathic arthritis, juvenile myositis, juvenile lupus, juvenile scleroderma, vasculitis, and fibromyalgia. The [Arthritis Foundation](#) has resources on diagnosis, treatment, and self-care.

**Ultraviolet (UV) Safety Awareness Month:** The [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#) has named July as Ultraviolet (UV) Safety Month. Overexposure to UV rays can cause numerous health issues. In addition to the risk of skin cancer, UV rays can cause macular degeneration, cataracts, skin growths, and suppression of the immune system. Resources on sun safety:

- American Cancer Society offers [Be Safe in the Sun](#). It includes how to do a skin self-exam and a skin cancer image gallery.
- The Oncology Nursing Society has information on [UV Awareness and safety](#).
- FDA article about [medications causing photosensitivity](#) with sun exposure.
- FDA Tips to Stay Safe in the Sun: [From Sunscreen to Sunglasses](#).



### FOR AUGUST:

**[Children’s Eye Health and Safety Month](#)**: includes facts about vision and the eye, eye health and safety topics, and “Fun Stuff”.

**[National Immunization Awareness Month](#)**: (NIAM) Includes information for healthcare professionals and [featured resources for parents and patients](#). This topic is especially important after the shelter-in-place and stay-at-home orders during the early years of the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in decreased accessibility to routine immunization services. Routine vaccination coverage protects young children from vaccine-preventable diseases. The CDC’s website page, [Vaccines for your Children](#) offers information on vaccination schedules and 14 diseases prevented by vaccines. A not-for-profit organization, [Vaccinate Your Family](#), started in the 1970’s by Former First Lady Rosalynn Carter and Former First Lady of Arkansas Betty Bumpers, provides information on programs available to help people who can’t afford to pay for recommended vaccines for children, pregnant mothers, adults, and active military.

**[National Breastfeeding Month](#)**: The United States Breastfeeding Committee (USBC) is a coalition of [more than 130 organizations](#) that *work collaboratively to drive efforts for policy and practices that create a landscape of breastfeeding support for babies and families across the United States*. The 2024 theme is *Nourish, Sustain, Thrive*. Week One is [World Breastfeeding Week](#). Week Two is [Indigenous Milk Medicine Week](#), Week Three is [Asian American Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Breastfeeding Week](#), and Week Four is [Black Breastfeeding Week](#).

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## RESOURCES FOR YOUR WELLNESS MINISTRIES

### **Emergency Preparedness:**

Summer may bring weather emergencies such as severe thunderstorms, tornadoes, and hurricanes. Earthquakes and forest fires may necessitate home evacuations. Education can focus on preparedness before disasters occur and responses during and after an event. The American National Red Cross’s [Emergency Resource Library](#) has key points for preparedness and response for 23 types of emergencies and natural disasters. The UCC Insurance Board offers an informational sheet for faith communities on [Disaster Readiness: Tornadoes](#).

### **Mosquito Borne and Tick-Borne illnesses:**

[Mosquito-borne diseases](#) include Zika, dengue, West Nile, and Chikungunya virus. Tips to prevent mosquito bites from the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) include dressing in light-colored clothing, long pants, and long sleeves; avoiding areas where mosquitoes are present; and [taking other actions](#) such as removing sources of standing water to prevent breeding can also help. The EPA site also includes information on [types of repellents](#) to protect against mosquito-borne illnesses.

[Tick-borne diseases](#) are a significant public health problem. Increased time in the outdoors can result in exposure to ticks. The CDC offers [Tick Bite: What to Do](#), a pdf poster that illustrates how to remove a tick and what symptoms to watch for after removal. [Alpha-gal syndrome \(AGS\)](#) is a serious, potentially life-threatening allergic condition that can occur after a tick bite. Symptoms appear after people eat red meat or are exposed to other products containing alpha-gal.

Consumer Reports offers timely topics on [mosquito and tick preventive approaches](#) and awareness of symptoms.

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## UCC WELLNESS MINISTRIES LEADERSHIP TEAM UPDATE

### Renewed Discussion Within the UCC:

In 1985, at the 18th UCC General Synod, the delegates adopted *the Mission Statement on Health and Welfare*, which states in part that: "It is clear that the whole church is involved in this mission in health and welfare.... Good health is a part of God's intention for all people; health involves the whole person—body, mind, and spirit, and healing and health care are good ways of proclaiming the Gospel and ministering in the name of Jesus Christ...." In 1997, at the 21st UCC General Synod, the delegates adopted the Resolution *Reclaiming the Church's Ministry of Health and Healing*, which states in part that "health is harmony with oneself and others, the environment, and God—a continuum of physical, social, psychological, and spiritual well-being.

"The Wellness Ministries of the UCC National Setting and the Council for Health and Human Services Ministries (CHHSM) recognized the importance of collective wisdom and thought it was time to explore the current concepts of wellness. The Wellness Ministries Chair and a CHHSM representative invited the UCC ministries that promote aspects of health and wellness to a Zoom meeting on June 13th. The discussion was shaped by the question, "What does wellness mean to us in the United Church of Christ?" After several thoughtful minutes, a free-flowing conversation began that covered various topics centered around health and wellness within and beyond our congregations and communities.

All agreed that the potential outcomes of this discussion are significant. If the group developed a standard definition of wellness, knew more about each ministry's focus, and explored collaborative advocacy efforts, deeper connections could be built, and the ministries strengthened. These efforts would directly benefit those seeking the wellness they deserve. The group agreed to meet again and continue this helpful, generative process. We will share more information as this discussion progresses.



### **Visitation Handbook:**

A team of volunteers has developed a new resource, ***The UCC Wellness Ministries Pocket Handbook for Visitation***. It replaces the retired *Called to Care Pocket Handbook for Caregivers*. It provides selections of Scriptures, prayers, and blessings that can be used by those serving in visitation ministries. Visitors to homes, hospitals, and assisted living communities can use the prayers and scriptures as support for their visits. The Pocket Handbook is a helpful resource for in-person visits, card or texting notes, and on-line visits. The handbook will be available later this summer from the UCC Resources Store in two formats:



printed booklet and a PDF on a flash drive. Watch this newsletter and the UCC Wellness Ministries webpage for the announcement on ordering information. A sincere “Thank you” to the team of volunteers who worked on this tool.

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## WELLNESS MINISTRIES-RELATED WEBINARS AND CONFERENCES

**UCC Faith INFO** has selected two UCC Wellness Ministries sessions for presentation this Fall. Details about the webinars will be available in August. **Mark your calendars now!**

- **Thursday, Oct.10th - *Discover Wellness Ministries in Your Congregation***
- **Thursday, Oct. 17th – *Wellness Ministries Intergenerational Holiday Happenings***

**HMA conference:** *Awaken Your Heart: Be Empowered, Encouraged, and Energized* - Health Ministries Association 2024 Virtual Conference – Oct.16th, 17th, 23rd, & 24th.

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## KEEP CONNECTED & SUPPORTING ONE ANOTHER



We are a community of mutually supportive leaders for the many aspects of Wellness Ministries.

**Visit our Facebook and LinkedIn pages: Post comments or share information about your health ministries; join in conversations.**

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

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

**An invitation from the Editors:** 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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