



MIND, BODY, SPIRIT

Linking Lives for Health and Wholeness

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UCC Wellness Ministries Newsletter

August 2024, Volume 9, Issue 8

REFLECTION



The Blessing of Recreation

During the summer months, we are grateful for the extended hours of daylight that enable us to enjoy more time outdoors. Some of us take walks, and others pursue more vigorous activities on land, in or on the water, or even in the sky. These choices move our bodies, engage our senses, and can foster a sense of community.

In many minds, the word *recreation* has become synonymous with participation in a sporting activity. However, according to Merriam-Webster, the word's etymology supports that its meaning is relevant to self-care and renewal to serve our purpose. Since the 15th

century, the English definition of recreation has been a *refreshment of strength and spirits after work*.

During August, may we appreciate the blessings of recreation in whatever form we choose as we renew our strength and spirits in preparation for the busy restart of many church activities this fall.

Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Recreation. In [Merriam-Webster.com dictionary](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/recreation).

Retrieved July 26, 2024, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/recreation>

TIMELY HEALTH TIP



Preparing a Fellowship Hour That Serves All

A survey of congregants avoiding coffee hours after worship led to some interesting findings. They couldn't partake of the food being offered and were tired of explaining why they were refusing this delicious pastry, or they were fearful that a child would follow the erroneous advice of an adult, "One won't hurt you."

Imagine starting every meal, every snack, and every little hunger-driven nibble, wondering if one bite of the food being offered might hurt or kill you. That is a daily reality for a growing number of people. Sugar, nuts, wheat, and milk are four common ingredients in treats offered at coffee hour. Would you feel welcome and comfortable participating if you or a family member had an invisible disorder such as:

- [Diabetes](#) - a disease that occurs when blood glucose (blood sugar) is too high. Glucose is present in foods that we eat. Diabetes is the 8th leading cause of death in the U.S.
- [Peanut and Tree nut allergies](#)— when the body's immune system overreacts after eating or exposure to the proteins found in peanuts or tree nuts. Symptoms from touching or eating can range from mild to life-threatening.

- [Gluten intolerance](#)- due to wheat hypersensitivity, wheat allergy, celiac disease
- [Lactose intolerance](#) – a lactose deficiency makes the person unable to digest milk and milk products.

Coffee hours and other food-related activities are more welcoming and safer after those with these dietary restrictions are invited to participate in the planning process. A wider variety of options became available. Small signs may be placed next to dishes identifying if one or more of the most common food allergens, milk, eggs, fish, shellfish, tree nuts, peanuts, wheat, soybeans, or sesame, are in the dish, cookie, cake, or pie. The desire for all to be welcome to fellowship together became a reality.

WELLNESS MINISTRIES FOCUS

There is hope.



September is National Suicide Prevention Month

Suicide is one of the leading causes of death in the U.S., with [1 person dying every 11 minutes](#). September is National Suicide Prevention Month – a month to remember the lives lost to suicide, the millions of people who have struggled with suicidal ideation, and acknowledge the individuals, families, and communities that have been impacted.

We can raise awareness about the signs of distress, offer hope, and save lives within our congregations and communities. An exemplar in Section 3 of the [UCC Wellness Ministries Toolkit](#) describes an Association's youth group event with speakers from the local [National Alliance on Mental Illness](#) (NAMI). During an interactive program, they explained their mental health challenges and the risk factors and warning signs when someone is considering suicide. This knowledge thankfully enabled one of the attendees to intervene appropriately and save a friend's life twenty-four hours later.

Resources are available:

- The [UCC Mental Health Network](#) provides a variety of resources and links.

- Educate yourself and others about suicide prevention: Learn the [warning signs](#) and [risk factors](#) for suicide, how to [support](#) someone considering suicide, and familiarize yourself with the [988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline](#).
- The [2024 National Strategy for Suicide Prevention](#) identifies ways to get involved in Suicide Prevention Awareness Month and the national strategy for the next ten years.
- [Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention for LGBTQIA2S+ Youth: A Resource Guide for Professionals, Families and Communities](#).
- [HOPE: A Guide for Faith Leaders on Youth Suicide Prevention \(PDF | 15 MB\)](#).

Order 988 materials now so you will have them for September activities:

- [988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline](#) – 988 is a universal entry point to reach a caring, trained counselor who can help people experiencing mental health, substance use, and suicidal distress. Various signs, magnets, wallet cards, posters, yard signs, etc., are free.
- SAMHSA [Safety Plan pad](#)—similar to a prescription pad—is helpful when an individual is exploring with a therapist, clinician, or other supportive person the resources they have to stay safe. They then take the completed small one-page document as a personal reminder of their choices and resources.
- [988 Partner Toolkit](#)—Offers resources for social media, video, print, FAQs, messaging, and other marketing materials that promote the 988 emergency phone number designed for states, territories, tribes, crisis centers, communities, emergency service providers, and other partners.

UCC RESOURCES FOR OUR WELLNESS MINISTRIES



New! UCC Wellness Ministries Handbook for Visitation

Are you visiting a person or writing a note on behalf of the church?

Aren't sure what to do or say to this person?

This handbook furnishes information to guide you for each encounter and provides scripture passages, prayers, and blessings you can easily use. It replaces the now-retired *Called to Care Pocket Handbook for Caregivers*.

The Handbook will be available as a hard copy and a PDF download from the [UCC Resources Store](#) by early fall.

New! Wellness Ministries' Volunteer Orientation Series offers interactive trainer-the-trainer sessions that will begin to prepare effective volunteers.

Tuesdays, September 3rd through October 7th at 6:30 – 8:00 pm ET

- All materials will be made available free of charge.
- Certificates of completion will be awarded at the end of the series.

Interested? Don't miss this opportunity. [Register as soon as possible.](#)

We will limit the group size to ensure the best learning experience and that each attendee receives the full benefit of personalized interactions and group discussions.

Have questions? Email WellnessMinistries@UCC.org or UCCWellnessMinistriesChair@gmail.com/

New! Nurture the Soul, Faith INFO Webinars

- *Discover Wellness Ministries in your Congregation*

Thursday, October. 10th, 3:30 to 4:30 PM Eastern Time

- Wellness Ministries Intergenerational Holiday Happenings

Thursday, October. 17th, 3:30 to 4:30 PM Eastern Time

UCC WELLNESS MINISTRIES LEADERSHIP TEAM UPDATES

- [UCC Wellness Ministries has a new Facebook page](#) – [Debbie Ringon](#) has set up and is actively adding beneficial information to our [UCC Wellness Ministries Facebook page](#). Thank you, Debbie! Share your ideas with Deb through WellnessMinistries@UCC.org



- A new YouTube presentation, [2024 UCC Wellness Ministries Overview](#), has been developed by [Alyson Breisch](#). It is a valuable tool for introducing this ministry to individuals and congregations exploring it. Aly has a second presentation, *UCC Wellness Resources*, that will be posted later this month. Thank you, Aly!
- [UCC Wellness Ministries Handbook for Visitation](#) – Thank you to the following people for the prayers, support, and time spent re-developing this resource. [Becky Anton](#), Minister, Northern California Nevada Conference; [Rev. Deborah Ball](#), Hawaii Conference; [Alyson Breisch](#), Minister, Southern Conference; [Rev. Joann Conroy](#), Minnesota Conference; [Linda Morgan](#), FCN, Illinois Conference; [Rev. Karen MacDonald](#), Southwest Conference; [Peggy Matteson](#), Minister, Southern New England Conference, and [Rev. Cheryl Lindsay](#), UCC staff, Minister for Worship and Theology, Faith Education, Innovation, and Formation (Faith INFO) who served as a consultant.
- Planning has started to create Wellness Ministry podcasts. Each Wellness Ministry is unique because it is based on the desires of the congregation and the community it serves. Would you and your Team like to share your Wellness ministry program with others? Please give it some thought. If you have questions, please contact the Chair through WellnessMinistries@ucc.org.
- Our next monthly meeting is [Thursday, August 8th, 1:45 – 3:00 pm ET](#). We invite you to share your God-given gifts and join with colleagues from across the UCC as we develop ways to assist wellness ministers as they advise, support, and advocate for members of their congregations and communities. To learn more, contact Peggy Matteson, [Chair, UCC Wellness Ministries](#).

LINKS TO NATIONAL HEALTH-RELATED TOPICS



- [Psoriatic Arthritis Month](#) - Psoriatic arthritis is a progressive inflammatory condition of the joints and the places where tendons and ligaments attach to bones. There is no cure for psoriatic arthritis, but thanks to a better understanding of the disease, treatments can slow its progression, lessen pain, and protect the joints.
- [National Breastfeeding Month](#) – Do breastfeeding mothers feel welcome at worship and other church functions? The 2024 National Breastfeeding Month theme, Nourish, Sustain, Thrive, highlights why protecting, promoting, and supporting lactation when it is the mother’s choice is so important. When families know they are welcome and supported in caring for their infant's needs, no matter how they nourish them, they are more at ease within a welcoming church family. One church met the desires of parents with infants to be in church by placing rocking chairs at the back of the sanctuary. This helped keep fussy babies happier. A side benefit was that a parenting peer support group was developed.



- [Childhood Obesity Awareness Month](#) - [Help Your Child Stay at a Healthy Weight](#) with healthy food choices and being more physically active, a great combination that supports family time.
 - [Facts to take to heart for National Cholesterol Education Month](#) – explains the good and bad sides of cholesterol and how to manage them. [Cholesterol Communication Toolkit](#) – provides media messages and graphics to educate the public about cholesterol management.
 - [Recovery Month](#) site provides and supports new evidence-based treatment and recovery practices. SAMHSA offers a toolkit because recovery is possible with the proper treatment, support, and resources. Additional resources are available from [UCC Harm Reduction and Overdose Prevention Ministries](#).
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WELLNESS MINISTRIES RELATED INFORMATION



- A [Summer Bucket List helps a church address the loneliness epidemic](#). Ava Bilton, Director of Congregational Life, First Congregational Church, Burlington, VT, addressed loneliness by promoting church activities and building community with a *Summer is Better Together – Call a friend and check off your bucket list*. The document she created is available in this article.

- [Church is a safe space](#) – A study by faith community (FCN) Veronica Gallo, PhD, MSN, highlights how FCNs can be critical to the mental health of people who attend houses of worship. As insiders, they have earned congregants’ trust and understand their health needs within the context of the faith community.
- [I love this work, but it's killing me](#): The unique toll of being a spiritual leader today can be immense, including burnout, trauma, and health challenges, yet it often goes unacknowledged.
- [The Best Ways to Reuse \(or Discard\) Old Pill Bottles](#). 90% of the 200 billion plastic pill bottles manufactured every year end up in landfills, contributing to plastic pollution
- [The Healing Power of Reminiscing](#) explains why looking back on happy moments of our lives can make us feel more connected, confident, and hopeful.
- [Talking to God When You're Seriously Sick](#) - a booklet written by two pastors, Elizabeth Felicetti and Samantha Vincent-Alexander. When faced with their severe illnesses, they wrote a series of prayers that moved beyond generic platitudes.
- [Faith & Leadership](#) is a free monthly resource provided by Leadership Education at Duke Divinity for Christian leaders and their institutions.

Education and Networking Opportunities

- [The Insurance Board](#) provides free educational videos. *Building a Culture of Protection in Your Ministry* is helpful to our ministry.
- *Awaken Your Heart: Be Empowered, Encouraged, and Energized*—Health Ministries Association 2024 Virtual Conference—Oct. 16th, 17th, 23rd, and 24th—More details at [Health Ministries Asso.](#)

KEEP CONNECTED & SUPPORTING ONE ANOTHER

- We are a community of mutually supportive leaders of all Wellness Ministries.
- Debbie Ringen has been working to update our social media connections. Please tell her what you would like to share by e-mailing wellnessministries@ucc.org



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