

Mind, Body, Spirit:
Linking Lives for Health and Wholeness
UCC Wellness Ministries Newsletter
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REFLECTION

Be Grateful.



Gratitude is defined as the quality of being thankful; a readiness to show appreciation for and to return kindness. Gratitude is about focusing on what's good in our lives and being thankful for the things we have. Gratitude is pausing to notice and appreciate the things that we often take for granted, like having a safe place to live, food, clean water, friends, and family. Gratitude is good for physical and emotional health. Gratitude aids relaxation and increases optimism and self-esteem. It can improve relationships and encourage kindness. You may sleep better and longer by spending just 15 minutes jotting down a few grateful sentiments before bedtime.

As we gather together on Thanksgiving Day with families and friends, we will pause and give thanks for our many blessings. A children's ministry activity for this month is to create and decorate a gratitude jar. After the gratitude jar is made and taken home, each family member writes down a daily note on a piece of paper naming something they are grateful for and placing it in the jar. [Creating the gratitude jar](#) can be a family project. One suggestion is for each family member to use different colored paper to write their notes for a family jar. Notes are collected in the jar until Thanksgiving to give time for collecting examples. On Thanksgiving, family members pull out the slips of paper and share them by reading them aloud.

We are invited to extend gratitude by practicing gratitude rituals on awakening, before meals, at the end of each day. We can show appreciation to someone who did a kindness, tell people in our lives what they mean to us. We can cultivate a perspective where the beauty and wonder in the smallest of things brings a sense of gratitude.

TIMELY HEALTH TOPICS

2024 Election:



This newsletter is arriving in your email just a few days before our country's national election day. Early voting is well underway. Here are several UCC resources related to this voting season:



United Church of Christ Nurture the Soul Webinar October 31st 3:30 pm eastern time: [Don't Be Scared, Be Prepared! What to Expect in the 2024 November Election](#). This webinar will be available for viewing after its posted date.

[**Having Faithful and Respectful Discussions - Tips for being a civil voice in uncivil times**](#)

[**Making this election accessible to all**](#)

UCC [**Our Faith Our Vote**](#) Events and Resources.

As voting results become evident, may every citizen seek opportunities to support community building, promote justice, and offer healing across the country.

Hurricanes 2024 Relief Efforts:

Hurricane Helene made landfall in Florida on September 26th and then moved into Georgia, western South Carolina, western North Carolina, and eastern Tennessee bringing high winds and severe flooding. Hurricane Milton landed on Florida's west coast On October 9th, resulting in several communities being devastated by tornados and flooding and without power. Several UCC churches throughout these affected regions of the Southeast, Southern, and Florida Conferences of the UCC have suffered extensive damage to their church buildings and surrounding communities. The Global HOPE team in United Church of Christ Love of Neighbor unit offers this [**Hurricane Helene Recovery Appeal**](#) to support communities as they recover from these disasters.

WELLNESS MINISTRIES FOCUS

Two wellness ministries programs you might consider doing this month:



A Church Family Thanksgiving Dinner: For some people, “Where are you going for Thanksgiving?” is a hard question to answer. A variety of reasons prevent some from participating in a picturesque family gathering. Read this [Wellness Ministries Toolkit Exemplar](#) to see how one church sponsored a Thanksgiving dinner with the turkey provided. Attendees were invited to sign-up and identify what they would bring to the celebration and share a recipe card that listed the ingredients.



Advent Wreath Making Workshop:

This is a timely workshop, while focused on the children of the church, it is also a multigenerational activity. The workshop invites families to have their own Advent wreath and share weekly prayers in their homes.

You can view the discussion of both of these activities on the [Nurture for the Soul October 17th YouTube webinar](#).

NATIONAL HEALTH AWARENESS TOPICS

For November:

- **National Diabetes Month.** The American Diabetes Association has a range of categories related to Diabetes – [Life with Diabetes](#), [Health and Wellness](#), [Food and Nutrition](#), [Advocacy](#), and [Tools and Resources](#).

- **Alzheimer's Awareness Month** - Worldwide, 50 million people are living with Alzheimer's and other dementias. The Alzheimer's Foundation of America [Alzheimer's and Dementia Facts and Tips and Resources](#) for Caregivers. The Alzheimer's Association offers [Time to Talk](#) resources on having discussions about Alzheimer's or other dementia with loved ones and healthcare providers. A [recent health news article](#) drew attention to the projection that **at least 4.3 million people 55 or older who have cognitive impairment or dementia live alone in the United States**. Elizabeth Gould, co-director of the National Alzheimer's and Dementia Resource Center at RTI International, a nonprofit research institute said: "If health care providers would just ask 'Who do you live with?'" she said, "that could open the door to identifying who might need more help."
- **Family Caregivers Month** - There are over 60 million Americans who are unpaid caregivers to family, friends, and neighbors. The Caregiver Action Network (CAN) offers a [Family Caregiver Toolkit](#). One in five caregivers help someone with mental illness. Mental Health America provides a [Crisis Planning Worksheet](#) that covers the majority of questions to be considered in preparation for completing legal Psychiatric Advance Directives (PADs). The CDC provides links for Federal, State, and Local resources and how to [Get Paid as a Caregiver for a Family Member](#).
- **National Hospice and Palliative Care Month** – This month is a time to include programs and activities to raise awareness, recognize, and support [hospice and palliative care](#). Family gatherings at Thanksgiving (even if virtual) are a good time to incorporate family discussions on [Advance Directives](#) and End-of-Life wishes. It is good to review and update your Living Will and Advanced Directive when major life events occurs such as retirement, moving out of state, or a significant change in health.

For December:

- **World AIDS Day** – December 1. World AIDS day is an opportunity for people worldwide to unite in the fight against HIV, to show support for people living with HIV, and to commemorate those who have died from an AIDS-related illness. It is a day to re-commit to ending the AIDS epidemic. Founded in 1988, World AIDS Day was the first ever global health day. The 2024 theme is "Collective Action: Sustain and Accelerate HIV Progress." The HIV.gov website of the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services shares [U.S. Statistics and Fast Facts](#).

RESOURCES FOR YOUR WELLNESS MINISTRIES



- **Dementia Friendly Congregations:**

November is Alzheimer's Disease Awareness Month. People with dementia are often happier if they can live independently in their own homes as long as possible. The organization, Dementia Friendly USA, has a wide range of [helpful resources](#) for caregivers and caregiving, and a separate section for Faith Communities. A [Dementia Friendly Faith Community](#) (DFFC) seeks to foster spiritual connection and meaningful engagement for those living with dementia, together with supporting their families and caregivers. The UCC Boxborough congregation in Boxborough, Massachusetts became a [Dementia Friendly Church](#).

If your faith community is considering a focus of dementia and support for families living with Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia, start by forming a small group to examine options and resources and prayerfully consider ministry opportunities. Develop a ministry of connection that explores best practices to welcome, embrace, and support individuals with dementia and their caregivers. Make a special effort to invite individuals and families coping with dementia to participate in congregational events, such as church programs, concerts, plays, preschool programs. During worship services, wear name tags, greet persons warmly and offer a volunteer companion for a member with dementia when extra support is needed. Provide a quiet area where the person may go during the service as needed. Check with your state Department of Health and Human Services Aging and Adult Services agencies for local resources.



- **NEW RESOURCE! 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 say to this person? This handbook furnishes information to guide you in each encounter and provides scripture passages, prayers, and blessings you can easily use. This handbook is now available through the [UCC Resources](#).
- The holiday seasons in November and December often involve groups of people gathering to share meals. Food preparation and food safety are important topics when considering education for volunteers involved in preparing, cooking, and storing left-over food. The USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service offers [A Volunteer's Guide to Food Safety](#) and [tips for Food Safety with Leftovers](#). Remember to label and separate foods that contain or may contain allergens. Use clear and visible signs, stickers, or cards that indicate the name and ingredients of each dish. Use different areas for preparation and use separate utensils, containers, trays, or tables for serving.

UCC WELLNESS MINISTRIES LEADERSHIP TEAM UPDATE

Nurture the Soul, Faith INFO Webinars: Alyson Breisch and Peggy Matteson of the UCC Wellness Ministries Leadership Team presented two UCC Nurture the Soul webinars on October 10th and 17th. The first webinar discussed *Wellness Ministries in Local Congregations* and the second one shared *Three intergenerational Holiday Happenings* (these examples are timely for activities during the next two months). Participants shared examples from their congregations and comments were positive. Both webinars are now posted as [YouTube videos](#) available for viewing.

Our next Leadership Team monthly meeting is **Thursday, November 7th, 2:00 – 3:30 pm ET**. We invite you to join in conversation with colleagues from across the UCC. To learn more, contact uccwellnessministrieschair@gmail.com

KEEP CONNECTED & SUPPORTING ONE ANOTHER



We are a community of mutually supportive leaders for the many aspects of Wellness Ministries. Visit our [Instagram](#) and [UCC Wellness Ministries Facebook](#) pages. Post comments or share information about your health ministries; join in conversations.

An invitation from the Editors: Have a question about health and wellness ministries? Do you have an innovative way you've provided wellness ministries? Let us hear from you. Contact us at wellnessministries@ucc.org

