

WELLNESS MINISTRIES - Linking Lives for Health and Wholeness

MIND, BODY, SPIRIT NEWSLETTER

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Spiritual, Mental, and Physical Wellness are Justice Issues

- [Reflection – Resisting Numbness with a Smile](#)
- [Wellness Ministries Focus – Just Eating – Practicing our Faith at the Table](#)
- [A Shared Article from a Colleague – Micro-resolutions for the New Year](#)
- [Links to National Health and Wellness Educational Materials – Plan ahead for March](#)
- [Items of Interest on the UCC Calendar – February](#)
- [Update From The Wellness Ministries Leadership Team –](#)
- [Connecting and Supporting One Another – Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn](#)

REFLECTION – Resisting Numbness With A Smile

A merry heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones. Proverbs 17:22

In the *WFJ - Witness for Justice* weekly commentary from December 25, 2025, Hannah Santos highlighted the importance of resisting the temptation to become numb during these tough times. She reminds us that "Each step we take to stay engaged and resist numbness is a step closer to our vision of a just world for all."

Is there a simple, science-based action you can do each morning and throughout the day to help fight feelings of numbness? Yes, there is!

Medical research shows that smiling [benefits](#) your mental and physical health by releasing endorphins and neurotransmitters like dopamine and serotonin, which help you feel good. Even smiling when you don't feel like it offers benefits for your physical and mental health.

When getting ready in the morning or in a restroom during the day, take a moment to give yourself a big grin in the mirror. This can lift your mood in just a few seconds. Throughout the day, intentionally smiling at others will bring joy to both you and those you smile at.

Carol King reminds us in the song "Beautiful" from her *Tapestry* album that
*"You've got to get up every morning with a smile on your face
and show the world all the love in your heart..."*

May the simple act of smiling offer both you and those you meet the opportunity to resist numbness and to continue striving towards our shared hope for a just world. Shalom.

WELLNESS MINISTRIES FOCUS – Just Eating? Practicing our Faith at the Table

Just Eating? While this phrase could simply mean eating, the word 'just' also conveys honesty and fairness in one's dealings. This wordplay highlights a paradox that this curriculum explores. Eating can be a routine activity done without much thought or reflection, or it can serve as a moment to intentionally live out our faith and practice justice.

What does it mean to practice our faith at the table? The Just Eating? curriculum will help you better understand the link between our Christian heritage and our food. Using Jesus' story and Christian rituals, this curriculum explores four ways we relate to food:

- the health of our bodies
- the access others have to food
- the health of the earth, which our food choices impact
- the ways we use food to extend hospitality and enrich relationships.

Practicing Our Faith at the Table seeks to apply our Christian faith in wholistic and healthy ways. We all spend a lot of time eating or preparing to eat, and the habits we develop reflect our values and influence our lives. May God bless you as you explore Just Eating?, and may your life be enriched.

Visit [Presbyterian Church \(USA\) Just Eating Materials](#) to download free materials that have been recently updated.

- Adult Leader's Guide in English - <https://pcusa.org/resource/just-eating-leaders-guide>
- Adult Participant Book in English - <https://pcusa.org/resource/just-eating-participants-book>
- Middle School Version in English - <https://pcusa.org/resource/just-eating-middle-school-curriculum>
- African American Congregation Adaption – Leader's Guide - <https://pcusa.org/resource/just-eating-leaders-guide-african-american-congregation-adaptation>
- African American Congregation Adaption – Participant Book - <https://pcusa.org/resource/just-eating-leaders-guide-african-american-congregation-adaptation>
- Adult Leader's Guide in Spanish - <https://pcusa.org/resource/alimentandose-justamente-guia-del-lider/>
- Participant's Manual in Spanish - <https://pcusa.org/es/resource/alimentandose-justamente-lecturas-para-la-reflexion-y-la-accion/>
- Middle School Version in Spanish - <https://pcusa.org/resource/alimentandose-justamente-version-juvenil/>

To purchase copies of the *Just Eating* curriculum, call Presbyterian Distribution Service at (800) 524-2612.

A Shared Article from a Colleague – Micro-Resolutions for the New Year

Micro-Resolutions for the New Year - Written and shared by Alyson Breisch, Southern Conference Minister for Health and Wellness

The beginning of a new year is often the time we make resolutions. We make plans to change unhealthy habits in an effort to increase our health and well-being. Setting challenging goals can be hard to achieve and difficult to maintain over time. A recent article covers 6 ways to establish small, repeatable daily habits – “micro resolutions” - that can improve blood sugar, heart health, and energy.

The 6 micro-resolution habits:

1. Load up on protein at breakfast
2. Go for a 10-minute walk within 30 minutes after meals
3. Practice belly-breathing
4. Take a 5-Minute Movement ‘Snack’ Every Hour

5. Eat Your Veggies First
6. Learn to Ground Yourself When You're Stressed. Use the 5-4-3-2-1 grounding exercise.

These brief movements, exercises, and daily patterns help reduce stress, boost mood, have positive effects, and support overall physical health. I invite you to click and [review the article](#) for the details for each of the 6 micro-resolutions. See if you can incorporate them into your daily habits. Here's to your health and well-being in the new year!

LINKS TO NATIONAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS – Plan Ahead for March

- **Healthy Nutrition Month** – The most easily understood, nutritionally sound, science-based recommendations on food selections are best shared using the [Healthy Eating Plate](#). Translations are available in over 25 languages.
The [Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics](#) offers information on nutrition and health, from meal planning and preparation to choices that can help prevent or manage health conditions. Specifics related to information you might want to share from their website, including [National Nutrition Month](#)®, including the use of trademark and copyright information is clearly explained.
- **National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month** - [Colorectal cancer](#) is the third most common cancer diagnosed in the U.S. The American Cancer Society's estimates for the number of colorectal cancers in the U.S. for 2026 are: About 108,860 new cases of colon cancer and about 49,990 new cases of rectal cancer. Colorectal cancer is highly preventable with screening and highly treatable when caught early. [The Colorectal Cancer Alliance](#) offers free brochures. Their “[Dress in Blue Day](#)” to increase colorectal cancer awareness is on March 6th this year.
- **National Deep Vein Thrombosis Awareness Month** – Each year, blood clots affect an estimated 900,000 people in the U.S., leading to about 100,000 deaths. This public health initiative by the [American Heart Association](#) raises awareness of this medical condition, which can lead to a pulmonary embolism, a potentially fatal condition. The [National Blood Clot Alliance](#) provides information on prevention, early recognition, and effective treatment that can save lives.
- **Sleep Awareness Month** – Every year, [The National Sleep Foundation](#) takes this time to reemphasize the important connections between sleep and both physical and mental health. This month includes March 8-14th, when daylight saving time begins, and we lose an hour of sleep. Information is provided on free-to-download graphics and articles on how to [improve your sleep](#).

ITEM OF INTEREST ON THE UCC CALENDAR - February

- Feb. 8th – Racial Justice Sunday - [UCC Racial Justice Ministries](#)
- Feb. 15th – Science and Technology Sunday - [UCC Science and Technology Network](#)
- Feb 18th – Ash Wednesday - [Information from past Ash Wednesdays](#)
- Feb 22nd – Seminary Sunday/Church Vocations Sunday - [Seminary Sunday](#)

UPDATE FROM THE UCC WELLNESS MINISTRIES LEADERSHIP TEAM – The Leadership Team is in the process of setting goals for the next 12 months. Guiding our thoughts are:

- The reality that Wellness is a Justice issue.
- The Wellness Ministries' mission statement: *...to inspire, enable, and empower everyone to experience wellness as they live their lives*, and

- The relevant areas of the eight “Marks of Faithful and Vital Local Church” in the 2025 *Manual on Local Church*.

We are looking for your input, and we know you have thoughts. Please share them as soon as possible.
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CONNECTING AND SUPPORTING ONE ANOTHER - Our Circle of Colleagues Grows

Ministry is often lonely work. You have a network of colleagues who will support you and your ministry. Connect with us on:

- Facebook - [Wellness Ministries UCC](#)
- Instagram - [wellness.ministries.ucc](https://www.instagram.com/wellness.ministries.ucc)
- Linked-In – [Wellness Ministries UCC](#)

Please send information to post or questions to Debbie Ringen, MS, FCN, wellnessministries@ucc.org

The United Church of Christ has more than 5,000 churches throughout the United States.

*Rooted in the Christian traditions of congregational governance and covenantal relationships,
each UCC setting speaks only for itself and not on behalf of every UCC congregation.*

*UCC members and churches are free to differ on important social issues,
even as the UCC remains principally committed to unity in the midst of our diversity.*