

## WELLNESS MINISTRIES - Linking Lives for Health and Wholeness

### **MIND, BODY, SPIRIT NEWSLETTER**

May 2026, Volume 12, Issue 5

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#### **REFLECTION – I'll Be There.**

*When two or three of you are together because of me, you can be sure that I'll be there*

The Message 18:20

The Wellness Ministries Leadership Team is offering a space and time to gather. We will hold the first quarterly gathering on May 11th from 6:30 to 7:30. Each gathering will include a discussion of a timely topic and time to raise ideas and issues. A resource list will be sent to attendees after each gathering. The group that gathers in May will share ideas for our next gathering on the second Monday in August.

#### **Wellness Ministries Affinity Group ZOOM Meeting**

May 11<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 pm ET

#### **Topic: Fostering Kindness through Wellness Ministries**

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://UCC.zoom.us/j/88630894815?pwd=BLQbUbUzqvOGR7SiELb7JTOfFn6C5K.1>

Meeting ID: 886 3089 4815

Passcode: 524665

One tap mobile

+13126266799,,88630894815# US (Chicago)

+16468769923,,88630894815# US (New York)

Join by SIP

\* [88630894815@zoomcrc.com](mailto:88630894815@zoomcrc.com)

#### **WELLNESS MINISTRIES FOCUS – May is Mental Health Month**

What can my church do?

Why is it important for my church to become W.I.S.E. (welcoming, inclusive, supportive, and engaged) for mental health?

People with mental health challenges are not others; they are in the pews, pulpits, schools, homes, community centers, and businesses in every community. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), more than 1 in 5 US adults and 1 in 7 youth ages 6–17 experience a mental health concern in a given year. Young adults aged 18-25 and LGBTQ+ youth are particularly at risk. Suicide is the second-leading cause of death among 10–24-year-olds each year.

Jesus teaches loving kindness and care for the sick and vulnerable. Still, people are reluctant to share their mental health struggles due to fear, stigma, and shame. The UCC Mental Health Network's guide to becoming W.I.S.E. helps congregations educate, advocate, and normalize conversations about mental health.

When stigma is eliminated, people with mental health experiences no longer have to hide, and congregations become supportive and caring for all people. Everyone will feel included, regardless of self-reported emotional or neurodiverse symptoms, experiences, and diagnoses.

A friend who lives with bipolar disorder worked with his congregation to become W.I.S.E. He states, "The solution to combat stigma is simple. Have more uncomfortable, educated conversations about mental health challenges to help make future conversations more normalized and comfortable."

Shared by Deborah Ringen, MS, RNC, Faith Community Nurse, Member Wellness Ministries Leadership Team, and Board member of Mental Health Network

### **ITEM OF INTEREST ON THE UCC CALENDAR – May**

**May 17<sup>th</sup> – Mental Health Sunday** – Mental Health Sunday is recognized within the UCC on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of May, or any other Sunday a church chooses. Identifying a Mental Health Sunday is a way for your congregation to begin or continue providing education and support to your members on mental health and wellness. [Worship Resources](#) are available from the UCC Mental Health Network. Other [Resources](#) are also available.

### **AN IDEA SHARED BY A WELLNESS MINISTRY COLLEAGUE – Making America Kind**

Kindness can change lives, strengthen communities, and rebuild trust. On Friday, April 24th, a national kindness challenge launched. The United Church of Christ has joined others who believe in the power of kindness and is committed to acting on that belief to create a more connected, compassionate country through everyday acts of kindness.

UCC Wellness Ministries joined the campaign because [science shows a simple act of kindness benefits the health of both the giver and the receiver](#). UCC churches nationwide are also accepting the challenge.

In February 2025, a UCC church recognized the need to encourage kindness both within and beyond its walls. The Wellness Minister found a website featuring [Make America Kind](#) pins. It suggested that individuals “wear one and share one.”

This became a mission outreach. 100 pins were ordered and displayed around the building. They were available to anyone entering the building, with the understanding that they take two, 1 to wear and 1 to give away, when someone comments on their button. Stories have been shared about people commenting on the pins and sometimes expressing gratitude, even in tears, when one is given to them. 16 months into this ministry, people continue to wear a pin and now keep 3 or 4 extras in the car to share throughout the week.

This congregation of about 35 in worship on any given Sunday has now distributed almost 500 pins within their community. Community members have been heard referring to the church as the “kindness church.”

We will never know the impact this has had on individuals as the message of kindness has been shared. What we do know is the positive effect it has had on the congregation and on the groups that enter our facilities. Do you have an idea to share? E-mail [WellnessMinistries@UCC.org](mailto:WellnessMinistries@UCC.org)

## **TIMELY RESOURCES – Books for Children and Adults**

### **Kindness**

- [A World of Kindness](#) (ages 3-6),
- [Deep Kindness](#) by Houston Kraft. A revolutionary Guide for the Way We Think, Talk, and Act in Kindness.
- [Kindness is my Super Power](#) by Alicia Ortega (ages 3-6) A children’s book about empathy, kindness, and compassion.
- [Kindness Makes Us Strong](#) by Sophie Beer. This pre-school read-aloud shows the way kindness helps build friendship and community.
- [Simple Acts of Kindness](#) by Peggy Healy Stearns, Ph. D. 159 easy ways to bring a smile, give comfort, share joy, and inspire a kinder world.
- [The Power of Kindness: The Unexpected Benefits of Leading a Compassionate Life](#) by Piero Ferrucci and Dalai Lama. When The Power of Kindness first appeared in 2006 it thrilled and challenged readers with one audacious promise: Your acts of generosity and decency are the secret to a fuller, more satisfying life. Kindness is not some squishy virtue but the very key to your own happiness.

### **A sampling of LGBTQ+ books for children or adults**

- [Love makes a family](#) by Sophie Beer (3-year-old). Whether you have two mums, two dads, one parent, or two of each, there’s one thing that makes a family a family ... and that’s love.
- [My Two Moms](#) (2012) by Zach Wahls, (Young adult – Adult) explores his experience growing up with lesbian parents and advocates for LGBTQ+ rights. The book emphasizes that love defines family and recounts the struggles and normalcy of his upbringing.
- [My Two Dads](#) (Picture book, 2015) Claudia Harrington (ages 3 – 8). The story follows a typical day in Jazz’s life. When classmate Lenny visits her home, he discovers that Jazz has two dads. This sparks many questions, such as: Who makes dinner? Who braids her hair? Who taught her to dance? Lenny realizes that love makes a family.
- [My Two Moms](#) (Picture book, 2015) Claudia Harrington (Ages 3 – 8) The story of an ordinary day in Elsie’s life. When classmate Lenny visits her home, he discovers that Elsie has two moms. This leads to many questions, such as: Who gets her splinters out? Who gets her cat out of the tree? Who reads to her? Lenny realizes that love makes a family.
- [Such a Busy Sunday](#) – The story of an LGBTQ+ Christian family as they joyfully play together, worship together, and build community together. Demonstrates the beautiful everydayness of one family’s faith. Available from Pilgrim Press.
- [The Bible and the Transgender Experience](#) - Pastors, chaplains, counselors, and congregants, and for family and friends of transgender people, as well as for gender-variant individuals seeking to find their stories in the biblical narrative, and desiring to know how scripture supports

them. Available from Pilgrim Press. A free discussion guide provides questions that can be used with a book group or as a part of a 4 to 5-week Bible study.

A google search of LGBTQ+ books will provide a variety of books for all ages. Carefully discern if a book shares the message you desire.

### **LINKS TO NATIONAL WELLNESS MINISTRY MONTHLY RESOURCES– June**

Connecting your wellness messages with national monthly health resources increases the likelihood that people will recognize and remember the information you are sharing.

- **June is Pride Month** – Pride Month is a month-long annual celebration honoring the contributions of the LGBTQ+ community and serving as a platform for advocacy, reflection, celebration, visibility, and equality. The theme of Pride Month this year is "Turn Pride into Progress," a call to recommit to advancing LGBTQ+ rights and inclusion.

On the UCC.org website, there is a page [LGBTQIA+ Ministries](#), that explains how Open and Affirming (ONA) ministries are rooted in the Gospel.

There is also a page [Resources for solidarity and action](#) that provides information about how to support trans and nonbinary people.

On the UCC.org website home page you can type Pride Month in the Search bar on the upper right side and get articles about what some churches have done/for Pride Month in the past.

On the [Diversity, Equality, Inclusion](#) website, a free-to-download toolkit for Pride education is available to organizations. Just scroll to the bottom of the Home Page and open "Cultural Toolkits".

- **National Migraine and Headache Awareness Month** is highlighted every June to educate the public, address stigma, support those living with headache disorders, and build a stronger community of patient advocates. [The Migraine Headache Awareness Month](#) site provides downloadable graphics – pathways to care, symptoms, facial pain, the Coalition for Headache and Migraine Patients (CHAMPS) logo, an 8-page Headache Diseases Statistical Guide (and a 1-page quick fact sheet summary) under "About" that will help those living with headache diseases, their caregivers, and the general public.
- **National Safety Month.** The National Safety Council is a public service nonprofit that educates and advocates for safe practices in the home and workplace. [The National Safety Council](#) offers free-to-download information under "Resources" and for home and travel safety under "Off the Job". They also have a free-to-download safety calendar with monthly focuses and website listings for information.
- **May 4-10 Screen Free Week.** "A global invitation the first week in May to take a break from entertainment screens and experience more peace, connection, and fun!" The goal is to educate about the reality of marketing capturing and selling our attention, preferences, and connections, and to advocate for kids to have the dignity of privacy and play. [Screenfree.org](#) offers free downloadable resources in English, French, and Spanish.
- **May 6<sup>th</sup> Interpreter Appreciation Day** – recognizes the essential work of language professionals who bridge communication gaps and ensure that all individuals can access and understand

healthcare services. Interpreters are key partners in advancing health equity, improving patient outcomes, and building trust within diverse communities. More information is available at [National Interpreter's Appreciation Day](#).

- **May 17<sup>th</sup> No Menthol Sunday** – This faith-based initiative promotes health equity and justice, along with prevention and cessation resources. National Awareness Day focuses on the health risks of menthol tobacco products and their targeted marketing to Black and other communities of color. Information and free fact sheets are available at [No Menthol Sunday](#).

### **UPDATE FROM THE UCC WELLNESS MINISTRIES LEADERSHIP TEAM – U.S. of Kindness**

**UCC Wellness Ministries**, in addition to the UCC National Setting and UCC congregations across the country, is participating in the [United States of KINDNESS](#). We know science shows that an act of kindness has a positive effect on both the giver and the receiver. What effect on wellness might this have within your congregation? We look forward to seeing you at the gathering described above on May 11<sup>th</sup>.

### **CONNECTING AND SUPPORTING ONE ANOTHER - Our Circle of Colleagues Grows**

Every month, we have more contacts coming to our social media sites.

Ministry is often lonely work. Know that you have a network of colleagues who will support you and your ministry. Connect with them through:

- **Facebook** - [Wellness Ministries UCC](#)
- **Instagram** - [wellness.ministries.ucc](#)
- **Linked-In** – [Wellness Ministries UCC](#)

Please send information to post or questions to Debbie Ringen, MS, FCN, [wellnessministries@ucc.org](mailto: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.*