

WELLNESS MINISTRIES - Linking Lives for Health and Wholeness

MIND, BODY, SPIRIT NEWSLETTER

March, Volume 12, Issue 3

Spiritual, Mental, and Physical Wellness are Justice Issues

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REFLECTION – Remember Your Why

Wellness Ministries sets up tables at every Synod. Attracting visitors with candy giveaways is always effective. In 2025, we handed out green-and-white mints and 200 soft-touch green pens with stylus tips. Each pen featured one of 10 messages of encouragement. As the days hours passed one particular pen began to draw more attention, and visitors came to the table to ask for it specifically. That message seemed to have a special meaning for many. What was the message on that pen?

Remember Your Why

When we wonder about our purpose, these three words gently remind us to slow down, take a deep breath or two, and reflect on our personal “why”. May your reflection reveal clarity of purpose, strengthen your energy, and guide your future intentions.

WELLNESS MINISTRIES FOCUS – Blessing Boxes and Food Sheds

Access to food is a fundamental human need, but the damage caused by food insecurity extends beyond just hunger. Uncertainty about meals and resources impacts both physical health and mental well-being, often leading to anxiety, depression, and emotional instability. Addressing food insecurity is a spiritual issue that involves more than simply providing food; it requires doing so in a way that maintains dignity. Faith communities have found ways to achieve this by offering a neighbor-helping-neighbor option.

The [Little Free Pantry Movement](#) is a grassroots community-driven solution to immediate local needs. It is neighbors recognizing neighbors’ daily struggles and feeling compelled to take action in ways that reflect shared values—compassion, generosity, and trust. Whether addressing the need for food or the need to give, mini pantries come in all sizes, offering neighbors a way to support each other. Rooted in compassion, privacy, and mutual care, the dignity of individuals is maintained.

In May of 2016, the first Little Free Pantry was made available. A wooden box on a post containing food, personal care items, and paper goods became accessible to everyone at all times, no questions asked. Within three months, the movement became global and continues to grow. Individuals, organizations, churches, and businesses are responding to the need and helping neighbors access what they need and maintain their dignity.

The [Little Free Pantry](#) website provides information and resources, pictures and suggestions from other groups, and links to many other resources. A map helps you identify local pantries that

congregants might use or support. The guidance offered on the site also helps you explain the purpose and process if your church wants to develop its own.

TIMELY RESOURCES – Opportunities for Connection and Important Updates

- **March 3rd**, 2:00 – 3:00 pm ET – [This Month at the UN](#) – An update on what the UCC does at the United Nations. Time will be set aside during the meeting for questions and suggestions.
- **March 4th**, 12pm – 1:00 pm ET – [Our Whole Lives: AI Impacts on Youth](#)
- **March 12th**, 6:30 pm - A Lenten Gathering – Lent is one of the busiest times on our church calendar. We are offering a Zoom wellness gathering for those leading Wellness Ministries. If you are interested in joining us, please e-mail WellnessMinistries@UCC.org.
- **March 16th**, 3:30 – 4:30 PM ET [Future of Faith: Movement on the Margins](#) – What are we called to be in such a time?

LINKS TO NATIONAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS – April

- **National Autism Awareness Month:** *“The observance aims to provide accurate information about autism, dispel misconceptions, and foster a more inclusive and supportive society - to shed light on autism spectrum disorder (ASD), raise public awareness, and promote acceptance of individuals on the spectrum.”* Go to: <https://www.amdisrights.org> (American Disability Rights) for general information about Autism and disability rights. A map of local affiliate chapters by state, as well as free downloadable education and resource materials are available at: <https://www.autismsociety.org>.
- **National Minority Health Month (NMHM)** is observed the entire month of April. It is an inclusive initiative that targets the health needs of African Americans, Hispanics, Asians, Native Americans, and other minorities. Its purpose is to build awareness regarding the unequal burden of preventable death and sickness in these groups. It also promotes action through health education and early management of disease complications. In a multicultural society such as the U.S., access to healthcare for everyone is paramount for the country’s continued progress. Contact resources in your community that offer opportunities to advocate for all God’s children.
- **Black Maternal Health Week: (April 11-17) always scheduled during Minority Health Month;** highlights the resilience of Black-led organizations and the need for continued advocacy and policy change to address systemic inequities affecting Black mothers. The theme for 2026, **"Rooted in Justice & Joy,"** reflects both celebration and acknowledgment of the challenges that persist in Black maternal health. For general information go to <https://www.blkmaternalhealth.com>. A newsletter, press and media links, free issue briefs, publications, and reports are available at <https://www.blackmamasmatter.org>.
- **National Public Health Week:** *“It’s a moment to celebrate the impact of public health and spotlight priority issues that can improve our nation’s well-being. This year’s theme is **Ready. Set.***

Action! ... Because one truth guides it all: *Good health doesn't just happen.*" Faith Communities can partner with local Public Health Departments for timely information and opportunities to open their doors for health-related classes. Go to <https://www.apha.org> (American Public Health Association) for free webinars and downloadable resources on Public Health topics.

- **Parkinson Awareness Month:** to educate and support people living with PD, as well as their care partners and loved ones, by helping them assemble the resources, support, and medical expertise they need to feel more empowered, connected, and optimistic. Go to <https://www.parkinson.org> download free fact sheets, lists of resources, and educational videos.

ITEM OF INTEREST ON THE UCC CALENDAR – March

- **March 1st – 7th Women's Week** - [Living Psalm 121](#)
- **March 6th – World Day of Prayer** - [A global ecumenical movement led by Christian women](#). Theme for 2026: *I Will Give You Rest: Come* based on Matt 11:28-30. At a time when people worldwide are carrying heavy burdens, our Nigerian sisters offer profound insights into finding rest in God.
- **March 8th – International Women's Day:** [Celebrating 115 years of International Women's Day](#). Provides materials in a free toolkit that advances collective action, advocacy & progress towards gender equality, an ongoing, worldwide justice issue.
- **March 29th - Palm Sunday** - [Beginning of Holy Week](#)

UPDATE FROM THE UCC WELLNESS MINISTRIES LEADERSHIP TEAM – Please respond to survey.

The Leadership Team requests your input regarding our Wellness Ministries' monthly newsletter, "Mind, Body, Spirit – Linking Lives for Health and Wellness." Please check your email for a survey sent from the UCC Wellness Ministries Leadership Team (WellnessMinistries@UCC.org) around February 20th. All you need to do is hit "Reply" and share your thoughts.

CONNECTING AND SUPPORTING ONE ANOTHER - Our Circle of Colleagues Grows

Every month we have an increased number of contact on our social media sites. Ministry is often lonely work. 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

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.