

WELLNESS MINISTRIES - Linking Lives for Health and Wholeness

MIND, BODY, SPIRIT NEWSLETTER

September 2026, Volume 12, Issue 9

Spiritual, Mental, and Physical Wellness are Justice Issues

- **Reflection: Be still and know that I am God**
 - **Wellness Ministries Focus: Collaborating with Faith Formation**
 - **Timely Health Tip: Reliable Health-Related Local Resources**
 - **Webinar Provided by Disaster Ministries: Loving Our Neighbors Through Disasters**
 - **National Health and Wellness Educational Materials: Plan Ahead for October**
 - **Update From The Wellness Ministries Leadership Team: Wellness Ministries Affinity Group**
 - **Connecting And Supporting One Another: Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn**
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REFLECTION – Be still and know that I am God.

As we move through increasingly busy and challenging days, it serves us well, spiritually, mentally, and physically, to pause periodically for 5 minutes, slow our breathing, and become centered. Slowly inhale, feel the breath of life expand your lungs, gently hold it as you count to 4, or as long as is comfortable, and then slowly release it. As you repeat this breathing process, recall the holy guidance we have been given. God reminds us:

Be still and know that I am God.

Be still and know that I am.

Be still and know.

Be still.

Be.

WELLNESS MINISTRIES FOCUS: Collaborating with Faith Formation

This is the time of year that a special Sunday appears on the church calendar. It is the Sunday that announces the church is alive, programming is back with a full schedule, and joy abounds as we gather again after a summer of diverse activities.

Wellness Ministries focus on spiritual, mental, and physical care and serve as a resource, collaborating with the Faith Formation team throughout the church year. These two timely books lay the foundation of Christianity and subtly explain why we in Wellness Ministries do what we do: care for all God's children.

- **Picture the Bible** – features diverse images of people and an understanding of justice grounded in God's love. The fifty-three stories of *Picture the Bible* share God's promises and the invitation to living in God's way. The stories encourage conversations across generations. Support materials are available.
- **God Is** offers a profound theology of joy, wonder, and assurance for children of all ages – including those of us who are learning anew, in adulthood, how to have faith like a child.

TIMELY HEALTH TIP: Reliable Health-Related Local Resources

County and state Departments of Health issue science-based Healthcare Professional Advisories. Often the general public is unaware of these alerts. With so many individuals following

social media suggestions and purchasing products on-line it would be very helpful if such alerts become part of a Wellness Ministries program of education. Below is an example of a recent Department of Health posting:

The State Department of Health is issuing an advisory to inform healthcare professionals about the dangers of 2,4-Dinitrophenol (DNP), a chemical that may be sold online as a weight-loss or bodybuilding product. The state poison center has reported a death linked to DNP use.

DNP is toxic, and use can be fatal. There is no safe dose of DNP, and no antidote exists for DNP poisoning. The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has banned DNP for human consumption since 1938 due to serious safety concerns. [DNP is used to make dyes, wood preservatives, explosives, and as a photographic developer.]

Healthcare professionals are encouraged to share this information and remind individuals to avoid any product that contains DNP and be skeptical of all products that claim rapid weight loss or fast fat burning.

If someone has taken DNP or a weight-loss product that may contain DNP, they should seek emergency medical care and contact the [National Poison Control Center](#) (1-800-222-1222) immediately. [There is no fee for this service.]

Even small amounts of DNP can cause the body to overheat. This can lead to serious illness, organ failure, and rapid death. More information is available at: [Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry](#) and [Beware of 2, 4-Dinitrophenol \(DNP\) – Poison Control Center](#).

Check the websites of your county or state Dept. of Health and, if possible, sign up for health alerts.

WEBINAR PROVIDED BY DISASTER MINISTRIES

- **Sept. 8th – 3 – 4:30 PM ET** - [Preparedness Month Kick-Off: Loving Our Neighbors Through Disasters](#) - Through an interactive mock disaster scenario, participants will explore practical strategies for how churches can effectively care for congregants, support clergy, safeguard facilities, and serve their communities when disasters strike.

FREE NEWSLETTERS TO HELP CHRISTIAN LEADERS NAVIGATE TODAY'S CHALLENGES

- ***Faith and Leadership*** newsletter: Through original stories, interviews, essays, and more. *Faith and Leadership* offers a new language and way of thinking about work and institutions from multiple disciplines. This free newsletter arrives in your inbox about every two weeks.
- ***News and Ideas*** newsletter: Faith and Leadership staff search the internet each weekday for stories of interest to Christian leaders. The result is *News & Ideas*, a free newsletter offering the most thought-provoking articles about the church and the world from a variety of publications
- Go to [Faith and Leadership](#) website to read articles and subscribe if you want one or both newsletters delivered to your e-mail box.

LINKS TO NATIONAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS - For October

We provide this information on national health-related educational activities in October to give you time to choose a topic, make community connections, and gather resources to share.

- **Mental Illness Awareness Week** (October 4-10) promotes mental health awareness. [National Alliance on Mental Illness \(NAMI\)](#) offers a variety of free downloadable toolkits. With the restart of the academic year, they offer a number of Back-to-School Resources.
 - [A Week of Wellness](#) is a daily calendar with conversation starters and activities.
 - [The Three C's for Parents](#) to help you and your child connect: Get Curious, Get Concrete, Stay Compassionate.
 - [Mindfulness Activities](#) allow children and adults to center themselves and refocus.
 - [Bullying Warning Signs](#) with tips for starting a conversation.
 - [Suicide Warning Signs](#) - The youth mental health crisis is here. This resource provides parents with actionable advice for navigating a mental health crisis and getting help.

- **National Bullying Prevention Month** supported by [National Bullying Prevention Center](#) is a month-long event that calls attention to preventing childhood bullying and promoting kindness, acceptance, and inclusion. 1 out of 5 students report being bullied. There are ways to reduce these behaviors and a Student Activity Kit is available. Also helpful is [Rachel's Challenge](#) an evidence-based anti-bullying program that reduces school-based (and church youth) violence, builds resilience, and creates a culture of kindness, starting day one.

- **Healthy Lung Month** is dedicated to raising critical awareness about lung health and preventing respiratory diseases. [American Lung Association](#) provides general information about lung conditions, treatment options, and environmental effects. Contact information is provided so you can locate a regional or state office. The [Lung Institute](#) is another source for general information about lung conditions and environmental factors.

- **Breast Cancer Awareness Month** is a national health campaign. People and organizations across the country unite to support those affected by breast cancer, raise funds, and help ensure more individuals have access to the support and resources they need. Some of the most meaningful events take place right in your community. Collaborate with one or more. Let the community know that your church cares. The [National Breast Cancer Foundation, Inc.](#) provides general information. 1 in 3 women and men will be diagnosed with cancer in their lifetime. The [American Cancer Society](#) offers information about breast cancer for both women and men. Free to download and print are fact sheets, infographics, caregiver resources, and a Breast Cancer Toolkit.

- **ADHD Awareness Month** is a time to focus on widening the welcome by sharing reliable information, reducing stigma, and improving understanding of Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder across all ages. Reliable information and resources to help people of all ages thrive are available from the [Children and Adults with ADD Organization](#) (CHADD), including fact sheets, infographics, and toolkits for parents and educators. Materials are in English and Spanish.

UPDATES FROM THE UCC WELLNESS MINISTRIES LEADERSHIP TEAM –

- **Self-Care While We Minister In The Months Ahead** is a supportive letter we wrote for all those striving to respond to the needs of others during these days of increasing anxiety. Self-care is an act of faith. We have attached the letter as the last page of this newsletter. Please share it as widely as possible as a gift to colleagues. Thank you!

- **Wellness Ministries Affinity Group** -The theme for the quarterly gathering on **Aug. 10th** was **Care for the Caregivers**. As the conversation progressed, it gradually shifted towards the care those at

the end of life desire. When partners and different generations share their end-of-life wishes, either verbally or in writing, they are caring for the surviving caregivers.

The Wellness Ministries Leadership Team is always busy planning ahead and responding with the support you request to assist in your Ministries.

- On **Monday, Nov. 2nd** (time not yet determined), we will host a webinar introducing the ***Just Eating*** program. The title is meaningful. Often, we think of food as just food, without much thought to how and where it comes from. However, there is a way to make food choices that frame eating as a practice of faith, a justice issue. English and Spanish versions are available for adults and middle school-aged children.
- **Monday, Nov. 9th** – **Wellness Ministries Affinity Group quarterly gathering.** All are welcome, lay leaders, chaplains, faith community nurses, pastors!_The theme for this gathering will be a conversation about ***Just Eating*** and how it might be shared with the congregation. Who has offered it? What audience did they work with? Are there tips that increase success?

CONNECTING AND SUPPORTING ONE ANOTHER Our Circle of Colleagues Grows

Every month, we welcome more contacts on 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 us 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.*

SELF-CARE WHILE WE MINISTER IN THE MONTHS AHEAD

provided by the

Wellness Ministries, EFA, Love of Church, UCC National Ministries

Mission Statement: *To inspire, enable, and empower everyone
to experience wellness as they live their lives.*

Dear Colleague,

Think for a moment: when was the last time you took a break for self-care? Taking time for rest and rejuvenation is faithful stewardship of the one body you have to minister to others.

You have received this message because you have previously been in contact with the UCC Wellness Ministries. Over the past twenty-two months, many of us have experienced a range of emotions while addressing others' anxiety and fears. We are exhausted in body and mind, and sometimes even in spirit, as we consider what comes next and how we can continue responding.

The concept of self-care has been taught for thousands of years. Rabbi Hillel the Elder, a Jewish scholar and sage (c. 60 B.C.– A.D. 20), wrote, "You have a solemn obligation to take care of yourself because you never know when the world will need you." In the New Testament, we find stories of Jesus practicing self-care during his three years of ministry.

We humbly offer information that you might find helpful.

- The most essential bodily activity that we can control is our breathing. A deep breath is helpful at any time. The [4-7-8 Calm Breathing Exercise](#) promotes relaxation, reduces anxiety, and can also help you fall asleep more quickly.
- A breath prayer combines two essentials: a conversation with God and breathing. An example is: (Inhale) *God of all creation*, (Exhale) *fill me now with your peace.*
(I) *God of all creation*, (E) *fill me with your love.*
(I) *God of all creation*, (E) *guide me in your desires.*
(I) *God of all creation*, (E) *grant me the courage to do your will. Amen.*
- Feeling anxious or stressed can cause some people to overeat, while others lose their appetite and refuse food. [Foods](#) high in Omega-3 fatty acids, protein, fiber, Vitamin B-12, magnesium, and probiotics may help reduce anxiety and stress. [If you have no appetite](#), stay hydrated by drinking water and tea, and choose protein and calorie-dense foods that appeal to you.
- Go outdoors and commune with God and nature. Even a small five-minute reprieve from an indoor environment can provide the [Benefits of Being in Nature](#). It frees our minds to think more deeply, gain insights, and meditate.
- [Come and Find the Quiet Center](#) in the multifaceted life we lead and simply be. Just sit back and listen or sing along.

May grace and love abound, and may your soul find peace as we all work toward a healthier, more just world.

Shalom,

Your Wellness Ministries Leadership Team

WellnessMinistries@UCC.org