

WELLNESS MINISTRIES - Linking Lives for Health and Wholeness

MIND, BODY, SPIRIT NEWSLETTER

October 2026, Volume 12, Issue 10

Spiritual, Mental, and Physical Wellness are Justice Issues

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REFLECTION – We must each do the things we think we cannot do

Many of us worry about the future yet wonder whether we can make a real difference. Eleanor Roosevelt, who faced many personal challenges throughout her life, became known as a leader by challenging societal norms and advocating for rights. She held press conferences with women reporters, visited factories and war zones, and fought for civil, women's, and children's rights. In 1945, she helped draft the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. She shared that facing fear gave her the strength, courage, and confidence to do what she had thought she couldn't do.

Where do you find the courage and confidence to do what you think you cannot do?

WELLNESS MINISTRIES FOCUS: A Church Family Thanksgiving Dinner

The most common question in November is, "Where are you going for Thanksgiving?" For some, this question is hard to answer. Various reasons keep them from attending a picturesque family gathering.

During a discussion about Thanksgiving, several active congregants said they would be celebrating quietly at home that day. Their reasons varied. Some could not take time off from work or lacked the money to travel far. Others said their adult children's families were spending it with their spouses' families. Some, sadly, lacked extended family. Others were disabled, limiting their ability to connect with others outside their home.

The Wellness Minister invited several individuals to join her in organizing a Church Family Thanksgiving Dinner. It was decided to plan it so that attendees would work together to make it happen, just like a family gathering.

An invitation was extended to everyone in the congregation to gather for Thanksgiving Dinner at noon on Thanksgiving Day in the church hall. The turkey would be provided. Attendees were asked to sign up and indicate what they would bring to the celebration, along with a recipe card listing the ingredients. They were encouraged to bring their favorite Thanksgiving dish.

When participants arrived at the church hall, they were greeted by the tempting aroma of roasting turkey. The Wellness Minister started cooking at home and finished in the church kitchen. The schedule was:

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| 11:00 am | Set up for dinner and enjoy simple appetizers. |
| 12:00 noon | Offer a communal prayer of Thanksgiving. |
| 12:05 pm | Serve the meal buffet style (with attention to allergy risks; all dishes had a recipe card with ingredients displayed next to them). |
| | Share stories, laugh, and engage in spontaneous activities. |
| 2:00 pm | Clean up and depart with desired leftovers. |

Carving the turkey became a cherished task. One individual, Bob, volunteered to carve the turkey the first year and demonstrated the process as others gathered around. This became an annual tradition, even as Bob faced increasing challenges from ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease) and required assistance. After Bob's passing, the turkey carvers continued to honor their mentor by sharing the process with others.

The clean-up was a collective effort, just as the set-up had been. It was done amid laughter, a sense of connectedness, and a shared purpose. Attendees left with full stomachs and the joy of feeling embraced and supported by a caring group of friends.

What is Thanksgiving without sharing leftovers? Some households had saved takeout containers and offered them to others. Most attendees left with more than one container of food.

Share this idea with your Wellness Ministries Team and determine whether you can bring joy to others in your congregation this Thanksgiving.

This exemplar is one of many found in Section 3 of the 2025 Wellness Ministries Toolkit available from UCC Store – www.UCCresources.com/

TIMELY HEALTH TIP: October – Reliable Information About Vaccinations

- **Influenza (flu)** is a potentially serious disease that can lead to hospitalization and, in some cases, death. Flu vaccination can reduce flu illnesses, doctor visits, and missed work and school. It can also make symptoms less severe and reduce flu-related hospitalizations and deaths in people who get vaccinated but still get sick. Everyone 6 months and older should get a flu vaccine every season, with rare exceptions. High-dose inactivated flu vaccine, recombinant flu vaccine, and adjuvanted inactivated flu vaccine are preferred for people 65 years of age and older. The recommended time to receive this vaccination is October. Have you scheduled a vaccination clinic at your church for your congregants and neighbors? More information is provided at [Who needs a flu vaccination?](#)
- [COVID-19 Vaccine - Get the Facts](#) – Receiving a COVID-19 vaccine helps keep you healthy. The vaccine protects against serious illness, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19. Staying up to date with the latest vaccine is most important for people at higher risk. That includes adults age 65 and older, those with weakened immune systems, people who are pregnant, and people with chronic conditions, such as heart disease, lung disease, or obesity.
- [Respiratory Virus Season Immunization Recommendations for Pregnant and Postpartum Individuals](#) provides information on flu, COVID-19, and RSV vaccinations.

- [American Academy of Pediatrics 2026 vaccine recommendations](#) provide the latest trusted guidance on when children and teens should receive each immunization.

WEBINARS PROVIDED BY U.C.C. That Relate to Wellness Ministries

- **October 1st - 3:30 – 4:30 pm ET - Access Sunday 2026:** How might your Wellness Team work to increase the ability of all to participate in worship and the full life of the church? [Get your resources here.](#)
- **October 7th – 12:00 – 1:00 pm ET - Preventing Violence Against Women** Learn how the UCC and other professionals are working to prevent violence against women, both domestically and globally.
How do you support the women who have experienced violence? Is it a topic that can be talked about within your congregation?
- **October 19th – 3:30 – 4:30 ET - Future of Faith: Communities of Deep Conversation.** We are in the midst of a loneliness epidemic; withdrawal due to fear of arguments based on political differences leads to silence or dwelling in the superficial. Find out more about how to [sustain communities of deep conversation](#). Research has shown that loneliness harms the health of the body, mind, and spirit.
- **November 2nd – 1:00 PM ET – Just Eating? Practicing Our Faith at the Table.** Explores how our eating connects us with our deepest faith commitments to nurture our bodies, attend to people who are hungry, care for the earth, and create community. Registration information will follow closer to the date.

LINKS TO NATIONAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS - For November

National Family Caregivers Month “highlights the dedication, challenges, and societal value of family caregivers. It is currently estimated that 53 million American family caregivers are providing care to a loved one.”

- The Caregiver Action Network (CAN) (<https://www.caregiveraction.org>) provides free education, peer support, and resources to download/print in English and Spanish
- The National Council on Aging (<https://www.ncoa.org>) has information about caregiving and support found under “Aging Well”,
- Who are the family caregivers in your congregation? How are your Wellness Ministries organizing support for them? Learn from them how you might support their caregiving.

National Homeless Youth Awareness Month draws attention to the causes of youth homelessness; including unsafe homes, poverty, and aging out of foster care, and emphasizes the need for policies and programs that provide safety, stability, and hope for vulnerable youth.

- [National Network for Youth](#) has free information from their Resource Center – found under “Learn” (<https://nn4youth.org>)
- [National Child Traumatic Stress Network \(NCTSN\)](#) has free-to-download Toolkits, informational sheets and resources in English and Spanish. Type “Youth Homelessness” in the Search Bar (<https://www.nctsn.org>). How might you find and make contact with the services that serve these homeless youth? What might you do if there aren’t sufficient services?

Native American Heritage Month “is a federal observance held every November to recognize and celebrate the rich traditions, languages, and histories of the wide range of Indigenous communities who

for thousands of years lived on the land of the continental U.S., Alaska, and Hawai'i. The U.C.C. is in relationship with their descendants.

- There are 20 U.C.C. congregations located on Native American reservations. These churches primarily serve Lakota, Dakota, Nakota, Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara, and Ho-Chunk communities across North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, and Wisconsin. In addition to the 20 reservation congregations, the UCC also has one urban, multi-tribal congregation located in Minneapolis. In the Hawaiian Islands, the UCC has 130 churches.
- The National Park Service offers historical education and stories from Indigenous cultures at <https://www.nps.gov>
- The Congress of American Indians (NCAI) and Native American Rights Fund (NARF) provide legal counsel and action on today's issues facing native Americans. <https://www.ncai.org>, <https://narf.org>

National Pulmonary Hypertension Awareness Month “is an annual global event aimed at raising awareness of **pulmonary hypertension (PH)**, a serious condition characterized by high blood pressure in the lung vessels which strains the heart and can be life-threatening if untreated”.

- The Pulmonary Hypertension Association offers a free to download toolkit, educational brochures and a book “Navigating Pulmonary Hypertension” in English, Spanish and French from the Pulmonary Hypertension Association of Canada under Events and Resources. (<https://phassociation.org>)

UPDATES FROM THE UCC WELLNESS MINISTRIES LEADERSHIP TEAM –

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

- **Monday, Nov. 2nd 1:00 pm ET**, 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 and a justice issue. English and Spanish versions are available for adults and middle school-aged children. Registration info will be available closer to the date.
- **Monday, Nov. 9th 6:30 pm ET** – **Wellness Ministries Affinity Group quarterly gathering**. All are welcome, including lay leaders, chaplains, faith community nurses, and 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** - [wellnessministriesucc](https://www.instagram.com/wellnessministriesucc)
- **Linked-In** – [Wellness Ministries UCC](#)

Please send information to post or questions to 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.*