**WELLNESS MINISTRIES - Linking Lives for Health and Wholeness**

# *MIND, BODY, SPIRIT NEWSLETTER*

**November 2026, Volume 12, Issue 11**

## Spiritual, Mental, and Physical Wellness are Justice Issue


- **Reflection:** *Just Eating? – Practicing Our Faith At The Table*
- **Resources that Focus on Food Insecurity** – Food Insecurity and Hunger are Causing Mental Health Issues for All Ages
- **Wellness Ministries Focus:** *Wellness Ministries Affinity Group Discussion* – How can we support *Just Eating* in our congregations*?* Monday,Nov. 8th at 6:30 pm ET. Use this Zoom link.
- **Timely Health Tip:** Understanding "Open Enrollment" Decisions
- **Webinars Provided By U.C.C.:** That Provide Information Related to Wellness Ministries:
- **Links To National Health and Wellness Educational Materials:** Plan Ahead for December
- **Update From The Wellness Ministries Leadership Team:** A Wellness Ministries Affinity Group Discussion about *Just Eating?* Mon. 11/9 6:30 ET
- **Connecting And Supporting One Another:** Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn


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**REFLECTION – *Just Eating – Practicing Our Faith At The Table*** –

Eating is something we strive to do every day. Not everyone we know, and many we don't, has that opportunity. We can make a real difference. This Wellness Ministries webinar offers ways to reflect and put our faith into action.

*Just Eating? Practicing Our Faith at the Table* is a way to explore and reflect, individually or in small groups, on how our eating connects us to our deepest faith commitments. The curriculum uses scripture, prayer, and global/local stories to explore five primary themes:

1. The health of our bodies - Nurturing physical well-being and addressing health challenges.
2. The challenge of hunger - Attending to food access and poverty.
3. The health of the earth - Considering how food production affects creation and environmental stewardship.
4. Hospitality and relationships - Using food to build community and enrich personal connections.
5. Action, renewal, and transformation - Making intentional changes as individuals and faith communities.

Rev. Dr. Kirsten Peachey, a co-developer of the curriculum, will share insights into this free online resource and examples of how congregations have used it to inspire meaningful action. Available in English and Spanish, the curriculum includes adaptations for Latino and African American audiences and resources designed for both adults and middle school students.

Join us and have your questions answered. Monday, Nov. 2nd at 1:00 pm ET.
Register here for *Just Eating? Practicing Our Faith at the Table*

**Resources With A Focus on Hunger and Food Insecurity:**

- Food Insecurity Is a Mental Health Crisis - Let's Treat It Like One provides an overview of policy and intervention strategies, and why it matters.

- Food - How what we eat is weaponized, edited by Miguel A De La Torre and available from Pilgrim Press, unveils the intersections of food, environmental injustice, and social disenfranchisement.
- Hunger and Food Insecurity – Hunger touches us all—and it holds back our families, schools and communities from reaching their full potential. The good news? Together, we can create a future where every person has the food they need to thrive. Discover how hunger affects your neighbors—and how your actions can make a real difference.
- Social Determinants of Food Insecurity – The goal of Healthy People 2030 to reduce food insecurity is progressing slowly. 48 million people, representing 1 in 7 U.S. households, and 1 in 5 kids experience food insecurity. Food insecurity may be long-term or temporary. Several factors may influence it, including income, employment, race/ethnicity, and disability. The risk of food insecurity increases when money to buy food is limited or unavailable. Residents with limited transportation options and longer travel distances to stores are at risk.

## WELLNESS MINISTRIES FOCUS: Understanding "Open Enrollment" Decisions

Open enrollment is a period when people learn about and choose the health insurance plan that fits their needs and budget. Senior centers and other community resources often have experts on this topic who will provide an information session for your congregation and community. Key information to keep in mind as you plan a program that shares information and answers questions:

- **Medicare** - Medicare open enrollment period began October 15 and runs through December 7. At this time, beneficiaries can compare their current coverage with other options, including original Medicare and prescription drug plans. Coverage choices made during this period will take effect on January 1, 2027. Medicare plans can change premiums, provider networks, and cost-sharing requirements year to year, so staying with the same policy does not necessarily mean identical coverage.

- **Medicare Advantage** - With privately run Medicare Advantage plans, beneficiaries could face another issue: their existing plan, provider network, or benefits may look dramatically different next year. Some Medicare Advantage insurers are pulling plans from certain geographic areas, while others are scaling back supplemental benefits like dental coverage or potentially increasing cost-sharing. Generally, for 2027, beneficiaries should look at:
    1. Monthly premiums and whether their current plan's premium is changing.
    2. Drug deductibles and copays could also significantly affect affordability, especially given the higher Part D thresholds.
    3. Their supplemental benefits, including dental or other perks, could be reduced or eliminated.

- **Affordable Care Act (ACA) Health Insurance Marketplace®** - Residents in the United States who are U.S. citizens, nationals, or are lawfully present can shop for plans and check subsidy eligibility at HealthCare.gov or through their specific state-run exchange. Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) are two available plans. Open enrollment for 2027 ACA Health Insurance Marketplace coverage runs from **November 1, 2026, through January 15, 2027**, on the federal platform. A Quick Guide to the Health Insurance Marketplace provides information about the federal and state-run programs and four steps to take.

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

- **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. Register here.

- **November 4th – 12:00 PM ET – Trans Athletes: What You Need to Know**. The restriction of trans athletes reduces the options for their physical activity and the experience of being part of a team activity. Exclusion has negative implications for mental health. Learn the myths and realities about trans athletes so you can be supportive of them. Register here.

## LINKS TO NATIONAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS - For December

**December 1st - World AIDS Day 2026** is an important reminder that we must remain steadfast in our commitment to prevent new HIV infections and provide essential services to all people living with HIV.

The first World AIDS Day took place in 1988, providing a platform to raise awareness about HIV and AIDS and to honor the lives affected by the epidemic. Significant progress has been made in addressing HIV and AIDS thanks to advancements in medical research, increased access to treatment and prevention, and a broader understanding of the virus. UCC HIV & AIDS Network provides resources that support education, prevention, and care.

**December 1st – 7th - Crohn's and Colitis Awareness Week.** The Crohn's and Colitis Foundation aims to educate about these common inflammatory bowel diseases and promote understanding and support for restrictive food choices during the holiday functions. Are people living with Crohn's or Colitis welcome to full participation in the activities of your congregation? Are there foods they can eat?

- The Crohn's and Colitis Foundation has free-to-download resource information by typing "Awareness Week" in the Search Bar.
- The American College of Gastroenterology also provides free-to-download educational resources at The American College of Gastroenterology

- **December 3rd - International Day of Persons with Disabilities** is a global observance that promotes the rights and well-being of people with disabilities across all areas of life. It draws attention to the barriers—physical, legal, and attitudinal—that limit participation, and highlights how removing them benefits entire communities.
  - The United Church of Christ Disabilities Ministries "envisions a world in which all are included in the fullness of life because they are created in the image of God." They have developed A Guide for Congregations, Associations, and Conferences for becoming Accessible to All (A2A)
  - American Disabilities Rights provides free-to-download statistical information and resources.

- **Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) Awareness Month.** NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) designated this annual observance "to raise awareness about SAD, a type of depression that often occurs during the late fall and winter months when daylight hours are shorter." Their goal is to educate the public, reduce stigma, and encourage open conversations about this condition, which affects millions of Americans each year." NAMI provides free-to-download informational resources at https://NAMI.org that will help lift the stigma, start conversations, and provide better understanding of how to manage this condition.

## 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 for your Ministries.

- **If you missed it last month –** There is help for your **Self-care During These Election Days.** It

is posted at the end of this newsletter.

- **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? Direct Zoom link to the Gathering

- **Add to Self-care during Advent**. We are planning a special *Self-care During Advent* helpful list. What do you do or advise others to do to lower the pressure and increase the joy? Please share with us, and we will include it and give you attribution. Send it to Wellness Ministries Chair or WellnessMinistries@ucc.org.

**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 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*.

# Taking the Time for Self-Care This Election Season

Provided by the UCC Wellness Ministries & UCC Office of Public Policy & Advocacy

**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.

As national elections near in the United States, our televisions, computer screens, emails, social media, mailboxes and voicemails are demanding our attention. Through messaging intentionally created to heighten our emotion, we can sometimes forget that rest is resistance. Self-care is a divine, spiritual practice, drawn from the Sabbath, that keeps us healthy and grounded in times of turmoil in our outside world.

**Over the past two years, 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.

**Consider taking a moment to participate in one of the following activities to center and ground yourself during this election season:**

- 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 (inhale for 4 seconds, hold for 7 seconds, exhale for 8 seconds) 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. For example
  (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. Please share this with someone who may need it in this moment.