



MIND, BODY, SPIRIT

Linking Lives for Health and Wholeness



UCC Wellness Ministries Newsletter

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REFLECTION



May is the month for graduations and Commencement speeches. Graduates are standing at a threshold. A time of endings and new beginnings; a “betwixt and between”. Thresholds are significant moments in life. Moving from one experience to another can be accompanied by a range of emotions – apprehension, excitement, caution, empowerment. These moments may be marked by rituals as loved ones gather, narrate their shared experience, form memories, and save mementos. Thresholds are transformational, creating sacred space and hallowed time where the ordinary is united with the mysterious. May we approach the emerging thresholds in our lives with a sense of positive anticipation and hope, celebrating life and moving forward with eager intent.

TIMELY HEALTH TIP



“Older Americans Month”

Every May, the Administration for Community Living (ACL) celebrates [Older Americans Month](#). This year the theme is *Aging Unbound*, which explores diverse aging experiences and how communities can combat older adult stereotypes. Stories build community and connect people. The ACL website offers several ideas for organizing [story-telling activities](#) for older adults to share their life experiences with others.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [MyHealthfinder](#) page has resources for older adults on [general health](#), [safety](#), [getting vaccines](#), and [oral health](#). Physical activity can help older adults prevent both chronic disease and fall-related injuries. The Healthy People 2030 objectives emphasize improving the health and well-being of older adults. Older adults are a priority audience for the [Move Your Way® campaign](#), which is the promotional campaign for the [second edition of the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans](#). A [Physical Activity Fact Sheet for Older Adults](#) can help encourage older adults to stay active. It is available in English and Spanish. Information includes [how to get started](#) and gain benefits with physical activity.

The UCC Council for Health and Human Services Ministries (CHHSM) has developed a curriculum, *Age-Friendly Congregations*, which explores how to minister well with, to, and for older adults. The curriculum is available for purchase from [UCC Resources](#).

WELLNESS MINISTRIES FOCUS

Maternal Health

Significant disparities in maternal health and infant birth and health outcomes occur despite advances in medical research and care. In the U.S., Black women are three times more likely to die from a pregnancy-related cause than white women, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Access to prenatal care and education can dramatically improve birth and health outcomes for mothers and their babies, but women who are uninsured (or underinsured) often miss out on these critical services. The Office of Disease Prevention and

Health Promotion provides guides to [Doctor and Midwife Visits](#) and [Nutrition and Physical Activity](#).

A nonprofit organization [Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition of Georgia \(HMHB\)](#) has been working since the 1970s to ensure that families across the state have access to preventive and prenatal health care and is a model for others wanting to develop programs. Their programs offer prenatal education for expectant families with the goal of reducing disparities and improving outcomes for moms and babies. One initiative of the HMHB organization, [Pickles and Ice Cream](#), provides information and resources from pre-pregnancy to postpartum.



The Centers for Disease Control estimates 80% of postpartum maternal deaths are preventable. The University of North Carolina first came up with the ["I Gave Birth" initiative](#) and it spread throughout North Carolina and to other states after being presented at a conference. It provides mothers with stretchable rubber bracelets to wear for up to 10 weeks after delivery, a time referred to as the "fourth trimester". The bracelets are to remind mothers to pay attention to their bodies and watch for warning signs of fever, chest pain, headaches, bleeding and depression. The bracelets also alert health care providers at any facility that the patient's complaint may be obstetric-related.

LINKS TO NATIONAL HEALTH-RELATED TOPICS



Some Links For May:

May is [Mental Health Month](#). The United Church of Christ is kicking it off with a webinar conversation about youth mental health and how it intersects with [Our Whole Lives](#). **A webinar, "OWL Taking Flight: Mental Health Awareness While Offering Our Whole Lives,"** is scheduled for **Wednesday, May 3, 2024 at noon ET**. [Registration is open](#). The [United Church of Christ Mental Health Network](#) works to reduce stigma and promote the inclusion of people with mental health challenges and neurodiversity and their families in the life, leadership, and work of congregations/ synagogues/ organizations. Plan a Mental Health Sunday service for May 19th or another Sunday that fits your church's calendar, using the [Mental Health and Wellness Worship Resources for All](#).

National Melanoma Skin Cancer Prevention Month: Prevention and early detection of skin cancer is a topic to emphasize as we move into the warmer season with increased sun

exposure. This is the time to help spread sun-safety messages and increase public awareness about skin cancer. The American Association for Cancer Research offers [information on melanoma and skin cancer prevention](#). The American Academy of Dermatology also promotes National Melanoma and Skin Cancer Prevention Month. Their website includes [free educational resources](#) to help others learn how to prevent and detect skin cancer.

Asthma and Allergy Awareness: May is [Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month](#). More than 100 million people in the United States have asthma and/or allergies. May is peak season for people with asthma and allergies. It is a perfect time to educate patients, family, friends, and other people about allergic diseases. The Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America provides resources on [asthma](#) and [allergies](#). The site also lists [the top 10 most challenging places to live with seasonal allergies](#).

Better Hearing and Speech Month: The American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery provides a [spotlight on hearing health](#). Informational topics include [Tinnitus](#), [Benign Paroxysmal Positional Vertigo](#), and [Ears and Altitude](#) (Barotrauma). Share educational [Tips for Preserving Your Hearing](#) when using ear gear listening devices.

ALS Awareness Month: ALS, or amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, is a progressive neurodegenerative disease that affects nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord. There is no cure for ALS at this time. [The ALS Association](#) offers information on [Understanding ALS](#), [Navigating ALS](#), [Resources and Support](#), [Research](#), [Advocacy](#), and ways to [Get Involved](#).



For Those Who Like to Plan Ahead, Here Are Some Links for June:

Men's Health Month: <https://menshealthmonth.org/> The purpose of Men's Health Month is to heighten the awareness of preventable health problems and encourage early detection and treatment of disease among men and boys. The Urology Care Foundation provides [Men's Health Resources, Blogs, and Podcasts](#).

PTSD Awareness Month: There are currently about 12 million people in the United States with PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder). PTSD affects Veterans and civilian survivors of sexual assault, serious accidents, natural disasters, or other traumatic events. The U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs [National Center for PTSD](#) offers information on understanding PTSD, treatment approaches, resources for families and friends, ways to get help, and videos.

Scleroderma Awareness Month: [Scleroderma](#), or systemic sclerosis, is a chronic connective tissue disease generally classified as an autoimmune disease. Hardening of the skin is one of the most visible manifestations of the disease. Changes related to **localized scleroderma** are relatively mild, usually found in only a few places on the skin or muscles, and rarely spread elsewhere. **Systemic scleroderma (systemic sclerosis)** may affect the connective tissue in many parts of the body. Systemic scleroderma can involve the skin, esophagus, gastrointestinal tract (stomach and bowels), lungs, kidneys, heart and other internal organs. It can also affect blood vessels, muscles and joints. The tissues of involved organs become hard and fibrous, causing them to function less efficiently. [Stepping Out to Cure Scleroderma](#) walks are organized

by the National Scleroderma Foundation's local chapters, and many are taking place during June at multiple locations (and virtually) across the country.

UCC WELLNESS MINISTRIES LEADERSHIP TEAM

Work continues on the revision of the **UCC Wellness Ministries Pocket Handbook for Visitation** with anticipated availability by June 2024.



Wellness Ministries Overview: A new [YouTube video](#) has been added to the Wellness Ministries home page of the UCC website. A second video is currently under development that will describe the role of the Leadership Team and highlight resources of the UCC Wellness Ministries.

UCC Wellness Ministries Toolkit: Highlight of an Exemplar in Section 3: As noted earlier in this newsletter, spring is a peak season for people with asthma and allergies. In addition to airborne allergens, people may have food-related allergies. An Exemplar in Section 3 of the [Wellness Ministries Toolkit](#) describes [How to Ensure All Feel Welcome and Safe at Coffee Hour](#). It includes these resources:

- [Diabetes Meal Planning](#) from CDC suggests choices for snacks and meals.
- [Diet Choices for a Child with Diabetes](#) provides a list of healthy snacks and meals.
- [Food Allergies and Hypersensitivities](#) from the FDA provides information about significant allergens and what to do if symptoms of an allergic reaction occur.

If you aren't already a registered user of the Toolkit, please do so to benefit from the whole resource on this topic. Your contact information enables us to contact you with updates to the Toolkit.

WEB-BASED RESOURCES/PROGRAMS



Summer may be a time of violent storms and other disasters. The [Be A Ready Congregation Disaster Basics tip sheet](#) from the National Disaster Interfaiths Network provides disaster basics for faith communities. [A Disaster Preparedness Manual for Churches](#), a joint resource from United Church of Christ Disaster Ministries and the Insurance Board is a guide through “Preparation” and some immediate Responses. **The insurance Board** also offers educational resources and planning about types of [severe weather](#): hail and wind, hurricanes, tornadoes, and wildfires.

[Allied Against Hate: a Toolkit For Faith Communities](#). This booklet (pdf file) was published in September 2023 by the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships. This toolkit describes practical steps faith communities can take to prevent acts of hate, discrimination, and bias, and to demonstrate solidarity with targeted communities if such acts tragically do occur.

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your health ministries; join in
conversations.

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An invitation from the Editors:

What programs and activities are happening in your area related to health and wellness? Share an innovative way you have provided an aspect of wellness ministries. Have a question about health and wellness ministries? Let us hear from you. Contact us at wellnessministries@ucc.org





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