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UCC Wellness Ministries Newsletter

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[COUNTERING PROJECT 2025 WITH LOVE: A UCC RESPONSE](#)



The mission of the Wellness Ministries of the UCC, National Setting is to *inform and engage UCC congregations in health and healing ministries for the benefit of each congregation and the community it serves*. The policy proposals put forth in Project 2025 stand in direct opposition to the UCC's values and work, harming those we serve daily.

[COUNTERING PROJECT 2025 WITH LOVE: A UCC RESPONSE](#) has been created to respond to some of the most extreme policies in Project 2025 from a faith perspective. As Karen Georgia Thompson, UCC General Minister and President, states, "We have long been a voice in the public square declaring the love of God for all people and present with those whose rights were threatened or diminished. As a community of faith, we continue to seek a just world for all. Project 2025 envisions a world where the civil and human rights of many are suppressed by economic and social policies."

The *Countering Project 2025 With Love* resource, a significant initiative by the UCC Office of Public Policy & Advocacy in Washington, D.C., in collaboration with UCC National staff members, is a must-read. It provides valuable insights and strategies to counter the

extreme policies in Project 2025 from a faith perspective. [Read more](#) about this new resource and download a copy [HERE](#).

The guidelines below explain how we may work to protect fundamental freedoms, protect the most vulnerable, and maintain the separation of church and state.

- [Guidelines for Congregations on Political Action](#) – This two-page guide will help you understand what activities UCC churches can undertake to raise our concerns and witness as we approach the elections.
- [Be Prophetic, Not Partisan: Navigating Election DOs and Don'ts for Churches](#) - offers advice for churches navigating this election.

Please share this important information with others so they know what dreadful consequences it will have on those we continually serve through Wellness Ministries.

A TIMELY HEALTH TIP

October - the time to prepare for essential conversations when loved ones gather for the holidays.

When prepared ahead of time, the holidays are the perfect opportunity to start conversations about the decisions an individual would like made on their behalf when they cannot speak for themselves. Resources are available to help prepare congregants, either as individuals or as a group, for these difficult conversations. Yet, people of all ages have misconceptions about advance care planning.

The [5 Most Common Myths About Advanced Care Planning](#) that cause people to delay the process are:

My loved ones will know what I want when the time comes. **FACT:** Nearly 1 in 3 people guessed wrong when asked to predict which end-of-life decisions their loved one would make.

I need a lawyer to create an advanced care plan. **FACT:** Most states offer free advance directive forms online, and you do not have to involve a lawyer.

I only need a plan if I'm very old or ill. **FACT:** It's impossible to predict the future. An emergency can happen at any age. Creating a plan now helps ensure that someone you trust can make decisions that reflect your wishes when needed.

An advance care plan only matters if I put it in writing. **FACT:** The most crucial part of planning is discussing your wishes with your loved ones. It can save them from worrying about whether they made the right decisions for you.

Once I put my plans in writing, I can't change them. **FACT:** Your advance directives can be changed at any time. Review your plans at least once a year and after any significant life event, such as a move, divorce, or change in health status.

[5 Wishes](#) is an easy-to-use legal advance directive document written in everyday language. It covers personal, spiritual, medical, and legal wishes in one document, allowing the family or caregiver to know exactly what a person wants, so there is no guessing or arguing. The digital version meets the requirements in all 50 states, which is reassuring when we cross stateliness. The paper document is legally valid in all but four states. [Resources](#) are available, including a Conversation Guide for Individuals and Families.

[Advance Care Planning—A Conversation Guide](#)—Available in both English and Spanish from the National Institute on Aging. Create your own plan using an e-mail series, Ready, Set, Plan! It also explains DNR, DNI, and DNH orders, POLST, MOLST, and POST documents that serve as medical orders.

[The Conversation Project](#) offers a series of guides that help break the silence so that people may share their wishes for care through the end of life. “The Conversation Project emphasizes having a conversation on values – *what matters to you, not what’s the matter with you.*” Ellen Goodman, Co-founder and Director. [Training kits](#) and [Audio versions of guides](#) are available.

WELLNESS MINISTRIES FOCUS



October is [Domestic Violence Awareness Month](#)

In a world where the wounds of domestic violence can run deep and invisible, we can break the silence and provide access to paths of safety and healing. However, do so in a gentle and supportive way because the odds are there is more than one current or past victim in your congregation.

Domestic violence can happen to anyone regardless of employment or educational level, race or ethnicity, religion, marital status, physical ability, age, sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation. [Domestic Violence Statistics](#). In the US, an average of 24 people per minute are victims of rape, physical violence, or stalking by an intimate partner. For many adults and children, home is not a safe place.

[A variety of Free Educational Materials are available to share with your congregation.](#)

- [The Clothesline Project](#) – This is a Break the Silence Project that began in 1990, offering a visual witness to violence against women. An exemplar in the UCC

[Wellness Ministries Toolkit](#) explains how a UCC church and a community joined together to create this meaningful tribute and educational project.

- [Safe Havens Interfaith Partnerships Against Domestic Violence](#) provides a webinar series for advocates and faith leaders (clergy and lay). Topics include: Abusers in the Congregation, Supporting Victims and Survivors of Elder Abuse, Domestic Violence Through a Christian Lens, and Between Compassion and Accountability: Guidelines for Faith Leaders Responding to People Who Abuse Intimate Partners.
- [Find Ways to Start a Conversation](#) – Talking with someone about abuse is hard for both people. The survivor may not want to talk about their situation for any number of reasons, including fear, shame, additional violence by the abuser, or even concern for the partner that is abusing them.
- [Supporting Victims and Survivors of Dating Violence in Our Faith Communities](#)– A Guide for Faith Leaders and Congregations.
- [BTSADV](#) (Break the Silence -Domestic Violence) – supports individuals experiencing domestic violence by offering a lifeline of understanding, resources, and empowerment.

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES FOR WELLNESS MINISTRIES



UCC Nurture the Soul, Faith INFO Webinars

Thursday, Oct 10th, 3:30 to 4:30 pm ET – *Discover Wellness Ministries in Your Congregation*

- Presenters: Alyson Breisch, Peggy Matteson
- This webinar will explore the variety of Wellness Ministry programs in UCC churches. Wellness Ministries resources will be illustrated. You will be invited to share ideas and questions in this interactive session. Please join us. [REGISTER HERE!](#)

Thursday, Oct 17th, 3:30 to 4:30 pm ET – *Wellness Ministries Intergenerational Happenings* Church Family Thanksgiving Dinner, Advent Candle wreath making, and Teddy bears in church.

- Presenters: Peggy Matteson, Alyson Breisch

- Organizing intergenerational gatherings and activities during Thanksgiving and Advent can reduce loneliness and deepen a sense of community within your congregation. We will share three different types of activities and answer your questions about how to plan and advertise your event. Please join us. [REGISTER HERE!](#)

Awaken Your Heart: Be Empowered, Encouraged, and Energized—34th Annual Health Ministries Conference— Oct. 16th, 17th, 23rd, and 24th—HMA is our professional organization and includes all faiths. The American Nurses Association and HMA are co-developers of *Faith Community Nursing: Scope and Standard of Practice*. -

UPDATES FROM THE UCC WELLNESS MINISTRIES LEADERSHIP TEAM

- **Oct. 6th** – Many churches collect the ***UCC Neighbors in Need*** offering as part of World Communion Sunday, but it may be collected on any Sunday during the calendar year. This year, the theme is “**Mental Health Justice For All**”. Please share the focus of the collection. One-third of the offering will support the Council for American Indian Ministry (CAIM). Justice and Witness Ministries will use the rest to provide grants to UCC churches and organizations.
- **Oct 13th – Access Sunday and Disabilities Awareness Week** –This week focuses on access and raises awareness about the injustice faced by people with a disability. [UCC Disabilities Ministry](#) provides resources year-round, including resources specific to Access Sunday.
- **UCC Wellness Ministries YouTube presentations**, [2024 UCC Wellness Ministries Overview](#), and [UCC Wellness Ministries Resources](#) are available. Have you seen or shared them? Please send your thoughts on what to develop next for [UCC Wellness Ministries](#).
- ***UCC Wellness Ministries Handbook for Visitation*** –The [UCC Resources Store](#) now offers this resource as a hard copy or a PDF download. It contains easy-to-use scripture passages, prayers, and blessings.
- **The Leadership Team’s next monthly meeting is Thursday, October 10th**, from 1:45 to 2:50 p.m. ET. We invite you to join colleagues from across the UCC as we develop additional ways to assist wellness ministries across the denomination. To learn more, contact Peggy Matteson, [Chair of UCC Wellness Ministries](#).
- **Wellness Ministries' Volunteer Orientation Series** offers six interactive trainer-the-trainer sessions based on information in the UCC Wellness Ministries Toolkit to help prepare effective volunteers. The September series filled up rapidly. Watch for an announcement of another series in early 2025.

LINKS TO NATIONAL HEALTH-RELATED TOPICS

October

- **10/6 – 10/12** [Mental Illness Awareness Week](#)
- **10/10** [National Depression Screening Day](#) – provides a free online screening tool and suggests the next steps to get assistance in dealing with this illness.
- **10/15** [National Mammography Day](#) reminds all women that the best defense is early detection, often detecting a problem before any outward physical sign.
- **Health Literacy Month**—Words used to teach health promotion and disease prevention can confuse anyone. The CDC provides [Health Equity Guiding Principles for Inclusive Communication](#) to increase health equity. After sharing information, the [Teach-Back Method](#) helps determine how much is understood as participants explain in their own words what they think they need to know or do. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services extensively lists [health literacy resources](#). The National Institute of Health provides [Clear Communication](#) resource pages.

November

- **11/28 – Thanksgiving Day** is [Collect Your Family Health History Day](#) provides Family Health History Tools and Resources
- **Alzheimer’s Disease Awareness Month** - The CDC provides a [Healthy Brain Resource Center](#) that provides information that supports and promotes dementia risk reduction, early detection and diagnosis, prevention of avoidable hospitalizations, and dementia caregiving. Information tailored for leaders of American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities is available.
- **Diabetes Awareness Month** – African American, Hispanic/Latina, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Asian/Pacific Islanders are more likely to have diabetes than White individuals. [Toolkits](#) are available to engage communities, increase cultural competence, and promote type 2 prevention and diabetes management.
- [Lung Cancer Awareness Month](#) – explains several ways to lower lung cancer risk: not smoking, staying away from secondhand smoke, and testing your home for radon. Fact sheets and infographics are provided.
- [National Family Caregivers Month](#) recognizes and honors family caregivers who are the primary source of support for older adults and people with disabilities. It aims to raise awareness of caregiving issues, educate communities, and increase support for the more than 53 million unpaid family caregivers, many of whom also

work outside the home. [Refer caregivers to this site](#) for information and an uplifting message.

WELLNESS MINISTRIES RELATED INFORMATION

Available from The Pilgrim Press

- [Caregiving 101](#) – When the author’s brother had a stroke, she was thrust into the realm of caregiving: the medical jargon, the legal paperwork, the spiritual exhaustion. *She* offers practical guidance from her own experience.
- [Caring for Ourselves While Caring for Our Elders](#) offers *an* overview of the issues in contemporary elder care, overarching biblical themes, and spiritual support for caregivers.
- [Healing Worship](#) - Provides practical tools with healing homilies, liturgies, and theological reflection on the church's healing ministry, pastoral self-care, and wellness ministries.
- [The Gospel of Loneliness](#) - There is good news to learn in loneliness when we go through it intentionally rather than avoiding or dismissing it.
- [Wild Coin Hunting](#) – The Recovery of Joy While Living with Depression. *This* narrative balances humor with hard truths as Griggs focuses on pleasure and other recovery essentials. Coming this fall. Preorder today.

Links to relevant articles

- [Self-forgiveness is more than self-comfort - a philosopher explains](#) - Self-forgiveness means managing to work through painful feelings such as guilt, shame, and deep disappointment with ourselves. It entails [transforming negative attitudes](#), such as contempt, anger, and shame, into more positive emotions such as respect and humility.
- [Lock-down](#) – There are good, common-sense ideas for restricting access to guns, being thoughtful about who can own and use guns, and plans for how to train and hold people responsible if they want to own guns. And yes, we need to increase our support and resources for the epidemic of mental health challenges our children and young people are struggling with these days. Isn’t it way past time to answer the cries of our children?

Education and Networking Opportunities

- [Organizing for Small Town Churches](#) – October 16th, 7:00 – 8:30 pm. This online workshop recognizes the work small-town churches are already doing. It explores

an organizing framework for your critical relationships and offers encouragement for future engagement in service to the world God is inviting us to create.

- [Convicted Offenders in Your Congregation: Recommendations and Best Practices](#) is a free educational video available from The Insurance Board. Remember that unknown victims of past abuses may be active in your church. Safe Space policies and procedures should be followed explicitly before a situation such as this arises. The response can then be based on policies and procedures known by all and not be personalized to the convicted offender.

KEEP CONNECTED SO WE CAN SUPPORT ONE ANOTHER

We are a community of mutually supportive colleagues focused on various aspects of Wellness Ministries. Thanks to Debbie Ringen, we now have two additional ways to communicate.

- Join Instagram **wellness.ministries.ucc** for announcements and information. Offer a supportive thumbs-up or a thoughtful comment. All responses will be appreciated.
- Go to the **UCC Wellness Ministries Facebook page**. Join in conversations. Share what you are doing within your congregation. Support the activities of others. E-mail [UCC Wellness Ministries](#)

Our ministries are more vital when we share ideas!



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