United Thank Offering

HANDBOOK

for Diocesan and Church Coordinators

Episcopal Church USA

www.episcopalchurch.org/uto
DEDICATION

This booklet is offered in thanksgiving for all the people whose ministries are reflected in its contents and for all those whose lives have been or will be touched through the United Thank Offering.

Revised 2006
Compiled by the Communications Subcommittee of the UTO Committee
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Message From the Committee

Grateful hearts are the reason the United Thank Offering is able to continue to award grants which are gifts of love, and which change lives. They are also the reason the United Thank Offering is a vital mission arm of the Episcopal Church.

We love the concept that UTO is not a fund drive, but rather a discipline in our daily life in Christ wherein we offer prayers of thanksgiving for our countless blessings; this makes giving a joyful experience.

One of the great joys of serving on the United Thank Offering Committee is the opportunity to visit grant sites and to see what these gifts of love are making possible. Our prayer is that the work of the United Thank Offering will continue and will flourish for many years to come.

We are grateful for diocesan coordinators and for the church coordinators without whom we could not function. We are also grateful for bishops and clergy who are supportive of our efforts.

It is our hope that this booklet will be of interest to you and of help in spreading the message of the United Thank Offering.

United Thank Offering Committee
The mission of the United Thank Offering is to expand the circle of thankful people. To achieve this mission, we encourage daily prayers, offerings, and awareness of the abundance of God's blessings.

Our values are:
Thanksgiving (for joy, blessings and challenges)
Generosity (all offerings are granted)
Mission (expand the church)
Ministry (meet compelling human needs)
The United Thank Offering is a spiritual and financial partner in the mission work of The Episcopal Church.

UNITED THANK OFFERING PRAYER

GRACIOUS GOD, source of all creation, all love, all true joy: accept, we pray, these outward signs of our profound and continuing thankfulness for all of life. Keep each of us ever thankful for all the blessings of joy and challenge that come our way. Bless those who will benefit from these gifts through the outreach of the United Thank Offering. This we ask through Him who is the greatest gift and blessing of all, Jesus Christ.

Amen
**Responsibilities**

**THE CHURCH COORDINATOR**

**Encourages** each household in the congregation to have and use a UTO Blue Box throughout the whole year.

**Teaches** that as daily prayers of thanks are given and money is placed in their boxes, the money becomes an outward and visible sign of thanks to God. It is a way to fulfill our baptismal covenant: to serve Christ in all persons, love our neighbor as ourselves and strive for justice and peace among all people.

**Uses** the sample prayers, songs, scripture references and service materials provided in this booklet to tell the story of the United Thank Offering, or uses the samples to develop ideas and materials (see sample letter in appendix).

**Holds** *Spring* and *Fall* Ingatherings. Encourages the *counting of blessings*. The size of the ingathering is not so important as the *practice* of thanksgiving.
   a. Coordinates dates with clergy or worship committee.
   b. Provides UTO envelopes—purchased or created—so that participants can empty their boxes and continue to use them. Explains where the filled envelopes are to be taken or sent.
   c. Makes sure envelopes are available in the pews or handed out at the door the day of the ingathering, and/or sends them out ahead in a church mailing or in a personal newsletter.

**Keeps** records of ingathering amounts and the dates sent as well as UTO expenses incurred.

**Combines** monies received and sends a check(s) for the amount to the UTO Diocesan Coordinator (or to the person/place designated by the diocese).
NONE of the ingathering money may be used for expenses. Money to cover your expenses and supplies may be secured from your vestry, ECW or clergy.

Notifies the UTO Diocesan Coordinator when leaving the UTO position. Includes name, address, phone, fax, and email address of the new UTO Church Coordinator.

**Ways to present the United Thank Offering story**

*Order and use printed materials.* A packet with samples of available materials is sent to your local church twice a year (Spring and Fall). A list of current materials can also be found by clicking Order UTO Materials on the UTO website, at www.episcopalchurch.org/uto.

*Show a United Thank Offering DVD.* Your diocesan coordinator has a copy that you may borrow, or you may purchase your own copy. The DVD contains both the English and Spanish versions.

*Speak to your congregation, ECW, vestry, etc.* Invite guest speakers or have the members visit a grant site.

*Create a United Thank Offering display* in a visible area using the poster, other hand outs, and local or diocesan grant site pictures you may have.

*Host a United Thank Offering coffee hour.* (Blue theme; blueberry muffins, etc. might be served.)
**THE DIOCESAN COORDINATOR**

*Encourages* prayer in thanksgiving for blessings every day and the tangible offering of coins in the Blue Box.

*Works* with clergy and church groups to recruit local church coordinator.

*Helps* church coordinators with their work. Offers to speak and show the DVD or CD when asked. Points out ways to use materials and shares ideas to promote the goal of every family offering prayers of thanks and providing a tangible offering to pass blessings on to others.

*Communicates* with the UTO Province Representative to gain training, answers to questions, and helpful information. Attends a *Face-to-Face* training.

*Sends* letters twice yearly reminding church coordinators of upcoming Ingathering dates.

*Corresponds* and meets with clergy and other organizations within the diocese to keep them informed of the opportunities for mission through the Blue Box.

(Note: UTO is neither a fundraiser nor a stewardship campaign, and it is not a program for women only. Expressing thankfulness benefits all members alike: men, women, youth, and children.)

*Creates* a UTO packet of information and materials to present as a welcoming gift to new clergy (deacons, priests, bishops) in the diocese.

*Cooperates* with the bishop(s) to insure that UTO is an integral part of the life of the diocese.

*Urges* the bishop to appoint a screening committee. This committee assists the coordinator in reviewing, investigating, and making recommendations concerning the diocesan UTO grant requests.

*Aids* the UTO Province Representative in understanding the unique characteristics of the grant requests submitted from the diocese.
Visits congregations and UTO grant sites when possible.

Informs the Province Representative of the UTO Committee of UTO activities in the Diocese, by sending copies of communications and responding to requests for information.

Notifies local church coordinators when we are mailing our Spring and Fall packets.

Receives offering money from UTO Church Coordinators. Sends check payable to the United Thank Offering with the name of the diocese or the special diocesan account number in the 'memo' as often as necessary (but at least twice a year) to:

United Thank Offering
Domestic & Foreign Missionary Society
Box 12095
Newark, NJ 07101

Offerings must be received at the lockbox by the end of the year in order to be granted the following year; therefore, please send your offering to the address above by December 15 so it can be counted. December 31 postmark no longer counts.

Keeps records of participating churches, amounts received, and dates.

Forwards receipts/acknowledgments to participants.

Provides the United Thank Offering office (815 Second Avenue, New York, NY 10017) and the UTO Province Representative with current information including their name, address, telephone, fax and email address and the same information for the new UTO Diocesan Coordinator when leaving the position.

 Writes articles about the UTO for diocesan newspaper(s).
DIOCESAN GRANTS SCREENING COMMITTEE

The grants screening committee is involved in the grant application cycle, which runs from October through January 31 every year. It serves at the pleasure of the diocesan bishop.

The committee is responsible for assisting the bishop in screening all UTO grant proposals that come from within the diocese. The bishop is asked to recommend two projects from the diocese for funding by the UTO Committee.

The screening committee must be familiar with the current UTO criteria and policies. These can be found on the UTO web site by clicking “How to apply for a grant” and are included in the United Thank Offering grant application packet sent to the bishop’s office and to each UTO Diocesan Coordinator in October.

The applicants need to be informed, in writing, of the date the applications must be in the bishop’s office for review. The dates for the screening committee’s work should be coordinated with the bishop’s office. Some dioceses have local people visit the proposed grant sites and some hold hearings when the requests are presented.

The local person must be well informed about the project before making a site visit. They should be armed with a copy of the grant application as well as the policy and criteria. Site visitation by people of the diocese is very valuable for the UTO Province Representative.

The committee reviews the final recommendations to insure that they are complete and presented on the current year’s application form. At the close of the screening process, the chairman sends a report and recommendations to the bishop (if the bishop is not an active member of the committee). Grant requests, with all required attachments, must be submitted to the UTO Office in New York and must be postmarked no later than January 31. It is also important to send a copy, with all required attachments, to the UTO Province Representative.
Memorial and Gift Trust Fund

Grant that we may be encouraged by their good examples of living and serving you with joy and thanksgiving: and bless your servants with thankful hearts, as they lift up to you those dear to them with an offering in their name. Amen

The United Thank Offering Memorial and Gift Trust Fund was established in 1982 as a permanent trust. Gifts enable ongoing prayer and remembrance. The names of those who are honored or memorialized are permanently recorded in a book that is kept at the Episcopal Church Center and displayed at each Triennial Meeting of the Episcopal Church Women.

Earnings from the investment of the fund assure income to:

- Support the work of the independent, elected volunteer UTO Committee
- Provide materials for the extensive diocesan and local church volunteer network to help them increase awareness of the United Thank Offering and encourage more thankful prayers and offerings in the Blue Box
- Supplement Blue Box offerings that are given as grants

Gifts to the United Thank Offering Memorial and Gift Trust Fund may be made at any time. A special tribute of thanksgiving is appropriate in loving recognition for devoted leadership, ministry and faithful service, or for special events such as birthdays, anniversaries, and graduations. Gifts also may be made in loving memory of a cherished friend, relative, or church leader.
Liturgical Resources

And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Colossians 3:17

MUSIC RESOURCES

9 Not Here for High and Holy Things
178 Alleluia
233 The Eternal Gifts of Christ the King
290 Come Ye Thankful People Come
366 Holy God We Praise Thy Name
376 Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee
385 Many and Great
397 Now Thank We All our God
411 O Bless The Lord My Soul
412 Earth and All Stars
416 For the Beauty of the Lord
437 Tell Out My Soul
445 Praise to the Holiest
486 Come Thy Fount of Every Blessing

The UTO Song “Thanks Be To God” can be found on the UTO website: www.episcopalchurch.org/uto
PRAYER RESOURCES

Prayer resources abound! Some suggestions:

- *Prayers Old and New (revised)* Forward Movement
- *A General Thanksgiving* BCP 58 & 101
- *Thanksgivings* BCP 836-841
- Other thanksgiving prayers BCP index p. 813

Table Graces

For work well done and work to do,
We praise your name, O Lord.
For those we love and need to love,
We praise your name, O Lord.

For awareness of You in the common and unexpected,
We praise your name, O Lord.
For bread and wine, our food and drink,
We praise your name, O Lord.

--Barbara Hopwood--

Oh Thou who clothest the lilies
And feedest the birds of the sky;
And leadest the lambs to the pasture
And the hart to the waterside;
Who multiplied loaves and fishes
And converted water to wine—
Do Thou come to our table
As guest and giver to dine.

--Mrs. Theresa Evans--
I asked God to take away my pain.
   God said, No. It is not for me to take away,
   but for you to give it up.
I asked God to make my handicapped child whole.
   God said, No. Her spirit was whole, her
   body was only temporary.
I asked God to grant me patience.
   God said, No. Patience is a byproduct of
   tribulations; it isn’t granted, it is earned.
I asked God to give me happiness.
   God said, No. I give you blessings.
   Happiness is up to you.
I asked God to spare me pain.
   God said, No. Suffering draws you apart from
   worldly cares and brings you closer to me.
I asked God to make my spirit grow.
   God said, No. You must grow on your own,
   but I will prune you to make you fruitful.
I asked for all things that I might enjoy life.
   God said, No. I will give you life so that you
   may enjoy all things.
I asked God to help me LOVE others, as much as
   He loves me. God said ... Ahhh, finally you have the idea.

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Other Prayers

Sunlit leaves, sweet morning breezes
   Your blessings excite my being
   Thanks, Lord.
Buzzing bees, spiders and carpenter ants
   Dutifully scurry on their way
   Thanks, Lord.
Frisky chipmunks, chickadees and finches
   Chirping a welcoming symphony
   Thanks, Lord.
Creation’s artful display
   A daily walking meditation
   Thanks, Lord.

PEGGY ANN WILDS
LORD, bless the food upon our dishes
As you did the loaves and fishes,
And like the sugar in our tea
May our lives be stirred by thee.

**GIVEN TO ECW BY ANNA FIELD**

GOD, we thank you for this food,
For rest and home and all things good,
For wind and rain and sun above,
But most of all for those we love. *Amen*

**UNKNOWN**

HEAVENLY FATHER, giver of all good gifts
Take our hands and lead us through the coming days.
Teach us to share your gifts and blessings with others
Along life’s way.

**TRANSLATED FROM**
THE GERMAN EDITION OF *THE UPPER ROOM*

Goodness is stronger than evil;
Love is stronger than hate;
Light is stronger than darkness;
Life is stronger than death;
Victory is ours through Him who loves us.

**DESMOND TUTU, SOUTH AFRICA**

ALMIGHTY GOD;
you give seed for us to sow,
and bread for us to eat;
make us thankful for what we have received;
make us rich to do those generous things
which supply your people’s needs;
so all the world may give you thanks and glory.

**A NEW ZEALAND PRAYER BOOK**

Be thou beside me to defend me
Be thou within me to keep me
Be thou before me to lead me
Be thou above me and bless me
Be thou behind me to guard me
That in thee and with thee
I may live and have my being forever. *Amen*

**UNKNOWN**
MY LORD GOD,
I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot
know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact
that I think I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing
so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope
I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything
apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right
road though I may know nothing about it. Therefore will I trust you always
though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for
you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.

THOMAS MERTON “THOUGHTS IN SOLITUDE”

ALMIGHTY GOD, Thank you for all the women of the world, and especially
for the women gathered here this evening. Renew our spirits through the love
and friendship we enjoy at this, our Annual Corporate Communion. Help us
to use our various talents to explore our different backgrounds, to develop our
different occupations, to share our love of each other and to find that common
thread of worship, devotion and communion that will bind us together in lives
of service to You. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen

MARTHA FISHER
DIOCESE OF DELAWARE

Give us, Dear Lord, the modesty to know that the work in which we are
engaged is but a part of your whole Church.

Give us faithfulness to fulfill that part by being all that we are
meant to be and doing only what we are meant to do.
And give us that enthusiasm to share the tasks with those
whom you have called in other ways,
that together we may proclaim your great salvation.
Through Jesus Christ, Our Lord. Amen

CHURCH MISSION SOCIETY
May the God of Eve teach your broken bones to dance.
May the God of Hagar bring you comfort in the desert times of your life.
May the God of Miriam bring companions to you on your way.
May the God of Deborah grant you courage for your battles.
May the Christ who knew Mary and Martha show you the way of balance.
May the Christ who healed the bent-over woman heal your pain.
May the Christ of Mary Magdala send you out to proclaim your story.
In the name of Christ who is the memory, hope and authority of the future. Amen

BY MARY ZIMMER
IN "WOMEN’S PSALMS" SAINT MARY’S PRESS

An easy thing, O Power Divine,
To thank Thee for these gifts of Thine,
For summer’s sunshine, winter’s snow,
For hearts that kindle, thoughts that glow.

THOMAS W. HIGGINSON

Oh, Lord, thank you for the blessings in my life—
my family and friends I Pray that these coins go to those who need them, that their lives may be turned around. I ask this in your Son’s name, Jesus Christ. Amen

BETSY KYLE, DIOCESE OF CONNECTICUT

We thank you, Lord, for the material resources which support the life and witness of your Church, for those in many places who have given them, and for those who help to use them responsibly in our service. May we use your gifts creatively, faithfully, wisely, boldly; and may our constant aim be the furtherance of your kingdom.

Amen
LITANIES

A Litany of Thanksgiving
The Reverend Canon Henry and Mrs. Male,
The Reverend Ralph Moore, Diocese of Maine

**Leader:** Let us remember before God and one another the ministries of every member of the universal church, saying,

**People:** “We remember and give thanks.”

**Leader:** For missionaries and emissaries here and abroad; founders and members of Episcopal religious orders; members and leaders of the Episcopal Church Women; and all Episcopal organizations, God of our sacred story,

**People:** We remember and give thanks.

**Leader:** For those who labor for the Church; in parish, diocese, province, and nation; for deacons, priests, and bishops, God of our sacred story,

**People:** We remember and give thanks.

**Leader:** For the diversity of ministries; for those who work for justice and peace; those who offer themselves in charity and outreach to those in need; people of vision and action, God of abundant blessing,

**People:** We remember and give thanks.

**Leader:** For those who enrich the Church and the world with their intellectual and creative gifts; those who create, provide, and preserve the arts; and who tend the earth and protect its resources, God of abundant blessing,

**People:** We remember and give thanks.

**Leader:** For those who offer hospitality, fellowship, and nurture as parents, friends, and neighbors, people of spiritual wisdom and prayer; those who are ministers of healing, to the sick, the troubled, the homebound, and the grieving, God of abundant blessing,
People: We remember and give thanks.

Leader: For those who sustain the life of the Church by quiet acts of service, with children and youth, in worship, in the guilds, in the kitchen, in the classrooms, in meeting rooms, and in the offices, God of abundant blessing,

People: We remember and give thanks.

Leader: Gracious God, source of life and giver of all good gifts, we thank you for all those who have ministered in your name throughout the ages. Grant us courage and compassion that we may stand ever receptive to your grace and faithful to your call.

People: Amen

Leader: When we are free of fear and worry,

People: O God, accept our offering.

Leader: When our children return home safely,

People: O God, accept our offering.

Leader: When a new baby is born in our family,

People: O God, accept our offering.

Leader: When we receive your gifts of food, clothing and shelter,

People: O God, accept our offering.

Leader: When we see your creative hand in the beauty of nature,

People: O God, accept our offering.

Leader: When our loved ones return to you,

People: O God, accept our offering.

Leader: When the sick and suffering are healed,
People: O God, accept our offering.

Leader: When the right solution comes to some serious problem,

People: O God, accept our offering.

Leader: When we find the peace of God in pain and sorrow,

People: O God, accept our offering.

Leader: When we discover through faith that death is a gateway into eternal life with Christ,

People: O God, accept our offering.

Leader: When we have enjoyed good fellowship and friends,

People: O God, accept our offering.

Leader & People: O God, we ask that we may ever be united in our response to your love, thankful for our many blessings and happy to give our offering; that by your Holy Spirit all nations and peoples may know the power of the love of Jesus Christ. Amen

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

The following scripture passages highlight blessings and thankfulness. They may be used as “jumping off” points for talks, or as citations in letters, newsletters, etc.

Leviticus 7:12, 19:5, 23:19
Nehemiah 11:17
Psalm 9:1-2; 24, 26:7; 34:1-10, 22; 56:11; 69:30; 92:1-2; 100; 117:1-2; 138:1-8; 146:1-2
Matthew 26:27
Mark 8:6
Luke 22:19
John 11:41
II Corinthians 4:15, 9:12
Philippians 4:6
Colossians 2:7, 4:2, 3:15-17
I Thessalonians 5:18
Suggested Talk About the United Thank Offering

May the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts be always acceptable in your sight, O Lord our strength and our redeemer.

SAMPLE TALK

Thanks be to God for:
(while holding a Blue Box and putting coins into it with each Thanksgiving)

1. The beautiful weather …
2. ________________________________
3. ________________________________

The United Thank Offering is a personal and family devotional program of the Episcopal Church. It is the sum of our daily thanks for the blessing in our everyday lives—for good weather, happy times, job opportunity, and unexpected visits—there are so many things for which we can be thankful. At the very least, we can be thankful to God for blessings and take action by putting coins in the Blue Box. Twice a year you are asked to bring the amount of your daily thanksgiving for the ingathering, where it is combined with the offerings of hundreds of thousands of other Episcopalians to become the United Thank Offering.

The United Thank Offering is an organization founded by women in 1889 and originally supportive of women missionaries. It has become a worldwide effort to meet compelling human needs and to expand the mission and ministry of the church—for men, women and children throughout the world.

The United Thank Offering is a way for each person to express tangible thanks to God. United with the prayers and offerings of Episcopalians, its ministry reaches around the world.
I invite you all to pick up a Blue Box and join the United Thank Offering. Put it in a convenient place. Take a moment each day to say thank you to God and put a coin in that box. We are not meant to be passive receivers; rather we are bid to be active participants in God’s work in the world.

(Hold up the Blue Box and insert another coin.)

I am thankful for this opportunity to speak with you about the United Thank Offering.

GWEN SAMPSON
DIOCESE OF WEST TEXAS

A REFLECTION ON GIVING THANKS

As a young child, I was taught a song that says, “Count your blessings, name them one by one.” The words of that song remain with me today, and it is through naming my blessings and placing a coin or two or three, maybe even a dollar or more, in my Blue Box that I can see what God has done.

I have been asked, “How much money should I put in my Blue Box? My answer is, “How grateful are you, and how much do you think you should put in it?” St. Paul says, “Be a joyful giver.” If you feel guilty because you haven’t given enough, simply give an amount that you feel is fair. If you feel guilty because you’ve given so much you or those you love suffer, simply give less. I’ll admit that sometimes I find it difficult to be grateful when someone has hurt my feelings or I feel maligned in some way. However, when I think of those suffering from hunger, abuse, torture or slavery in the world today, my cares and concerns seem very small, and I thank God with a prayer and a prayer offering in my Blue Box.

Some people say, “I don’t know how to pray. What should I say?” God knows what is in your heart, so prayer can just be a simple “Thank you, God” or other similar words.

There are many examples in scripture of small offerings multiplying to meet needs…the fishes and the loaves, and the manna in the wilderness to name two. So, too, do the tangible offerings and prayers of the United Thank Offering multiply. Coins and dollars,
when joined together, become grants that meet compelling human need or church expansion. Through these grants, those less fortunate can come to know the love of God.

This dream of the women in 1889 that build a church in Anvik, Alaska and sent a woman missionary to Japan has become an important missionary arm of the Episcopal Church. Today, women, men, youth and children of the church thank God for their many blessings and give offerings in the Blue Box that bring blessings to those in need.

I hope you will help the United Thank Offering Committee meet our goal of a Blue Box in every home!

DIANA BORN
DIOCESE OF ARIZONA

CONTINUING THE LEGACY

The United Thank Offering has a legacy. Two far-sighted, mission-minded women began the legacy in 1889. Julia Emery and Ida Soule were leaders in their day. The General Convention looked to them to begin the Women’s Auxiliary as part of the Board of Missions. They began the offering to show the connection between giving thanks and giving money, united praying and sharing.

Women throughout these many years have carried forth the legacy. The United Thank Offering has grown and strengthened. Prayer and offering are our response to God’s love as experienced in our lives.

The church continued to look to the United Thank Offering in times of extreme need. In 1967, Presiding Bishop, John Hines, asked the General Convention and the Triennial Meeting to support a newly established Urban Crisis fund. The Triennial Meeting was the first to respond by pledging one million dollars a year for three years from the United Thank Offering.

Thus began the awarding of the grants every year rather than only at the Triennial Meeting. We are confirmed in our actions as the offering continues to grow from three million dollars every three years to nearly three million dollars each year.
The United Thank Offering Committee itself took a bold step during the 1985–1988 triennium. The Committee decided to grant $350,000 each year for three years to establish the Memorial and Gift Trust Fund. This met with some objections, but the committee stood firm. We are so glad they did! Today, the income from the Memorial and Gift Trust Fund supports the entire operating budget of the UTO Committee. Since 1988 every cent offered through the twice-yearly ingatherings is granted throughout the world for mission and in response to compelling human need.

The integrity of our legacy has been maintained for over 100 years. The United Thank Offering is a strong and firm mission arm of the Episcopal Church. The ‘blue box’ gives the opportunity for all members of our church family to give thanks for their blessings each day. Your coins and mine are joined with those from all over the Episcopal Church. Each one is important; each prayer is remembered. The legacy continues.

BARBARA MYRICK
DIOCESE OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

QUICK QUOTES

“Thanksgiving was never meant to be shut up in a single day.”

UNKNOWN

“Gratitude takes three forms: a feeling in the heart, an expression in words, and giving in return”

SISTERS HEARTLAND SAMPLERS, INC.

God gave you the gift of 86,000 seconds today, have you used one to say “thank you?”

WILLIAM A. WARD

Thou hast given me so much …
give me one thing more, a grateful heart.

GEORGE HERBERT 1595-1633
JOURNEY OF THE BLUE BOX

“Grandma, tell me why I should put a coin in the Blue Box,” Kia said as she picked up the box. “Because you are giving thanks, child,” I replied. “But, for what am I giving thanks?” she persisted. That is a question that I must answer carefully, because I really want this curious grandchild of mine to understand WHY.

“First, you tell me what are some things that you are thankful for—you know—the things that you can’t imagine not having.”

“That’s easy,” she said. “I can’t live without Mommy and Daddy and ice cream and my new baby brother ‘n’ Buddy (the dog), Cathy, my best friend, ‘n’ Misty (the doll), ‘n’ cats, my bike, ‘n’”

“Okay, honey, I get the picture—these are things that are very precious to you, right?” She nods and looks at me questioningly.

“Then you could say, ‘I am thankful for these people and these things that make me happy’, couldn’t you?”

“Yes, but why the Blue Box?” “Because,” I answered, “it is a way of thanking God for letting these lovely blessings come into your life—of sharing these blessings by placing a coin in the Blue Box.”

“Where does the coin go? How does my coin help?”

“Your coin joins other coins throughout the church and it becomes a part of a great pile of coins that become dollars. These dollars are then sent to places like Africa where the money may buy goats for a whole village. It may also be used for schools, community centers, churches, and clinics to help people help themselves. The money from the Blue Box also helps to build shelters for the homeless and children, women and men who have been hurt.

“Here in our town, too?” she asked. “Yes, indeed!” I reply. “The Good Shepherd Center is one of the places that received a grant from the UTO to help with the day-care program. They can serve 30 more families now.”

“Where else does the coin go?” she asks. I get out the globe and give it a gentle spin. “Wherever the word of God is taken in the Anglican Communion. From Alaska to Zimbabwe, and all places in between, our offering becomes a might prayerful thanksgiving as it joins other offerings on its journey to aid our sisters and brothers in Christ.”

Gwen Sampson
Diocese of West Texas
A Letter

A letter for you to use with children is found in the appendix. Try to address each letter personally. It is important for each child to know that their participation is valued. Adapt the letter to fit the children of your congregation. The more personal you can make the letter, the better it will be. Try to use colorful paper for the letter and mail it to each child’s home, or give it to them at Church School. The earlier that we start the children learning and practicing thankfulness, the more considerate and Christ-like these children will become.

(All inspirational materials mentioned below are listed in the appendix.)

Every month or two use the Children's Activity Sheets and the tattoos. These were designed especially to encourage children's participation in the United Thank Offering.

Use all the other UTO materials as part of the Church School program. The following suggestions are ways these UTO material can be made extra special for children.

BLUE BOX:

1. Always have a Blue Box set in a visible space.
2. Each time you gather, the teacher starts by putting in coins of thanksgiving with a prayer. Later invite the children to do likewise. As you proceed include spontaneous thanks for things that come up during the class session.
3. Be sure that each child has his/her own UTO Blue Box.
4. UTO every day and everywhere! Ask the children where they think a good spot would be to keep a UTO box at home. Discuss how to use the boxes, for example at mealtime, after school, just before or after a trip, etc. …
5. As the teacher, be sure to thank the children for being there for class. Also mention thanks for their parents, grandparents, or whoever brought them to church. (Deposit a coin or two in the Blue Box as you express your thanks.)
POSTER:

1. Place the UTO poster on a classroom wall.
2. Take a Sunday to focus just on Thanksgiving by using the multicolored poster, have the children review the thankful words on the poster. Then ask them to think of some of their own. Ask them for ways that they show thankfulness at home. Try to encourage them to focus on the small everyday ways of showing gratitude. This fits in with offering their coins of thanksgiving at home.
3. Make their own Thankful Poster. To prepare for the class, have the children bring in pictures of themselves, their family, their home, toys, nature, places, and pets, or anything for which they might be thankful. Collect pictures yourself, because some children may forget to bring these items. Have supplies available so that each child can make their own poster. Display these in the church hall before they take them home.

PLACEMATS:

1. Prepare the Sunday school room with the UTO placemats on the tables. Review the words and pictures as examples of thanksgiving. Then pass out a small food treat that they can share. This activity correlates with the Eucharist and other Bible stories.
2. Have the children make their own thankful placemat. See the suggestions used for the poster. Laminate the placemats and encourage children to make extra ones so that these can be used at a church function.
3. Make thankful napkins to go with their placemats. Sturdy white paper napkins or towels and crayons are suggested for this project. Have the children draw small pictures and write words on the napkins.
LAPEL BUTTON: “TODAY, I AM THANKFUL FOR …”

1. Give each child a button as you tell your own reason to be thankful for that particular child.
2. Suggest the children give a button to someone in their family. Practice reading the words and adding their own thanksgivings.

POSTCARDS: “TODAY, I AM THANKFUL FOR …”

1. Give each child one postcard. Have them fill in their own home address on the front. On the message side have them fill in the name of their mom or dad. Write down one reason why they are especially thankful for them. Then you, as the teacher, may send these in the US mail. Have the children report back the responses of the adults when they receive their card.
2. Have additional cards available for the children to take home so that they can send them to others.
3. As the teacher, send a UTO post card to each child in your class at least once a year.

DVD: “TURNING LIVES AROUND”

1. Show this 18-minute DVD to the children. Be sure to follow up with discussion of the grant examples and the cultural differences that were shown. The act of helping people is still needed no matter how modern or old things are. God’s loving generosity is always here and we are called to bring that special love to others by saying prayers of thanks when we drop coins in the Blue Box.
2. Have the children act out their own movie of how they would use the UTO for the benefit of others today. Encourage them to look around their own neighborhood to notice the “compelling human needs” of the area. This is a good way to teach them to be concerned for the needs of others.
CHILDREN’S PRAYERS OF THANKS

(Unless otherwise noted, prayers in this section were written by Peggy Ann Wilds.)

Encourage the children to write their own prayers of thanks. Use as many simple children’s prayers as you can find or simplify the ones used in our Book of Common Prayer. The Litany lends itself to be rewritten by the children with their words and special items of thanks.

Dear God, Keep my family safe. Thank you for my mom and dad. And thank you for my special pet. I love you God. Amen

Hi God, Are you listening with both ears? First I want to thank you for my special friends. We play together at school. We have fun. And second, please help _________ who is sick and needs you.

Thanks, Me

Each time you feel thankful, just drop a small coin in this little Blue Box with others who have joined. Then this little Blue Box is for you.

You’ll be happy to know that all money you give will go to those whose dream is just a better life to live. Then this little Blue Box is for you.
The ABC PRAYER of THANKS

Today I thank God for APPLES
And BANANAS so sweet,
For Halloween CANDY.

DADS are special, EGGS sunny side up,
FUDGE with nuts, for these I am grateful.

For birthday GIFTS, HOLIDAYS, and for
ICE CREAM of course, thanks God!

JUMP ROPES, KITES, and for all the
LOVE I receive from mom and dad,
Thank again, God.

These lines are a start of what you can do with children. They will love to share their own ideas. This can be adapted to saying thanks for the things they see along the way as they travel or take a walk. By putting their thanks in ABC order and saying “Thank you Lord” every once in a while they learn to focus on the every day things that bless our lives. Later on their ABC prayer of THANKS can be written out and shared.

MEAL PRAYERS OF THANKS

For all the food we are going to eat, thank you, God.
For the farmer who grew it, thank you, God.
For the person who prepared it, thank you, God. Amen

Give us grateful hearts, our Father, for all your mercies, and make us ever mindful of the needs of others.
Now thank we all our God, with heart and hand and voices; who wondrous things hath done, in whom his world rejoices.

Catherine Winkworth

LORD we thank you for all have come to this table to share in this meal. May all the food we have this day help us to grow strong bodies. May the food we eat help us to have a clear mind and help us to grow in your likeness, Lord. Thank you, God. Amen

For fast food, snacks, or home cooked meals, for all of these, we are thankful, God.

JESUS be with us and help us to remember the needs of others as we enjoy our food today. Amen
SAMPLE LETTERS

Sample letter for local church coordinators

DATE

Dear __________,

A United Thank Offering Ingathering will be held on Sunday, ______________. You are invited to ‘count your blessings’—those coins you have put in the Blue Box in thanksgiving for large and small daily gifts from God that brighten your life and the lives of those around you. Use the enclosed envelope to offer your coins or a check for the amount of your blessings. Send or bring it to the church so that it can be joined with the thank offerings of other Episcopalians.

The power of the Blue Box is unlimited. Your prayers and offerings have built churches and schools, made needed renovations, fed the hungry, clothed the poor, provided shelter for the homeless and have provided care and support for those with physical, mental and emotional challenges. In our area, your offerings have enabled a grant(s) to be given to_________.

If you do not have a Blue Box, or would like to know more about the United Thank Offering, please ask me. We need you! Regular, intentional thanksgiving can make a difference in your life as well as in the lives of those who receive your offering.

Yours in thanksgiving,
Name, Title
Address
Phone
E-mail
Sample letter to new clergy

When you send out or deliver a clergy packet, include a letter similar to the sample below. Suggested enclosures include: UTO and Me brochure, Blue Box, bookmark, poster with next ingathering date marked, a Memorial and Gift Trust Fund flier, a UTO pin. Check your order form, the UTO web-site www.episcopalchurch.org/uto or www.episcopalparishservices.org for materials currently available.

DATE

Dear __________,

Welcome. I am so happy to greet you as you begin your ministry among us. I have actively supported the United Thank Offering and appreciate the opportunity to share my enthusiasm with you. It is my hope that you will join our congregation in supporting this program with prayers and offerings.

The United Thank Offering is a program encouraging men, women, and children to share their thankfulness to God through daily prayer and offerings in the Blue Box to pass those blessings to others.

If you have been fortunate enough to have been involved in this program previously, you will be glad to see the enclosed items serving as reminders and information for the congregation.

If this is all new to you, please take a good look at the packet. I will be glad to share my experience with you as I answer your questions or concerns.

Yours in thanksgiving,
Name, Title
Address
Phone
E-mail
A sample letter to use with children

DATE

Dear __________,

I am so glad that you are here. You are a special person. Everyday I say a prayer of thanks to God for YOU and put coins in my Blue Box.

I know that you are thankful for your mom and dad, your brothers and sisters, your pets, and your home. Of course you are glad to have your friends and toys. For all these things and more, you, too, can be THANKFUL.

We bring in all of our Blue Boxes on certain Sundays. Your offerings are put together with the coins and dollars of children, adults, and grandparents from (insert name of church) and all over our country and other parts of the world. Bring your Blue Box to church on __________.

Your money and prayers have helped the sick, fed the hungry, made a safe place for an after school programs for children like you, and even helped build playgrounds. In our own area these offering have helped to __________.

When you use your own Blue Box, you tell and show God that you are thankful. As you put in a coin you say, “Thank you God. Please help others with my gifts.”

Thank you for helping others.
(Signed by the church school teacher or clergy)
UNIVERSAL THANK OFFERING COMMITTEE

The committee is composed of:

- One representative from each of the nine Episcopal Church USA Provinces, which include several countries outside of the United States.
- Three members-at-large elected by the former committee.
- The UTO Coordinator who is a member of the staff at the Episcopal Church Center and is a non-voting member.

Committee members

Attend all Committee meetings.
Fulfill all Committee and sub-committee commitments
Communicate with their diocesan coordinators, speaking about the UTO and representing the UTO when asked.
Raise the church’s awareness about expanding the circle of thankful people.
Are knowledgeable about grant requests.
Present these grant requests from their province or region.
Vote on the grants to be awarded in non-Triennial years.
Provide a proposed grants list to be awarded by delegates at Triennial and respond to questions about their province or region from delegates to the Triennial Meeting of the Episcopal Church Women.

ALL OFFERING MONIES ARE GRANTED

Expenses incurred for UTO Committee business are reimbursed from interest on trust money especially designated to cover administrative costs. The Memorial and Gift Fund Trust is a major source of this funding. Expenses incurred for provincial business must be covered by provincial or personal funds.
INSPIRATIONAL MATERIALS

The following materials are available for you to use to help encourage participation in the United Thank Offering. Twice a year (Spring and Fall) an envelope containing a letter, order form, and sample UTO materials is sent to each church. Current materials available can be viewed on our website. They are found by clicking on “Order UTO Materials”. You may also view color samples and order them online at www.episcopalchurch.org/uto or call Episcopal Book & Resources toll free at 1-800-903-5544.

- Bookmarks
- Bulletin Covers
- Bulletin Inserts
- Grants List
- Memorial and Gift Brochure
- Offering Boxes
- Offering Envelopes
- Placemats
- Posters
- United Thank Offering Handbook (available in English or Spanish)
- UTO & ME brochure (available in English or Spanish)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Tasks and Events</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>AUGUST</strong></td>
<td>Order materials for Fall Ingathering. Article to diocesan newspaper.</td>
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<td><strong>SEPTEMBER</strong></td>
<td>Fall letter to coordinators/congregations.</td>
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<td><strong>OCTOBER</strong></td>
<td>Grant applications available in diocesan office. Set up schedule for diocesan screening committee. Alert diocesan secretary and ask to be notified when an application is requested.</td>
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<td><strong>NOVEMBER</strong></td>
<td>Fall Ingathering: Sunday closest to All Saints Day is suggested. Check with the Bishop’s office about grant applications that have been distributed. Contact applicant and let them know you can be of assistance.</td>
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<td><strong>DECEMBER</strong></td>
<td>Diocesan Screening Committee meets. Ingathering money collected to date is sent in. Sent late offerings by December 31.</td>
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<td><strong>JANUARY</strong></td>
<td>Grant applications to bishop for signature and comments. Applications postmarked After January 31 will not be considered. Send annual report to UTO Province Representative.</td>
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<td><strong>FEBRUARY</strong></td>
<td>Full copy of grant screening committee notes to UTO Province Representative.</td>
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<td><strong>MARCH</strong></td>
<td>Order materials for Spring Ingathering. Spring letter to coordinators/congregations.</td>
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<td><strong>APRIL/MAY</strong></td>
<td>UTO Committee completes grant research and holds granting meeting. Spring Ingathering: Sunday following Ascension is suggested.</td>
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<td><strong>JUNE</strong></td>
<td>Grant applicants, dioceses &amp; coordinators are notified of awards. Grant funds available. Send in Spring Ingathering.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>JULY</strong></td>
<td>In Triennial Meeting years grants are awarded.</td>
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Attention:
Church Treasurer and/or
Church UTO Coordinator

The UTO Committee suggests
you send local church UTO offerings to
your Diocesan UTO Coordinator
(Call the Diocesan office for the name and address)

Make offering checks payable to:
The United Thank Offering

Attention:
Diocesan UTO Coordinators

Send Diocesan UTO Ingatherings to:

United Thank Offering
Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society
Box 12095
Newark, NJ 07101

Credit your diocese by writing the Diocesan name and account number in the Memo section of the check