



United Thank Offering Handbook  
*for diocesan and*  
parish coordinators

## Dedication

125 years ago in 1889 Miss Julia Chester Emery, Secretary of the Woman's Auxiliary of the Board of Mission of The Episcopal Church, founded the United Offering, later known as the United Thank Offering. In keeping with the same spirit of thankful giving this handbook is dedicated to Sarita Redd (1958-2013), who served as President of the United Thank Offering Board from July 2009 to January 2013 and to all of the women who have worked so diligently over the past 125 years. By faithfully offering prayers of thanksgiving with gifts of coins placed in their Blue Boxes they have set an example for others throughout the Church to do likewise. These gracious gifts have supported mission in The Episcopal Church and throughout the greater Anglican Communion ever since, generating thanks from those benefitting – creating a circle of thankful people.

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# MESSAGE FROM THE UNITED THANK OFFERING BOARD

The United Thank Offering board gives thanks for the opportunity to work together to support prayer, giving and mission in The Episcopal Church. Thank you for your willingness to serve and participate in the mission and ministry of the United Thank Offering. As a United Thank Offering coordinator you are among the most important leaders of the ministry. In your daily life, you show gratitude for personal blessings each time you put a coin in a Blue Box and by reminding and teaching others to do the same you enrich the lives of so many. In addition to promoting thank offerings, coordinators are entrusted to receive the offerings through Ingatherings in parishes or dioceses and then turn these designated gifts into the United Thank Offering office in time to be counted with the annual Ingathering.

This handbook is intended to provide you with the tools necessary to assist you in the ministry of the United Thank Offering.

**For more information about the United Thank Offering please use the following links:**

For free up-to-date downloadable resources (such as bulletin announcement and templates grant lists and so forth) be sure to visit our blog:

[www.unitedthankoffering.org](http://www.unitedthankoffering.org)

Like our Facebook page:

[https://www.facebook.com/pages/United-Thank-Offering/145387268865346?ref=aymt\\_homepage\\_panel](https://www.facebook.com/pages/United-Thank-Offering/145387268865346?ref=aymt_homepage_panel)

Check out our web pages for videos and other information:

[www.episcopalchurch.org/uto](http://www.episcopalchurch.org/uto)

To order free resources (pay only shipping and handling) such as Blue Boxes, offering envelopes, and grants brochures, the History of the United Thank Offering brochure, and An Introduction to the United Thank Offering brochure, visit: <http://episcopalmarketplace.org/Products/United-Thank-Offering> or call 1-866-937-2772

If everyone in The Episcopal Church participated in the United Thank Offering the board could fund all the requests that are made annually for grants worldwide and more. We can all be “armchair missionaries” and accomplish in a moment of grace a change in someone else’s life. It takes everyone fulfilling all that Christ embodied for us to further the work of The Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion. With God’s faith in us to do good in the world and be thankful we give our heartfelt thanks to you.

*The United Thank Offering Board*

## 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.

## Mission Statement

**Mission Statement:** Put gifts into the Blue Box with thanksgiving, prayer, and generosity. Take blessings out of the box for grants extending the church’s faithfulness to God’s mission.

# ROLES IN THE UNITED THANK OFFERING STRUCTURE

The United Thank Offering was founded as a grassroots network to teach the practice of using thank offerings to deepen our individual awareness of the blessings that God bestows on us each day and to fund innovative ministries throughout the church. Our mission and structure remain the same as when first founded and we are grateful to have you be a part of this wonderful spiritual discipline and mission-funding ministry.

## Blue Box

The Blue Box was created as a receptacle for coins to remind the user to give thanks daily and for all things. The box is designed for use in the home or anywhere it can serve as a visual reminder to offer blessings large and small. It represents the heart of the United Thank Offering ministry and is a pathway between our prayers and the mission of The Episcopal Church. It is a symbol that allows us, during the week, to be linked to our Christian tradition of praying, recognizing that blessings come from God (and in this case making a thank offering when we encounter those blessings) and being present to Christ in the world by helping others in need.

Blue Boxes hold individuals' gifts of coins and dollars which are then collected and blessed at an Ingathering in the parish or diocese. For many, the size of the box is a reminder that all blessings, big or small, are gifts from God and that all offerings, big or small, are used for the glory of God and the building of God's Kingdom.

## Every Episcopalian is a member of the United Thank Offering

The United Thank Offering gives an opportunity to contribute in a meaningful way to mission through daily prayers of thanks for all the good things that we have and can recognize in our lives. In giving thanks with a coin, not only

do we offer a gift to someone else, but we also honor the blessing that we are remembering. Giving in small ways teaches us to give in larger ways as we grow. The Blue Box is a reminder that coins and bills can go a long way toward helping someone else in great need. As people benefit from those gifts, they in turn can help others. The United Thank Offering could be described as a pay-it-forward ministry – we help others who in turn help others, most often in life-changing ways. It is a ministry that is particularly instrumental in teaching children about the Christian way of giving thanks and helping someone else. (Please see our blog for resources for teaching children about gratitude, including a United Thank Offering Godly Play lesson plan.)

## Parish coordinators

The goal of the grassroots network is to have one United Thank Offering volunteer or parish coordinator in every congregation in The Episcopal Church. Parish coordinators are the essential to our network, as they educate and excite the people in the pews to participate in the spiritual discipline that is the foundation of our ministry. The most important role of the parish coordinator is to convey the message of the United Thank Offering regularly and in a meaningful way to both priests and parishioners. We recommend showing some of the videos available on our webpage. Additionally, parish coordinators are responsible for ensuring that the Ingathering (or collection of the Blue Boxes) takes place and that the total amount is turned in to the diocese or the United Thank Offering in a timely fashion. Please note that every coin placed in a Blue Box is considered a designated gift to the United Thank Offering and must be used for that purpose only. Please see the section on Financial Practices for more information.

The following are some of the tasks that have helped to increase participation in the United Thank Offering and that you can implement as a Parish Coordinator:

- Encourage each household in the congregation to have and to use a Blue Box as a daily prayer practice. Teach the message that as daily prayers of thanks are given and money is placed in the Blue Box the money becomes an outward and visible sign of thanks to God. This 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.

1. Use free printed materials that you can order by visiting: <http://episcopalmarketplace.org/Products/United-Thank-Offering> or calling 1-866-937-2772.

2. Show a United Thank Offering video, which you can download for free at [www.episcopalchurch.org/uto](http://www.episcopalchurch.org/uto).

Speak to your congregation, ECW, vestry, etc., utilizing resources from our blog – [www.UnitedThankOffering.org](http://www.UnitedThankOffering.org) – to help explain that participating in the United Thank Offering will enhance giving and participation in the congregation.

3. Often people are interested in where the money goes, so create a display, invite recipients of a grant to speak, or take a field trip to visit a grant site near you. Not sure what grant sites are near you? Please contact the United Thank Offering staff for a list of grant sites in your diocese. Our Facebook page also has a wealth of photos from grant sites with information about the ministry associated with the grant.

4. Host a United Thank Offering coffee hour using a blue theme. Serve blueberry muffins, blue carrots and so forth. Create activities that allow people to share their blessings with each other.

- Introduce the United Thank Offering to children through children's sermons, Sunday School, Godly Play, and Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. Sample lessons and sermons are available on our blog: [www.unitedthankoffering.org](http://www.unitedthankoffering.org).
- Coordinate the Spring and/or Fall Ingatherings. Remember, the amount of money given at an Ingathering is not as important as the practice of gathering the funds together so that the blessings from individual boxes are visually multiplied as each person gives his or her box or envelope. Ingatherings are held in churches once or twice a year for receiving and blessing the coins from the Blue Boxes. Ingatherings are generally held in the spring to represent new growth and in the fall to represent harvest

times. The suggested day for the Spring Ingathering is the Sunday closest to Ascension, and the suggested day for the Fall Ingathering is the Sunday closest to All Saints' Day in November, near Thanksgiving.

1. Check with your diocese to see how the Ingathering of funds is handled in your location. Some dioceses have an Ingathering at Convention, others at a special worship service and others prefer to send in funds as they are collected. We encourage you to follow the process that your diocese utilizes. If your diocese does not have an Ingathering you can send your check directly to the United Thank Offering but be sure to let our staff know so they can work with your diocese to begin an official Ingathering.

2. Schedule Ingathering dates with the clergy and/or the worship committee.

3. Use the sample prayers, songs, scripture references and service materials provided online and in this handbook to tell the story of the United Thank Offering and to make the service with the Ingathering special. (Remember, you are celebrating and blessing all of the blessings that people have made offerings in honor of so this is a big deal!)

4. Some congregations provide United Thank Offering envelopes so that participants can empty their boxes, count their money and submit a check. The boxes then can be reused. If you are doing this make sure envelopes are available in the pews or handed out at the door the day of the Ingathering and/or send them out ahead in a church mailing or a personal newsletter.

- Combine monies received from Blue Boxes and envelopes and turn in the funds as directed by your diocese.
- Keep records of Ingathering amounts and the dates the money is sent to the Diocesan Coordinator. Keep a separate accounting of expenses incurred for reimbursement by your congregation with

prior approval. Money to cover your expenses and supplies should be secured from your congregation. NONE of the Ingathering money may be used for expenses. Ingathering money is a designated gift to fund United Thank Offering grants. Remember that you are entrusted in good faith by people in your church to send any money given to the United Thank Offering in a timely fashion.

5. Thank people for participating! Write a thank you note in the parish newsletter, say something at the announcements or send personal letters. Some people would like a letter for tax purposes – see the section on Best Financial Practices in this handbook or on our blog for more information and a sample letter. Remember, thankfulness generates thankfulness.

- Notify the diocesan coordinator when leaving the position of parish coordinator, and send the name, address, phone number and email address of the next person to fill the position.
- Explain the importance of the Memorial and Gift Trust Fund to the congregation and encourage gifts to honor or remember someone. See the Finances section to learn more about the trust fund.
- Encourage your congregation to submit grant applications for funding, and explain how it works. Help them with applications if requested.

## Diocesan coordinators

Diocesan coordinators are the link between the parish coordinators and the diocese, as well as between the diocesan network and the provincial representative to the United Thank Offering Board. Often they are on the front lines regarding the grant application process and fiduciary processes within the diocese. Listed below are the tasks that will assist you in your important work as Diocesan Coordinator.

- Your Provincial Representative will communicate with you regularly to share information regarding monthly webinars, good news (such as grant awards), and educational resources. Please share this information with your diocesan communications officer and your parish coordinators.
- Participate in trainings and/or webinars to the extent you are able, or ask your provincial representative for the notes after the webinar so you are up to date on the latest United Thank Offering processes.
- Inform the provincial representative about the United Thank Offering activities in your diocese by sending copies of communications and responding to requests for information.
- Be prepared to answer any questions your province representative might have regarding grant requests submitted from your diocese or past grant reports.
- Meet with the diocesan bishop to insure that United Thank Offering is an integral part of the life of the diocese. We encourage you to discuss the following with your bishop if any are not in place or haven't been revisited recently:
  1. Is the Ingathering held at a prominent time and place within the life of the diocese?
  2. Does the bishop take Blue Boxes with him when he visits parishes? Is he or she familiar with the spiritual discipline?
  3. Is your diocese following best financial practices for handling the Ingathering funds?
    - Does the diocese send all offerings received before the close of the calendar year December 31 so they can be counted in that year's Ingathering total to be funded the following spring? (Remember that you are entrusted in good faith to send to The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society any money given to the United Thank Offering

by people in your diocese. Money should not be held since it is a designated gift.)

– Does the diocese acknowledge each gift directly upon receipt?

4. Urge the bishop to appoint a United Thank Offering grant screening committee if there isn't one currently . (See the section on granting in this handbook for more information.)

- Work to recruit a parish coordinator in every parish in your diocese. Ask your bishop to help.
- Create a United Thank Offering packet of information and materials to present as a welcoming gift to new clergy (deacons, priests, bishops) in the diocese. There is a special overview on how to start the United Thank Offering on our blog: [www.UnitedThankOffering.org](http://www.UnitedThankOffering.org).
- Write articles about the United Thank Offering for diocesan newspaper(s) and other publications. Share sample articles and announcements that are available on our blog with your parish coordinators. Organize visits to United Thank Offering grant sites for your parish coordinators.
- Provide the provincial representative and staff with any changes to your name, address, telephone number or email address. When leaving the diocesan coordinator position please send this same information for your replacement to keep records and communications current.

## The United Thank Offering board

The United Thank Offering Board is comprised of 14 members plus one appointed liaison member from the Executive Council. Nine members are elected by the Provincial Synod or Episcopal Church Women (ECW) Provincial Board to serve a term of three years concurrent with General Convention. province representatives may be elected for a second term of three years. The other members are appointed. Two members are appointed at-large by a consensus of the presiding bishop, the president of the House of Deputies

and the president of the United Thank Offering Board. The 15th person is an appointee of the presiding bishop and the president of the House of Deputies (the presiding officers of the Executive Council of The Episcopal Church) as a liaison between the United Thank Offering Board and the Executive Council of The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, a governing body of the church. This position has voice and no vote on the United Thank Offering Board but reports regularly to council about board activities. Members of the board are responsible for reading, rating and recommending grant applications annually to the Executive Council for funding approval, creating and presenting training opportunities for coordinators and serving on multiple committees of the board.

## **The United Thank Offering staff**

The United Thank Offering is served by two full-time The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society staff members. The first staff member, the United Thank Offering Missioner, supports the work of the board while also promoting participation in the United Thank Offering. She is available to help anyone making inquiries or needing support to carry out the ministry of the United Thank Offering. The second staff member, the United Thank Offering Grants Associate, oversees the reporting, filing, archiving, and payment of all United Thank Offering awards. She also helps with other projects throughout the year.

The United Thank Offering also shares an intern with the Global Partnerships Team of The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society and General Theological Seminary. The Julia Chester Emery United Thank Offering/Young Adult Service Corps (YASC) Intern is appointed each year, having served as a missionary in the YASC program the previous year. The intern is responsible for helping the staff and board engage with a younger generation through participation at board meetings and by representing the United Thank Offering at speaking engagements.

## **The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society (DFMS)**

Early English settlers established the Church of England in the original colonies of the United States. In 1789, after the American Revolution, an assembly met in Philadelphia to unify all Anglicans in the United States into

a single national church. The full legal name of The Episcopal Church is The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America. (When the church was incorporated, it was located only in the United States, but today it is an international church.) When Diocesan Coordinators or individuals send their offerings to The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, they are submitting designated funds to The Episcopal Church to be held in the United Thank Offering account. The Ingathering money earns thousands of dollars in interest each year and is granted for approved projects by the United Thank Offering Board the following year. The United Thank Offering Board is a board of The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society and has worked in and with the Mission Department (or its equivalent) for 125 years.

# GRANTING

## Diocesan coordinator responsibilities for the granting process

Annually the call for United Thank Offering grant applications is released by the Public Affairs Office of The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society. The dates shift from year to year, based on factors related to the United Thank Offering Board's schedule. The board notifies diocesan coordinators when the grant criteria and application are available. It is the diocesan coordinator's responsibility to let people in the diocese know well in advance when the process is open and what the deadlines are. Every congregation must be informed in writing of the date that the applications are to be received by the diocesan office for review. We recommend not only notifying the parish coordinators but also asking the diocesan communications officer to send out an email specifically about the grant process (with a reminder that the funding for these grants comes from Blue Boxes) to every clergy person and to the contact list the diocese regularly utilizes. It also is a good idea to ask the diocesan communications officer to put this information on the diocesan Facebook page and Twitter feed. The more places that people can hear about the application the better.

The United Thank Offering grant process requires every application to be endorsed by the diocesan bishop and only one application from the diocese and one for a partner diocese can be submitted per year. Each diocese has a different system for handling this process. The United Thank Offering Board recommends having a diocesan grant screening committee, as outlined below, to fairly determine which application(s) to submit to the board. Once the criteria and the application for grants are released, the board hosts a webinar to answer questions people might have about the process. We strongly suggest that any applicants review the criteria and application prior to attending the webinar, so they can ask any questions that they might have. The board offers a second webinar prior to the deadline for members of diocesan grant screening

committees to answer any specific questions that they might have about applications they are evaluating. During the entire grant process, the staff and board are available to answer questions and assist, however the webinars are the best place to gain information. It is our goal to help dioceses submit applications that are eligible for funding so please do not hesitate to ask for help.

The diocesan grant screening committee reviews applications to insure that they are complete, are presented on the current year's application form and meet the criteria. At the close of the screening process the committee chair sends a report and recommendations to the bishop (if the bishop is not an active committee member). Grant requests with all required attachments must be submitted electronically to the United Thank Offering Office by the stated deadline. Each bishop (and his or her assistant) will receive an email from the United Thank Offering Missioner at least one month prior to the submission deadline with instructions on how to file applications. Any questions on the submission process should be directed to our staff.

## Example of a diocesan grant screening committee

Members of the diocesan grant screening Committee:

- Serve three (3) year terms (staggered to preserve experience)
- Receive all the information as soon as it is available
- Know the dates of the meetings well in advance
- Are made aware of the granting deadlines

When planning how many to invite to serve on the committee consider the following:

- Number of convocations or deaneries in your diocese
- Number of churches in your diocese
- Diversity of the committee: age groups, ethnicity, clergy/lay

Grant applicants are invited to the diocesan grant screening committee meetings to present their application and to answer questions.

# FINANCES

## Ingathering United Thank Offering funds: best practices

- Funds are ingathered on behalf of the United Thank Offering, a ministry of The Episcopal Church.
- Episcopal Church organizations fall under both IRS regulations and Episcopal Church canons.
- Once the United Thank Offering Ingathering is announced all of the ingathered funds are considered designated and then transferred to the United Thank Offering account with The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society (The Episcopal Church):

The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society lockbox,  
P.O. Box 958983 St. Louis, MO 63195-8983

- No administrative expense can be taken from the Ingathering; Administrative expenses are budgeted separately.

United Thank Offering Ingathering funds are handled differently from diocese to diocese. The most common practices:

- The United Thank Offering diocesan coordinator has a checking account; Funds are deposited, recorded, accounted for and sent to The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society lockbox.
- The Diocesan Coordinator uses the ECW checking account to deposit Ingathering funds, which are held in a restricted fund and then sent to The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society lockbox.

- The Ingathering funds are sent directly to the diocese and held there in a restricted fund for UTO. Then, the diocesan treasurer sends the funds to The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society lockbox.

No matter who is overseeing the Ingathering the following practices should be put in place.

- Counting once the offering is taken up, it should be counted by two unrelated persons.
- Recording/Reporting the money is recorded, listing checks and cash separately by donor. If anonymous cash is given it is recorded as one total figure.
  1. For cash of any amount, when the donor is known a receipt is given generally, and always when requested.
  2. For personal checks, the check is enough for tax purposes unless the check is for \$250.00 or more, in which case the donor will need a letter to substantiate the contribution for tax purposes. This can be issued routinely as part of a “thank you” or issued upon request. Specific wording is required. (See IRS Publication 177: Charitable Contributions Substantiation and Disclosure Requirements; relevant sections highlighted.)
- Parish coordinators may suggest to parishioners that they include their name and/or pledge number for the gift to be acknowledged on a pledge/giving statement. The procedure should be worked out with the parish’s treasurer/vestry so everyone is on the same page.
- Diocesan coordinators usually send acknowledgements for United Thank Offering gifts. Churches only need a “thank you”. Any personal checks should be acknowledged using a standard acknowledgement letter. (See IRS Publication 1771: Charitable Contributions Substantiation and Disclosure Requirements.)

Records should be kept that report the number of individual offerings and the amount of each along with the total amount sent to the diocese or to The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society lockbox.

Although not required, photocopying checks is an option. If this done the copies need to be secured and then shredded when no longer needed, usually at year-end or after acknowledgement letters are mailed.

### 3. Deposit accounts

- Tax ID Numbers: What tax ID number is the account opened under? The entity that holds the tax ID number will have oversight of the funds and will be responsible for best practice and for audits. The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society is a nonprofit, tax-exempt corporation in the state of New York and holds a group ruling for all “approved” subordinate organizations, which normally includes all parishes, missions, affiliated organizations and integrated auxiliaries. (See IRS Publication: Tax Guide for Churches and Religious Organizations.)
- Accounts: The funds should be deposited immediately into an authorized account of the parish, the diocese, the diocesan ECW/UTO, the province or the province ECW/UTO. A check is then cut from that account and sent to the diocese or The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society lockbox, whichever practice the diocese uses. (See Manual of Business Methods in Church Affairs Chapter III: Bookkeeping pp. 2-3.)
- Parish coordinators:
  - I. If the account is a separate account, like a United Thank Offering account or an ECW account, it should use the parish tax ID number and be listed as an account of the parish. Then the treasurer will account for the funds on the parish parochial report and the account will be included in the parish audit. (See Manual of Business

Methods in Church Affairs Chapter III: Bookkeeping p. 11 and Chapter VI: Audit Guidelines for Congregations p. 8.)

II. If the funds go directly into the parish checking account the treasurer should set up a restricted “fund” for the United Thank Offering. All Ingathering monies received are then sent to the diocese or The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, as the diocese recommends. (See Manual of Business Methods in Church Affairs Chapter II: Internal Controls p. 15 and Chapter III: Bookkeeping p. 3.)

Diocesan coordinators: Some dioceses have a separate United Thank Offering account, some deposit the funds with a diocesan ECW and some deposit directly with the diocese. Whatever method is used the funds are to be held in a restricted account and paid out to The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society lockbox on a regular basis, at least twice a year if there are funds to disburse. Best practice is to ensure that the account is listed under the group ruling and the account is audited annually.

Existing Accounts: If your parish or diocese has an existing system that works, there is no reason to change it. However, check to be sure best practice is in place. Unless the bank requests additional information, existing accounts are not a problem. When changes are made to accounts, for instance to the officers or signers, many banks require supporting documentation about the tax entity if it is not on file or if it is in question.

4. If a United Thank Offering Coordinator in the parish or diocese wants to set up a new account the account must carry the tax ID number of the related organization. This is something the coordinator will need to work out with the parish or the diocese, as United Thank Offering accounts must be an account of the parish, the diocese or in some cases the diocesan/provincial ECW. The United Thank Offering Board does not have a transferable tax ID number.

## Memorial and Gift Trust Fund

The United Thank Offering Memorial and Gift Trust Fund was established in 1982 as a permanent trust. Gifts to this trust fund may be made at any time. A special tribute of thanksgiving is encouraged “in honor of” a friend or family member for leadership, ministry, and faithful service or for special events such as birthdays, anniversaries or graduations. Gifts also may be made “in memory of” a cherished relative, friend or church leader as a special remembrance. The names of those who are honored or memorialized are permanently recorded in a book that is kept in the United Thank Offering Office at the Episcopal Church Center and displayed at each Triennial Meeting of the Women of the Church. Earnings from investment of this fund assure income to support the independent, elected volunteer board as well as staffing and materials for the extensive diocesan and parish volunteer network to help increase awareness of the United Thank Offering and encourage more thankful prayers and offerings in the Blue Box.

United Thank Offering gifts are tax-deductible. For more information or questions please call 800-334-7626.

Make checks payable to The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society (DFMS) with United Thank Offering TRUST FUND #852 in the memo line.

Please mail Memorial and Gift Trust Fund checks to:

United Thank Offering The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society –  
Protestant Episcopal Church  
815 Second Avenue  
New York, NY 10017

# RESOURCES FOR WORSHIP

Please visit <http://episcopalmarketplace.org/Products/United-Thank-Offering> or call 1-866-937-2772 to order our free prayer booklet, which features prayers written by people from around the Church for the 125th anniversary of the United Thank Offering.

## Litanies

### Thanksgiving

**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,

**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 find 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 and 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 offerings; that by your Holy Spirit all nations and peoples may know the power of the love of Jesus Christ. Amen.**

## Mission

Let us pray for the world that it may be transformed through our many individual prayers of thanksgiving and gifts of blessings.

Jesus was transfigured on the high mountain when a voice from heaven said, “This is my son, the Beloved, listen to him!”

**His face shone like the sun.**

He gave us the great commission to heal the sick, feed the hungry, house the homeless, visit those in prison, welcome the stranger.

**Help our faces to shine, God of transformation.**

Mission is local; mission is global.

**Empower us, God of love.**

Mission is reaching out to those who are disenfranchised, those whose voices are silenced, those who live on the margins of society.

**Guide us, God of justice.**

Mission is communicating our faith to a hurting world, taking time to build a vision of a better world.

**Shape us, God of patience.**

Mission is reaching out to touch and be touched by others that we all become one.

**Use us, God of mercy.**

Mission is encountering differences of race, culture, class, and age, not being afraid of them but embracing them.

**Draw us into community, God of compassion.**

Mission is responding to natural disasters such as floods, earthquakes,

tornados, or human disasters such as wars and school shootings, with more than shelter and food. It is mending broken hearts.

**Help us, God of Grace.**

Mission is developing partnerships as we “seek and serve Christ in all persons.”

**Transform us, God of our hearts.**

We are your hands and feet in this world, the conduit through which mission happens. Keep our eyes heavenward, our minds focused on the tasks you have set before us. Refresh us when we are tired, renew us when we falter, reawaken us daily to hear the cries of your people.

**Hear our prayer, Triune God.**

## Concluding collect

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 to you. May we use your gifts creatively, faithfully, wisely, and boldly, and may our constant aim be the furtherance of your Kingdom. **Amen.**

## Suggested hymns for ingathering sundays

From **Voices Found:**

#85 *Circle the Table*, by Mary Nelson Keithahn

#101 *Imela*, traditional Nigerian Song of Thankfulness (Iona Community)

#113 *We Sing a New Song*, by Luiza Cruz (lyrics in Spanish & English)

#118 *What Gift Can We Bring*, by Jane Marshall

#124 *Brother, Sister, Let Me Serve You*, by Richard Gillard, arr. by Betty Pulkingham

From **Wonder, Love and Praise:**

#752 *There's a Sweet, Sweet Spirit in This Place*, by Doris Akers

#775 *Give Thanks for Life*, by Shirley Erena Murray

#802 *When the Poor One Who Has Nothing, Cuando el Pobre Nada Tiene*, by JA Oliver & Miguel Manzano (lyrics in Spanish & English)

From **Flor y Canto (all Spanish lyrics):**

#642 *Te Den Gracias*, by Mary Francis Reza

#644 *Demos Gracias al Señor*, by Cesáreo Gabaráin

#645 *Te Damos Gracias*, Psalm 137, arr. by Juan A. Espinosa

From **Lift Every Voice and Sing:**

#135 *Is Your All on the Altar*, by Elisha A. Hoffman

#154 *Taste and See*, by James E. Moore, Jr.

#158 *Make Me a Blessing*, by Ira B. Wilson

#216 *In My Life, Lord, Be Glorified*, by Bob Kilpatrick

From **The Hymnal 1982:**

#9 *Not Here for High and Holy Things*, by Geoffrey Anketel Studdert-Kennedy

#178 *Alleluia, Alleluia! Give Thanks to the Risen Lord*, by Donald Fishel

#233 *The Eternal Gifts of Christ the King*, by St. Ambrose of Milan

#290 *Come Ye Thankful People Come*, by Henry Alford

#366 *Holy God We Praise Thy Name*, by Ignaz Franz

#376 *Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee*, by Henry Van Dyke

#385 *Many and Great*, by Joseph R. Renville

#396 *Now Thank We All Our God*, by Martin Rinckart

#411 *O Bless The Lord My Soul*, by James Montgomery

#412 *Earth and All Stars*, by Herbert F. Brokering

#416 *For the Beauty of the Lord*, by Follinot Standford Pierpoint

#433 *We Gather Together*, by anon.

#437 *Tell Out My Soul*, by Timothy Dudley-Smith

#445 *Praise to the Holiest*, by John Henry Newman

#537 *Christ for the World We Sing*, by Samuel Wolcott

#581 *Where Charity and Love Prevail There God Is Ever Found*, tr. by J. Clifford Evers

#686 *Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing*, by Robert Robinson

From **Taize: Songs for Prayer:**

*In the Lord I'll Be Ever Thankful*

*Bless the Lord*

*Laudate Dominum/Sing, Praise, and Bless the Lord*

*Bendigo Al Señor/I Bless You, Lord, My God, Christe Lux Mundi*

# SAMPLE UNITED THANK OFFERING LETTERS FOR DIOCESAN COORDINATORS

As one writes letters and prepares talks on the United Thank Offering ministry, please consider telling stories about grants given to your diocese – both domestic and foreign – and about people and the importance of the United Thank Offering ministry to them.

## Sample fall letter to parish coordinators

(Date)

Dear parish coordinator,

The air is cooler. Football season has started and a hint of autumn is in the air! It is time to start planning for the United Thank Offering Fall Ingathering. Depending on the activities at your church the date for this Ingathering Sunday can be scheduled from mid-October to the end of November.

Please encourage every member in your church to have and to use a Blue Box daily. It is a prayer ministry of thankfulness for every man, woman and child. Everyone can drop in a nickel or dime a day for all those blessings bestowed on us by a wonderful God and those coins in the Blue Box make possible many blessings for others.

It is important to include reminders of this date in the weekly bulletin and to explain to your parish that United Thank Offering is a ministry of thankful prayers leading to mission. This small token of thanksgiving does not negatively affect stewardship giving. In fact there is clear evidence that it has a positive effect on stewardship because thankful people are generous people. If parishioners use their Blue Boxes correctly – dropping in coins in conjunction with thankful prayers – then you will have lots of coins at the Ingathering. Encourage parishioners to count the coins at home and to write a

check for the amount, using a United Thank Offering Envelope as a receptacle for the gift in the offering plate.

Order Blue Boxes for every member of your parish. You can order online at <http://episcopalmarketplace.org/Products/United-Thank-Offering> or call 1-866-937-2772.

Please send the Ingathering check from your church soon after the Ingathering to your Diocesan Coordinator or the person designated in the diocese to collect United Thank Offering monies. The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society receives a much higher percentage of interest on donations, and it truly makes a difference for granting purposes. It increases our granting potential by thousands of dollars.

Please know that I am thankful for every one of you and that God will bless you for helping coordinate and encourage this wonderful prayer ministry that opens doors for meaningful life changes for so many people in the world. If you have any questions please email me at \_\_\_\_\_ or call at \_\_\_\_\_.

Blessings,

(Signature)

United Thank Offering Coordinator

Diocese of

## Sample spring letter to parish coordinators

(Date)

Dear parish coordinator,

Spring seems finally to be on its way! For the lovely weather, the blooming daffodils in my yard and the singing birds I am grateful and I will drop coins in my Blue Box to show my gratitude. The coins that go into my box are combined with the coins from the Blue Boxes of Episcopal households throughout the diocese, the nation and the world to fund an amazing amount of ministries.

Because I know that the United Thank Offering coins fund ministries that meet compelling human needs I continue to be excited to serve as your diocesan coordinator for the United Thank Offering. I am here to lend support while you further this vital ministry in mission by doing your part for the whole church. If, at any time, you want me to speak to a group at your church about the United Thank Offering please do not hesitate to contact me.

The United Thank Offering Board has designated the Spring Ingathering to be any Sunday in the month of May. Be sure to schedule with your rector the most convenient Sunday and then alert your congregation about the Spring Ingathering by putting weekly reminders in the bulletin. Please collect and count the Spring United Thank Offering Ingathering monies and write one check to the diocesan coordinator or to the person in the diocese charged with handling these monies. Put a notation on the memo line that it is for the United Thank Offering.

It is important that the monies from the Ingathering be sent in as soon as possible as the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society (DFMS) receives a much higher percentage of interest earnings and it truly makes a difference for granting purposes each year. It increases our granting potential by thousands of dollars.

Again, my purpose as diocesan coordinator is to serve you, as you are a vital part of the success of this prayerful ministry in mission. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can assist you in any way. In thanksgiving for your willingness to serve the United Thank Offering I offer a prayer and a coin in your honor.

Blessings,

(Signature)

United Thank Offering Coordinator

Diocese of

## Suggested United Thank Offering talks

### For Groups:

Good morning! (Hold up a Blue Box and drop in coins.) This morning I am thankful for the rain we received this week and for this gathering of faithful people. I want to tell you about this Blue Box, but before I start, I want to ask how many of you have a Blue Box. Not just a Blue Box in your house or your wife's or mother's Blue Box, but your own personal Blue Box. This Blue Box is a symbol of a very important ministry – the United Thank Offering. I want to tell you what the United Thank Offering is, but first I want to tell you **what it is NOT**:

- It is **NOT** the U-T-O.
- It is **NOT** just some women's organization of the Episcopal Church Women of The Episcopal Church doing some kind of women's work.
- It is **NOT** a time to reach into your pocket for a donation because you see a note in you newsletter or an envelope in the pew.
- It is **NOT** a once or twice a year contribution.
- It does **NOT** affect stewardship giving to your church.

### What it **IS**:

- It **IS** the United Thank Offering.
- It **IS** a personal and family devotional program of the whole Episcopal Church.
- It **IS** the sum of our daily thanks for the blessings in our everyday lives – family, friends, a good day, healing of the sick and much more. At the very least it is thankfulness for a God who loves us.

- It **IS** a ministry of the Department of Mission which opened the door over 125 years ago for women to find a way to fund mission for the church. Its longevity says something about its importance to the Church.
- It **IS** the way that The Episcopal Church funds mission at home and in the greater Anglican Communion. It is an outward sign of the action we are committed to take as Christians.
- It **DOES** enhance stewardship in churches as it engages and helps people recognize the grace that occurs when giving is a regular practice in our lives.

Appreciating the art of thankfulness can be understood in a number of ways:

- Taking disappointments and failures and offering thanks when we can find a way to move forward
- Asking God what He would have us do when we feel stuck and need to refocus our energy and then thanking Him for listening
- Being thankful for mistakes that push us to learn and overcome challenges that seemingly stop us and then giving a coin to help someone else

Twice a year, you are asked to bring the amount of your daily thanksgivings for the Ingathering service at your church. There, it is combined with the offerings of thousands of other Episcopalians to become the United Thank Offering, which provides funds for mission for the whole church. If every Episcopalian dropped two cents every day into his or her Blue Box, we would have over \$5 million to give away in grants at the end of each year. Every penny collected is granted.

It is NOT just women's work. It IS an organization founded by women in 1889 and originally supportive of women missionaries. It has become a church-wide effort to aid in ministry for compelling human needs – for men, women and children throughout the Anglican Communion. The United Thank Offering still makes contributions to missionaries, both men and women, and now

youth in The Episcopal Church as it reaches into the places of greatest need worldwide.

I encourage you to acquire your own personal Blue Box. Put it in a place where you will see it daily. Take a moment each day to say thank you to God and to put a prayerful coin in that box. We are not meant to be passive receivers, but active participants in God's world.

## **For convocations/deaneries or dioceses**

How many of you know what this is? (Hold up a Blue Box.)

How many of you have your own PERSONAL Blue Box?

I want to talk to you today about this special ministry and explain why it is important to have your own personal Blue Box. (At this point, you can insert some of the information used in the previous presentation.)

The United Thank Offering is a daily prayer ministry for every family member.

That is why each person needs his or her own Blue Box, which is emptied and offered at church Ingatherings twice a year. Those coins are then collected from participating Episcopal churches and every cent goes to fund grants for compelling human needs. This diocese has benefitted from those coins. (Describe some of the grants your diocese has received, both domestic and companion/partnership. You can obtain a list of grants from the United Thank Offering Office in the Church Center for use.) The United Thank Offering is a circle of thankful people and prayers. From the daily prayers of thankfulness of individuals dropping coins in their Blue Boxes to the prayers of thankfulness by the recipients of those grants, all people involved benefit. It is important that each church in this convocation/diocese have a United Thank Offering parish coordinator who informs the congregation about this ministry and provides Blue Boxes and information on how to apply for a United Thank Offering grant. There are churches in this convocation (or deanery/diocese) that do not have a coordinator. If your church is one of those, please urge your vestry or rector to appoint someone. Or volunteer to be that person!

Sometimes the reason given for not participating in the United Thank Offering Ingatherings is that the church leadership thinks that the United Thank Offering competes with a capital campaign or stewardship drive.

The United Thank Offering does not ask for a lot, just a nickel or dime a day. What the United Thank Offering is asking for is that everyone participate because many coins make great sums when joined together with a simple effort and because everyone benefits. This is the “United” in the Thank Offering. It is a ministry that expands the community of The Episcopal Church, as grants for mission go throughout the Anglican Communion. If every Episcopalian gave two cents a day there would be over \$5 million each year available for grants. The United Thank Offering Board has far more requests for grant funds than it has money to grant so worthy programs and people are always not granted. This makes the board’s job very difficult when it has to choose among so many worthy opportunities.

Most importantly there is evidence that churches that participate in United Thank Offering have very successful stewardship drives. Thankfulness begets thankfulness and thankful people are generous people.  
Thank you.