



# Building Gratitude and Generosity Together:

## A Stewardship Guide for Congregations rooted in gratitude from the United Thank Offering

# Welcome!

About twenty years ago, when I was a new youth minister, I was asked if I could create something for the youth group to do to help teach about stewardship during our month-long stewardship campaign program. I worked at a church that always struggled to meet the budget during stewardship and for a priest who hated talking about money, so the idea was to spread out the task of asking for money, and who can refuse teenagers? This was my first real experience thinking about stewardship and how to ask people for money. We wrote a skit to poke fun at one of the great challenges of stewardship, designated gifts. This was at a church where people were known to restrict their pledges because of political challenges the church was facing at the time or where people liked to only give to those things which they enjoyed or felt like they benefited from and this was a real challenge. Our skit was to have the teens stop church as it started. One of the youth stopped the opening hymn and told the organist that we didn't have a sponsor for the hymn. Someone "volunteered" to pay so the service continued. Only the Gospel was funded, and then the teens announced that no one sponsored the sermon today, and as the priest was objecting, the lights went out...oh yeah, no one sponsored the electricity, or the toilet paper or the heat. That skit taught us something about giving to church, it started a conversation about all the things people were grateful for that they had simply come to expect when they showed up at church. For example, it's great you only want to give expensive candles for the altar, but we also need toilet paper in the bathrooms. For me, it started my decades long thought process about generosity, gratitude and how we talk about stewardship and congregational health and vitality. (I like these questions so much I even got an MA in Religion and Psychology focused on Congregational Development after seminary.)

Fast forward a few years and I'm sitting at a clergy day just a few weeks after starting at a new parish listening to a presentation about tithing. It was a great presentation. I went home and thought through how I was going to implement everything I had learned. I remember excitedly sharing with my senior warden what I had learned. I'll never forget her response: "Tithing is simply not an option for most people and it can be painful to be told this is your duty when you cannot see a way to do it." She then shared with me some of the economic challenges that she knew about in our community. I realized that if we simply tell people they must do something out of obligation or duty it can trigger shame for some, run others off and a blessed few will, like the presenter said, find it life-giving. So, I began to create my own stewardship program. Year after year I worked on it, but always I came back to the belief that grateful people are generous people, and if we aren't grateful for something then why should we contribute to support it? I was left wondering how we can help our congregations put gratitude into practice in a way that would support the overall health of our congregation.

Early on in my journey as the Staff Officer for the United Thank Offering, I had the opportunity to listen to Bishop Leo Frade, a huge supporter of UTO, talk about asking his clergy about giving after hearing one say that they didn't want to do UTO because it would decrease giving to the annual stewardship campaign. Bishop Frade shared that in his diocese, he found that congregations that participated in UTO were more generous overall, but especially to the annual stewardship campaign than those that did not. He stated simply to the group, "gratitude breeds generosity."

What follow, is a stewardship campaign created out of the belief that gratitude breeds generosity and fights back scarcity. That when we ask people to practice gratitude it increases our ability as a church, congregation or family to joyfully give to those things which are life-giving and liberating. These materials would not be possible without the many clergy and lay leaders (including UTO Board Members) who have listened and wrestled with me on this idea of building a stewardship campaign around gratitude and on the foundation of the UTO Theology of Thankfulness. So, it is with humble hearts that we, the Staff and Board of the United Thank Offering, offer you this collection of stewardship and gratitude materials, with the hope that you might find some or all of this helpful in your context. We hope you'll share your feedback and ideas so we can continue to grow these resources to support the building up of the ministry of the whole church. We give thanks for you joining us in the ministry of teaching the importance of gratitude and we hope it empowers you to do all of the good things God is doing in the midst of you.



The Rev. Canon Heather L. Melton  
Staff Officer for the United Thank Offering



# Introduction to the Process

This packet contains all you need to lead a stewardship campaign built on the foundation of gratitude. These materials assume two things: 1. That each item within this booklet can be used separately or as a part of the whole program, with small groups (vestries, budget committees, etcetera) or the entire congregation, and 2. That every church should determine the best timeline for their congregation in using them. We've set the materials up to focus on the smallest amount of time we could imagine doing a stewardship campaign well, which is one month. However, feel free to do what is set up as a one-week unit, for a month, or two months if you want to make it last all year. You'll notice that unlike traditional stewardship campaigns, this one does not begin with a budget but ends with it. We believe that a budget created as a response to reflecting on the gratitude of your congregation will be transformative. Instead of creating a budget based on what you think you have to do or should do, this will help you create your budget based on what your congregation truly finds life-giving, while still ensuring that the electric bill gets paid. For example, I once asked a parish about the newsletter, and found that people were much more thankful to receive it via email than in the mail, so we stopped mailing it and deleted the budget line for postage and printing the newsletter. We knew that a few people were thankful for getting it in the mail, so we offered to send it to those who pledge using the office budget and for "friends" of our congregation we offered a subscription fee to cover the cost of printing and mailing the newsletter.

**Each segment contains the same elements with a different theme.** What science has shown is that it takes a month to create a new habit. The new habit that we are trying to teach individuals and the congregation is to respond with gratitude at a higher frequency. Often, we are quick to respond with criticism, especially if we can do it anonymously. Our aim is to get to the heart of what people appreciate about their experiences as a part of this faith community but also help them to learn to respond with gratitude to the world around them. We'll work on this goal by modeling gratitude through the bulletin announcement/insert, asking people to reflect on what they are grateful for, teaching age-specific gratitude lessons, and sending everyone home with a task to reinforce practicing gratitude during the week. Again, not everything here will apply, and we hope you'll modify or expand as you see fit. The elements are:

- **Introduction on the theme for the section.** This is for leaders to help reflect and prepare the materials to fit your individual context. Everything can and should be modified. The more you modify the better your results.
- **Bulletin insert for the section** including a thank you for participating in the previous segment, an overview of the one you are beginning, and an opportunity to thank all of the groups that fall into the theme. This is a chance to model gratitude for the congregation and to recognize that each person brings gifts to share and we also recommend doing it during worship. Perhaps giving out certificates of gratitude for service or thank you cards. There is always the fear that when we thank someone publicly we'll forget someone, so be sure to ask someone to check your list before recognizing people so as to not leave anyone out.
- Next is a **survey on the section** which invites people to pay attention to one aspect of your congregation's life that is funded by the budget and simply reflect on what they are grateful for having or experiencing.
- Finally, each segment includes a **take home gratitude activity and a gratitude faith formation lesson**. Some have an age group listed but all lessons can be done as an intergenerational activity for congregations lacking critical mass within a specific age group.

The final segment is different; it holds all of the information necessary to create a budget based in what you learned, and a pledge packet rooted in gratitude along with suggestions for your pledge card Ingathering Sunday.

**You will need two volunteers** to share the work of leading this program. We recommend appointing someone from the vestry or budget committee as the Stewardship Chair. This person will be responsible for ensuring that people get their surveys and help with the process of collecting them. You will also need to appoint a Gratitude

Chair. This person will help ensure that people have the take home activities, that activities happen at coffee hour and receive feedback on how practicing gratitude is going for members of your congregation. The Gratitude Chair will transition into being the UTO Coordinator/Organizer for your parish at the end of the program and help your congregation to remember the habits learned during this process of practicing gratitude.

While working on this booklet, I shared the first draft with some clergy for their feedback. Perhaps the most telling is that one said they could use it without stewardship simply to help combat the grumbling of his small church with gratitude. This is a totally acceptable way to use these materials as they might remind some of you of the tenants of appreciative inquiry. The goal is to help the members of our congregations adopt new skills for participating in the life of our congregations. At the last General Convention, I had a deputy come up and share with me that their deputation used their UTO Blue Box as a way to remember their covenant on behavior. If they said something mean, deconstructive or snarky, that person had to put folding money in the Blue Box. Coins were added each time someone was grateful. I decided to try this with a group of leaders who often fell into the habit of negative feedback and parking lot conversations. The Blue Box became an image of Christ in the midst of us, and the call to be grateful and make sure that feedback was offered as constructive and lifegiving. Gratitude will always return us to the signs of God's love we were created to be; it fights back against scarcity, grumbling, and gossip because gratitude always assumes the best in people and looks for the signs of God's blessing in the midst of good times and challenging ones.



# Overview of Materials

## An Invitation to Grow in Gratitude Together: Introductory Materials pgs. 6-10

- **Welcome Letter** from parish leaders to the congregation with an overview of the program and timeline.
- **Participation Covenant:** A way to invite participation within the context of your congregational system by setting the ground rules on the surveys.
- **Sample Sermon** on the importance of gratitude to launch the program.
- **Formation Activity:** Gratitude Chains: Intergenerational faith formation activity.

## Segment One: Reflecting with Gratitude on How We Worship pgs. 11-17

- **Introduction** of the theme for church leaders.
- **Bulletin announcements** thanking people for participating so far and introducing the theme.
- **Gratitude Survey** on worship.
- **Formation Activity:** Gratitude Game: Pick Up Sticks Sunday School lesson practicing gratitude.
- **Take home** gratitude activity: Five Things I'm Grateful for...

## Segment Two: Reflecting with Gratitude on Our Sacred Spaces pgs. 18-23

- **Introduction** of the theme for church leaders.
- **Bulletin announcements** thanking people for participating so far and introducing the theme.
- **Gratitude Survey** on Sacred Spaces.
- **Formation Activity:** Thankful, Grateful, Brave youth group lesson helping teens express gratitude.
- **Take home gratitude activity:** I'm Grateful for My Home.

## Segment Three: Reflecting with Gratitude on Our Programs pgs. 24-29

- **Introduction** of the theme for church leaders.
- **Bulletin announcements** thanking people for participating so far and introducing the theme.
- **Gratitude Survey** on programs.
- **Formation Activity:** Photo Gratitude Scavenger Hunt, an Intergenerational Activity.
- **Take home gratitude activity:** Photo Gratitude Journal.

## • Segment Four: Give Thanks and Reflect on Our Community Engagement pgs. 30-35

- **Introduction** of the theme for church leaders.
- **Bulletin announcements** thanking people for participating so far and introducing the theme.
- **Gratitude Survey** on your Community Engagement.
- **Formation Activity:** Gratitude Graffiti Walls: an Intergenerational activity
- **Take home gratitude activity:** Reflect, Invite, Connect.

## Concluding Materials: Building a Budget and a Pledge Packet pgs. 36-43

- **Introduction** of the theme for church leaders.
- Tips for **Building a Gratitude-Based Budget**.
- Pledge packet **overview letter**.
- **Gratitude-based pledge card**.
- Pledge Card **ingathering Sunday ideas**.
- Sample **Follow Up Letter** for Pledges Received.
- **Formation Activity:** Introducing UTO
- **Take home gratitude activity** - Blue Box Journal.



# An Invitation to Grow in Gratitude Together: Introductory Materials

## In This Section You Will Find:

- **Welcome Letter** from parish leaders to the congregation with an overview of the program and timeline.
- **Participation Covenant:** A way to invite participation within the context of your congregational system by setting the ground rules on the surveys.
- **Sample Sermon** on the importance of gratitude to launch the program.
- **Formation Activity:** Gratitude Chains: Intergenerational faith formation activity (can be done at coffee hour) to introduce gratitude as an intentional practice.



# An Invitation to Grow in Gratitude Together: Welcome Letter

**Note:** You are welcome to write whatever introductory letter feels authentic to you, however, we strongly recommend beginning your letter with gratitude and an invitation into the journey of this program. We get that if you have a large congregation this might create a lot of work for you, but we invite you to do it over time and in prayer or break up the list with your staff or vestry. Sit with a list of parishioners/families, a UTO Blue Box, and give thanks for their place in the Body of Christ. Items in red are places where this letter can be customized easily to your context and then placed on letterhead.

You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us; for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God. II Corinthians 9:11-12

Date

Name

Address

Dear NAME,

Today I am writing to express my gratitude for you **and your family**, and to invite you to join me on a journey reflecting on the blessings of our life together in Christ in this congregation. I am so grateful for you and all of the ways you contribute to the life of this congregation. Thank you, especially for **name specifically one really wonderful thing you've noticed this person doing in the life of your congregation and why you are grateful for the gift they shared**. Thank you for all of the ways you contribute to building up the Body of Christ in this place and serve as a reminder of Jesus' love in the community as the quote from II Corinthians above reminds us.

This **year/month/et cetera** I am inviting our congregation into a time of reflection and gratitude for the gifts and ministries of our common life together. Why gratitude? Gratitude is the Christian response to recognizing that all good things that happen in our lives are gifts from God, a reminder of how much God loves us and wants us to be signs of God's love in the world. Typically, this is the time of year that the **vestry and staff/budget committee/etcetera** send out the draft budget for next year and we invite you to consider the budget, your resources, and make a pledge to support the budget. This year, instead of beginning with a budget, we are beginning with the invitation to reflect on the blessings of our common life together, through worship, sacred space, programs/formation, and how we engage our community. This is not just another questionnaire, or an opportunity to offer criticism, but a chance to name the ways this congregation is a blessing in your life and give thanks for all of the things you interact with in this place that enhances your experience of your faith and the love of Christ. After we've completed the **year/month/etcetera** the vestry and staff will review all of the things you've shared gratitude for having or experiencing in this place and build a budget out of your thanksgivings. We'll present that budget along with a way for you to respond in gratitude for the continuation of the blessings experienced here on **DATE** as we invite you to make a pledge in gratitude. We also invite you to join us on **DATE** for a special ingathering of these pledges and a celebration of all the good things God is doing in the midst of us or calling us to do through our budget for next year.

If you have any questions about this process at any time during our program, please let me know. Again, thank you for all of the ways you participate in the Body of Christ in this place and for helping our congregation be a sign of Jesus' love in the community.

Sincerely,



# An Invitation to Grow in Gratitude Together: Creating a Participation Covenant

**Note:** Any time we ask for feedback, it is important to set the ground rules so that everyone participating is set up to succeed. Below are the suggested ground rules, in the form of a covenant, that guided our creation of this program. Please add or edit them as you see fit for your congregation. We know that each congregation is a complex system and a unique creature and therefore we cannot create a covenant that will protect this process and keep it grounded in gratitude without your help of naming and claiming your unique context. You will also need to determine if you want to include this with the introductory letter and collect them or if you want to include it with each survey. Since the survey process is about what we are grateful for, it does not need to be anonymous, but it could be; again, that's up to you and your context.

## An Invitation to Grow in Gratitude Together at CHURCH NAME

Over the next **TIME PERIOD** CHURCH NAME will be reflecting on all of the good things God is doing in the midst of us to help us create our budget for next year. Our budget will be created out of the gratitude of the members of this congregation as a reminder of where God is calling us to use the blessings of our time, talent, and treasure to build up the body of Christ in this place and to support our gospel imperative to be signs of Christ's love in the community.

As I join in this journey of gratitude for all of the good things God is doing in the midst of **CHURCH NAME**, I commit to the following:

- I will pray for our church, church leadership, and community every day.
- I commit to noticing the good things that God is doing in our life together, and in my life outside of church.
- I will honestly and compassionately reflect on the survey each week, knowing that regardless of if I am thankful for the item on the survey, I am thankful for those who share their gift to create that particular item/experience or thankful for those for whom this item is a blessing.
- I will read and pray about each item. I know that the items are not competing for funding and that this is not a vote but that we are simply trying to honor each item and its place in our common life.
- I am committed to commenting only from a place of gratitude and building up by constructive feedback and not indirect or direct criticism offered without help or support.
- I am committed to loving as Jesus loves us, to believe that each person is doing their best and working together to participate fully in the Body of Christ.

Thank you, **CHURCH NAME**, for the following ways you are blessing me today:

Signed:



# An Invitation to Grow in Gratitude Together: Sample Sermon to Begin the Process

**Note:** *Since you can start this program at any time, your opening sermon might be constrained by the appointed lessons. We believe the Gospel should be preached at all times and that the Gospel is a reminder to give thanks for the good things God is doing inside of each of us, in the midst of us and sometimes, in spite of us, therefore it is always a good time to talk about gratitude. What follows is a general outline on gratitude that we hope inspires you to write a beautiful sermon on the lessons in front of you and gratitude.*

Have you ever googled “why be grateful”? It’s a really fascinating black hole of information from psychologists, religious leaders of all faiths and even just everyday people who have experienced gratitude changing their life. You’ll find tips to help you practice gratitude, health benefits, and often the case for why grateful people are more generous, happy and fulfilled. As Christians, gratitude is more than just a key to happiness, it’s a spiritual discipline rooted in the belief that everything good that happens around us is generated out of God’s love for us.

Why today’s scripture lesson is a reminder of gratitude and God’s love...

It is easy to forget that we were made by a loving God to be signs of that love in a broken and hurting world. It is easy to get overwhelmed by the brokenness, paralyzed by the wounds the world has inflicted upon us, or simply be caught up in the tasks and busy-ness of our days. And yet, in the midst of all of that God is calling us to gratitude. It is easy to be critical, it is easy to notice what is wrong, broken or annoying, or to simply dismiss or ignore things that don’t bring you joy instead of really critically reflecting on why you keep doing them. I know that I have caught myself in the midst and muck of all of these things only to hear the still small voice of God beckoning me back. It’s easy to get lost. Scarcity and capitalism can sometimes fool us into thinking there isn’t enough to share or that we have earned or deserved the good things that happen in our lives and then we no longer see them as a gift. It’s easy to get there in church life. It’s easy to get busy and to keep doing things without reflecting on why we are doing them or if anyone really needs us to do the things that take up so much of our time and energy. And yet, God reminds us that we were created to be enough, and that we have enough for everyone, and for that I am deeply grateful.

For the next few **TIME PERIOD** I want to invite you to join me in slowing down, in pausing to reflect and give thanks, to re-center on gratitude for the good things God is doing in this congregation. Each week we’ll reflect on an aspect of our common life together to determine those things that give us life, those things that might need our attention to do better or things whose time have come to an end and that we should give thanks for the many years they served us well but now will create space, time and energy for God to do something new in their place. We’ll participate in a new activity each week to help us refocus on gratitude, to deepen our experience of it, and to remind us to respond to the blessings of God with gratitude. Most importantly, we will enter into this as a time of celebration, to give thanks to God and to one another for all of the beautiful and wonderful things we experience from one another...we’ll celebrate all of those things we notice, we’ll celebrate those things that we’re grateful for but take for granted, and we’ll give thanks for the good things that God is calling us to do, beginning with slowing down and noticing the blessings of each day. As we begin, let me start by saying thank you to all of you. Thank you for believing in the mission of this church, for being companions together in the Jesus Movement, and for being a reminder of the love of God to all you encounter in the world each day. I am grateful for you, for this place, and for the ways God’s dream are continuing to be revealed in the midst of us.



# An Invitation to Grow in Gratitude Together: Intergenerational Faith Formation Activity

## Gratitude Chains

### **Note:**

*Since you've just introduced this new way of talking about stewardship, it's time to have some fun. This gratitude practice comes from a parish UTO Coordinator who wanted to visually show her congregation how much they had to give thanks for in their daily lives. We've used it with all ages and for various lengths of time. This project is especially popular at Episcopal Youth Event, where young people came day after day to see how long the chain was getting and what others were thankful for that might inspire their gratitude.*

### **Overview:**

Gratitude Chains is a super easy project to help people visualize how many good things God is doing in the midst of their daily life. It's easy to start at coffee hour, during the announcements or as a part of a parish gathering. It can be done by anyone of any age or ability. You'll be making paper chains like many of us made as children to decorate our Christmas tree.

### **Supplies:**

**Paper cut into slips** – these can be as long or short as you want, but long enough that someone can write (or draw) what they are thankful for. We recommend making them in a variety of colors but all the same length.

**Tape or staplers** to attach the chains

**Markers, crayons, pens, etc.** for people to decorate or write on their slips

### **Action:**

Invite your congregation to take slips and write one thing on each slip for which they are grateful. You can invite them to take home slips and bring them back the following Sunday, so they can continue to notice and give thanks. Once you have a pile of slips begin to assemble them into a chain. Let people know how long this project will last and how long you are hoping to make the chain. For example, we're going to do this for a month and we want to see how many lengths of the sanctuary we can complete. Then simply remind people, continue to provide paper, and keep adding gratitude links to your chain. When the time has finished, be sure to offer a concluding prayer of gratitude for all of the blessings the chain represents before taking them down. These also make great decorations for your pledge ingathering Sunday if you want to keep adding to them throughout the entire campaign.





## Segment One

# Reflecting with Gratitude on How We Worship

### In This Section You Will Find:

- **Introduction** of the theme for church leaders.
- **Bulletin announcement** thanking people for participating so far and introducing the theme for the week.
- **Gratitude Survey** on worship.
- **Formation Activity:** Gratitude Game: Pick Up Sticks Sunday School lesson practicing gratitude.
- **Take home** gratitude activity: Five Things I'm Grateful for...



## Reflecting with Gratitude on How We Worship: Introduction for Leaders

This week we'll begin by focusing on how we worship. For some congregations, this will be super easy and for others this will be a challenge. Episcopalians feel very strongly about worship, regardless of high or low church (however you want to define that), small or big congregations. This is one area of our life together that often falls into the trap of "well, we've always done it that way" which can keep us from experiencing the fullness of the Prayer Book or the richness of the diversity of ways to worship within our denomination. It's also a place where we sometimes forget to look at things with a critical eye. Some aspects of our worship are fraught with good ideas that we've picked up when we've visited other churches or read an article or participated in workshops on church growth and evangelism. This is a chance to really look at all of these things and figure out what is serving you well, what might not be, and you might even find things that your congregation has completely missed that you did or changed as church leaders. Feel free to customize the survey. We recommend walking in the front door of your church with the survey in hand and writing down everything you see that you hope people engage with when they are gathered on a Sunday morning, from the bulletin boards to the candles on the altar. You might find that something you spend a lot of time on (like that bulletin board) is something people don't even notice. This means that it frees up the space or your time to do something else. Or you might think no one notices the bulletin board only to find that everyone loves it and finds it helpful, so you'll feel encouraged to keep it going. You might learn that no one knows the candles are expensive beeswax and would be just as happier with a less expensive version that looks basically the same. The questions driving all of the surveys are: is the time, energy, effort and money behind this item valued or can it be done for less money, or in less time or with less energy so that you can be freed up to do something new, something better, or something with more joy.

This week in the bulletin announcement, we've also invited people to bring their favorite photo of the sacred spaces with them the following week for a bulletin board display. Sometimes we forget how a space becomes a part of our lives, from baptisms, weddings, funerals or simply the place where you made a new friend, or experienced Jesus in a new way. All of these pictures are reminders of the centrality of this place in the lives of our fellow congregants and why everyone cares so much about this place.

This week our Faith Formation will focus on helping children reflect on the good things that happen in their life by playing pick-up sticks as a part of a gratitude game. Everyone will be sent home with a gratitude journal page and the invitation to try keeping a gratitude journal using the sheet every day or just as a way to reflect at the end of the week.



## Reflecting with Gratitude on How We Worship: Bulletin Announcements

### **This Week at Church Name: Reflecting with Gratitude on How We Worship**

Thank you for joining us today as we reflect with gratitude on how we worship together. Thank you for filling in our covenant to journey together in gratitude for the next **TIME FRAME**. If you haven't received a covenant or the letter that was sent to your home, please let **NAME**, Stewardship Chair, know so we can make sure you receive one. We value your voice and presence in this program and are thankful for your time and participation. **Today our children will be learning about gratitude in Sunday School by playing a game of pick-up sticks focused on what they are grateful for in their lives.** We hope you'll take home the instructions and play during the week with the children in your life.

You should have **received a survey about what parts of worship** you are most grateful for when you come to church. We invite you to be really present during worship today as you consider how we move, pray, celebrate, and function in this space together. What are you most grateful for? Mark those things on the survey. If there are things you simply don't notice or engage with leave those blank on the survey. Did we ask you about something that you never realized was there but now that you do you'll engage with it going forward? Let us know! Did we miss something you're grateful for during worship? Be sure to add it at the bottom. Thank you for taking time to give thanks with us for all of the wonderful things God is doing in the midst of our time together in prayer.

**Please bring with you a photo during the next TIME FRAME that expresses your gratitude for our church and an experience you've had in this place.** Maybe you were married here or made a new friend at coffee hour. Bring a photo for our bulletin board in the **LOCATION** so we can all give thanks for the way our space blesses you.

Please be sure to pick up this week's take home gratitude practice: a gratitude journal page. Studies have shown that keeping a gratitude journal is good for your health. This is a quick half-page journal prompt that will help you reflect on the best things you experienced each day, or simply during the week. Be sure to let **NAME**, our Gratitude Chair, know next week if this helped you seek out the good things happening in your life during the week.

### **This week during church we'll be recognizing the contributions of the following groups (in alphabetical order):**

Acolytes	Eucharistic Visitors
Altar Guild	Flower Guild
Bulletin Creator/Bulletin Assembly Team	Intercessors
Choir	Lectors/Readers
Clergy	Musicians
Eucharistic Ministers	Ushers/Greeters

*Be sure to add any other groups that help lead or support worship at your church.*

Thank you to everyone who participates in or leads worship at our church. Many times, your gifts go unnoticed, but it is through your work, your hands, voices, heart and hope that we come together each week to participate in the Eucharist and give thanks with all of the tools necessary.



# Reflecting with Gratitude on How We Worship: Gratitude Survey

Please mark the boxes of the items you are deeply grateful for this morning. Circle items you hadn't noticed before that now that you see them you are grateful for and will pay attention to going forward.

*Please note: leaving an item blank doesn't mean that you don't like it or don't want it, it simply means that the experience of it neither enhances nor impacts your gratitude for being present in worship today.*

## Today I am grateful for:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> The sign outside of church                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The entryway/a safe place for my coat       | <input type="checkbox"/> Organ/Piano/Music Team              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Children in worship materials               | <input type="checkbox"/> Styles of the Prayers of the people |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bulletin                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Communion wafers/bread              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bulletin board                              | <input type="checkbox"/> Seasonal art/decorations            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Brochures with information about our church | <input type="checkbox"/> Flowers                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Invitations to church functions             | <input type="checkbox"/> Prayer A                            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nametags                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Rite II                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Signs for the bathroom                      | <input type="checkbox"/>                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Announcements in the bulletin               | <input type="checkbox"/> PLEASE ADD AS MANY ITEMS AS YOU CAN |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prayer Book                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> THINK OF...                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hymnals                                     | <input type="checkbox"/>                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Candles                                     | <input type="checkbox"/>                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communion Wafers                            |  |

**I'm also grateful for these things which were not on the list but that I experience while in worship at  
church name:**



# Reflecting with Gratitude on How We Worship: Faith Formation Focus for Children

## Gratitude Game: Pick Up Sticks\*

### Note:

While this activity is intended for children to do in Sunday School, it can easily be done as an intergenerational activity either at Coffee Hour or as a part of a parish forum. It would be a fun activity to mix up age groups and have them hear from one another the things they are most grateful for in the categories listed or ones you come up with specific to your context. (Note: there are jumbo pick up sticks available online that are fun to use with a big group.)

### Supplies Needed:

- Pick Up Sticks, the game
- Gratitude Game Board (see next page)

**Background:** Children are naturally very good at gratitude, maybe because they depend on others so much for so many things, or maybe because they haven't yet forgotten the importance of thank you. Teaching children gratitude is important because they will often remind others, through their example of giving thanks, to join them in practicing gratitude. Today we'll help the students see all of the things in their life that they can give thanks for and encourage them to keep giving thanks to God for all of the good things happening in their life.

### Lesson:

Read the scripture verse that you've chosen for the lesson. We recommend using: Psalm 105:1-6, 37-45

Discuss with the students what the lesson means. If using the recommended lessons some questions might be:

- What was the best thing that happened to you this week?
- What was the best trip you ever went on?
- What was the most fun thing you did at school this week?
- What is your favorite place to visit?
- What thing would you like to be able to do?

### Gratitude Game:

Using the game Pick Up Sticks, and the rules that come with it, (you can find the rules here: <https://www.fgbradleys.com/rules/Pick%20Up%20Sticks.pdf>) play a round of Pick Up Sticks, however, depending on what color the student picks, they need to share something they are grateful for using the Gratitude Game Board. (Feel free to adapt the categories to what best meets the needs in your community. You can also build your own sticks for the Gratitude Game using instructions found here: <http://teachbesideme.com/gratitude-game-pick-sticks/>)

**After the game:** ask the students, was one color harder than the others to think of things that you're grateful for? Was one color the easiest to think of things from? What other categories could we have used? What are you most thankful for today?

Invite them to challenge their families to find at least one thing each day to be grateful for and keep a list or make a thank offering through UTO. (If your church currently participates in UTO, this is a great time to talk about and share UTO Blue Boxes, if not, we will introduce UTO at the end of the Gratitude Program.)

\*A big thank you to <http://teacgbesideme.com/gratitude-game-pick-sticks/> for the idea behind this project.



# Reflecting with Gratitude on How We Worship: Take Home Gratitude Activity

## Five Things I'm Grateful For...A Fast Journal Page

**Note:** Keeping a gratitude journal does not need to be labor intensive, it can be as simple as writing down five good things that happened today. We've created a form (below) for you to send home for your congregation to use to track the five best things that happened to them this week and how they feel about the week overall. This is also a great way to help young people start their own gratitude practice.



## Five Things I'm Grateful For...

Studies have shown that keeping a gratitude journal improves your overall health. There is no right or wrong way to keep a gratitude journal, but we've created this page as a spot to capture five quick moments or words of gratitude for the week that has ended.

### Five things I'm grateful for...

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

### Five people I'm grateful for...

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Now that you've reflected on your day, we encourage you to make a thank offering to God for all of these blessings in your UTO Blue Box. Thank you! To learn more about UTO or ways to develop your gratitude practices, please visit: [www.episcopalchurch.org/uto](http://www.episcopalchurch.org/uto)



# Gratitude Game

**Black = Name something  
God has done for you that  
you are thankful for**

**Red = name a person  
you are thankful for**

**Blue = name a place  
you are thankful for**

**Green = name an activity  
you are thankful for**

**Yellow = name an object  
you are thankful for**



## Segment Two

# Reflecting with Gratitude on Our Sacred Spaces

### In This Section You Will Find:

- **Introduction** of the theme for church leaders.
- **Bulletin announcements** thanking people for participating so far and introducing the theme.
- **Gratitude Survey** on Sacred Spaces.
- **Formation Activity:** Thankful, Grateful, Brave youth group lesson helping teens express gratitude.
- **Take home** gratitude activity: I'm Grateful for My Home.



## Reflecting with Gratitude on Our Sacred Spaces: Introduction for Leaders

Welcome to week two! Last week we focused on worship, which is probably the easiest of the four sections for people to reflect on together. This week we move on to our Sacred Spaces, or buildings and grounds. As a parish priest, I often found that taking care of our sacred spaces consumed more time than I would have guessed and more work than seminary prepared me to deal with. When we enter into a public space we expect it to be clean, climate controlled, and cared for and we often only notice when they're not. What I came to learn is that a lot of time, energy and funding goes into keeping our buildings and grounds not only functional, but welcoming and lovely. Helping our congregation give thanks for the aspects of our sacred spaces that often go unnoticed is important because it is a reminder that we all need to be good stewards of our spaces and how much work and expense the physical plant actually is within our budget. Some congregations have wonderful practices around the care of their buildings, some as simple as, if you use something up, bring a replacement. Other congregations find that the care of the buildings and grounds falls solely on staff. Either way, it's a lot of work and a lot to give thanks for. We also want to reflect on how our Sacred Spaces are the foundation for all kinds of wonderful things we can do and that the spaces shape the ministries housed within.

Some of the items on the survey might feel silly, but it is important to recognize that everything within this category is often the result of someone thinking of others. Almost everyone I know is probably grateful for the bathroom to be stocked with supplies, but has anyone ever thanked the person who makes sure it is stocked? If your congregation utilizes staff to ensure the sacred spaces are stocked and cared for it is easy to ignore the importance of being grateful for the time the person put into it. Once I thanked the Barista at my local coffee shop while she was making my drink. The man behind me in line grumbled, "well it is her job." I turned and had a conversation with him that I couldn't imagine her dream for herself was to make coffee and even if it was, clearly my dream for myself today was not to make my coffee so I'm glad she's here and she's willing to do it for me. The man averted his eyes and thanked her for making his coffee. She smiled and thanked me. Even if it is your job, it is nice to be appreciated for doing it well, or with care and compassion. As human beings, we long to be recognized and thanked for our contribution to the good of the order, even if it is for doing the most mundane of tasks that make the lives of others easier or better.

This week the bulletin announcement will also thank people for participating last week. We'll invite you to share the most surprising thing you learned and the thing you were most grateful to see. We'll remind them of the covenant and the goals of this work. Once again, we've put a place in the sample bulletin announcement to thank people, but we also recommend doing it during worship. There is always the fear that when we thank someone publicly we'll forget someone, so be sure to ask someone to check your list before recognizing people so as to not leave anyone out.



## Reflecting with Gratitude on Our Sacred Spaces: Bulletin Announcements

### **This Week at Church Name: Reflecting with Gratitude on Our Sacred Spaces**

Thank you for joining us for worship today as we reflect with gratitude on the sacred spaces of **CHURCH NAME**. Thank you for filling in our covenant to journey together in gratitude for the next **TIME FRAME**. If you haven't received a covenant or the letter that was sent to your home, please let **NAME** know so we can make sure you receive one. We value your voice and presence in this program and are thankful for your time and participation.

Last **time frame** we reflected with gratitude on how we worship together; thank you for filling out and returning the survey! As we reflected on your answers, we were so thankful for your time and for all of the ways our worship gives you joy and sustenance for the week ahead. We were surprised to learn that people were especially grateful for **NAME SOMETHING SURPRISING**. We learned that **NAME SOMETHING MOST PEOPLE AGREED UPON**. If you didn't get a chance to turn in your survey or fill one out, you are most welcome to still do so. Please see **NAME**, Stewardship Chair, to get the materials from last **TIME FRAME** and turn them in by **END DATE**. Regardless, please let people know you are grateful for them, their ministry or role in our community life, as there's never a moment that's not appropriate to give thanks. **Thank you to everyone who brought photos this week. Be sure to hang them up in LOCATION.**

You should have received a **survey about what aspects of our sacred spaces** you are most grateful for when you come to church. We invite you to be really present today as you consider how we move and function in this space together. What are you most grateful for? Mark those things on the survey. If there are things you simply don't notice or engage with leave those blank. If we asked you about something that you never realized was there but now that you do you'll engage with it going forward, let us know! Did we miss something you're grateful for during your time here? Be sure to add it at the bottom. Thank you for taking the time to give thanks with us for all of the wonderful things God is doing in the midst of our sacred space.

**Today our teens will be thinking about all of the people for whom they are grateful and the things they are grateful for that they contribute to the community.** They will send thank you cards to someone in youth group, someone in the community that they admire, and one to themselves. If you would like to send a thank you card to our young people this week, please do! You can send them directly using the church directory or drop them off in the office to be forwarded.

Please be sure to pick up **this week's take home gratitude practice: "I'm grateful for my home,"** an opportunity to reflect on the blessings of the places that provide us shelter and the things we place in them that make it home. Be sure to let **NAME**, Gratitude Chair, know next week if this helped you seek out the good things happening in your life during the week.

### **This week during church we'll be recognizing the contributions of the following (in alphabetical order):**

Building Committee  
Cleaning Crew  
Custodian/Sexton  
Landscaping Crew  
Volunteers who stock bathroom supplies  
Volunteers who stock kitchen supplies

*Be sure to add any other groups that help lead or support the care of sacred spaces.*

Thank you to everyone who helps care for our Sacred Spaces. Many times, your gifts go unnoticed, but it is through your work, your hands, your sweat and intentionality that we come together each week in a safe, comfortable space to participate in the Eucharist and give thanks.



## Reflecting with Gratitude on Our Sacred Spaces: Gratitude Survey

Please mark the boxes of the items you are deeply grateful for this morning. Circle items you hadn't noticed before that now that you see them you are grateful for and will pay attention to going forward.

*Please note: leaving an item blank doesn't mean that you don't like it or don't want it, it simply means that the experience of it neither enhances nor impacts your experience in our sacred spaces.*

### Today I am grateful for:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gardens outside of church                | <input type="checkbox"/> Kitchen   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parking lot                              | <input type="checkbox"/> o Dishes and pots/pans                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Handicapped accessibility                | <input type="checkbox"/> o Silverware, knives, tools                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Welcoming front door/entry               | <input type="checkbox"/> o Clean and organized                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electricity                              | <input type="checkbox"/> Technology                                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Climate control                          | <input type="checkbox"/> o Wifi  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clean sanctuary                          | <input type="checkbox"/> o Televisions, etc. for watching presentations  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Comfortable seat and space to worship in | <input type="checkbox"/> Play area for children well-tended              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stained glass windows                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Playground safe and well-tended                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sanctuary light                          | <input type="checkbox"/>   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Well cared for floors, walls, etc.       | <input type="checkbox"/>   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bathrooms, clean and accessible          | <input type="checkbox"/> PLEASE ADD AS MANY ITEMS AS YOU CAN THINK OF... |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Faith formation spaces                   | <input type="checkbox"/>   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> o Cheerful places to learn               | <input type="checkbox"/>   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> o Clean and organized                    | <input type="checkbox"/>   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Storage spaces clean and organized       |  |

**I'm also grateful for these things which were not on the list but that I experience while onsite at church name:**



# Reflecting with Gratitude on Our Sacred Spaces: Faith Formation Focus for Teens

## Thankful, Grateful, Brave

**Background:** Many teenagers (and even some adults) often forget to say thank you to the people we engage with on a regular basis. Saying thank you also requires a level of vulnerability and bravery. When we acknowledge our gratitude simply for the presence of another, we also acknowledge our connections, dependency, and that the person we are most grateful for is often the person we feel safest with to be our true self, or not always be our kindest self. Today we want to take a moment with our young people to help them say thank you to people simply for being in their life. Teenagers are in the midst of self-differentiation and finding their voice in the midst of what can be crushing peer pressure and the demands of growing up in a digital age. Helping our young people identify those individuals who can encourage and support them within the church and in the community is important support, and teaching them to express gratitude an important skill; both take bravery to do because they require an element of vulnerability (naming that you need help and letting someone know you need them) but these are important life skills that will serve them well for years to come. Additionally, it's something all of us need a reminder of, that God created us for one another and that we should give thanks for the blessings of our relationships. We will also give them a chance to send a thank you note to their future self, because gratitude is one expression of being gentle with ourselves.

**Supplies Needed:** Thank You cards-at least three for each student and stamps.

**Lesson:** Read the scripture verse that you've chosen for the lesson we recommend using: Psalm 105:1-6, 37-45. Discuss with the students what the lesson means. If using the recommended lessons some questions might be:

- What was the best thing that happened to you this week?
- What was the best trip you ever went on?
- Where did you see kindness at school this week?
- What is the nicest things someone has ever done for you?

**Project:** Pass out a thank you card to each student. Invite them to write a thank you note to someone at church. You can also do this verbally by inviting each student to share something they are thankful for about someone else in the room. It's up to you and the maturity of the group. Pass out a second card. Ask them to write a thank you card to someone not in the room. It can be a family member, someone in the community or even a celebrity, someone they look up to that they are grateful for how that person lives their life and is an example to them. Pass out the third card and invite the students to write a thank you note to themselves. Imagine yourself ten or fifteen years in the future. What will you be doing? What things are you thankful you tried, learned or encountered? What would you in the future thank you for doing now that would help you achieve your dreams? If you could do or be anything, what skills will you need to get there, whose help will you need? Who will you need to thank and what will you need to thank yourself for? While they are writing, let them know that you have also written a thank you note to each of them (or will write while they are writing). Tuck this note into the same envelope as the card they write to themselves.

**Closing:** Collect the letters that the students have written after they have sealed them. Let them know that you will mail the cards for them this week but that you will hold the cards they wrote to themselves and mail them at a later date but prior to graduation so they can be reminded on a day when they might need it most, that they are a blessing from God to the community.





# Reflecting with Gratitude on Our Sacred Spaces: Take Home Gratitude Activity

## I'm Grateful for My Home

Shelter is one of the three basic human needs. Many of us are grateful for the place where we live while some of us live in a place or situation that feels unstable or that perhaps we might be thinking about moving. Regardless, within the walls of the place we call home or where we live are often things that bring us joy, remind us of happy times, celebrate the journey our life has taken or simply serve us well. We invite you to take time to celebrate your home and the things inside of it that bring you joy, comfort or hope.

### Five objects I'm grateful for...

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

### Five photos I'm grateful for...

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

### Five tools I'm grateful for...

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

### Five moments my home reminds me of today that I'm grateful for...

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

### Five things that remind me of a vacation/trip that I'm grateful for...

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

### Five items that make my home cozy that I'm grateful for...

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Now that you've reflected on your home, we encourage you to make a thank offering to God for all of these blessings in your UTO Blue Box. Thank you! To learn more about UTO or ways to develop your gratitude practices, please visit:

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



## Segment Three

# Reflecting with Gratitude on Our Programs

### In This Section You Will Find:

- **Introduction** of the theme for church leaders.
- **Bulletin announcements** thanking people for participating so far and introducing the theme.
- **Gratitude Survey** on programs.
- **Formation Activity:** Photo Gratitude Scavenger Hunt, an Intergenerational Activity.
- **Take home** gratitude activity: Photo Gratitude Journal.



## Reflecting with Gratitude on Our Programs: Introduction for Leaders

Welcome to week three, you're halfway there! Last week we focused on sacred spaces, which likely brought to light for members of your congregation the many things behind the scenes that keep your church open, safe and functioning. We hope that it has helped you think critically about your space (maybe you've got a work day scheduled to follow up on a project area) because your space is really key to this week's focus—programs. This week might hit close to home for many priests, deacons, and church leaders who have tried and failed (or tried and succeeded) to start new programs at church. We've all heard the same studies and information that show that families are feeling overscheduled and overprogrammed and yet we also believe deeply as a church in the importance of faith formation or religious education. Many of us have deep gratitude for a program or event at church that really taught us something about our faith or ourselves. If we're being honest, many of us have also spent hours putting together a program that we think will just be amazing only to have no one show up or only one or two people when you were ready for twenty. Perhaps you've had the opposite...maybe you forgot to prepare for your lectionary study only to find twenty people waiting to join you. Programs are often unpredictable. What works one year, might not work the next, or something that flopped might have simply failed because of the timing, not the content. There are a lot of options when it comes to programs and you probably know what is working and what isn't, but the goal of this week is to really hear and experience the gratitude of your congregation for these programs, regardless of if they could come or not. The survey might open up bigger conversations and discernment about what kinds of programs people are interested in. Even this stewardship program is designed to help your congregation experience some types of formation that they might not have before, like take home work and intergenerational activities.

This week's survey is a little different. We're going to ask what programs people are grateful for and which ones they have participated in or would participate in if the schedule allowed. This is really important. I can be grateful that my priest leads a Bible Study each week and still not want to attend it, but it's more important to discover that I am grateful that the Daughters of the King are a part of our congregation, I just wish they met on a week night instead of Sunday afternoon. This helps leaders think critically about the programming they offer and how they might expand, contract, or try something new.

Again, this week the bulletin announcement will also thank people for participating last week. We'll invite you to share the most surprising thing you learned and the thing you were most grateful to see. We'll remind them of the covenant and the goals of this work. Once again, we've put a place in the sample bulletin announcement to thank people, but we also recommend doing it during worship. There is always the fear that when we thank someone publicly we'll forget someone, so be sure to ask someone to check your list before recognizing people so as to not leave anyone out.



## Reflecting with Gratitude on Our Programs: Bulletin Announcement

### **This Week at Church Name: Reflecting with Gratitude on Our Programs**

Thank you for joining us for worship today and reflecting with gratitude on the programs at **CHURCH NAME**. Thank you for filling in our covenant to journey together in gratitude for the next **TIME FRAME**. If you haven't received a covenant or the letter that was sent to your home, please let **NAME**, Stewardship Chair, know so we can make sure you receive one. We value your voice and presence in this program and are thankful for your time and participation.

Last **time frame** we reflected with gratitude on our sacred spaces and you were encouraged to bring photos of moments that took place here that you were grateful for; thank you for filling out and returning the survey and bringing photos! We've hung your photos in **PLACE** and some are included in this bulletin insert. As we reflected on your answers, we were so thankful for this place and the way it provides a respite for us on our life journeys. We were surprised to learn that people were especially grateful for **NAME SOMETHING SURPRISING**. We learned that **NAME SOMETHING MOST PEOPLE AGREED UPON**. If you didn't get a chance to turn in your survey or fill one out, you are still welcome to do so. Please see **NAME** to get the materials from last **TIME FRAME** and turn them in by **END DATE**.

You should have received **a survey about our programs**. This week our survey is a little bit different. We invite you to be really present today as you consider the educational and formational activities that we offer. What are you most grateful for that you've participated in? Mark those things on the survey. If there are things you simply don't notice or engage with leave those blank. Did we ask you about something that you never realized was there but now that you do you'll engage with it going forward? Let us know! Mark those items you would attend gratefully if they were only offered at a different time. Did we miss something you're grateful for during your time here? Be sure to add it at the bottom. Thank you for taking the time to give thanks with us for all of the wonderful things God is doing in the midst of our time together.

Today we'll be hosting **an intergenerational event** during our usual **parish forum/coffee hour** time. Bring your phone, digital camera or other way to share digital images with a small group. We'll break into groups and share photos that remind us of things we are grateful for and share why. This is a fun activity that's easy to do at home and especially great to do at the holidays with your family. Please join us!

Please be sure to pick up this week's **take home gratitude practice: photo challenge!** To build upon our adult forum/coffee hour, we're sending you home with a sheet to help you proactively look for opportunities to give thanks. Fill it out, encourage a friend to do the same and then share your sheets and stories at the end of the week. Be sure to let **NAME**, Gratitude Chair, know next week if this helped you this week.

### **This week during church we'll be recognizing the contributions of the following (in alphabetical order):**

Bible Study Leaders	Nursery Volunteers
Daughters of the King	Parent Assistants
Easter Egg Hunt Leaders and Volunteers	Sunday School Teachers
Education for Ministry Leaders	Youth Group Leaders

*Be sure to add any other groups that help lead or support the care of sacred spaces.*

Thank you to everyone who supports, attends or leads programs at our church. Your gifts help us to strengthen and deepen our commitment to Christ and to one another as we grow in faith and fellowship. Thank you!



## Reflecting with Gratitude on Our Programs: Gratitude Survey

Our survey for this section looks a little different. We invite you to consider all of the programs that are offered at **church name**. Please mark those programs in which you have or are currently participating and leading. Or mark those which you would attend if they were offered at another time.

### Today I am grateful for:

Program	I Am Grateful to Attend and/or Contribute	I would gladly and gratefully attend if it were at a different time.
Sunday School		
Youth Group		
Bible Study		
Intergenerational Activities		
Advent Activity Hour		
Easter Egg Hunt		
Daughters of the King		
Education for Ministry		
Godly Play		

I'm also grateful for these things that were not on the list but that I experience as program or formation at **church name**:

Finally, as I reflect, I realize that I am grateful to work with parish leaders on transitioning out of leadership of the following ministries and training my replacement so that I might participate in new ministries at **church name**.



# Reflecting with Gratitude on Our Programs: Intergenerational Faith Formation Activity

## Photo Gratitude Scavenger Hunt

**Background:** Many of us now take a lot of pictures with our phones, then forget to ever print or share them with others. Often a snapshot is something we are grateful for—a sunset, a person, an experience or a moment in time that we don't want to forget. So today, at **coffee hour/parish forum** we're going to break into mixed-aged groups and do a phone photo scavenger hunt—each of you will get a chance to share the photos on your phones that show moments of gratitude with those you love and learn about others in the congregation and the things for which they are grateful.

**Supplies Needed:** The list below, a timer and photos on your phone/digital camera or other device.

**Project:** For this hunt, one person will read the category to the group and set a timer. Everyone will have two minutes to search through their photos on their phones to look for the one that best describes the category. (Invite children without phones to help someone with theirs or draw a quick picture.) No new pictures are allowed, only ones currently on the phone. When the time is up, each person shares the photo they chose and why. If they don't have a photo to share, invite them to simply share why they are grateful for that category.

### I'm Grateful for...

1. My family
2. My friends
3. An adventure
4. A vacation or trip
5. A quiet place
6. A beautiful spot
7. A favorite art project/piece of art
8. A funny video
9. Someone who can't be with us today
10. My health and happiness

**Closing:** Invite each group to share with each other what story or photo they were most grateful to receive from the group. Then invite people to share, as they feel called, what they learned about each other and the blessings they got to learn about in the photos with the full group.

*\*Adapted from [www.kcedventures.com](http://www.kcedventures.com)*





# Reflecting with Gratitude on Our Programs: Take Home Gratitude Activity

## Photo Gratitude Journal

*This week we looked back at our photos to reflect and share stories of times when we were grateful. This week we'll practice being proactive about taking photos of things that cause us to pause and give thanks, recognizing that all things are gifts from God. Snap a picture and put it in the squares. Challenge someone to do the same and then join you to share the stories behind the photos at the end of the week over a cup of coffee or tea.*

**I'm grateful for this person:**

**I'm Grateful for this place:**

**I'm grateful for nature:**

**I'm grateful for this moment:**

**I'm grateful for how I felt in this picture:**

**I'm grateful for how I felt when I was taking this picture:**



## Segment Four

### Reflecting with Gratitude on Our Community Engagement

## In This Section You Will Find:

- **Introduction** of the theme for church leaders.
- **Bulletin announcements** thanking people for participating so far and introducing the theme.
- **Gratitude Survey** on your Community Engagement.
- **Formation Activity:** Gratitude Graffiti Walls: an Intergenerational activity
- **Take home gratitude activity:** Reflect, Invite, Connect.



## Reflecting with Gratitude on Our Community Engagement: Introduction for Leaders

Today we begin our final section of reflection and gratitude regarding the ministries, space, and experience of the members of your congregation. We now turn our focus outward to how your congregation engages with the community in which you are apart. Every congregation engages with their community differently, which makes building this section particularly difficult. With that said, there are two major ways we engage with our communities: service/advocacy/justice or evangelism/invitation/connection. We'll try to focus equally on both aspects, knowing that many congregations might do one better than the other or might be struggling to do either. You'll notice that the survey has two columns, one for each way congregations can engage with their community. You might think of a third way; be sure to include that as well, as we've only made the broad categories as way to delineate between two very different forms of engagement and yet show that both are key to the Jesus Movement.

As you know, we'll once again use the bulletin insert to introduce the theme and thank leaders in the areas addressed. We will use the formation time to engage the congregation with a gratitude graffiti wall—you'll need two areas where folks can write on the wall to share their gratitude for the congregation and one for the community to share what they are grateful for as well. This will help you begin to not only remind your congregation of the importance of gratitude as a spiritual discipline but help the community to remember or name all of the blessings they experience as well. The take home activity might be a challenge for some people; we're going to ask everyone to invite someone to church. We need your help to make sure that what they are inviting people to something engaging and welcoming for visitors. You don't need to create something new, but it will depend on when you are doing this during the year. For example, if it is October, have a St. Francis of Assisi pet blessing and invite the local animal shelter to do pet adoption at your church. If it is around Christmas, do an Advent Activity day where you make Advent wreaths, share cookies, sing carols and so forth. You can also invite them to simply come and join you for church, we just recommend that you perhaps pick a Sunday and make sure that you are set up to welcome people as best as you can (signs for the bathroom, people ready to help visitors juggle books and so forth). This will be the focus of the take home activity. We'll ask each person to share with someone else why they are grateful for their church and learn why the other person is grateful for their faith community or why they choose to not be a part of a faith community. This will require compassion and deep listening, but since we've been focused on gratitude this long, we certainly can listen and receive someone's experience with gratitude for the sharing and hope for the healing.

If you would like to expand this work into a longer session to really do it justice, we highly recommend *Transforming Evangelism* by The Rev. David Gortner, PhD. It's a wonderful step by step process to welcoming people to church. If your growing area is service/advocacy/justice, we highly recommend signing up a group of leaders to attend Asset Based Community Development Training through Episcopal Relief and Development and the Presiding Bishop's Staff.



## Reflecting with Gratitude on Our Community Engagement: Bulletin Announcements

### This Week at Church Name: Reflecting with Gratitude on Our Community Engagement

Thank you for joining us for worship today and reflecting with gratitude on the ways CHURCH NAME engages with our community. Thank you for filling in our covenant to journey together in gratitude for the next TIME FRAME. Today begins our last section of reflection together. If you haven't received a covenant or the letter that was sent to your home, please let NAME, Stewardship Chair, know so we can make sure you receive one. We value your voice and presence in this program and are thankful for your time and participation.

Last time frame we reflected with gratitude on our programs. Thank you for filling out and returning the survey! As we reflected on your answers, we were so thankful for this place and your willingness to grow in faith together in spite of your busy schedules. We were surprised to learn that people were especially grateful for NAME SOMETHING SURPRISING. We learned that NAME SOMETHING MOST PEOPLE AGREED UPON. If you didn't get a chance to turn in your survey or fill one out, you are still welcome to do so. Please see NAME to get the materials from last TIME FRAME and turn them in by END DATE.

You should have received a **survey about our community engagement**. There are two columns this week: how we serve and how we invite. We invite you to be really present today as you reflect on the ways we engage and invite members of our community to join us on the journey here at Church Name. Think about what first drew you to come visit. Why did you stay? Did someone invite you? Share these things with us on the survey so we can give thanks for the ways you were drawn into our church community. Mark those things on the survey that our congregation does to serve and connect with our community for which you are grateful. If there are things you simply don't notice or engage with leave those blank. Did we ask you about something that you never realized was there but now that you do you'll engage with it going forward? Let us know! Did we miss something you're grateful for during your time here? Be sure to add it at the bottom. Thank you for taking the time to give thanks with us for all of the wonderful things God is doing in the midst of our time together.

Today we'll be hosting **one last intergenerational event** during our usual parish forum/coffee hour time. We're going to make graffiti on the walls of location and set up a graffiti wall outside. Please join us!

Please be sure to pick up this week's **take home gratitude practice: Reflect, Invite Connect**, to help you reflect on why you joined our congregation and help you to invite others to join us as well. Be sure to let NAME, Gratitude Chair, know next week if this helped you seek out the good things happening in your life during the week.

### This week during church we'll be recognizing the contributions of the following (in alphabetical order):

After School Program Volunteers

Holiday Planning and Invitation Team

Breakfast with Santa Leaders and Volunteers

Jail Ministry Team

Community Garden Leaders and Volunteers

Soup Kitchen Leaders and Servers

Evangelism Team

*Be sure to add any other groups that help lead or support your community engagement ministries.*

Thank you to everyone who volunteers their time to help those in need in our community and to everyone who invites friends and family to join you here for worship. Your time and talent are a reminder that Jesus called us to seek him out in the least, the lost, and the lowly and to care for him there. Thank you also for each time you tell the good news of what God is doing in this place as a way to invite others to journey with us. Thank you!



## Reflecting with Gratitude on Our Community Engagement: Gratitude Survey

Please mark the boxes of the items you are deeply grateful for this morning. Circle items you hadn't noticed before that now that you see them you are grateful for and will pay attention to going forward. Please note: leaving an item blank doesn't mean that you don't like it or don't want it, it simply means that the experience of it neither enhances nor impacts your gratitude for how our congregation engages with our community.

### Today I am grateful for:

#### Service/Justice/Advocacy Work:

- ☐ After School tutoring program
- ☐ Free Summer Camp
- ☐ Hosting AA groups
- ☐ Youth summer mission trips
- ☐ Job skills training programs
- ☐ Warming shelter in the winter
- ☐ Domestic Violence awareness and prevention training
- ☐ CPR Trainings
- ☐ Voter Drives
- ☐ Hosting Community Teach-In Events
- ☐ Participating in local protest events
- ☐ PLEASE ADD AS MANY ITEMS AS YOU CAN THINK OF...
- ☐

#### Evangelism/Invitation/Connection Work:

- ☐ Flyers for Special Events
- ☐ Back to School snacks at the bus stop
- ☐ Social Media
- ☐ Church Newsletters
- ☐ Newcomers Ministry and Events
- ☐ Mentoring for new members
- ☐ Confirmation/Reception programs
- ☐ Special events - Blessing of the Animals
- ☐ Church Website
- ☐ Dinner Groups
- ☐ Clergy engaging with community members at coffee shops
- ☐ PLEASE ADD AS MANY ITEMS AS YOU CAN THINK OF...
- ☐

I'm also grateful for this person/experience which first brought me to worship at **church name:**

I'm also grateful for these things that were not on the list but that I experience as a part of **church name:**



## Reflecting with Gratitude on Our Community Engagement: Intergenerational Faith Formation Activity

### Gratitude Graffiti Walls

**Background:** Over the past few years, Graffiti walls have increased in popularity. Some utilize post-it notes to invite people to leave a kind word for another person to take with them. Others are ways for community members to engage with one another, particularly in places where people are isolated from their neighbors. Still others are ways for people to share and be heard. There's a great TED Talk about a graffiti wall that helped connect a disconnected place as people shared their bucket list dreams with one another on a giant wall:

[https://www.ted.com/talks/candy\\_chang\\_before\\_i\\_die\\_i\\_want\\_to?referrer=playlist-give\\_thanks&utm\\_campaign=tedsread&utm\\_medium=referral&utm\\_source=tedcomshare](https://www.ted.com/talks/candy_chang_before_i_die_i_want_to?referrer=playlist-give_thanks&utm_campaign=tedsread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare)

We invite you to watch the TED Talk and consider what questions your church might like to ask your community. We'll then create a space where people can share and connect as they pass by your church. We invite you to continue this for as long as you like. You might want to change the prompts every so often to stimulate further discussion. You might want to be brave and ask tough questions like: "I wish this church would..." after you've gained some trust that you'll listen. We recommend starting with gratitude, but you know your community best; ask whatever question you see best.

#### Supplies Needed:

- Bulletin Board covered with poster board, or matte board/foam core or similar to create a surface hard enough to write on but thick enough that if a marker breaks through it won't damage the walls.
- Chalkboard sign—you can build one using particle board and chalkboard paint or you can purchase a chalkboard and mount it outside of your church.
- Markers
- Chalk
- Chalkboard paint pens

**Project:** Today we are going to create two graffiti walls in the hopes of helping connect our congregation and our community. Inside your church you'll need to hang either large poster boards or matte board on a wall/bulletin board. At the top write: "I am grateful for **CHURCH NAME** because..."

Invite members of the congregation to start filling in the inside graffiti wall and let community groups that use the space also begin to fill in the wall with their gratitude.

Next, you're going to need to either purchase a chalk board for outside or build one. (There are lots of instructions online for building an outdoor chalkboard, here's just one example: <https://www.hgtv.com/design/outdoor-design/outdoor-spaces/how-to-make-an-outdoor-chalkboard>.) On the chalkboard outside write: "I am grateful for..." using paint pens (that way you can wash it off and ask a different question). Leave a waterproof container with chalk outside and wait to see what happens.

**Closing:** Invite your congregation to consider what they learned from the two graffiti walls. What other questions should we be asking on the chalkboard outside or on the board inside the church?



## Reflecting with Gratitude on Our Community Engagement: Take Home Gratitude Activity

### Reflect, Invite, Connect

**Overview:** This take home project is a little different from the previous ones. It begins with a journal prompt, like the others, but then we want you to think about if there is a person in your life that you could invite to come and worship with you at our church. In order to help you do this, we've created an event that will be authentic to who we are as a congregation but that will also be easier for visitors to join. The first half of this page is space for you to reflect on why you initially came to our church, what helped you to stay, and why you are grateful you did. The second half is a flyer for an upcoming event that we invite you to cut off and share with someone along with your story of joining our church and the good things you experience by being a member.

#### Reflection:

1. The first time I came to **CHURCH NAME** was because...
2. I am grateful for my experience of the following, which helped me decide to join **CHURCH NAME**...
3. The best part about being a member of **CHURCH NAME** is:

*Please utilize the remainder of the page to create a flyer for an event at church that parishioners can give to someone as a way of inviting them.*





## Concluding Materials - Building a Budget and a Pledge Packet

### In This Section You Will Find:

- **Introduction** of the theme for church leaders.
- Tips for **Building a Gratitude-Based Budget**.
- Pledge packet **overview letter**.
- **Gratitude-based pledge card**.
- Pledge Card **Ingathering Sunday ideas**.
- Sample **Follow Up Letter** for Pledges Received.
- **Formation Activity:** Introducing UTO
- **Take home gratitude activity**–Blue Box Journal.



## Concluding Materials - Introduction for Leaders

Congratulations, you made it to the end! You've asked your congregation to spend at least a month focused on gratitude. There have likely been difficult moments, people you've had to remind to speak from a place of gratitude and not grumbling, and push back on formation activities that might have led to discomfort over trying something new. Hopefully, in the midst of all of this, you've helped your congregation find a new way of speaking about your church and to one another. Gratitude assumes that everyone is doing their best, and learning to share criticism grounded in gratitude is really challenging and not a skill most people have ever been taught. Now your congregation has a foundation in gratitude for how to move forward acknowledging the hard work and contributions of staff, volunteers, and community groups you engage with through the course of your ministry.

Now it is time to take what you've learned and create a budget. A budget based in gratitude recognizes that there might be shifts in resources from what we've always done to what we might do. As you reflect on the surveys and especially those things that surprised you, think about what budget implications these things might have on your congregation. Are there ministries or activities that might need to experience a holy death? Are there other ministries that should be resurrected? Do some things need to continue but with better education as to why they are important? Do you need to do a survey regarding times people are available and interested to participate in church activities beyond worship because they said they wanted to come but the times never work? As you sort through these questions, begin to build your budget and any other surveys or tasks you might want to include in your pledge packet. Normally, the pledge packet includes a brochure or booklet with lengthy justifications for the budget changes. In this case, you will build a narrative budget to show how each item is a response to the gratitude the congregation has expressed. Some items, like the water bill, might not have gotten folks super excited, but I think we are all thankful for a glass of water or a bathroom when we need it. This might just be a sign that we need to remind people that gratitude is needed for things glamorous and not, big and small, but all necessary.

We'll also give you a sample pledge card letter, however, the more you can customize this to your context the better. The pledge card letter is in fact a thank you note to your congregation for their ongoing commitment to being present for and contributing to the blessings of your congregation. Next, you'll find a pledge card rooted in gratitude. We want to reinforce the idea that we give out of gratitude and not out of obligation. You'll also find on there a line asking how each person or family intends to continue to practice gratitude going forward. We've got a page with some quick tips on ways to make your pledge card Sunday special, and a follow up thank you letter to send after each card is received.

Finally, you'll find your final faith formation activity, which is introducing the United Thank Offering to your congregation. It pairs with the final take home lesson, which is creating a UTO Blue Box that also doubles as a journal for remembering all of the good things God is doing in our lives. We share all of these because UTO is a great way to reinforce and strengthen the habit of gratitude that you have spent all of this time creating. The Blue Box is a powerful reminder at Church meetings and gatherings of the importance of gratitude. Churches that participate in UTO find that their congregation is more generous, and studies show that gratitude increases generosity. I also believe that congregations who practice gratitude and talk about gratitude will be healthier and happier for it. Just like psychologists suggest teaching children to practice gratitude to set them up for success, so should we adults also practice gratitude.



## Concluding Materials - Tips for Building a Gratitude-Based Budget

Many churches approach the annual budget process in the same way...they simply account for increases they are aware of (cost of living increases for staff, increased insurance rates, etcetera), cut spending where line items underspent, and maybe increase spending where programs are growing. In creating the gratitude-based budget you will begin with the fixed expenses, evaluate if there are ways to decrease these costs, and note the opportunities available. Then look at how people responded to the surveys. Are there things that are imperative to people's experience of church? If so, list those next after fixed income and mark them as such. Are there things you are spending money on that people simply do not notice or experience as necessary to their ability to gather, pray, and connect at church? If so, can you cut these items or decrease the cost. (For example, if no one notices that you use 100% beeswax candles, can you switch to a lower percentage and save money on candles? If no one likes the bulletin, is there a better way to get out the information you want without the printing and production cost of a bulletin?) One place this might be noticeable is in Sunday School or Faith Formation. Do people like that your church offers Sunday School but only two families participate? Is there a way to do more intergenerational activities and save on both the adult formation budget as well as the Sunday School budget? Look over the surveys one last time. Have people named something that is not represented on the budget? Perhaps there's a ministry that took place a long time ago that people would like to bring back. Maybe people like Bible Study a lot but you've never budgeted for resources or workbooks. Maybe people love the space, but it could use a coat of paint, or they love the windows, but they need proper cleaning or repair and you've simply not made it a priority. Whatever it is, build into the aspirations section of the budget those things you'd like to do if there is extra money pledged.

When creating the budget, this is also a great time to create a wish list. Are there things that need attention around the place that people could sign up to do on their pledge card? Often times, people want to give but they don't know how they can give. For example, it could be that they are handy and could install water saving devices on the toilets. They might not have much money to give, but this would be a long-term savings for the parish—what a gift! How people can give of their time might free up other expenses, but you won't know if you don't ask. Many congregations ask families to adopt areas of the grounds so that they don't have to pay for landscaping. Others create a sign-up sheet to mow in the summer time, while still others see a large patch of grass (that perhaps no one was thankful for on the survey) and realize giving it away to use as a community garden is cheaper than hiring a landscaper and a great way to connect with people in your neighborhood. The goal of the gratitude approach is to think creatively about your expenses and free up resources in order to do things that are life-giving, but it requires thinking critically about each line item while holding it in tension with the things your congregation is deeply grateful for. This method will create a narrative budget, one that explains why each change is being made, either in response to the surveys or as a way to cut costs to free up funding for other opportunities expressed in the surveys or activities.

Now that you've created your narrative budget, invite a small group of people who did not help to create it to review and pray through it and the survey results. Make sure that if the budget committee developed it, the vestry takes ownership in it as well. Then offer it in gratitude to the congregation as a part of the pledge packet. You'll invite the congregation to once again respond from a place of gratitude for the congregation when filling out and returning their pledge cards.



## Concluding Materials - Sample Pledge Packet Overview Letter

Dear **NAME**,

Thank you. Thank you for being on the journey with us the last **TIME FRAME** through a process of reflecting on the blessings of God that we experience in this place. **CHURCH NAME** is better for having had so many people participate in this process. The vestry and staff learned a lot throughout this process and we want to share some of the highlights with you and how these lessons have helped shape our budget.

Through the surveys we learned...

We are profoundly grateful for the following experiences we shared through this process...(share a story of something that will bring a smile to people's faces as they read it...did something funny happen while sharing photos? Did a child do or say something really profound while playing the gratitude game? Sharing these stories helps solidify the importance of the journey.)

What we learned shaped our budget in the following ways...

Now we invite you to pray and give thanks for all of the ways this congregation blesses you, our members and our community. Enclosed you will find a narrative budget that will walk you through the changes we've made to the budget based on the responses to the survey. You'll also find a list of tasks that we need help with which will also help to lower our operating expenses. We've also included a gratitude-based pledge card. On this card you'll be invited to consider what you are able to give of your time, talent, and treasure out of your gratitude for this congregation. This might mean you recommit to leading Sunday School or you might decide it's time to commit to finding your replacement because you no longer lead out of gratitude but out of obligation, and that's okay. Our hope is that we can move forward as a congregation rooted in gratitude for the blessings of God in this place and in our daily lives.

Thank you again for your participation and for committing to practicing gratitude. Gratitude is a spiritual practice that reminds us that everything we have and everything we are is a gift from God and so we respond with thanksgiving to the world around us. We are so grateful for the gift that you are to us, to our congregation, and to our community. Thank you for all of the ways you bless us and remind us of the love and goodness of God. We are so very grateful for you this day and always.

Sincerely,



# Concluding Materials - Sample Gratitude-Based Pledge Card

## CHURCH NAME Gratitude Pledge Card

Name:

Address:

Phone Number:

Email:

Birthdate:

Family Members and Birthdates:

I would be grateful to receive parish communications via:

- ☐ Email
- ☐ Mail
- ☐ Text Message
- ☐ Picking Up a Copy While at Church

I would be grateful to join the following programs:

- ☐ Sunday School
- ☐ Daughters of the King
- ☐ Altar Guild
- ☐ Vestry

Additionally, I would be grateful to: (please share ministries you might be willing to lead or those ministries which you are currently doing but would like to identify and train a replacement with the help of others.)

I would be grateful to share my talents in the following ways:

*(Please refer to the list of volunteer opportunities or share other ways you would like to help at church.)*

I am grateful for this congregation and its involvement in the community. I pledge to support or participate in:

- ☐ Soup kitchen
- ☐ After school tutoring programs
- ☐ Health and wellness programs

I pledge to give in gratitude:

\$

- ☐ Weekly for a total of:
- ☐ Monthly for a total of:
- ☐ Other:

I commit to continue to practice gratitude by:

**Thank you** for taking the time to fill out our gratitude-based pledge card. Please bring your card with you to our special celebration on **DATE**. If you cannot attend, please be sure to bring or mail your card by **DATE**. This will allow us time to prepare the final budget for approval and help connect you with ministries within our congregation before the new year begins.



# Concluding Materials - Pledge Card Ingathering Sunday Ideas

As you prepare for worship service where you will collect pledge cards, it is good to reflect on all of the experiences your congregation has participated in while preparing for this Sunday. It is important to make this a special Sunday with a special coffee hour and a celebration of all the good things God is doing in the midst of your congregation and community.

## **Ideas for Collecting and Celebrating:**

1. If you continued the gratitude chains, string them from the back of the church to the front of the church. If the chain isn't long enough, use it to decorate the front pews.
2. Move the "graffiti wall" from the parish hall to serve as an altar frontal to help tie together the Great Thanksgiving with all of the blessings listed on the wall.
3. Invite people to come forward and place their cards in a basket, offer a special prayer of thanksgiving for the people and their gifts.
4. Include the litany of Thanksgiving in your worship service.
5. Sing songs of thanksgiving.
6. Create a thank you banner to hang outside the church.
7. Have a special coffee hour to celebrate (maybe even provide brunch).
8. Give a thank you gift to each person who pledges (church sticker for the car, reusable grocery bag, etc.).
9. Create a visual representation of your budget to help people know how close you are to your fundraising goals.
10. Hand out UTO Blue Boxes and explain UTO as a way to keep the gratitude going. Appoint a UTO Coordinator for your parish (perhaps the person who was asked to receive feedback on the take home gratitude practices) to help strengthen and remind people of the importance of gratitude. (For information on how to start UTO in your congregation, please visit: [www.episcopalchurch.org/uto](http://www.episcopalchurch.org/uto) or [www.unitedthankoffering.org](http://www.unitedthankoffering.org).)

## **Ideas for Infusing Gratitude Going Forward:**

1. Invite people to name the things they are thankful for during the Prayers of the People each week.
2. Schedule and remind people often about practicing gratitude with their UTO Box.
3. Continue to add gratitude experiences from the UTO webpage or blog. UTO offers free formation resources for the month of November focused on gratitude, and during Lent we offer resources based on the UTO grants and gratitude. UTO also participates in the Good Book Club.

Most important, focus on gratitude and have fun!



## Concluding Materials - Sample Follow Up Letter for Pledges Received

**Note:** the more you can customize this the better. This is a chance to thank each individual for their contributions and for the ways they are committing to contribute in the upcoming year. Also, be sure that everything they mark on their form is responded to quickly. When people offer to give out of gratitude, it is important to receive it and connect them so they can begin to participate more fully in the life of the congregation.

Dear Name,

Thank you so much for returning your Gratitude-Based pledge card. On behalf of the vestry and staff, I wanted to write to let you know how thankful we are for your commitment to this congregation. I am writing today to follow up on items you indicated an interest in on your form. I am thankful for the **new programs you are committing to trying/things you are ready to transition out of leading/new ministries you're interested in leading or assisting with.**

Because you indicated you would like to do **NAME PROGRAM** I have shared your contact information with **LEADER OR LIAISON OF THAT MINISTRY**, who will follow up with you in the next week on when their next meeting/gathering will be held and where.

You also indicated that you would be grateful to transition out of leadership of **NAME OF MINISTRY** and to assist in the training of a new leader. Thank you, I am grateful for your help in transitioning this ministry to new leadership and would like to talk more with you **OFFER DATES AND TIMES** on how best to do that.

Thank you for indicating items on our wish list that you have the ability to do for the church! You indicated you could do **NAME WISH LIST ITEM FROM THE PLEDGE PACKET. NAME** will be in touch this week to schedule that project/help you get started/etcetera.

Finally, thank you for your financial commitment to our congregation. Your pledge of **AMOUNT AND FREQUENCY** has been recorded. Please know that you can update your pledge at any time if your circumstances change; just let me know. We know that everyone has many demands on their personal budget, particularly in terms of charitable giving, and so we are very grateful for your support of our congregation.

Don't forget your UTO Blue Box! Your Blue Box (or Blue Box Smart Phone App) is a great way to remember to continue to practice gratitude at home, at work, and out and about in the community. We will collect all of the Blue Boxes on **DATE**. For more information on the United Thank Offering or for additional gratitude practices to try, visit [www.episcopalchurch.org/uto](http://www.episcopalchurch.org/uto) or [www.unitedthankoffering.org](http://www.unitedthankoffering.org)

Thank you for all of the ways you continue to bless our congregation and community.

Sincerely,



# Concluding Materials - Faith Formation Activity and Take Home

## Introducing UTO

**Background:** The United Thank Offering was founded over 125 years ago to help Episcopalians develop and deepen a personal spiritual discipline of gratitude. UTO members are invited to notice the good things that happen daily, from a good parking spot to healing from a severe illness, and then give thanks to God for the blessing while make a thank offering in a Blue Box. UTO then collects all of the thank offerings through parish and diocesan Ingatherings once or twice a year. These funds are then collected and 100% of what was given as a thank offering is then granted the following year to support innovative mission and ministry in the Episcopal Church and Anglican Communion. Today we invite you to build a Blue Box and get a little fancy if you are so inclined. One thing that many UTO members have shared is that they open their Blue Box just before an Ingathering and notice all of the coins and can't remember what they all were given in thanksgiving for. In response to this, we have created a double Blue Box, one to hold coins and one to hold post-its as a reminder of all of the ways that God has blessed you. Additionally, UTO offers a Blue Box Smart Phone app that also allows you to keep a gratitude journal right on your phone.

### Supplies Needed:

- 2 UTO Blue Boxes
- 1 Rubber Band
- Tape
- Post-It note pad (1.5x2 inches)
- Ribbon (optional)

### Directions:

Build the Blue Boxes as you normally would. Turn both boxes on their end so the "UTO" side is up. Put the rubber band around the middle of both boxes, holding them together. Make sure the coin openings are facing each other so things do not spill out later.

On the "UTO" end, trim the interior flaps so the small edges are removed. Do the same with the tab that would secure the "UTO" piece closed. Then trim the UTO piece to match the interior tabs. Tape the side shut. You should now have an opening large enough for paper or coins to be put in the box. Repeat on the second box. Tape the post-it note pad between the two "UTO"s so you don't have to search later for paper to put into the box. Optional: Cover the rubber band with ribbon. You can also use ribbon to attach a pencil to the box.

**Use:** Each time you put a coin in the box, write what it is for and put that piece of paper in the other side. At the end of the year, turn in your funds to the Ingathering and enjoy reflecting and looking back on all of the ways you were blessed in the past year.



To learn more about UTO or ways to develop your gratitude practices, please visit: [www.episcopalchurch.org/uto](http://www.episcopalchurch.org/uto)





UNITED THANK OFFERING



THE GOOD THINGS THAT HAPPEN EACH DAY



THANKS TO GOD FOR YOUR BLESSINGS



AN OFFERING FOR EACH BLESSING

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