



Lenten Hymns, Disciplines, and Practices

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

As a parish priest, I often had our church musicians pick all of the music, unless I wanted specifically to sing something that I planned to mention in a sermon. So, as I was skimming the Lenten hymns, I found one that I've never sung or even remember reading: Hymn 145. The words are amazing. This hymn was written by Percy Dearmer (1867-1936), an English liturgist and priest, who advocated for leadership roles for women in the Church (not ordination, mind you), wrote volumes on vestments, and compiled hymnals. This hymn stuck with me because, as a former Roman Catholic, I have often struggled with the place and meaning of Lent. Every Ash Wednesday, I find myself reflecting on the admonition not to be like those in sackcloth and ashes, and yet we put an ashen cross on our forehead before heading out into the world. I'm sure that theologians and scholars have quick answers to this conundrum, but each year I struggle with the outward ways we engage with Lent and repentance and wonder about them. I've advocated taking something on instead of giving something up; I've explained how giving something up gets in the way of our relationship with God; and I've benefited from all sorts of Lenten disciplines, practices, and educational programs. And yet, as Lent approaches each year, I think about the ways it sets us apart publicly (like eating fish on Fridays at school growing up) and wonder. This year, I'm sitting in that same familiar place but equipped with Hymn 145.

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Mission of Gratitude: UTO and the Good Book Club

By Sandra Squires, UTO Board President, and the Rev. Canon Heather L. Melton, Staff Officer for the United Thank Offering



UTO is grateful to be a part of the Forward Movement experience called the Good Book Club, which begins on February 11, the first Sunday of Lent. The Good Book Club is an invitation to all Episcopalians (and anyone interested) to read through the books of Luke and Acts in the Bible during Lent and Easter. Organizations from around the Church are creating materials to support individuals and groups in the process of reading through the Bible. We are pleased to announce that UTO is offering a free downloadable booklet, *Mission of Gratitude*, for you to use on this Lenten journey. Each week, the

booklet offers a short reflection on the readings, questions for contemplation or discussion, space to journal, and a story and a link to a video about a UTO grant site. We hope that this booklet not only will help you deepen your experience of reading scripture, but also will help you engage with journaling as a way to deepen your gratitude and scripture reading experience. For many of us (Heather especially) keeping a journal is a challenge, so Lent is a great time to try something new and see if it is a discipline you might like to keep doing.

To learn more about the Good Book Club or see what other resources are available, please visit <http://www.goodbookclub.org>.

To download the *Mission of Gratitude* booklet, please visit <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/files/documents/uto-mission-of-gratitude-booklet.pdf>.

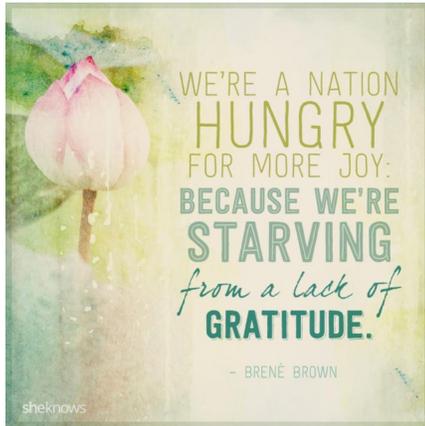
UTO Crosses Now Available

At the last General Convention, many of you asked if UTO was going to create another cross for purchase. The UTO Board and staff wanted to make a cross that would be meaningful, reminding us of our deep roots and our wide reach through the grant process. After much discernment and much help along the way, we are pleased to announce that a new UTO cross is available for purchase at <https://shima-of-navajoland.myshopify.com/collections/united-thank-offering> beginning on January 9, the feast day of Julia Chester Emery. The cross comes in two sizes: 2 inches in length or 3 inches in length. The Celtic cross is a replica of the one that Ms. Emery chose to have in her home, in her office, and on her gravestone. Each cross is handmade in sterling silver by Lester James, a Navajo silversmith, honoring the decades of UTO grants (and countless UTO missionaries) in Navajoland. We currently have 15 of each cross available, and once those are sold, we will commission a second batch while continuing to take orders. We will also have the cross available for purchase or order at General Convention. These crosses make a wonderful gift to anyone who has led, supported, or organized UTO ministry and a wonderful keepsake for yourself, as well. Thank you for your support of this wonderful endeavor. We hope that you'll love the UTO cross as much as we do!



UTO Reads!

The Gifts of Imperfection: Let Go of Who You Think You're Supposed to Be and Embrace Who You Are by Brené Brown



Reviewed by the Rev. Canon Heather L. Melton, Staff Officer for the United Thank Offering

Brené Brown is a renowned researcher and Episcopalian who came to fame via a TED Talk on shame and resilience. Dr. Brown's first book was published in 2010, and it remains my favorite. If you've not seen her TED Talk, you can watch it and more of her videos at brenebrown.com. I had never heard of Brené Brown until she came to speak to the Presiding Bishop's staff about three years ago. Hearing her speak was transformative for me, and I suggest her books to anyone who will listen. This particular book is the shortest of her writings, but it covers 10 guideposts for wholehearted living. Guidepost #4 is "Cultivating Gratitude and Joy: Letting Go of Scarcity and Fear of the Dark" and it is a great chapter for explaining why a spiritual discipline of gratitude is so very important in our world today. She shares that every Friday she writes a blog called TGIF, in which she shares what she's trusting, what she's grateful for, what inspires her, and how she's practicing her faith. She talks about how gratitude must be practiced – it isn't something you can do without being mindful – and as gratitude pushes back against fear and anxiety, it is a reminder that we are enough and that scarcity thinking will not solve any problems. Dr. Brown's research shows that courage, compassion, and connection will change our daily lives, and gratitude is one of the foundational tools for wholehearted living. I hope you'll pick up a copy and read it, or any of her books. They are all fantastic and would make for a great Lenten read!

A Spiritual Discipline: Women Leaders in the Church and Gratitude

by Sandra Squires, UTO Board President

This past year, I have been reading about women who have been important in our country's history and in their ministry as Christians. Their influences have been felt in the Church, but they are often the unacknowledged workers and fundraisers. These women have led through their actions, their words, and their legacies. So, this Lent, as that part of your Lenten preparation, which calls for adopting some type of spiritual discipline, I am recommending that you learn about one or more women who have made important contributions to our Christian history. You may find names in *Holy Women, Holy Men* or look to the Episcopal Women's History Project. It would also be appropriate to start with the women from your parish's or your diocese's history.

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News from You!

By Lynn Headly, St. Michael and All Angels Church, Corona del Mar, California



This month, we bring you a note that is a reminder of the reach of UTO. When you are travelling, be sure to check the UTO grant list to see if you might happen upon a grant site.

This was the fifth pilgrimage to Jerusalem that I organized for my home parish, St. Michael and All Angels, and we joined with a wonderful group from the Washington National Cathedral led by the Rev. Canon John Peterson, canon for Global Justice and Reconciliation, and the Very Rev. Randolph M. Hollerith, cathedral dean. Gurtie Berkner and I had served together previously on the UTO Board, and she joined our pilgrimage from her home in Minnesota.

During the pilgrimage, we were having a morning briefing in a room at St. George's College in Jerusalem when I noticed the UTO tile on the door. Gurtie happened to be wearing her UTO scarf from when we were on the board, so it seemed right to snap a photo of her by the sign. This tile commemorated a United Thank Offering grant for the purchase of AV equipment that is used during presentations at St. George's College in the Cathedral Close in Jerusalem.

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Grant Site Update: Anglican Pilgrim's Center, Pontevedra, Spain

By the Rev. Canon Spencer Reece

The **Spanish Reformed Episcopal Church**, also translated as the **Reformed Episcopal Church of Spain**, or **IERE** (*Iglesia Española Reformada Episcopal*) is the Church of the Anglican Communion in Spain and home to many UTO grant sites. In 2015, UTO awarded a grant of \$60,000 to purchase a building in Pontevedra to open the first Anglican presence on the Camino in Spain. This was an important project not only for the Church in Spain, but for the many Episcopalians who come to Spain to walk the Camino each year.

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Save the Date!

UTO Annual Grant Materials are now available! Please visit www.episcopalchurch.org/utogrants to download all of them. All applications are due on the first Friday of March, but please feel free to submit drafts early for review by the staff. We also invite you to attend a webinar: There will be **two webinars in January** –Tuesday, January 16 and Wednesday, January 17 – and **two in February** – Tuesday, February 6 and Wednesday, February 7. All webinars will be held at 7 p.m. Eastern Time. Join us online at <https://zoom.us/j/8140408194> or by telephone by dialing +1 408-638-0968 or +1 646-558-8656, Meeting ID: 814 040 8194. If you cannot attend the webinar, please email your questions to hmelton@episcopalchurch.org.

New UTO Materials Available!

Over the past few weeks, a lot of new materials have become available on our website and in the distribution center. We wanted to make you aware of a few of them. [Click here to see the new brochures, prayers, and boxes >>](#)

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