



**Handbook**  
**for Diocesan and Parish**  
**Coordinators/Organizers**  
**2021-2024**

*Approved June 2021*

# Table of Contents

Please note: on the electronic version, you can click on any of the text within the Table of Contents to jump to that page. If you want to come back to the Table of Contents, there is a link at the end of each section you can click to return here.

<b>Message from the United Thank Offering Board President .....</b>	<b>3</b>
United Thank Offering Prayer .....	3
<b>Other Roles in the United Thank Offering Structure.....</b>	<b>4</b>
The Blue Box .....	4
United Thank Offering Blue Box Prayer .....	4
Every Episcopalian Belongs in the United Thank Offering .....	4
The United Thank Offering Board .....	4
The United Thank Offering Staff .....	5
Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society (DFMS) .....	5
<b>A Note for First Time Coordinators/Organizers.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Parish Coordinators/Organizers .....</b>	<b>7</b>
Basic Overview of Tasks Associated with Being a Parish Coordinator/Organizer .....	8
Quick Introduction to UTO for Use in Parishes.....	11
<b>Diocesan Coordinators/Organizers.....</b>	<b>12</b>
Basic Overview of Tasks Associated with Being a Diocesan Coordinator/Organizer .....	13
Diocesan Coordinator/Organizer Responsibilities for the Granting Process .....	15
Diocesan Grant Screening Committee Overview .....	15
<b>Finances .....</b>	<b>18</b>
United Thank Offering Ingathering Funds: Best Practices.....	18
For Parish Ingatherings .....	18
For UTO Ingatherings Held at Diocesan Convention .....	18
Basic Reminders about UTO donations: .....	18
Handling “Out of the Ordinary” Donations .....	19
Regarding Acknowledgements for UTO Offerings.....	19
<b>Memorial Trust Fund.....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>UTO Resources List .....</b>	<b>21</b>
Customizable Resources for Coordinators/Organizers .....	21
Sample Items Available Online for Parish Coordinators/Organizers.....	21
Sample Items Available Online for Diocesan Coordinators/Organizers .....	21
<b>Basic Calendar of the Year .....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Resources for Further Learning .....</b>	<b>24</b>
Resources on Gratitude from a Theological Perspective .....	24
Resources on Gratitude from a Social-Emotional Perspective.....	24
Other Resources on Gratitude.....	25

## Message from the United Thank Offering Board President

Welcome to the 2021 revised UTO Coordinators Handbook. Because processes and emphases change over time, the UTO Board, Staff, and some of your fellow Coordinators did a complete review of the previous handbook, removing pieces that were no longer applicable, revising pieces to reflect the current best practices, and adding more resources to help you with your work of promoting UTO. This is not so much a rule book on how to be a perfect UTO Coordinator as it is a resource full of ideas so that no one struggles to answer a question that's already been answered or put together a talk or event that others have already put together. Even the most creative Coordinator sometimes runs out of steam, and this handbook might be just the thing to fill that energy gap.

As you read and use this handbook, please take note of any changes or additions you think would be beneficial, and let Heather ([hmelton@episcopalchurch.org](mailto:hmelton@episcopalchurch.org)) know so we can incorporate them in future revisions. If you haven't joined your Province's UTO Coordinators Facebook page, please do so you can share ideas with other Coordinators and learn what's working and not working for others. And please stay in touch with your Province Representative on the UTO Board—we want to support your work in all that we do, so the more we hear from you the better we can help.

Thank you for your passion for UTO, for the essential work you do promoting gratitude in your dioceses and parishes, and for the lives of gratitude you model to the Church and to the world.

Gratefully,



Sherri Dietrich  
UTO Board President

### United Thank Offering Prayer

Gracious God, we come before you in the knowledge that although we are varied in our gifts, we are united as laborers of your harvest. With grateful hearts, we give thanks for the blessings and challenges that inspire the work of the United Thank Offering. May the offerings given to UTO as an expression of gratitude go on to address the needs of our ever-changing world. All this we ask through Jesus Christ, whose life is a blueprint we strive to follow. Amen.

Questions? Contact UTO Staff Officer, The Rev. Canon Heather Melton: [hmelton@episcopalchurch.org](mailto:hmelton@episcopalchurch.org).

[Click here to return to the Table of Contents.](#)

## Other Roles in the United Thank Offering Structure

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

### The Blue Box

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

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

### United Thank Offering Blue Box Prayer

Almighty God, I give you praise  
for blessing me in many ways.  
Create in me a grateful heart  
and with this gift a blessing start. Amen.

### Every Episcopalian Belongs in the United Thank Offering

The United Thank Offering gives an opportunity to contribute in a meaningful way to mission through daily prayers of thanks for all the good things that we have and can recognize in our lives. Membership in UTO is open to everyone, regardless of gender, thanks to an act of General Convention in the 1970s. In giving thanks with a coin, not only do we offer a gift to someone else, but we also honor the blessing that we are remembering. Giving in small ways teaches us to give in larger ways as we grow. The Blue Box is a reminder that coins and bills can go a long way toward helping someone else in great need. As people benefit from those gifts, they in turn can help others. The United Thank Offering could be described as a pay-it-forward ministry – we help others who in turn help others, most often in life-changing ways. It is a ministry that is particularly instrumental in teaching children about the Christian way of giving thanks and helping someone else. (Please see our website for formation resources for teaching about gratitude, including a United Thank Offering Godly Play lesson plan. A booklet of formation materials will be available in the Fall of 2022.)

[Click here to return to the Table of Contents.](#)

### The United Thank Offering Board

The United Thank Offering Board is comprised of 17 members plus one appointed liaison member from the Executive Council. Nine members are elected to represent each Province and link Diocesan Coordinators with the work of the Board and staff. They serve a term of three years concurrent with General Convention. Province Representatives may be elected for a second term of three years. Three officers are elected from the ranks of the Board. The other members are appointed: one financial secretary, two young adult Board members are appointed by the Board President, two members are appointed at-large by a consensus of the Presiding Bishop, the President of the House of Deputies, and the President of the United Thank Offering Board. The 17th person is an appointee of the Presiding Bishop and the President of the House of Deputies as a liaison between the

United Thank Offering Board and the Executive Council of the Domestic Foreign Missionary Society (DFMS), the governing body of the church. This person has voice but no vote on the United Thank Offering Board. They report regularly to Executive Council about Board activities. Members of the Board are responsible for reading, evaluating, and rating grant applications with recommendations annually to the Executive Council for funding approval.

### **The United Thank Offering Staff**

The United Thank Offering is served by two DFMS staff members. The first, the Staff Officer for the United Thank Offering, supports the work of the Board while also promoting participation in the United Thank Offering. She is available to help anyone making inquiries or needing support to carry out the ministry of the United Thank Offering. The second, Administrative Associate for the United Thank Offering, oversees administrative and creative tasks, from compiling and designing the annual report to sending out Ingathering acknowledgements. She is responsible for supporting triennial events, such as the UTO Pilgrimage, in addition to helping promote UTO.

The United Thank Offering also shares an intern with a rotating host ministry each year. The Julia Chester Emery United Thank Offering Intern is appointed each year. The intern is responsible for helping the staff and Board engage with a younger generation through participation at Board meetings and by representing the United Thank Offering at speaking engagements.

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

Early English settlers established the Church of England in the original colonies of the United States. In 1789, after the American Revolution, an assembly met in Philadelphia to unify all Anglicans in the United States into a single national church. The full legal name of The Episcopal Church is the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America. (When the church was incorporated, it was located only in the United States, but today it is an international church.) When Diocesan Coordinators/Organizers or individuals send their offerings to DFMS, they are submitting designated funds to The Episcopal Church to be held in the United Thank Offering account. The Ingathering money earns thousands of dollars in interest each year and is granted for approved projects by the United Thank Offering Board the following year. The United Thank Offering Board is an interim body and has worked in and with the Mission Department of the Presiding Bishop's Staff (or its equivalent) for over 130 years.

[Click here to return to the Table of Contents.](#)

# A Note for First Time Coordinators/Organizers From Someone Who Has Been There Recently

Dear New Coordinator/Organizer,

Before you launch into the next section that discusses the work of Coordinators/Organizers I want to offer a word of support. If you are new to the position of United Thank Offering Diocesan or Parish Coordinator/Organizer and don't know where to begin, don't worry. There is a lot of help available. If you need history, ideas, guidance or help where to begin all you need to do is ask for help. The grassroots structure of UTO has help available in a variety of ways, but the easiest place to start is by reaching out to our Staff Officer, Heather ([hmelton@episcopalchurch.org](mailto:hmelton@episcopalchurch.org) or 917-771-3366) and telling her what you think you need. She helps guide you to information, websites, and resources. She will put you in touch with another Diocesan or Parish Coordinator who can share their story and ideas that worked in their context, so you don't have to reinvent the wheel. In the two years I have held this position, I have experienced her connecting me with people in three other Provinces who are now my friends and resources. Of course, I also have my Province V UTO Board Member who helps me find the websites with the information I am looking for, especially around grant application time. I have found many people are happy to help me with UTO in my church. All I had to do was ask for help and advice from the people who have skills or gifts that could come alongside to support me.

I find that I get the most information from the monthly United Thank Offering e-newsletter. The writings are insightful, lighthearted, and full of gratitude. Each month, the staff offers a variety of online webinars via Zoom that are interesting, and I have enjoyed attending them. They range in topic from Bible Studies to nuts and bolts UTO gatherings. I find that the most important are the sessions offered on grant writing and the UTO grant process. Grant process webinars are usually held at two different times and over the course of several months so that the discussion can be focused on helping applicants, diving deep into the focus and criteria or supporting UTO Coordinators and Diocesan Staff in the submission process. I sign up for all of them because they attract different people who bring different questions, and all of the answers are important to hear. This is a way to help your Diocese get information on how to present the best written and most complete grant application that can be submitted. In this document you'll find more information about the grant process specifically geared towards Diocesan Coordinators/Organizers. If you still have questions after reading it, be sure to reach out.

The new addition which I am most excited about is the monthly UTO Coordinators' e-newsletter. It comes out about two weeks after the general newsletter. It is what we coordinators need to keep us on track with a theology of gratitude and creates an environment that allows us to share grateful thoughts and ideas with each other. I hope you'll share your ideas with us through the Coordinators' e-newsletter, as we are all better together.

I am so grateful for your willingness to join us in this important work. Each person who embraces a personal spiritual discipline of gratitude will experience all of the blessings that gratitude gives us, from improved health to sleeping better at night, and their blessings will go on to bless others through the UTO grant process. Both of these things combine to make the world a better and kinder place, so thanks for joining us.

Linda T., Diocese of Chicago, UTO Coordinator

# Parish Coordinators/Organizers

## *Encourage, Teach, Celebrate*

Parish Coordinators/Organizers are the foundation of the United Thank Offering; without you, we could not invite and connect people with the ministry of the United Thank Offering nor encourage and build up personal spiritual disciplines around gratitude. The work of a Parish Coordinator could best be summed up as *Encourage, Teach, and Celebrate*. It is our hope that this ministry is life-giving and purposeful while focused on gratitude and building up gratitude within every Episcopal congregation or mission. The goal of the grassroots network is to have one United Thank Offering Coordinator, or Organizer, in every congregation of The Episcopal Church. Parish Coordinators/Organizers are essential to our network, as they *encourage, teach, and celebrate* gratitude with the people in their congregations and communities. The most important task for Parish Coordinators/Organizers is to regularly convey the importance of gratitude in ways that are meaningful to people regardless of age or theological background. This can look like a UTO Box in each Sunday School classroom where kids can put slips of paper with what they are grateful for that week, or you encouraging your congregation to recognize and give thanks for different ministries each month. Parish Coordinators/Organizers are also responsible for ensuring that the Ingathering (or collection of the Blue Boxes) takes place at least once a year, but it is not your job to count the coins! We really want you to focus on building up grateful hearts. Work with the clergy, worship leaders, finance team and others so that UTO is a part of the life of the parish and not something just inserted in. When we invite others to share their gifts, it gives us a chance to talk about UTO and to practice gratitude. Ultimately, we hope you will have fun thinking about ways to lift up the practice of gratitude in your congregation. Below are some of the ways that we recommend going about the work of being a Parish Coordinator/Organizer. While I hope these get you going, I also hope that you find this work to be an opportunity to be creative and contextualize the work of gratitude within your congregation or community.

One last thing, and perhaps the most important thing. Consider how you are practicing gratitude in your own life. I find it really helpful to keep a gratitude journal. Make a daily gratitude offering/prayer/note in a journal each day—this practice should be a headliner and not an afterthought. This is also a great way to look back at the year that was, and see that even though there are challenges, there are blessings abounding as well. If you need help getting started with journaling, the blog has sample journal pages, and you can even use those to do a workshop for groups at your church. Write a thank you card every week, not for something you received but simply thanking someone for being a part of your life. Thank people on social media for something they posted. Use gratitude to engage in a new way in other aspects of your life and see how it changes you. These experiences will also help you to teach and encourage others to do the same. UTO has made a profound impact on my life, and I am blessed to share that opportunity with others, I hope you'll feel the same way as you embark on your journey as a Parish Coordinator.

Jeanne K., Diocese of Missouri, UTO Coordinator

## UTO Parish Organizers/ Coordinators:

- **Encourage** each person in the congregation to adopt a personal practice of grateful living, through the example you set with your own practice, by sharing stories of grateful living and giving.
- **Teach** that daily prayers of thanksgiving improve life and health. It is a way to fulfill our baptismal covenant. Through gratitude we learn to serve Christ in all persons, love our neighbor as ourselves, and strive for justice and peace among all people.
- **Celebrate** all the blessings (and challenges that lead to blessings) of the parish by working with the rector on establishing an all-parish special “grateful giving day”/ingathering and by making sure that gratitude is a part of the life of the congregation, from recognizing volunteers, to sharing a word of gratitude at meetings, to the prayers of the people.

## Basic Overview of Tasks Associated with Being a Parish Coordinator/Organizer

### Encourage

- Learn the United Thank Offering story. Share it. “Preach what you practice” through social media posts and conversations when you experience the blessings of gratitude. Notice the good things that happen each day and give thanks to God for your blessing.
- Invite those gathered at church meetings to share one thing they are grateful for prior to beginning the meeting and then share one word about what they are grateful for from the meeting as a way to close.
- Speak to your congregational leaders about utilizing UTO resources (stewardship programs, faith formation, November Gratitude Challenge, etcetera) to help incorporate gratitude practices throughout the ministries of your congregation. People love to be thanked, and UTO has resources to help you do just that.

### Teach

- Order and distribute printed materials from: <https://shimaofnavajoland.com/collections/united-thank-offering> (The only charge is for postage).
- Forgot to order materials and need them right away? No problem, everything can be downloaded and printed locally, including Blue Boxes. You can access them here in English and Spanish: <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/ministries/united-thank-offering/resources/>.
- Go to [www.episcopalchurch.org/uto](http://www.episcopalchurch.org/uto), scroll down and click on “Videos” for free United Thank Offering videos you can download and show. Many give the story of a ministry that received a UTO grant or a person who was served by the ministry. Seeing the actual ministry in action and hearing the stories can be very powerful. The United Thank Offering 2014 Blue Box video is also available and continues to be popular.
- Use articles from the E-Newsletters for your parish newsletter or bulletin. Remember, you can copy anything from these resources and use them as you see fit to encourage each household in the congregation to drop money (or slips of paper to do an online donation later) in the Blue Box daily as an outward and visible sign of thanks to God.
- Introduce the United Thank Offering to children through children’s sermons, Sunday School, Godly Play, and Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. Sample lessons and sermons are available on our blog: [www.unitedthankoffering.org](http://www.unitedthankoffering.org). Children love to fold the flat boxes themselves.

### Celebrate

- With your rector, establish a yearly day of gratitude for the parish to celebrate as a congregation. This could be a “party” with liturgy, food, and fellowship. This is the day that ingathering/grateful giving is counted/recognized.



- Because people want to know where the money goes, create a display with information on grants awarded each year. Maybe invite recipients of a grant to speak, or take a field trip to visit a grant site near you. For additional information regarding grants, contact the United Thank Offering staff at [hmelton@episcopalchurch.org](mailto:hmelton@episcopalchurch.org) for a list of grant sites in your diocese. UTO's Facebook page also has a wealth of photos and information about grant sites.
- Help your congregation to see practicing gratitude as a part of your community ethos. Make sure people feel seen for the good things they are doing and celebrated. These outward celebrations are a great way to model how to practice gratitude at home, work, school or simply in the community.

### **How to Get Started:**

If your parish does not currently have UTO, please speak to your clergy or vestry about starting UTO. You will need a small budget to order materials (they are free, but you will need to pay for shipping) or access to a copier to create materials locally. You will also need the support of the offering counting team, church treasurer, or similar since you will need their help with processing the Ingathering funds. We strongly recommend beginning with a gratitude experience as a part of worship. For example, invite people to spend time each Sunday morning writing what they are thankful for on slips of colorful paper and put them into the offering plate. Collect the slips and turn them into paper chains to decorate your church on your first UTO Sunday in place of an Ingathering. You can then pass out UTO information and Blue Boxes and encourage your congregation to focus on gratitude year-round. Let them know you'll collect the Boxes (or online donation receipts) a year from now, but mostly encourage them to notice the good things that God is doing in their life and let them know you'll keep sharing examples of gratitude and ideas on how to practice gratitude throughout the year.

### **How to Organize a Parish Ingathering:**

When planning your Parish Ingathering, we suggest considering the following four steps.

1. **Coordinate the Ingathering date well in advance so you can plan out your year, or better yet, get the congregation to have it as an annual occurrence that people can look forward to.** The most important part of the Ingathering is teaching about giving in gratitude, then gathering the Blue Boxes and envelopes together. Ingatherings are generally held in the spring to represent new growth, and in the fall to represent harvest times. The traditional date for the Spring Ingathering is the Sunday closest to Ascension, and for the Fall Ingathering is the Sunday closest to All Saints' Day. However, it is more important that you pick a date that works for your congregation. Some churches do UTO in Lent and utilize the Lenten resources, others in November, utilizing the UTO November Gratitude Challenge and as a way to center Thanksgiving on gratitude. Whatever works best for your church is the best date for an Ingathering.
2. **Plan a special worship service, coffee hour or other event for the Ingathering date.**
  - Use the sample prayers, songs, scripture references, and service materials provided online or in the Liturgies handbook to connect the United Thank Offering and a theology of thankfulness to the experience of worship. This helps make the Ingathering special. (Remember, you are celebrating prayers and blessings so this is a big deal!)
  - Some congregations provide United Thank Offering envelopes for paper money and checks. Then Blue Boxes can be reused. If you are using envelopes, make them readily available in the pews, inserted in bulletins, or handed out at the door the day of the Ingathering.
  - Other congregations include the Text to Give information (Text INGATHER to 41444.) so people can donate online with a credit card and encourage individuals to simply put the email receipt in the plate or a note that says they gave online. You can download a Text to Give graphic and an "I gave online" card on the Coordinators Resource page on the blog.
3. **Working alongside the systems within your parish for handling donations, process the Ingathering**

## **funds.**

- Combine monies received from Blue Boxes and envelopes utilizing the accounting procedures of your congregation. It is not your job to count the money!
- For tax purposes, identifiable cash and checks should appear on pledge records as a special offering, but your parish treasurer should know how to do this. This allows people to have their charitable donations to the parish in one place for tax purposes.
- Send your total amount to the following address within a month of the Ingathering: United Thank Offering, DFMS—Protestant Episcopal Church US, P.O. Box 958983, St. Louis, MO 63195-8983. **Mark your check or include a piece of paper with the following information: Parish Name, Town, Diocese Name.** This allows the finance department to properly track your donation so that we can notify your Diocesan Coordinator that your funds were received. You can also include a list for acknowledgements with this check. (Just make sure to note if you'd like the cards mailed directly and include the addresses, or we can send the cards to the church for you to send or hand out to groups like Sunday School classes.)

## **4. Respond with Gratitude**

- Thank people for participating! Write a thank you note in the parish newsletter and say something at the announcements. Tell them how much you raised and share something like, "If every nickel we collected represented one blessing we experienced in the last year, this congregation experienced a total of 100,000 blessings!" Remember, thankfulness generates thankfulness.
- If you would like individuals thanked for giving to the Ingathering, please email a list to the UTO staff or include a list with your Ingathering check as noted above and we will send a card to everyone on the list. This can include cards for thanking the children who put slips of paper in a Blue Box at Sunday School. We will thank whomever you ask us to thank. (If it is for kids let us know, because we have a special thank you note for children that they can color.)

## **Other Things**

- We strongly encourage you to **look at the UTO Grant list** to find every grant awarded to your diocese since 1883. Then we hope you'll visit some of the sites in your area. Visiting UTO grant sites can be inspiring and is a wonderful way to help promote giving to UTO by telling local stories about how a UTO grant helped a congregation, ministry, or mission.
- **Encourage your parish to proudly list UTO on the website.** You can even ask them to simply link to [www.unitedthankoffering.org](http://www.unitedthankoffering.org) where those seeking information about gratitude can easily find it.
- Once UTO has become a part of the life of the congregation, it is good to explain the importance of the **Memorial Trust Fund** and encourage gifts to honor or remember someone. People can also name this trust in their will to continue the work of building up gratitude for generations to come. To learn more about the Memorial Trust Fund, we have created a brochure in English and Spanish for download or from the distribution center.
- Encourage your congregation to submit **grant applications** for funding and explain how it works. Help them with applications or seek help from your Diocesan Coordinator/Organizer, if requested.
- **When leaving** the Parish Coordinators/Organizers position, update the form found here: <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/uto/united-thank-offering-contact-update/> and we will notify your diocese of the change and make sure the new person is receiving UTO communications.

*[Click here to return to the Table of Contents.](#)*

## Quick Introduction to UTO for Use in Parishes

Are you wondering why you should participate in UTO? First and foremost, UTO is an invitation to practice gratitude, something deeply needed in our world. Practicing thankfulness is vitally important to our spiritual lives. Imagine what relationships would be like if we didn't thank one another. The same is true with our relationship with God. Practicing gratitude helps overcome the temptations of greed and envy. We live in a very commercialized society that makes those temptations even more seductive. A painful reminder of that is our November holiday which is dedicated to giving thanks but has been turned into a shopping weekend. We've become programmed to think that the more our neighbors have, the more we think we need. We tend to think in terms of *scarcity* and *abundance*. Let's reprogram ourselves by taking time each day to focus on what we have rather than what we don't have, to be grateful for what we have. That cycle of needing more, more, more can then be broken. This cycle causes us to be unsatisfied with our lives and leads us to take what we have for granted. This includes our possessions, our health, and our relationships. Gratitude takes everything and makes it enough. If we do not want to live in scarcity, then we must be living in abundance. What if we reprogrammed our minds to see how blessed we are, that we are enough and that we have enough? That would change our whole world.

Practicing thankfulness helps overcome stress and anxiety. Think about the times you have been really stressed. For example, have you ever been stuck behind someone who was driving about 15 miles an hour? You probably began to tense up and maybe even started to yell a bit to that person. "Why are you driving so slow?" might be one of the nicer things you yelled. Instead of the tension and the anger, what if you took a deep breath and offered a prayer to God: "Dear God, I am so grateful that I enjoy the freedom and independence of owning my own car. So many people do not have that luxury." Suddenly the tension in your body eases and your blood pressure drops. Practicing thankfulness helps us adjust our mindset, it is a self-reprogramming that focuses on gratitude, and it brings us closer to God.

The second reason why UTO is unique is that 100% of all collected money goes towards the funding of grants for innovative mission and ministry. UTO has a Memorial Trust Fund, which is used to pay for all overhead costs. Because of that, the money that you put into that little Blue Box, out of thankfulness, goes on to bless others. UTO has funded [insert grant example from your area].

So how does all this work? First, notice the good things happening in your life. Then, offer prayers of thanksgiving to God and place a coin, or a bill, or a note into your Blue Box. Something really special occurs when you do this. The Blue Box becomes a sacramental gift. A sacrament is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. When your thankfulness leads to money being put into that little box, the Blue Box becomes a physical manifestation of your prayers of thanksgiving. And then those Blue Boxes become grants. And those grants fund new ministries that you are now part of, through your generosity and thankfulness.

UTO has been in existence for over 130 years and has funded over 5,000 grants. Many of those ministries are still ongoing. That translates to millions of people whose lives have been touched by a UTO grant. Each grant represents not only a new way that our church has become the hands and feet of Christ, but also represents people just like us who have had the faith and courage to say yes to God. Those Blue Boxes are small but mighty.

[Click here to return to the Table of Contents.](#)

## Diocesan Coordinators/Organizers

### *Connect, Promote, Inspire*

Wherever I am, I always remember the United Thank Offering ministry had humble beginnings in 1871. Episcopal church women supported the work of the church with a simple tithing box we all know as the “little blue box.” I continue to be inspired by these acts of gratitude and by these donations that enable many funded ministries.

Your coins add up; ministries that need your support such as food banks, day care centers, shelters and laundry facilities for travelers, and wheelchair ramps into churches, are all possible thanks to your generosity. Your blessings become possibilities for others.

I love sharing your thankful ideas. One woman brought ninety, one-dollar bills to celebrate her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday during an in-gathering Sunday. Blue cupcakes and blueberry muffins are another way to be creatively thankful at coffee hour. And a UTO Blue Box can be transformed into a bonnet or a complete ensemble!

Notice the little things in your life and the way they make you feel. Your gratitude builds and changes the ways we view our world. Know that you and your work is appreciated, and I am grateful.

Kathy L., Diocese of Oregon, UTO Coordinator

## UTO Diocesan Coordinators/Organizers:

- **Connect** Parish Coordinators within the diocese and the diocese to UTO as well as to supplies, resources, and opportunities. Diocesan Coordinators are often the link between parishes and ministries and the grant process.
- **Promote** UTO by supporting Parish Coordinators, encouraging congregations who are not yet participating in UTO to see the importance of promoting gratitude, and finding ways to speak about UTO throughout the Diocesan structures.
- **Inspire** Episcopalians within your diocese to adopt intentional gratitude practices by speaking at Diocesan events and convention, making sure UTO has a presence at summer camps or youth formation events, and so forth.

## Basic Overview of Tasks Associated with Being a Diocesan Coordinator/Organizer

### Connect

- Get a list of parishes in your diocese and the names of the parish coordinators in each parish. Divide up the list so you are praying for a few congregations or communities each week. Let them know you are praying for them and make sure you let them know you are thankful for them.
- Sign up for the monthly UTO Coordinators e-newsletter. This is a great way to get timely information about UTO, ideas for promoting gratitude, and updates on grant sites. You can also encourage Parish Coordinators to do the same so you know that everyone is getting the same information at the same time.
- Participate in trainings and/or webinars to the extent you are able, or ask your Province Representative for the notes after the webinar so you are up to date on the latest United Thank Offering processes.
- Let us know about the great work you are doing to promote UTO by submitting information with pictures or videos for the UTO Facebook page or the monthly e-newsletter.

### Promote

- Create a United Thank Offering packet of information and materials to present as a welcoming gift to new clergy (deacons, priests, bishops) in the diocese. Information from the Parish Coordinators section of this handbook might be useful to include to help them recruit a leader.
- Meet with the diocesan bishop to ensure that United Thank Offering is an integral part of the life of the diocese. We encourage you to discuss the following with your bishop if any are not in place or haven't been revisited recently:
  - Is the Ingathering held at a prominent time and place within the life of the diocese? If your diocese does not have an Ingathering, this would be a good goal for your diocese and help is available from the UTO staff.
  - Does the bishop take Blue Boxes with him when he visits parishes? Is he or she familiar with the spiritual discipline of gratitude?
  - Is your diocese following best financial practices for handling the Ingathering funds?
    - Does the diocese send all offerings received semi-annually at least 3 full weeks before the close of the calendar year, December 31, so they can be counted in that year's Ingathering total? (Remember that you are entrusted in good faith to send to DFMS any money given to the United Thank Offering by people in your diocese. Money should not be held, since it is a designated gift.)
    - Does the diocese acknowledge each gift directly upon receipt?
  - Since the Bishop has the final authority on endorsing the UTO applications to submit to the Board for review, we recommend that you ask the bishop to appoint a United Thank Offering Grant

Screening Committee if there isn't one currently. (See the section on *Granting* in this handbook for more information.)

### Inspire

- Write articles about the United Thank Offering for diocesan newspaper(s) and other publications. Share sample articles and announcements that are available on our blog with your Parish Coordinators.
- Connect with non-traditional opportunities to talk about gratitude. Can you present UTO to the Camp and see if there is a way for them to incorporate a gratitude practice for campers like a gratitude scavenger hunt, or invite committees to practice gratitude at their meetings?
- Organize visits to United Thank Offering grant sites for your Parish Coordinators/Organizers.
- Have fun and share how gratitude or UTO grants have inspired you. When people see you having fun they will want to join in.
- Make sure you lead by example, and practice gratitude for and with Parish Coordinators.

### Other Things

- We strongly encourage you to **look at the UTO Grant list** to find every grant awarded to your diocese since 1883. Then we hope you'll visit some of the sites in your area. Visiting UTO grant sites can be inspiring and is a wonderful way to help promote giving to UTO by telling local stories about how a UTO grant helped a congregation, ministry, or mission.
- **Encourage your diocese to proudly list UTO on the website.** You can even ask them to simply link to [www.unitedthankoffering.org](http://www.unitedthankoffering.org) where those seeking information about gratitude can easily find it. Or we can provide them a list of all past UTO grants to the diocese to feature.
- Once UTO has become a part of the life of the diocese, it is good to explain the importance of the **Memorial Trust Fund** and encourage gifts to honor or remember someone. People can also name this trust in their will to continue the work of building up gratitude for generations to come. To learn more about the Memorial Trust Fund, we have created a brochure in English and Spanish for download or from the distribution center.
- Encourage your congregations to submit **grant applications** for funding and explain how it works. Help them with applications if requested.
- **When leaving** the Diocesan Coordinators/Organizers position, update the form <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/uto/united-thank-offering-contact-update/> and we will make sure the new person is receiving UTO communications.

[Click here to return to the Table of Contents.](#)

## Diocesan Coordinator/Organizer Responsibilities for the Granting Process

Annually, the call for United Thank Offering grant applications is released by the Public Affairs Office of DFMS at the same time it appears in the UTO E-Newsletter. Typically, application materials and resources for the **Regular Annual Grants** are available in early summer and due the first Friday of March. It is the Diocesan Coordinator's responsibility to let people in the diocese know well in advance when the process is open and what the deadlines are. (Please note: these are not firm dates, because in a General Convention year the materials will be due earlier.)

Some dioceses have a deadline for grant applications to be submitted so they can be reviewed by a Screening Committee or Bishop before the deadline for grant applications. Every congregation must be informed of this date. We recommend not only notifying the Parish Coordinators/Organizers but also asking the Diocesan Communications Officer to send out an email specifically about the grant process (with a reminder that the funding for these grants comes from Blue Boxes) to every clergy person and to the contact list the diocese regularly utilizes. It also is a good idea to ask the Diocesan Communications Officer to put this information on the diocesan Facebook page and Twitter feed. The more places that people can hear about the UTO application, the better.

The United Thank Offering grant process requires every application to be endorsed by the diocesan bishop. Each diocese has a different system for reviewing grant applications. The United Thank Offering Board recommends having a Diocesan Grant Screening Committee to fairly determine which application(s) to submit to the Board. Once the criteria and the application for grants are released, the Board hosts a webinar to answer questions people might have about the grant writing process. We strongly suggest that applicants review the criteria and application prior to attending the webinar, so they can ask pertinent questions. The Board offers a second webinar for members of Diocesan Grant Screening Committees, to answer questions about the review process. During the entire grant process, the staff and Board are available to answer questions and provide technical assistance; however, during the full week prior to grant submission, the staff will only check to see that applications are complete but not ensure that they are correct (staff will check that all required items have been submitted, but not that they have been filled in correctly). It is our goal to help dioceses submit applications that are eligible for funding, so please do not hesitate to ask for help.

The Diocesan Grant Screening Committee reviews applications to ensure that they are complete, are presented on the current year's application form, and meet the criteria. At the close of the screening process, the committee chair sends a report and recommendations to the bishop (if the bishop is not an active committee member). Grant requests, with all required attachments, must be submitted electronically to the United Thank Offering Office by the stated deadline. Any questions on the submission process should be directed to our staff.

## Diocesan Grant Screening Committee Overview

*The following are ideas for structuring your Diocesan Grant Screening Committee and come from a variety of dioceses to help you determine what is best in your context.*

Members of the Diocesan Grant Screening Committee:

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

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

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

Grant applicants should be invited to the Diocesan Grant Screening Committee meetings to present their applications and to answer questions.

### **1. Connect with the Diocese:**

As you begin, make sure you know who your contact person is at the diocese for the grant process and go over the schedule with them early on to ensure that you won't run into any issues with getting the Bishops Endorsement Form. Also work with the Communications person to find out when the deadlines are for submitting information on granting, Ingatherings, etcetera. Find out what the word limits are, if you can use images, and so forth.

### **2. Create a Team:**

A team that has diverse talents and backgrounds and is able to view the grant request from different perspectives is a blessing. It is really key to have someone who is detail oriented who will take notes, and someone who likes reading budgets and is willing to be the lead on checking the budget against the criteria. It is important to remind the committee that they can always recuse themselves from evaluating a particular application if it is something they cannot be impartial about. The goal of the committee is to read each application with fresh eyes and an unattached heart to ensure that the application that is selected is the best possible fit to the focus and the criteria. Team members need to actively listen and communicate in a respectful and caring manner as you get into the details of the grant. Mutual affirmation is also useful. (This is also a great committee to invite someone to from a parish you would like to be more involved in UTO, to join as it showcases the important work the Ingathering funds.)

It is important to have team members experienced in using telephone/computer technology. If you need help setting up Zoom (or similar for the meeting) the diocese or Heather can help.

Advance preparation is essential to the team's success. By attending webinars and asking questions, the team leader is able to inform members of important considerations when reviewing the applications. Make sure the team has time to review the applications before meeting.

Appoint a secretary to take notes that can be used to respond to applicants and to formulate the screening committee letter. One team member can write the committee recommendation letter for the application.

You can also invite UTO Board members or staff to sit in on your screening committee meeting to help answer questions you might have as you review the applications, however, do this well in advance of the submission deadlines.

Some things to consider as you form the committee:

- Make clear in the invitation to serve what the term is on the committee. Make sure that you stagger the terms to preserve experience.
- Number of convocations or deaneries in your diocese;
- Number of churches in your diocese; and
- Diversity of the committee: age groups, ethnicity, clergy/lay

### **3. After you've decided**



Open dialogue should be maintained with the grant writer. Make suggestions based on questions the screening committee has. Application modifications ensure the grant language conforms to the grant criteria and focus. Set deadlines to ensure that the process of revising doesn't delay submitting the application well in advance of the deadline.

The committee could write thank you notes to all the applicants, sharing the strengths from their application. If you know of possible alternative funding sources, offer those connections.

**4. Things to consider as you write your letter from the screening committee:**

- make sure you identify how your committee saw the project fulfilling the focus and criteria for the year.
- add any additional data or information regarding the project that would help explain the need in your area that the application was unable to cover.

**5. Bishops Endorsement Form and Submission Process**

Check in with the Diocese and make sure the Bishops Endorsement form demonstrates strong supporting reasons for funding. Confirm they know how to submit the final application per the instructions on the website. Once they have submitted it, Formstack will send them a "received receipt" and they will also receive an email when it has been processed for review. Ask that the diocese forward you these emails for your file.

[Click here to return to the Table of Contents.](#)

# Finances

## United Thank Offering Ingathering Funds: Best Practices

### For Parish Ingatherings

1. As all Ingathering funds are fully granted, thank you to all of the parishes and sponsoring organizations who carry any administrative cost of participating in UTO.
2. Make sure to give plenty of notice regarding the date of the Ingathering, and give time after the Ingathering for anyone who might have missed that Sunday to be able to contribute.
3. Follow parish procedures for safeguarding the Ingathering from theft or loss.
4. We strongly recommend having the Ingathering funds counted and processed according to the financial practices currently in place in your parish. If this is not available to you then please engage two unrelated people to count and record the Ingathering.
5. Make sure your treasurer records the UTO Ingathering in a separate general ledger account for transmittal and reporting.
6. Please ask your treasurer to mail the Ingathering funds immediately to the UTO/DFMS bank address in St. Louis. There are two options for sending checks:
  - send all of the checks collected (make sure they are made out to UTO and not the parish) and a check from the parish for any cash received, or
  - send one check for all the funds.

Make sure to include a list of all donors to be acknowledge with their name and address. The staff will send each person a card, and if an amount is included, a receipt they can use for their taxes. See the section below regarding acknowledgements.

7. Share the total Ingathering amount with your parish and thank them in multiple places for participating.
8. Be in communication with your Diocesan Coordinator about your Ingathering so you can also be certain to follow any internal request from your Diocese regarding UTO Ingathering funds.

### For UTO Ingatherings Held at Diocesan Convention

- Thank you for the ways that you shepherd the process of holding an Ingathering at Diocesan Convention. We know that it is a lot of work and a lot to organize.
- In order to safeguard the offering, and lower the risk of a collection taken off-site, we strongly recommend that parish offerings be sent directly from the parish to the Saint Louis Address. When parishes send their checks in directly, we recommend a ceremonial Ingathering at Diocesan Convention similar to what is done at General Convention. In this case, a card is deposited as a symbol of what was sent it, it can even include the amount received by the deadline you provided to the parishes. Sample, blank Ingathering cards are available in the Coordinators section of our blog.
- Follow-up with a report of contributing parishes in your Diocesan newsletter.
- The UTO Office will supply a bi-annual report of parish and individual donations for a Diocese upon request to designated Diocesan representatives.

### Basic Reminders about UTO donations:

1. Funds are ingathered on behalf of the United Thank Offering, a ministry of The Episcopal Church.

2. Please send in your donation as soon as possible, because the interest gathered on the Ingathering is also granted and sometimes amounts to enough to full fund one grant.
3. Episcopal Church organizations fall under both IRS regulations and Episcopal Church canons.
4. No administrative expense can be taken from the Ingathering. Administrative expenses are to be paid by Episcopal Church Women (ECW), the local parish, or diocese, and are budgeted separately.
5. Once the United Thank Offering Ingathering is announced, all of the ingathered funds are considered designated and then transferred to the United Thank Offering account with the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society (The Episcopal Church):
  - a. **Make the check out to UTO**
  - b. **Send it to: United Thank Offering DFMS Protestant Episcopal Church US, P.O. Box 958983 St. Louis, MO 63195-8983**
  - c. **Include a note with the diocese/parish/list of donors.**

### Handling “Out of the Ordinary” Donations

Sometimes you will receive donations out of the ordinary. Here are some tips for handling these situations.

1. If it is a check, ask that it is made out to UTO and send it in to the lockbox as described above. If the check comes from someone visiting, include the note to state you want it credited to your diocese/parish.
2. If it is cash, place it in an envelope, seal it and have them sign the seal. If an envelope is not available use a piece of paper and have two people sign it to confirm the amount. Then give it to your parish to process as a UTO donation with either the signed envelope or the paper with the cash in an envelope.
3. If they want to use a credit card, have them text INGATHER to 41444 (41444 is the phone number, and you put INGATHER in a message) to access the online donation system that can process cards or visit: [www.unitedthankoffering/give](http://www.unitedthankoffering/give) .

### Regarding Acknowledgements for UTO Offerings

Because the United Thank Offering is a gratitude ministry, we feel strongly that every intentional act of gratitude with a UTO Blue Box should be acknowledge. There are a variety of ways that this can happen, but below is the way we recommend if you do not want to acknowledge each gift individually.

1. **Parish Ingatherings:** When sending one check to the St. Louis address, include a list of all of those who need to be thanked. This can include the amount (which is helpful for those that want to take it as a tax deduction) or the staff can simply send a thank you for participating in UTO card to each person on the list. If you have children participating in UTO, either with coins or simply putting slips of paper in a Blue Box as a part of Sunday School, we will also send each child a thank you note. Be sure to get the parents’ permission to share their name and address with us (it will not used for any purpose other than sending a thank you card) before you send the list to us. You can also email this list and reference the parish and diocese and the check number that it goes with so we can connect them later on.
2. **Diocesan Ingatherings:** If you receive checks at the Diocesan Level, please send us a list of parishes that contributed and their addresses so we can send acknowledgement cards to them. You can also email this list and reference the diocese and the check number that it goes with so we can connect them.

[Click here to return to the Table of Contents.](#)

## Memorial Trust Fund

The United Thank Offering Memorial Trust Fund (MTF) was established in 1982 as a permanent trust. The earnings from the MTF are designated to cover administration expenses so that every penny given in the Ingathering is awarded through grants. Earnings from the investment assure income to support the autonomous, elected volunteer Board, as well as staffing and UTO materials for the extensive diocesan and parish volunteer network to help increase awareness of the United Thank Offering and teach gratitude. Annual income from the MTF was nearly \$270,000 in 2020.

Gifts to this trust fund may be made at any time. A special tribute of thanksgiving is encouraged “in honor of” a friend or family member for leadership, ministry, and faithful service, or for special events such as birthdays, anniversaries, or graduations. Gifts also may be made “in memory of” a cherished relative, friend, or church leader as a special remembrance.

The names of those who are honored or memorialized are permanently recorded in a bound book that is kept in the United Thank Offering Office. It is also available online here: <https://unitedthankoffering.com/memorial-trust/>

United Thank Offering gifts are tax-deductible and we can help you make a legacy gift to the Trust Fund or the Ingathering through your estate planning.

- If you would like to include the Memorial Trust Fund in your will, please visit: [www.episcopalchurch.org/files/wills\\_bequest\\_language\\_for\\_web\\_20160426.pdf](http://www.episcopalchurch.org/files/wills_bequest_language_for_web_20160426.pdf)
- *For stock donations:* [www.episcopalchurch.org/files/contribution\\_instructions.pdf](http://www.episcopalchurch.org/files/contribution_instructions.pdf)

A Memorial Trust Fund brochure in English and Spanish is located in the resources section of our webpage or available from the distribution center. There is a form in the brochure that you can use to make your donation or just send your donation with a note stating the intention and address to receive an acknowledgement card. Make checks payable to: The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society (DFMS). Or visit [www.unitedthankoffering.org/give](http://www.unitedthankoffering.org/give)

Please write **United Thank Offering TRUST FUND #852 in the memo line** and mail checks to:

United Thank Offering – Memorial Trust Fund  
DFMS – Protestant Episcopal Church  
P.O. Box 958983  
St. Louis, MO 63195-8983

[Click here to return to the Table of Contents.](#)

## UTO Resources List

- Subscribe to the UTO **E-newsletter**, <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/ministries/united-thank-offering/e-newsletter-sign-up/> a monthly resource with timely UTO information that can be cut and pasted or adapted for use in your diocesan or parish e-newsletters. We also offer a monthly **Coordinators E-newsletter** that you can sign up for by emailing Heather.
- Check out our **website** for the most current items from UTO. [www.episcopalchurch.org/uto](http://www.episcopalchurch.org/uto) Updated items will always be on the main page, with less current but still applicable materials on the **resources** tab: <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/ministries/united-thank-offering/resources/> **Videos** can also be found at <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/ministries/united-thank-offering/video/>.
- Our **blog** is a wealth of resources ([www.unitedthankoffering.org](http://www.unitedthankoffering.org)) for those seeking information about gratitude, with a special page for coordinators/organizers and historical archives.
- "Like" our **Facebook** page: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/United-Thank-Offering/>
- To **order free resources** (pay only shipping and handling) such as Blue Boxes, envelopes, and brochures, visit: <https://shimaofnavajoland.com/collections/united-thank-offering>

### Customizable Resources for Coordinators/Organizers available at [www.unitedthankoffering.org/coordinators](http://www.unitedthankoffering.org/coordinators):

Below is a general outline of materials available for you on our blog that you can customize easily and use as your own. If you don't see something here (or on the blog) that would be useful to you, please let our staff know so the Board can generate the resource. Did you create a resource that is really great but not listed here? Please share it with our community so we can learn from you! Email the resource to our staff and she'll include it on the blog.

#### Sample Items Available Online for Parish Coordinators/Organizers

1. Introducing UTO to your congregation
2. Social Media Ideas
3. Why Episcopalians should practice gratitude
4. An outline to help you tell your story about why gratitude matters
5. How to talk about mission and ministry as funded through UTO
6. Sample Bulletin or Spoken Announcements
7. How to introduce UTO to your Faith Formation Team

#### Sample Items Available Online for Diocesan Coordinators/Organizers

1. Sample letter to your bishop, encouraging them to support UTO
2. Sample letter for new clergy to the diocese
3. Suggested outline for creating a talk at convention or other large gatherings
4. Sample talk for convention or other large gatherings
5. Planning your UTO presence at Convention
6. Sample Fall Letter for Parish Coordinators
7. Sample Fall Letter for Parish Coordinators version 2
8. Sample Spring Letter for Parish Coordinators
9. Sample Spring Letter for Parish Coordinators version 2
10. Screening Committee letters:
  - a. Letter from the screening committee to applicants who are not chosen
  - b. Letter to UTO regarding the application that was chosen

[Click here to return to the Table of Contents.](#)

## Basic Calendar of the Year

Below is an overview of the annual events that happen in the life of The Episcopal Church using the liturgical seasons. We find that it is helpful when planning times to talk about UTO to think about the season of the church and other activities happening within your congregation. For example, Lent is a very busy time in most congregations, but this is when some focus on UTO; for others, simply sending home the Lenten calendar from UTO is enough to do with so much going on. Please note: we try to ensure that all Fall formation materials are available no later than August 1<sup>st</sup> and all Spring materials are available no later than November 1<sup>st</sup> to help with parish planning.

If you are looking for a basic calendar of events or resources from the UTO Board and Staff, we update that annually and post it in the Coordinators E-News and on the Coordinators Resource page. We follow the program year with our calendar, so it comes out in June and runs from July to June.

### Advent

Reminder: All UTO Ingathering funds need to be sent in by December 15<sup>th</sup> in order to be counted in the current year's ingathering. The First Sunday of Advent is a great time for Diocesan Coordinators to send a reminder email to all of your parishes to ensure that they have sent in their Ingathering funds.

Faith Formation Suggestion: host a coffee hour and invite your congregation to do a gratitude scavenger hunt with the photos on their phone. Invite them to break into small groups and share photos of things they are thankful for. A format for this can be found on the Formation page of the blog.

### Christmas

Host a post-Christmas thank you card party! This is a great intergenerational activity to help little ones write thank you notes for the gifts they received at Christmas.

### Epiphany

During Epiphany, UTO hosts an online Bible Study as a part of the Good Book Club from Forward Movement, which is a great way to refresh and recharge!

### Lent

Share the UTO Lenten Calendar—each day you can learn about a UTO grant site and are invited to give thanks for something in your home that relates to the work of the grant site. People “pledge” an amount at the beginning of Lent and then are invited to make a thank offering at the end. This is a fun resource for families, especially when faced with the challenges of consumerism.

### Easter

Holy Week and Easter are great times to stop and give thanks for all that God is doing in the midst of us. While it is a very busy time in the life of the church, consider ways to demonstrate and practice gratitude, from thanking the clergy and lay leaders to hosting an Ingathering during Easter Season.

### Pentecost

Pentecost is the birthday of the church and a great time to practice gratitude! This is a time to reflect on the

gifts of the members and leaders of your congregation. Invite people to write what they are grateful for on slips of paper to decorate the church with paper chains. Invite children to draw pictures of things they are grateful for to decorate the church.

## The Season After Pentecost/Ordinary Time

In Godly Play, this long green season is called the growing time. There are so many opportunities to practice gratitude and promote UTO during this time, from graduations to the joy of summer. The possibilities are endless.

## November/Thanksgiving

Each November, UTO offers a gratitude challenge that can be done by individuals, small groups or whole congregations. Each week, individuals are invited to spend the week giving thanks for the good things happening in their life within the context of different areas. It is a great way to get ready for Thanksgiving and focus on gratitude. Additionally, UTO offers prayer resources in our Liturgy Booklet for marking Thanksgiving as a celebration of gratitude.

The biggest reminder when thinking about the year ahead is that most congregations try to plan out the schedule many months in advance. So, for **Parish Coordinators/Organizers**, it is best to talk with your clergy, vestry, worship team, etcetera, about ways gratitude can be included in the overall life of the congregation beyond simply scheduling the Ingathering. The UTO Stewardship guide is a great resource to inject gratitude into each month of the year and does not need to be used for stewardship. For **Diocesan Coordinators/Organizers**, ask about presenting at regional (or deanery) gatherings, or ways you can inject gratitude into the overall life of the diocese. This can be anything from supporting the camp with their process of recognizing the staff at the end of the season to ways of recognizing those rotating out of leadership. You can also ask to have Blue Boxes present at different gatherings as a reminder to speak from a place of gratitude first.

[Click here to return to the Table of Contents.](#)

## Resources for Further Learning

Below are some of the resources we recommend if you'd like to learn more about the theology around gratitude, gratitude from a social-emotional standpoint, or simply some non-church resources to help deepen your understanding/practice of gratitude. This list is by no means exhaustive, so if you know of a resource that you find particularly helpful, please send it in to add to the list.

### Resources on Gratitude from a Theological Perspective

1. **Scholars Conferences** – UTO hosted our first scholars conference in 2020. The videos from that conference are available at [www.unitedthankoffering.org](http://www.unitedthankoffering.org) and the written text will be available in the summer of 2021 from the *Anglican Theological Review*. At the time of this publication, plans for the 2021 Scholars Conference were well underway. Those videos will join the others and the papers will be published in an edited volume in 2022.
2. **Psalms of Gratitude** from *She Reads Truth* contains 13 lessons that walk you through Psalms of Gratitude with space for reflection and journaling, and can be done as an individual or with a group.
3. **Help, Thanks, Wow: The Three Essential Prayers** by Anne Lamott is a wonderful, short, and easy read on prayer and is great for a small group discussion.
4. **Gratitude: An Intellectual History** by Peter J. Leithart is a very academic approach to the theology of gratitude but the chapters are well labeled for topical reading.
5. **Grateful: The Transformative Power of Giving Thanks** by Diana Butler Bass is an accessible read which offers an introductory-level approach to gratitude. Great for those starting out or as a resource for helping people understand the importance of gratitude.

### Resources on Gratitude from a Social-Emotional Perspective

6. **Thanks! How Practicing Gratitude Can Make You Happier** by Robert A. Emmons is an easy read which looks at gratitude from a psychological perspective. This book is often referenced in other gratitude texts.
7. **Gratitude Works! A 21-Day Program for Creating Emotional Prosperity** by Robert A. Emmons is designed to help make a gratitude practice a gratitude habit. Each day there is something to read and do as you solidify time in your schedule to practice gratitude.
8. **The Gifts of Imperfection: Let Go of Who You Think You're Supposed to Be and Embrace Who You Are** by Brené Brown has a wonderful chapter on how gratitude pushes back on scarcity thinking.



## Other Resources on Gratitude

9. **Gratitude** by Oliver Sacks is a collection of four essays he wrote just prior to his death.
10. **The Gratitude Diaries: How a Year Looking on the Bright Side Can Transform Your Life** by Janice Kaplan is a wonderful memoir on taking time to practice gratitude in the midst of a busy life.
11. **TED Talks** on gratitude:
  - Nature, Beauty and Gratitude by Louie Schwarzberg  
[https://www.ted.com/talks/louie\\_schwartzberg\\_nature\\_beauty\\_gratitude?utm\\_campaign=teds%20spread&utm\\_medium=referral&utm\\_source=tedcomshare](https://www.ted.com/talks/louie_schwartzberg_nature_beauty_gratitude?utm_campaign=teds%20spread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare)
  - Want to be happy? Be grateful by Br. David Steindl Rast  
[https://www.ted.com/talks/david\\_steindl\\_rast\\_want\\_to\\_be\\_happy\\_be\\_grateful?utm\\_campaign=teds%20spread&utm\\_medium=referral&utm\\_source=tedcomshare](https://www.ted.com/talks/david_steindl_rast_want_to_be_happy_be_grateful?utm_campaign=teds%20spread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare)
  - My Journey to thank everyone responsible for my morning coffee by A.J. Jacobs  
[https://www.ted.com/talks/a\\_j\\_jacobs\\_my\\_journey\\_to\\_thank\\_all\\_the\\_people\\_responsible\\_for\\_my\\_morning\\_coffee?utm\\_campaign=teds%20spread&utm\\_medium=referral&utm\\_source=tedcomshare](https://www.ted.com/talks/a_j_jacobs_my_journey_to_thank_all_the_people_responsible_for_my_morning_coffee?utm_campaign=teds%20spread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare)

[Click here to return to the Table of Contents.](#)