



November Gratitude Practices for Children: UTO and Growing Gratefulness

Centering Thanksgiving on Thankfulness

Dear Families,

November is a great time to focus on gratitude because Thanksgiving is always a reminder of how important gratitude can be. Below you will find two faith formation options for helping children practice and engage with gratitude during the month of November. These activities are a wonderful way to make Thanksgiving about giving thanks. One of the things that we can help children focus on is **noticing the good things that happen and seeing God amid our daily lives**. A 2019 study showed that if we can teach our children to practice gratitude, they will reap long-term health benefits, from increasing resiliency to increased happiness and well-being.

We included a section with resources about the historical events that created the holiday of Thanksgiving, including some links to resources created by Tribal members and communities to help continue this conversation throughout the year. These resources are likely best used as an intergenerational activity.

The materials provided here are meant to feel very simple, with the hope that we are not adding more work to the already very full schedules of families, but an opportunity to pause, reflect, share, and rejoice in the good things that God has done in the day that has passed. We hope this will spur discussions around dinner tables and connect our daily experiences as gifts from God to be received with gratitude.

The materials include:

1. An introductory lesson about gratitude along with discussion questions.
2. Two crafts to choose from or you can do both!
 - a) UTO Blue Box Turkey craft
 - b) 30 Day turkey gratitude challenge
3. A closing lesson on how to wrap up after Thanksgiving.

You can find additional liturgical resources for congregations and families in our **UTO Liturgy Booklet** which you can find here: <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/ministries/united-thank-offering/resources/> The Liturgy Booklet includes a section with prayers especially for Thanksgiving that we hope will help your family focus the holiday on gratitude.

If you would like more ideas on how to incorporate gratitude as a spiritual discipline for your family our blog has a wealth of resources. You can find them at www.unitedthankoffering.org or you can contact me at hmelton@episcopalchurch.org for help.

Thank you for inviting us on the journey with your family. Be sure to share any photos or ideas on social media and tag us using #UTO #ThankfulThanksgiving

Heather Melton
Staff Officer, The United Thank Offering

UTO Thankful Thanksgiving Introductory Lesson

Background:

Many families have the tradition that when they gather for their Thanksgiving meal, each person says something they are thankful for from the past year. Since the United Thank Offering asks people to do this every day, this is a great opportunity to build upon the tradition of giving thanks and expand it into a practice that goes beyond one annual experience.

Scripture for Introducing the Project:

Taken from the Thanksgiving Liturgy in the Book of Common Prayer

1 Timothy 2:1-7

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings should be made for everyone, ²for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity. ³This is right and is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁵For there is one God; there is also one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human, ⁶ who gave himself a ransom for all—this was attested at the right time. ⁷For this I was appointed a herald and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

Discussion:

Begin with **defining the words** from the passage that the children might need help with, along with words they should know. You can ask them what each of the following words mean: supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgiving, and mediator.

Some questions might be:

- I wonder how you talk to God?
- I wonder who we might want to talk to God about that might need God's love or care?
- I wonder how you could show kindness and love for others who might need it?
- What are some nice things you could do for people in our community?

Wrap Up and Transition:

- God gives us the gift of grace freely. We respond or say thank you to the gift of grace by doing good each and every day. Since we can't send a thank you note to God every time something good happens during our day, we remember those things and say them in a prayer of thanks in the evening.
- The United Thank Offering is a ministry for every Episcopalian that you get to join in. For over 125 years, Episcopalians have taken these little Blue Boxes home from church and put money or a note of thanksgiving into it each time something good has happened in their day as a way of saying thank you to God. Each year the boxes are collected and all the money in the boxes go to help people all over the world. This November, instead of just talking about what we are thankful for on Thanksgiving, I want us to practice gratitude every day this month.

Additional Resources to further discussion:

Here is a list of books for elementary aged children that UTO leaders recommend:

- *I am thankful: A Thanksgiving Book for Kids*, by Sheri Wall
- *Thank you, Thank you, Thank you* by Melissa Peck

- *Giving Thanks: A Native American Good Morning Message* by Chief Jake Swamp
- *Giving Thanks: More Than 100 Ways to Say Thank You* by Ellen Surrey

UTO also offers more resources for teaching gratitude at home on our website:

www.unitedthankoffering.org

Additional Resources for discussing Thanksgiving:

There are wonderful resources online to help children learn about the historical tradition around Thanksgiving and we commend them to you, particularly those that come from the Indigenous Communities. Here is a list of books we've used with elementary aged children that we recommend:

- *We are Grateful: Otsaliheliga* by Traci Sorell
- *1621: A New Look at Thanksgiving* by Catherine O'Neill Grace
- *We are still here! Native American Truths Everyone Should Know* by Traci Sorell
- For lesson plans and other book recommendations from the National Education Association please visit: <https://www.nea.org/advocating-for-change/new-from-nea/native-educators-say-thanksgiving-lessons-can-be-accurate>
- Oklahoma City Schools, Native American Student Services created this resource: https://neaedjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/NASS-Thanksgiving-Booklet-Print-Ready.pdf?_ga=2.40110178.1305114002.1626379770-363981057.1626379770
- Harvest Ceremony: Beyond the Thanksgiving Myth, from the National Museum of the American Indian offers an overview and discussion questions that might be helpful: https://neaedjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/NMAI_Harvest_Study_Guide.pdf?_ga=2.220267608.1305114002.1626379770-363981057.1626379770
- Scholastic also offers resources by grade level: https://www.scholastic.com/scholastic_thanksgiving/index.html and an interview with Russell M. Peters (1929-2002), a Mashpee Wampanoag leader, Native American rights advocate. <https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/articles/teaching-content/native-american-perspective-fast-turtle-wampanoag-tribe-member/>

UTO Thankful Thanksgiving

Craft Directions

Option One: UTO Turkey Blue Boxes

Supplies:

1. **UTO Blue Box** for each child.
 - a. You can print one (in English or Spanish) or print a label to put on a box or can you already have at home here: <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/ministries/united-thank-offering/resources/>
 - b. You can order one from the distribution center here: <https://shimaofnavajoland.com/collections/united-thank-offering>
2. **Templates** – print the following for **each participant** (use cardstock for a sturdier presentation):
 - a. option one: print the outline version that children can color from Scholastic (https://teachables.scholastic.com/content/dam/scholastic/teachables/products/92/9780439503792_055/9780439503792_055.pdf)
 - b. option two: print the color version for a faster craft or for small children from Tammy Yee at (<http://origami-n-stuff4kids.blogspot.com/2010/11/thanksgiving-giving-thanks-paper-bag.html>)
3. **Craft supplies:** Tape and scissors (unless you pre-cut the pieces)

Activity:

Many people talk about what they are thankful for on Thanksgiving and as we just learned, the United Thank Offering encourages us to practice gratitude every day. Today we are going to create turkey Blue Boxes to help us remember to be grateful every day this month, not just on Thanksgiving.

1. Have the children color and cut out their turkey pieces if using option one.
2. Glue or tape the head and wing pieces onto the Blue Box
3. There are two options with the tail:
 - a. print out enough feathers so you have one for each day between when you start and Thanksgiving, then add one feather each day as a gratitude practice.
 - b. Glue or tape those onto the box to finish decorating it and then:
 - i. use either a jar of coins or marbles to put into the box each day while sharing something you are grateful for with each other.
 - ii. use it alongside the other turkey craft below and as a centerpiece on thanksgiving.
 - iii. or finally, you can pass the turkey around as each person shares something they are thankful for to show that everyone can practice gratitude
4. Close by saying how thankful you are for them. Say each child's name as you put a coin in your Blue Box.

Photos of completed crafts:



UTO Thankful Thanksgiving

Craft Directions

Option Two: Giant Gratitude Turkey

Supplies:

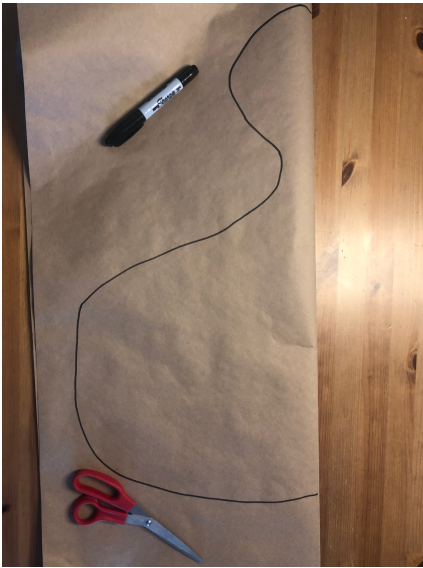
1. Brown craft paper (usually found in the mailing section of your office supply store) or you can use a paper grocery bag
2. Construction paper in a variety of colors
3. Tape, glue sticks, and scissors
4. Giant Turkey Feather Template

Activity:

Today we are going to make a giant turkey and 30 feathers, one for every day of November. Each day we are going to write one thing we are thankful for on a feather and add it to our turkey.

1. Have the children pick the colors for their feathers. You can then use the template or just cut strips of paper to make feathers. Each child will need 30.
2. Since every turkey will be unique in size, we do not have a template for the turkey. However, **we do have some photo directions below**. The easiest way to do this is cut a length of brown craft paper a little smaller than you will want your turkey to be tall. (Feathers will go behind the body so be sure to make room for them.) Fold the brown craft paper in half and draw an outline for your turkey head and body. It should look like an elongated "8" with room for the neck between a small circle and a big tummy circle. Cut it out and shape as needed. Using construction paper, give your turkey eyes, a beak and a waddle, and legs. Older kids will be able to do much of this themselves, and younger kids will enjoy directing you on the size of things and then will happily build the turkey.
3. Give each child one feather and ask them what they are most thankful for from that day. They can write or draw about it on their feather. Once they are done, encourage them to add it to their turkey.

Photo directions for making the giant turkey:



Step one: With the craft paper folded in half, draw an outline of the body. It should look almost like half of the number "8". My kids wanted a large turkey with a short neck, but you can customize the size to their directions.

Step two: cut it out. You might need to do a little shaping if it doesn't look exactly the way you want it.

Note: craft paper often wants to stay rolled up, so use some things to hold it flat while you draw and cut.



Step three: fold and cut an orange piece of construction paper in half. Fold one half, in half again and cut. This creates two legs. If you want, you can make them longer with more paper or shorter by tucking them under the body.



Step four: with the remaining half of the orange paper, cut out three triangles. One for the beak (I fold the paper in half to cut this one out) and two feet. Glue or tape it all together.



Step five: make the face. You can use a jam jar or similar, to make two white circles and then something smaller, like a cap to a vitamin jar, to make two small black circles which will become the eyes. You will also need to cut out the waddle. I do this freehand out of red paper.



Step six: assemble your turkey on whatever surface it will remain on during November. Then you can start adding the feathers.

Photos of completed crafts:



UTO Thankful Thanksgiving

Follow Up Lesson

Background:

This November, your family has spent time each day intentionally practicing gratitude. **Gratitude is the work of noticing and responding to the good things God is doing in the world around us.** One of the ways to make the work of paying attention and giving thanks feel more meaningful is to take a moment to reflect and remember all the good things that we've experienced. It can be exciting and joyful to see all the blessings we noticed and encouraging us to keep practicing gratitude. For those of you that used marbles or coins to mark the passage of time, you can also take those out and notice how many good things happened over the past month.

We're going to reflect on the good things that happened in November. Then we'll notice how when we do kind things for others, we often feel good. ("Enriched for generosity" is the theme of our scripture reflection.)

Supplies:

1. **UTO Turkey Blue Box** that you used during November or the feathers from the giant turkey.
2. **UTO Grant List** - you can order one from our distribution center or download it on the resources page at www.episcopalchurch.org/uto (We also have a list of every grant awarded since the beginning of UTO that you can search and see if a grant was ever given in your community or for a specific thing they were thankful for (for example, if they were thankful for books, UTO has given numerous grants to educational programs, from Reading Camp in the Diocese of Lexington to computer labs in Palestine.)

Scripture for Introducing the Project:

II Corinthians 9:11-12

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.

Discussion:

Read the scripture and begin with **defining the words** from the passage that the children might need help with, along with some they should know. You can ask them what each of the following words mean: enriched, thanksgiving; you might want to define who the saints are that the passage is referring to.

Some questions might be:

- I wonder how you feel when you do something nice for someone else?
 - Does it make you want to do more nice things or less?
 - How do you think the other person feels when you do something nice for them?
- When someone thanks you for helping them, I wonder how you feel?
- If we are all saints, I wonder how saying thank you connects us to God?

Wrap Up and Transition:

- As Christians, we believe that we are all connected and that our love for one another is a way that we show the world the love of Jesus. When we say thank you, we are noticing the goodness inside of another person, which is a gift from God. When we do kind things, we are representing a sign of that love.

- This past month we've noticed a lot of good things. I'm wondering if we look back on those things we were grateful for this month, we might notice the love of God coming from others.

Activity:

1. Open the box and read all the slips of paper and reflect on all the awesome things that they experienced in November. Celebrate memories, maybe give thanks once again for the people named and all the ways that these moments of gratitude connect them to others and to God.
2. After reading all of the thanksgivings and if your child uses a *Share, Save, Spend* bank, (or has money available to donate to help others) encourage them to share some of their money as a thank offering to God for all of the blessings they experienced over the last few weeks in your Blue Box to take to church for the UTO Ingathering or online at www.unitedthankoffering.org. Explain that all the money that goes to UTO goes on to help others be signs and clues of God love in the world.

Please note:

- 100% of what is given to UTO is given away the following year in grants to support innovative mission and ministry around the globe as well as here in the United States.
- The United Thank Offering likes to thank every person who participates in UTO, so if you would like a special thank you note sent to your child for participating in the Thanksgiving program, please email Heather Melton at hmelton@episcopalchurch.org and she will send a card. Please note that we do not keep this information, we only use it to thank children for participating.

Additional Resources to further discussion:

If you'd like to keep talking about gratitude in your home and UTO, we offer resources and support on our webpage www.episcopalchurch.org/uto or www.unitedthankoffering.org there you can find journal prompts, lessons for Lent and more. We continue to add to the collection each year with the ideas that come from people like you, so do let us know if you are looking for something specific to use that you can't find.