November 2018
Gratitude Challenge
From the United Thank Offering
UTO GRATITUDE CHALLENGE
NOVEMBER 2018

This November, the United Thank Offering invites you to engage with a gratitude challenge each day to deepen your personal experience of gratitude. Each day of the week has a consistent theme throughout the month (and resources are organized by day of the week), but the focus will change from week to week. You might find things you enjoy and things you’re not so interested in, but we hope you’ll find something you might want to continue after the month has ended. Science has proven that people who practice gratitude are healthier, happier and live longer, so we hope these quick daily practices fill your month with joy and gratitude. See the back of this page for a description of each day of the week and where to download additional resources.

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Sundays: Scripture Reflection
As you head off for church, take a moment to read a quick reflection on the lessons from one of our Board or Staff members. Each reflection is focused on gratitude and includes questions to reflect on with a group or on your own.

Mondays: Random Acts of Gratitude
Each Monday we’ll invite you to seek out a moment in your life to thank someone who touches your life that you might not know. Often our acts of gratitude are not random, but a response to a kindness shown by another person. What if we found a moment to say thank you to someone without any action prompting the response? If you’re not leaving the house on a Monday, that’s okay, you can do it any time during the week.

Tuesdays: Seek and Give Thanks
Like the parable of the pearl of great price, sometimes we need to really look for opportunities to give thanks, or we need to be reminded to search out the overlooked opportunity to give thanks. Each Tuesday we’ll invite you to consider a question that will help you find a small, everyday thing to give thanks for, then we invite you to take a photo and share it on social media; just be sure to tag UTO and tell us why you’re grateful.

Wednesdays: Thank You Notes
Each Wednesday we’ll invite you to write a thank you note to someone in your life. This is a chance to thank them for their presence in your life, not just for giving you a gift or doing something for you. This is a chance simply to stop and say thanks for being you.

Thursdays: Creative Gratitude
Once a week we’re going to pause to do an art project that will help us name our blessings. Studies have shown that doing a creative project helps us remember things and often engages a part of our brain that some of us don’t get to use as often. Instructions for these projects are on the following pages.

Fridays: Write it Down
Keeping a gratitude journal is a great way to practice gratitude on a daily or weekly basis. It also gives you a means to look back and see what good things happened in your life on days when being grateful feels more challenging. Each week we’ll give you a different gratitude journal page to try different methods and see if you find one that works for you.

Saturdays: Reflect and Recharge
Many UTO members have sent us TED talks on gratitude that have profoundly affected their experience of UTO and the spiritual discipline of gratitude and we want to share some of these with you. Be sure to let us know on Facebook what you think of the video each week and others you have found which have increased your experience of gratitude.
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 1ST: CREATIVE GRATITUDE
All Saints Day Activity
All Saints Day is a time in the church year when we pause and give thanks for the lives of the saints who have gone before us. In some churches, the community will build an altar with photos of loved ones who have died that people want to remember. In Mexico, and within many Spanish-speaking Episcopal Churches, congregations will celebrate the Day of the Dead with special things like sugar skulls, pan de Muertos, banners and other decorations. All Saints Day is a great day to start the gratitude challenge, especially with a creative challenge. We invite you to think about a loved one who has died that you’d like to remember and give thanks for today. Do something today that helps you remember what you are grateful for that you learned or experienced with that person. Perhaps the person taught you to bake a cake…we invite you to bake that cake and share it with others today, along with the story of the person you are remembering. Maybe they loved movies, so watch a movie tonight. Perhaps they taught you something, like how to knit, so teach someone how to do whatever it is they taught you. One of the best ways we can honor and give thanks for those we love who are no longer with us is to share their story and the gifts they bestowed in our life. Be sure to share photos to the UTO Facebook page of the person you are giving thanks for and how you are remembering them.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 2ND: WRITE IT DOWN
I Am Grateful Today…
During General Convention in 2018, UTO hosted a daily gratitude offering in the UTO booth in the Exhibit Hall. For one of the days of Convention, we invited people to come and try their hand at keeping a gratitude journal. Today, we invite you to try out the same sheet (or do it again if you were at Convention) and journal about the week that has passed. (See following page for the journal sheet.)

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 3RD: REFLECT AND RECHARGE
How a Penny Made Me Feel Like a Millionaire
All Information Contained in This Section is Directly from www.TED.com
https://www.ted.com/talks/tania_luna_how_a_penny_made_me_feel_like_a_millionaire?referrer=playlist-give_thanks&utm_campaign=tedspread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare

From the TED Talk Webpage:
“As a young child, Tania Luna left her home in post-Chernobyl Ukraine to take asylum in the US. And one day, on the floor of the New York homeless shelter where she and her family lived, she found a penny. She has never again felt so rich. A meditation on the bittersweet joys of childhood -- and how to hold them in mind.”

About the Speaker:
“Tania Luna has an unusual title: she calls herself a “surprisologist.” The co-founder and CEO of Surprise Industries, Luna thinks deeply about how to delight, and how to help individuals and teams thrive in uncertain circumstances and develop the bonds needed to get through them.

When Luna was invited to take part in TED’s Worldwide Talent Search in 2012, she expected to give a talk about surprise and the importance of not being attached to outcomes. However, she was inspired to tell a more personal story -- one many of her closest friends didn’t know -- about her Ukrainian family getting asylum in the United States when she was 6-years-old and arriving in New York with virtually nothing. She sees her work as connected to her upbringing -- in which a piece of Bazooka bubble gum, a thrown-out toy or a mis-delivered pizza was magical -- because it gave her an appreciation for the joy of little surprises.”
I Am Grateful Today...

Studies have shown that keeping a gratitude journal improves your overall health. There is no right or wrong way to keep a gratitude journal, but we’ve created this page with some prompts that might help you reflect on your day and the blessings you encountered.

**Relationships For Which I Am Grateful:**
1. 
2. 
3. 
4.

**People Who Improved My Day Today:**
1. 
2. 
3. 
4.

**One Overlooked Blessing from Today:**

**One Difficult Moment That Was Also An Opportunity to Grow:**

**Things I’m Grateful I Learned or Experienced Today:**
1. 
2. 
3. 
4.

**Positive Things About My Health and/or Body I Noted Today:**
1. 
2. 
3. 
4.

**The Best Thing That Happened Today:**

**I Am Simply Grateful For:**

Now that you’ve reflected on your day, we encourage you to make a thank offering to God for all of these blessings in your UTO Blue Box. Thank you! To learn more about UTO or ways to develop your gratitude practices, please visit: [www.episcopalchurch.org/uto](http://www.episcopalchurch.org/uto)
Gratitude Challenge Week Two: November 4-10, 2018

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 4TH: SCRIPTURE REFLECTION
Grounded in God’s Love
By Sherri Dietrich, UTO Board President, Diocese of Maine

This past spring the world was amazed and delighted by our Presiding Bishop’s sermon about love at the royal wedding in England, which shocked and saddened me. Don’t get me wrong—it was a good sermon. But the general surprise over the centrality of love in Christianity made it clear that we of the church have not done a good job at spreading the plain message of Jesus, which he states so clearly in today’s gospel reading. Love is both the first and second commandment; first, love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and second, love your neighbor as yourself. Like the Saduccees, we Christians have spent more time disputing over the finer points of Christianity and parsing it out into denominations and catechisms than we have spent wholeheartedly living out the main point of Jesus’ life and ministry—love.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion:
1. It isn’t always easy in our complicated world to know which decisions live out Jesus’ way of love, but it should be our first guideline as we struggle with those decisions. Loving God and our neighbors is our main task as Christians. Think about how that could help with a decision you face this week. How will it affect your thoughts and actions at home and at work?
2. What can you do today to show the world the love of God?

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 5TH: RANDOM ACT OF GRATITUDE
Catch Someone Being Kind

Often when we say thank you, it is because someone is doing something kind for us. What would happen if we said thank you to someone you noticed doing something kind for someone else? How would they respond, how will we feel? This is the random act of gratitude we invite you to try out today, or whenever the opportunity presents itself this week. Join us in this random act of kindness by saying thank you to someone you saw helping someone else.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 6TH: SEEK AND GIVE THANKS
Gratitude for the Great Outdoors

Each Tuesday, we invite you to spend time thinking about your environment and to take a photo in an area of something you are grateful for today. Once you’ve taken the photo, share it, on your social media or on ours. Be sure to tag it with #UTOChallenge. Today we invite you to take a photo of something outside for which you’re grateful. Is there a place in nature -- your yard, a nearby park or simply a garden you pass on your way to work -- where you feel like you can breathe deeply or be closer to God? Take a photo and share it with us so we can join in your blessing and gratitude.
**Wednesday, November 7th: Thank You Notes**

Thank You for Being my Oldest Friend

Writing thank you cards was a required response to any gift for many of us growing up, but somewhere along the way many of us stopped writing a note for each gift and perhaps sent a quick email, gave a call of thanks or simply thanked the person as the gift was received. Maybe you have been told by someone to stop writing thank you notes for things they’ve given you. Maybe you write thank you notes religiously for each gift but receive very few. Regardless, our relationship with thank you cards has changed. Each week we will invite you to write a thank you card simply for that person’s role in your life, not for a gift given, but for the gift they are. Today we invite you to write a thank you note to your oldest friend. Thank them for all of the ways they have been on the journey with you and all of the blessings they have participated in unfolding in your lives together. Then share a photo of you and your friend on one of the UTO social media platforms.

**Thursday, November 8th: Creative Gratitude**

Gratitude Garland

Many times, people say that they can’t start a gratitude practice because it’s a lot of work to start or that they aren’t “crafty” or creative. One of the social media platforms that UTO is grateful for is Pinterest because it helps us think of new ways to teach and practice gratitude, often without a lot of work. UTO has a Pinterest page ([www.pinterest.com/UnitedThankOffering](http://www.pinterest.com/UnitedThankOffering)) where you can find gratitude ideas, inspirational quotes (that you can print out and hang on a bulletin board) and more. We wanted to introduce you to one of our favorites, which is a gratitude garland. Many of you have probably heard or seen the gratitude paper chains project, this one is similar, but instead of making paper chains and writing one thing you are thankful for on each page, you can print out the next page on cardstock and cut out these great banners to make a garland. Fill one out each day with something you are thankful for, and invite your family, your church group or the whole congregation to join in. It’s a simple, and pretty way to name all of the things for which we give thanks daily. Check out [https://www.somewhatsimple.com/simple-thanksgiving-craft-gratitude-garland-free-download/](https://www.somewhatsimple.com/simple-thanksgiving-craft-gratitude-garland-free-download/) for the original post and the story behind the creation of the garland.

**Friday, November 9th: Write it Down**

Five Things I’m Grateful For…A Fast Journal Page

Keeping a gratitude journal does not need to be labor intensive, it can be as simple as writing down five good things that happened today. We’ve created a form (below) for you to use to track the five best things that happened to you this week and how you feel about the week overall. This is also a great way to help young people start their own gratitude practice.
Studies have shown that keeping a gratitude journal improves your overall health. There is no right or wrong way to keep a gratitude journal, but we’ve created this page as a spot to capture five quick moments or words of gratitude for the week that has ended.

**Five things I’m grateful for...**
1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 

**Five people I’m grateful for...**
1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5.

Now that you’ve reflected on your day, we encourage you to make a thank offering to God for all of these blessings in your UTO Blue Box. Thank you! To learn more about UTO or ways to develop your gratitude practices, please visit: [www.episcopalchurch.org/uto](http://www.episcopalchurch.org/uto)
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 10: REFLECT AND RECHARGE

Before I Die I Want To…

Please note: All Information Contained in This Section is Directly from www.TED.com

https://www.ted.com/talks/candy_chang_before_i_die_i_want_to?referrer=playlist-give_thanks&utm_campaign=tedspread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare

From the TED Talk Webpage:
“Before I die I want to ___.” Her neighbors' answers -- surprising, poignant, funny -- became an unexpected mirror for the community. (What's your answer?)”

About the Speaker:
“Candy Chang is an artist, designer, and urban planner who explores making cities more comfortable and contemplative places. She believes in the potential of introspection and collective wisdom in public space to improve our communities and help us lead better lives.

Recent projects include Before I Die, where she transformed an abandoned house in her neighborhood in New Orleans into an interactive wall for people to share their hopes and dreams -- a project The Atlantic called “one of the most creative community projects ever.” Other projects include I Wish This Was, a street art project that invites people to voice what they want in vacant storefronts, and Neighborland, an online tool that helps people self-organize and shape the development of their communities. She is a TED Senior Fellow, an Urban Innovation Fellow, and was named a “Live Your Best Life” Local Hero by Oprah magazine. By combining street art with urban planning and social activism, she has been recognized as a leader in developing new strategies for the design of our cities. She is co-founder of Civic Center, an art and design studio in New Orleans. See more at candychang.com.”
SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 11TH: SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

Trusting and Giving
By Sandra Squires, former UTO Board President, Diocese of Nebraska

Have you ever been truly hungry to the point of starvation? I have not, but the story from 1 Kings is about a widow and her son who knew great hunger but still followed the cultural customs of hospitality to God’s prophet, Elijah. Have you ever given everything, to the point of poverty? The gospel of Mark tells of such giving. These stories of extreme giving are the point of today’s readings.

During a time of severe drought, Elijah was completely and utterly dependent on God for food and water. The supply dried up! So God sent Elijah to a widow to be fed. She had nothing but a bit of meal and oil and had plans to make it as a last meal for herself and her son. But along comes Elijah who asked her for a drink and to fix him something to eat— even before feeding herself and son.

She trusted Elijah and his God, and as most mothers, was accustomed to putting the needs of others first. As a result she received a blessing! What gratitude she felt the first time she went to the jars of meal and oil and they were still full! Elijah was right, and she was glad to have trusted him. She fed her entire household out of the God-provided meal and oil until the drought was over. This woman knew gratitude.

The story from Mark is about giving proportionally to the treasury of the church. This scripture reminds me of giving to the UTO Blue Box. People give in different ways to their UTO Blue Box—some remember to give a donation every day for a blessing received, some write out a check during Ingathering Sunday to give what was in their Blue Box at home, some make a single large donations, some make a single small donation, but all of this is giving. What Jesus called attention to regarding the widow’s donation was that, because of her poverty, what she gave was more of what she had than what the wealthy donors had given. For her, those two small coins that amounted to a penny, represented a huge donation, and Jesus wanted his disciples to understand the quality of her giving.

In this story, those donors who gave large amounts of money to the treasury were appreciated, and certainly not turned away. However, Jesus teaches us in this lesson about giving from what we have, always remembering that the greatest gift, while perhaps not the largest gift, may come from the person who has the very least to give.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion:

1. Have you ever given so much that it caused you to experience poverty or anxiety? What was that experience like, what did you learn from it, what blessings did you experience from it?
2. What organizations do you support and why? How do these organizations impact your life? What hopes do you have for your gift?
**Monday, November 12th: Random Act of Gratitude**

**Share the Work Differently**

This week we invite you to think about your roommate, partner or a coworker with whom you spend a lot of time and are grateful for the ways you share the work each week. Think about how you have divided the tasks...is there something this person does faithfully but would be grateful for a break? Maybe it's mowing the lawn, or doing the laundry, or making dinner. Or is there some task they keep saying they need to get to that you could do for them? Perhaps they've been meaning to clean out the cabinets, paint the bathroom or organize the filing system in the office. This week, we invite you to identify a task that you could do for someone else to give them more free time or take something off of their plate as a blessing for their week.

**Tuesday, November 13th: Seek and Give Thanks**

**Gratitude for Your Home**

Each Tuesday, we invite you to spend time thinking about your environment and to take a photo in an area of something you are grateful for today. Once you've taken the photo, share it, on your social media or on ours. Be sure to tag it with #UTOChallenge. Today we invite you to take a photo of something in your home for which you’re grateful. Is there a place in your house where you feel like you can breathe deeply or be closer to God? Take a photo and share it with us so we can join in your blessing and gratitude.

**Wednesday, November 14th: Thank You Notes**

**Thank You to a Child**

Today we invite you to write a thank you note to a child in your life. Children are a wonderful gift from God. They remind us of the importance of curiosity, wonder and joy in things small or big. One of the great gifts of church and family is a reminder of the hope and joy each of us is born with as expressed through the boundless energy of the children in our lives and community. This week we want you to write a thank you note to a child in your life who reminds you of all of these things, or who has taught you something about yourself, the world around you or God. If appropriate (and with permission from the parent if applicable) share a photo of the two of you together on one of the UTO social media platforms.

**Thursday, November 15th: Creative Gratitude**

**Blue Box Turkey**

A couple of years ago as I (Heather) was preparing for Thanksgiving, I decided I wanted to put a UTO Blue Box on our Thanksgiving Table to encourage my guests to give thanks and give to UTO. I take my Thanksgiving decorations very seriously (I once made a turkey cheese ball) and needed the Blue Box to have a little more Thanksgiving flare so I decided to turn it into a turkey. I then created a lesson for teaching about the turkey Blue Box to Sunday School classes, even though I think the turkey box is great for all ages. Today, I invite you to make your Blue Box into a turkey as a way to talk to others about UTO in the days leading up to Thanksgiving. On the following pages you'll find two different turkey forms (one to color or one already colored in) you can cut out and use, or you can draw your own!

For the full lesson plan please visit our blog: [www.unitedthankoffering.org](http://www.unitedthankoffering.org)

**Friday, November 16th: Write it Down**

**Photo Gratitude Project**

Great things are happening all around us all of the time. This week, many of the challenges remind us of the power of taking photographs and how these images can help us not only remember things but give thanks for them. Today your journal project has a place for you to put photos of moments this week where you stopped to take a picture because you wanted to remember a special moment, a funny sign or a beautiful place...all of these pauses in your week were moments to give thanks and this journal page will help you document them.
United Thank Offering Turkey Box:
Thanksgiving Lesson & Craft

Supplies Needed:
1. Enough Blue Boxes for everyone to have one. (You can also use a lunch bag if you don’t have Blue Boxes available, just be sure to write “UTO” on the outside.)
2. Turkey templates - print on cardstock for a sturdier presentation
   a. You can do a Google image search for crafts: turkey feathers and head or
   b. use one of the two that follow that we found online (with credit on each page) or
   c. you can draw your own
3. Tape, glue sticks, and scissors (unless you pre-cut the pieces)
4. Grant stories to share - www.unitedthankoffering.org under the stories tab or from our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/UnitedThankOffering or from one of the UTO Grant lists/brochures.

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 and at all times, this is a great opportunity to have the Blue Box available for thank offerings. We wanted to offer a craft for Sunday School/Faith Formation that would make the Blue Box into a turkey and give teachers, parents and students a way to talk about gratitude, giving and UTO.

Scripture for Thanksgiving Day:
Joel 2:21-27
Psalm 126
1 Timothy 2:1-7
Matthew 6:25-33

But we recommend using:
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.

Lesson:
Read the scripture verse that you’ve chosen for the lesson. Discuss with the students what the lesson means. If using the recommended lessons some questions might be:

- What are some of the nice things you’ve done for someone?
- How do 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, do you want to do more?
- What are some nice things you could do for others?

Discussion Points:
Some of these points might be helpful or not depending on the age range in your class…

- 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.
- The United Thank Offering is a ministry for every Episcopalian. 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. Each year the boxes are collected and all of the money in
the boxes go to help people all over the world.
  o This would be a great time to share a grant story.

**Activity:**
Today we are going to turn our Blue Boxes into turkeys for Thanksgiving! Many people talk about what they are
thankful for on Thanksgiving so you can pass around your turkey Blue Box as people share.

1. Have the children color and cut out their turkey pieces.
2. Glue or tape the pieces onto the Blue Box
3. Have a grant story for each child - it can be as simple as a grant brochure cut up so each child can have a
   photo and description or you can pull stories from the UTO blog and make panels for the box. (as shown
   in the photos) Add these to the bottom of the box
4. Give each child a coin and ask them to say what they are thankful for and put it in their new turkey Blue
   Box.
5. Close by saying how thankful you are for them. Say each child’s name as you put a coin in your Blue Box.
Thanksgiving Paper Bag Turkey

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origami-n-stuff4kids.blogspot.com
Studies have shown that keeping a gratitude journal improves your overall health. There is no right or wrong way to keep a gratitude journal, but we’ve created this page as a spot to capture photos from your phone of moments you stopped to take notice and give thanks.

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

I’m grateful for this person:

I’m grateful for this place:

I’m grateful for nature:

I’m grateful for this moment:

I’m grateful for how I felt in this picture:

I’m grateful for how I felt when I was taking this picture:
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 17TH: REFLECT AND RECHARGE
Nature. Beauty. Gratitude

Please note: All Information Contained in This Section is Directly from www.TED.com

From the TED Talk Webpage:
“Nature’s beauty can be fleeting -- but not through Louie Schwartzberg’s lens. His stunning time-lapse photography, accompanied by powerful words from Benedictine monk Brother David Steindl-Rast, serves as a meditation on being grateful for every day.”

About the Speaker:
“Louie Schwartzberg is a cinematographer, director and producer whose career spans more than four decades of providing breathtaking imagery using his time-lapse, high-speed and macro cinematography techniques. Schwartzberg tells stories that celebrate life and reveal the mysteries and wisdom of nature, people, and places. Schwartzberg’s recent theatrical releases include the 3D IMAX film, Mysteries of the Unseen World with National Geographic, narrated by Forest Whitaker, and the documentary Wings of Life for Disneynature, narrated by Meryl Streep. Mysteries of the Unseen World is a journey into invisible worlds that are too slow, too fast, too small and too vast for the human eye to see, while Wings of Life focuses on pollination and the web of life. Schwartzberg also directed Soarin’ Around the World, an international update to the original Soarin' ride now showing at Disney Parks in Anaheim, Orlando and Shanghai.

Schwartzberg’s Gratitude Revealed series of shorts were launched on Oprah.com. Supported by the Templeton Foundation, with science and analytics by the Greater Good Center at UC Berkeley, the series explores the multifaceted virtues of gratitude. Schwartzberg is the first filmmaker to be inducted into the Association for the Advancement of Science and the Lemelson Foundation’s Invention Ambassadors Program.
For Schwartzberg, the greatest satisfaction is creating works that can have a positive effect on the future of the planet. "I hope my films inspire and open people's hearts;" he says. "Beauty is nature's tool for survival -- we protect what we love. Nature's beauty can open hearts, and the shift in consciousness we need to sustain and celebrate life."
SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 18TH: SCRIPTURE REFLECTION
Gratitude in the Midst of Strife
By the Rev. JK Melton, PhD Candidate, Fordham University, Diocese of Colorado

It is easy to imagine that Jesus has been reading the news. Too often, the news feels too much like what Jesus describes: wars and rumors of wars, nation rising against nation, earthquakes, famine. Even the great edifices that we look toward in order to organize our world seem to crumble.

But Jesus doesn’t stop there. He points out that this is just the beginning of the birth pangs. Something new is coming.

While the realities of life can overwhelm, gratitude helps us to see the new thing that is coming. Gratitude helps us see the reign of God, even in the midst of the wars and earthquakes and famines. But more than this, I think gratitude helps us not just look toward the future as “pie in the sky” but it helps us find some pie right now.

When the news is overwhelming, we can shift to look for the signs of God moving among us. Gratitude can help us remember that our God is bringing new life. Where did we see kindness today? What was a pleasant surprise? Where did we see the miraculous? Even more, sometimes the overwhelming reality of life can spur us to follow the advice of the author of the Letter to the Hebrews: we can provoke one another to love and good deeds, we can meet together, and we can encourage one another. Those are all actions to be grateful for.

In the midst of the chances and changes of this life, focusing on gratitude helps us to hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, because as the writer of Hebrews reminds us, he who has promised is faithful.

Jesus tells us that this is just the beginning. Something new is being born among us. Look for it. And let us be grateful for the new thing that God is bringing to life in our midst.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion:
1. When has gratitude helped you see God in the midst of difficult or troubling events?
2. What new thing are you grateful God is doing in the midst of your life, your community and the world?

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 19TH: RANDOM ACT OF GRATITUDE
Feed Someone Who Feeds Others

As we head towards Thanksgiving, you are either in the throes of cleaning, cooking, and shopping or preparing to travel to a celebration. Think about someone you know who is preparing to host a Thanksgiving meal and bring them dinner, send them a pizza--something to prepare one fewer meal this week. If you’re cooking and hosting, consider how you might find another way to support someone else in your community who is also preparing to host Thanksgiving this week.
**TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 20th: SEEK AND GIVE THANKS**
Gratitude at the Break of Day

Each Tuesday, we invite you to spend time thinking about your environment and to take a photo in an area of something you are grateful for today. Once you've taken the photo, share it, on your social media or on ours. Be sure to tag it with #UTOChallenge. Today we invite you to take a photo of something you experience in the morning for which you’re grateful. For those of you who are aren’t morning people, this will be a wonderful challenge! Is there something you do or see each morning that helps you prepare for the day, centers you for the work ahead or just helps you get out the door? Take a photo and share it with us so we can join in your blessing and gratitude.

**WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 21st: THANK YOU NOTES**
Thank You for Gathering with Me to Give Thanks

Tomorrow is Thanksgiving, the day when many of us in the United States gather together with friends and family to give thanks for the blessings of this life, eat too much food, and enjoy good conversation and being together. Many people have some kind of gratitude moment at Thanksgiving -- giving thanks for the past year or the blessings they have experienced or received. As you prepare to gather, we invite you to write a thank you note to someone you will see tomorrow for the ways they have blessed you. If you want, try writing a thank you note to everyone who will gather with you to celebrate Thanksgiving. Then share a photo of your Thanksgiving gathering on one of the UTO social media platforms.

**THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 22nd: CREATIVE GRATITUDE**
Photo Gratitude Scavenger Hunt

Many of us now take a lot of pictures with our phones or digital cameras, then forget to ever print or share them with others. Often a snapshot is something we are grateful for -- a sunset, a person, an experience or a moment in time that we don’t want to forget. So today, as you are waiting to eat Thanksgiving with friends and family, do a phone photo scavenger--each of you share those photos on your phones that show moments of gratitude with those you love.

**FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 23rd: WRITE IT DOWN**
Holiday Gratitude Journal

Often after a major holiday we are full of food, joy, and love, so it's a great time to stop and reflect on the blessings of that experience, and to give thanks for the people and places you shared with yesterday. Fill out a special journal page specifically about holidays. (This is a great journal page to keep and use at Christmas with the children in your life.)
United Thank Offering
Gratitude Photo Scavenger Hunt*

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

I’m Grateful for...

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

*Adapted from www.kcedventures.com

To learn more about UTO or ways to develop your gratitude practices, please visit: www.episcopalchurch.org/uto
Holiday Gratitude Journal

Studies have shown that keeping a gratitude journal improves your overall health. There is no right or wrong way to keep a gratitude journal, but we've created this page as a spot to capture moments or words of gratitude for the holiday that has just passed. We know that holidays can also be a challenging time for those who have lost loved ones or are separated by great distances, so we've also included a space to reflect on the gratitude for those people who you love who are missing from your celebration.

I’m grateful for the food we ate, especially:

I’m grateful for the activities of the day, especially:

I’m grateful I got to spend time with:

Today I missed:

...but I give thanks for all of the ways they blessed me when they were present at our holiday celebrations past.

Now that you’ve reflected on your holiday, we encourage you to make a thank offering to God for all of these blessings in your UTO Blue Box. Thank you! To learn more about UTO or ways to develop your gratitude practices, please visit: www.episcopalchurch.org/uto
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 24TH: REFLECT AND RECHARGE

Want to be Happy? Be Grateful.

Please note: All Information Contained in This Section is Directly from www.TED.com


From the TED Talk Webpage:
“The one thing all humans have in common is that each of us wants to be happy, says Brother David Steindl-Rast, a monk and interfaith scholar. And happiness, he suggests, is born from gratitude. An inspiring lesson in slowing down, looking where you’re going, and above all, being grateful.

Many first met Brother David Steindl-Rast through a viral video called "Nature, Beauty, Gratitude," where Louie Schwartzberg’s footage of time-lapse flowers in bloom is narrated by Brother David’s moving words asking us to simply be ... grateful. Since 1953, Brother David has been a monk of Mount Saviour Benedictine monastery in New York, dividing his time between hermitic contemplation, writing and lecturing. He’s the cofounder of gratefulness.org, supporting ANG*L (A Network for Grateful Living).”

About the Speaker:
“Brother David Steindl-Rast, a Benedictine monk, meditates and writes on "the gentle power" of gratefulness. He was one of the first Roman Catholics to participate in Buddhist-Christian dialogue, and is the author of The Ground We Share, a text on Buddhist and Christian practice, written with Robert Aitken Roshi. His other books include Gratefulness, the Heart of Prayer and Deeper Than Words. His most recent book is 99 Blessings, a series of prayers for the general reader -- whether people of faith, agnostics, or uncertain.”
SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 25TH: SCRIPTURE REFLECTION
Gratitude for the Greatest Blessing
By Caitlyn Darnell, Young Adult Board Member, Diocese of Virginia

Our days and years are full of little blessings from God for which we give thanks. Our Blue Boxes jingle with “dime blessings,” “quarter blessings,” and sometimes even rustle with dollar bill blessings. The blessings we put in our boxes multiply -- a sunny day becomes a senior community center, getting over a head cold becomes a NICU in a hospital, a birthday card from a friend becomes mental health care for refugees.

Underpinning all of our little blessings is the greatest blessing of all time, that Jesus, “loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen” (Revelation 1:5-6). What greater gift than our freedom? What better blessing than our lives eternally in and with Jesus Christ our King? My gratitude for that act doesn’t really fit in my Blue Box -- I would need more coins than the Treasury mints. What then can I give him?

I think it is a gratitude that only fits in bread and wine, in the Great Thanksgiving, shared with friends. It is my sacrifice of “thanks and praise” (Holy Eucharist Rite II).

And how does my gratitude from that blessing multiply? What can it become? That gratitude, deeply rooted and grafted into my soul by communion, is one that changes the world. It proclaims the Good News to the poor and showers everyone in your path with the fresh reign of Christ’s love.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion:
1. When was the first time that the story of Jesus really sounded like good news to you?
2. How do you express your gratitude?
3. What does your “sacrifice of thanks and praise” look like? How will you praise and give thanks today?

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 26TH: RANDOM ACT OF GRATITUDE
Thank Everyone

It is easy, especially on a Monday, to get lost in being busy. Today, we invite you to be present to the world around you and ground that presence in gratitude. As you move through your day, we encourage you to thank everyone you interact with--your barista, your mail carrier, even if it is their job to interact with you. Thank the people you live with, thank people in the service industry, thank your coworkers, thank your clergy, thank your friends. Pay attention to all of the opportunities to experience gratitude for people you engage with on a regular basis, strangers and those known to you, then notice at the end of the day if you feel different than you normally do on a Monday night.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 27TH: SEEK AND GIVE THANKS
Gratitude at the End of the Day

Each Tuesday, we invite you to spend time thinking about your environment and to take a photo in an area of something you are grateful for today. Once you’ve taken the photo, share it, on your social media or on ours. Be sure to tag it with #UTOChallenge. Today we invite you to take a photo of something you’re grateful for as you prepare to end your day. Sometimes we get so tired that we forget to reflect on our day or the blessings around us. Is there something you do or see each evening that helps you prepare for sleep? Take a photo and share it with us so we can join in your blessing and gratitude.
**Wednesday, November 28th: Thank You Notes**

Thank You for Being my Neighbor

Each week we have invited you to write a thank you card to people you know well and spend time with frequently. Today we want to expand the circle of gratitude to someone you might not know very well but spend a lot of time nearby, your neighbor. Some of us know our neighbors well, others may only know them by sight. Today we invite you to write a thank you note to someone whose home shares a wall, a fence or a yard with yours. Let them know you’re glad to be adjacent to them, thank them for having a nice garden, good dog, or great holiday decorations, whatever it is that you notice and give thanks for as you live next door.

**Thursday, November 29th: Creative Gratitude**

Gratitude Box for 2019

As our month of gratitude challenges comes to an end, we wanted to give you one to carry you through the New Year. Have you ever opened your Blue Box in preparation for the annual Ingathering in your parish and wondered what all of those coins and bills were given in thanksgiving for? Today’s activity will help you easily build a way to track all of the good things you gave thanks for in the past year. See the form on the next page to learn more about how to double your Blue Box to have a place to keep notes and coins.

**Friday, November 30th: Write it Down**

Unbounded Gratitude Journal

Each Friday we’ve given you specific prompts for journaling. Today we invite you to grab a piece of paper, open a Word document or do a video log of all of the things you’ve been grateful to experience this week or this month. No format other than the one you create for yourself. Just know, that today, UTO is giving thanks for being on this gratitude challenge journey with you! Be sure to let us know what you liked, what you want to continue and what was the most fun either by email or on any of our social media platforms. Thanks for being on the journey with us!
UTO Blue Box Gratitude Journal

Have you ever opened your Blue Box just before an Ingathering and noticed all of the coins and wondered what they all were given in thanksgiving for? Here’s a fun way to use two Blue Boxes to create a way to use your Blue Box as a gratitude journal so that when the Ingathering comes around, you can take the time to remember all of the blessings of the past year.

**Supplies Needed:**
- 2 UTO Blue Boxes
- 1 Rubber Band
- Tape
- Post-It note pad (1.5x2 inches)
- Ribbon (optional)
- Golf Pencil (optional)

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

On the “UTO” trim the interior flaps so the small edges are removed. Do the same with the tab that would secure the “UTO” piece closed. Then trim the UTO piece to match the interior tabs. Tape the side shut. You should now have an opening large enough for paper or coins to be put in the box. Repeat on the second box.

Tape the post-it note pad between the two “UTO”s so you don’t have to search later for paper to put into the box.

Optional: Cover the rubber band with ribbon. You can also use ribbon to attach a pencil to the Box so you never have to search for one.

**Use:**
You’re ready to use your new UTO Blue Box Gratitude Journal! Each time you put a coin in the box, write what it is for and put that piece of paper in the other side. At the end of the year, turn in your funds to the Ingathering and enjoy reflecting and looking back on all of the ways you were blessed in the past year.

To learn more about UTO or ways to develop your gratitude practices, please visit: [www.episcopalchurch.org/uto](http://www.episcopalchurch.org/uto)
Please use this page to write, draw or paste photos.
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