



Incarnation, Gratitude, and Light

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

Happy (liturgical) New Year! Advent and Christmas are my favorite seasons of the year and always have been. Some Episcopalians like to say that we are Easter people, but I really think that we are Advent people – incarnational in our faith and in our outlook and view of the world. Maybe I believe that because gratitude requires us to be incarnational. Gratitude demands that we pay attention and see God's presence in the world around us. Gratitude is the simple act of really looking for the light in the darkness, of believing that God would be so surprising as to show up as a baby in a manger thousands of years ago and that God might be also showing up in the kindness of a stranger at Costco.

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Self-care: A Millennial Approach to Gratitude

by Kayla Massey, Associate Staff Officer for the United Thank Offering



I'm a millennial, and it seems that no matter where you turn these days, someone is talking about us; some good, some not so good. Our generation is often defined by its obsessions with social media, avocado toast, Harry Potter, and self-care.

Even with wonderful things like avocado toast in the world, I still find it incredibly easy to let myself get bogged down with all the little negativities. My subway was packed and uncomfortable, my internet is so slow, I still have not totally figured out grad school yet, my ceiling is leaking, I'm late for a video conference, I'm drowning in a sea of emails and it's not even noon yet.... Dwelling on these thoughts, it's easy to get myself stuck in a negative rut that is hard to get out of.

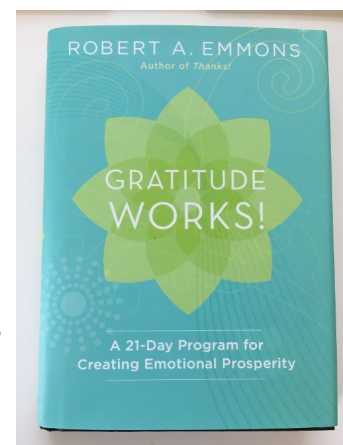
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UTO Reads!

Advent Read-Along Challenge: *Gratitude Works!* By Robert A. Emmons

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

Last month, I introduced a book that's been sitting on my shelf and invited you to read (and journal) along with me during Advent. There's still time to join us! Advent this year is 21 days, so it's perfect for this challenge – a 21-day program for deepening gratitude. It's also a perfect time to read together about gratitude because there is so much to give thanks for during December and so much to do that we often forget to simply stop, be present, and be grateful. With that said, I want to invite you to join me in reading *Gratitude Works!* by Robert A. Emmons, Ph.D. Emmons is a professor of psychology at the University of California, Davis, and his research focuses on gratitude. The book begins with an overview of why gratitude is important, from the health benefits to the overall emotional effects of practicing gratitude, and it ends with the 21-day challenge, which is to keep a gratitude journal with specific prompts. I hope you'll join me. I'll review the book and share what folks have learned in our January e-newsletter, so email me your thoughts as you go along! **One person who joins the read along challenge and signs up via our [Facebook event](#) (or emails me if you don't do Facebook) by December 5 will receive a UTO prize in the mail.**



Daily Meditations and an Invitation for Lent

by Sandra Squires, UTO Board President

Last summer, I decided to change my morning meditations to include a Bible reading; one chapter of some other spiritual work; prayer, often contemplative; and thanksgivings accompanied by dropping coins or bills in my UTO Blue Box. I read only one chapter of one book of the Bible each day, The Message version, and on my Kindle. Then, I read only one chapter of my spiritual book each day, as well. My goal is to slow down and allow myself to think about what I am reading. I'm up to Deuteronomy 19, and hearing about Moses in the recent Sunday readings feels so familiar.

[Read more >>](#)

Grant Site Update

2016 Massachusetts Companion Grant with the Diocese of Tanga, Tanzania – To Expand Through Renovation the Hegongo Holy Cross School

by the Rev. Maryalice Sullivan

We are pleased to report that the building project for the girls' dormitory at Hegongo Holy Cross School in Tanzania is ongoing and will hopefully be completed soon. All the money from the UTO grant has been spent, and more money has been raised to complete this project. In February 2017, a small group of us made a trip to the Diocese of Tanga, and we were able to visit the school, meet with the engineer, and see the progress.

When we were there, the old building had been stripped to the brick frame. Some of the partitions were in place, and the workers were stuccoing the inside walls. The building has been reconfigured as a dormitory, creating enough space for 60 girls, along with proper bathrooms with plumbing and showers. The wiring had been stripped out and replaced with new wiring that will enable the girls to read and study in the evenings. The windows will all have glass and screens, and there will be ceiling fans for ventilation. I wish you could have been with us to see the faces of the girls when they learned there would be screens in the windows and fans. The smiles on their faces were enough to light up any room.

[Read more >>](#)



Save the Date!

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

Ingathering Update: Ingathering checks should be sent as soon as possible throughout the year to help increase the interest that we earn on the Ingathering account. With that said, all Ingathering checks should be placed in the mail **no later than December 10** in order to be counted in the 2017 Ingathering. This is the last chance to contribute to the Triennial Ingathering, so please help us as we work toward raising the Ingathering over the past three years. If you would like to check on your Ingathering amount so far this year for your diocese, please [contact Kayla](#).

Young Adult and Seminarian Grants will be announced after they are approved by Executive Council, so on or around January 24, 2018. We'll include them in the February e-news, and there will be a press release in addition to our email notification to all of the applicants.

In Case You Missed It...

For more information on the Diocese of Puerto Rico, please visit: <http://episcopalpr.org>

To donate the Diocese of Puerto Rico Hurricane Relief, please visit: <http://www.gemn.org/donate-to-diocese-of-puerto-rico-hurricane-fund/>

New UTO Materials Available!

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

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