



Gratitude and Presence: A Reminder from the Almost Three-Year-Old

by Heather Melton, Staff Officer, United Thank Offering

You've probably noticed that the e-newsletter skipped May – my apologies. April was a really busy month, and the articles in this edition cover the big news and projects that we've been working on for UTO. Thanks to the Communications Department, we've got a new format that should be easier to read and that lets us share bigger and more photos and even videos. With that said and out of the way, let's talk about gratitude!

Last night, I was folding laundry and the girls had dragged chairs into the laundry room so they could sit and watch. Carrie began to sing "Happy Birthday" ... there was a birthday party at school that day, so it was on her mind. She got to the end of the song and was quiet, and as I looked at her, she said, "You're welcome, mom." I smiled and said, "Thank you, Carrie, for offering that wonderful song." She grinned and proceeded to sing "Jingle Bells." The moment caught my attention ... this isn't the first time this has happened, when Carrie has prompted me to stop and give thanks. Perhaps all of this gratitude business is wearing off on my kids. It made me realize how easy it is to miss an opportunity to give thanks ... how fast time really moves. It also made me think about how many times we offer something to someone and that person misses that we are offering ourselves. Gratitude isn't just a chance to acknowledge the deed done by someone else; it's also an opportunity to recognize the humanity of the other person right in front of us.

When I was in my early 20s, I spent part of my summer working at the homeless day shelter that our church, along with the other downtown churches in Boulder, Colorado, sponsored. I learned a lot from that experience, but the moment that stays with me is one conversation I had with a man who had been homeless for decades. Sitting across from one another while searching the job openings, we discussed the challenges of getting a job when you didn't have an address. I was learning a lot from him, so I wondered if I had said something wrong when he got quiet. He stared into his coffee mug and said, "The hardest part of being homeless is that most people ignore you. They look past you or through you or away from you. You speak to them and they simply act as though you aren't there. I sometimes begin to fear that I'm not real, or that I'm actually dead, or that I am as terrible as they must think I am to not even acknowledge my humanity." I don't remember what I said to him after that, but I have never forgotten what he said. Whenever I am stopped on the street, I always speak, I try to connect.

I share these two stories because in Carrie's simple act of saying, "You're welcome, mom," I realized that there are so many times we fail to recognize the presence of Jesus right in front of us, so many moments when we get busy and forget. I say all of this because it has been a very busy month, and looking back, I'm certain I've missed opportunities to give thanks or opportunities to be present to the people around me and not just in their presence. Perhaps the spiritual discipline of gratitude is also about being proactive – being awake and vigilant about responding to the gifts given to us in the everyday moments of our lives. It's a challenge. We love our phones and always being connected, but what if we tried to be more deeply connected with those right around us – family, friends, and strangers? What gifts would we receive if we paid attention, if we stood vigilant looking for Jesus in our midst? I'm going to try it this month ... I hope you'll join me and let me know how it goes for you.

2016 Ingathering and Looking Ahead to Convention

by the UTO Board



Celebrate the 46 Dioceses Who Increased Their Giving with Us in 2016!

** indicates a diocese that increased giving in 2015 and in 2016 (List organized by Province.)*

- Massachusetts
- New Hampshire
- Rhode Island*
- Albany
- Central New York
- Europe*
- Haiti
- Long Island
- Rochester*
- Bethlehem
- Central Pennsylvania
- Delaware
- Pennsylvania
- Pittsburgh*
- Southern Virginia
- Washington
- West Virginia*
- Central Florida
- Florida
- Kentucky*
- Louisiana
- North Carolina
- South Carolina
- Upper South Carolina
- Western North Carolina*
- Chicago
- Eau Claire*
- Fond du Lac
- Northern Indiana
- Western Michigan
- Minnesota

Spring for the UTO Board means Holy Week, Ingathering reports, grant application reviews, and the difficult process of selecting which grants will be awarded. It's also a time to reflect on the collected funds from the Ingathering. This year, we are grateful that 46 of 109 dioceses increased their giving to UTO in 2016. We've listed the dioceses that increased their giving in the sidebar so you can see all of the amazing contributions to funds that can be granted by UTO. Of those 46 dioceses, 13 (noted with an asterisk) increased their giving from 2014 to 2015 and again from 2015 to 2016! Awesome work! A big thank you to Province VI, which as a province increased its total giving between 2015 and 2016. There is much to celebrate and give thanks for the 2016 Ingathering. This year we have \$1,169,969.55 available to grant. Thank you to everyone who contributed and worked to make it another million-dollar year!

With that said, the 2016 Ingathering total is less than the previous year's. If we hope to grant the same amount of money this triennium as in the past, we need to ask for your help. One of the hardest tasks in making decisions about grants is seeing really worthwhile ministries go unfunded because we don't have enough Ingathering funds available. Because of that, we are asking for help from everyone who lives a life of gratitude. It's a big challenge, but we hope you will participate. Here is how we would like to proceed.

Verify amounts collected. UTO Board members will be contacting their diocesan coordinators over the next few weeks to check whether our reported Ingathering amounts are correct. It is not uncommon to find a couple of checks that have gone missing or were credited to the wrong diocese.

Create a list of giving churches and non-giving churches. We'd also like to get a UTO participation list in each diocese so we can better support dioceses and congregations in practicing the Spiritual Discipline of Gratitude.

Monitor diocesan giving. Additionally, we're going to provide each diocesan coordinator with parish and individual contacts, in case, for example, a coordinator would need to track down a check or be prepared to confirm diocesan conventions. Remember, all money must be received by December 31, 2017 to be counted in this triennium's collection. Maybe you want to see how you are doing this triennium compared to the last one? Please check out our Ingathering reports on our blog at www.unitedthankoffering.org. You will find a chart to let you see where each province is compared to last triennium/General Convention. We've also provided the ingathering amount for 2017 that has been collected thus far.

How you can help... The UTO team would really love to collect more than the last Convention's giving, and we hope you'll help. If we receive a total 2017 Ingathering of \$1,973,341.88, or \$18,104.05 per diocese, we would equal the amount collected at the last triennium. That may not be realistic, but even if every diocese would set a goal to increase its giving by 20 percent, that would help us award more grants – perhaps one to your diocese. **If we would have had the additional \$700,000 in 2016 that we are asking for in 2017, all eligible grant applications would have been funded.** Please help us meet our goal of increasing the Ingathering over the previous triennium ... the last time that happened was in 2003. We will again award prizes to coordinators who have increased giving every year of the triennium and those who have increased two out of three years. Thank you for working so hard and thank you for helping us reach our goal. If we can help you promote UTO in any way, please let Heather know.

Grant Site Update: Colorado Haiti Project

A well-known Haitian proverb advises, *Sonje lapli a ki leve mayi ou*, meaning, "Remember the rain that helps your corn grow." The students and faculty of St. Paul's School in Petit Trou share their gratitude for the gardens and the produce that are growing as a result of the support of the United Thank Offering.

Over the last eight months, the team at St. Paul's has been supporting vital recovery after the devastation caused by Hurricane Matthew. Approximately 90 percent of community crops were lost, including thousands of mango, plantain, and avocado trees, which are essential producers of nutrition. While many disaster response groups descended on Haiti to help address urgent issues, it is programs like St. Paul's agriculture education initiative that provide the support necessary to make the community whole again and to help it grow back stronger.

Our agricultural team worked with students at St. Paul's to plant a garden capable of supplying the school lunch program. By February, tomatoes, onions, and cabbages were ready, and this harvest was followed by a March crop of melons, okra, and eggplants. The mango and lime trees will take a few years to start to produce, but crops of moringa and peanuts are providing nourishing food already!



Nebraska
North Dakota*
South Dakota
Wyoming
Northwest Texas
Oklahoma
Western Louisiana
Alaska*
El Camino Real*
Los Angeles*
Nevada
Northern California
Utah
Litoral Ecuador*
Uruguay

Request for Prayers for the 2018 UTO Prayer Booklet

by Sandra Squires, UTO Board President

As you may know, every three years, the United Thank Offering gathers original prayers from around The Episcopal Church to create a pocket book of prayers that is available at General Convention. Last Convention, we were able to collect 125 prayers of gratitude in honor of 125 years of the United Thank Offering. This year, we are hoping to collect original prayers from nine categories: gratitude, guidance, fear/danger, forgiveness, healing, loneliness, crisis/dealing with disappointment or crisis, love of God, and other. Children, women, men, clergy, seminarians, and groups may write prayers for this edition of the booklet. We welcome prayers from every diocese and province of The Episcopal Church. Prayers can be submitted in any language and in any format – collect, litany, free form, or prose. We encourage you to listen to the Holy Spirit and write a prayer to be used throughout the Church by individuals, for the beginning or closing of meetings, or in a variety of settings.

Please submit all prayers by July 1, 2017. All prayers must be submitted using our [webpage](#). More information about the project can also be found there.



Agronomist and teacher, Kenel Pierre, has ensured that his students take the agriculture lessons home to share with their families. He along with his partner, Jean Louis Smith, make regular visits to the students' homes, checking on progress and answering questions the families have about the gardens.

In the past two months, Kenel and Jean Louis took what they had learned from the UTO agriculture program and implemented a peanut project to help address a need for protein at the school. This peanut crop was funded entirely by the community itself, after seeing what was possible through the previous UTO-funded efforts.

Kenel spoke passionately about the importance of UTO support:

“My feelings about the program are many, because we got so much done after the hurricane. We grew 50 varieties of vegetables in our gardens and we fed at least 3,000 people with the produce from the program. We are still feeding people today! We also made progress on our goat project, beginning with 14 goats – now we have 31 goats! We built a very nice, big peanut farm, along with corn, beans, cassava, and melons, and we have a chicken coop with 60 chickens. We planted 1,000 lime trees with a small community named ‘Lendo’ as well, and two weeks ago, we planted 250 moringa trees at St. Paul’s School. So as you can see, we work very hard and have made big impact in Petit Trou de Nippes!”



Sonje lapli a ki leve mayi ou! With the partnership of the United Thank Offering and all the church supporters around the country, a life-saving project in rural Haiti has been launched with the potential to grow for years to come. Thank you for the support and stay tuned for updates from our partners in Petit Trou.

New UTO Distribution Center in Navajoland

As many of you know, UTO has moved its distribution center for materials from Atlanta, Georgia, to Fort Defiance, Arizona. The UTO Board and staff did not make this decision lightly; we are very grateful for the Marketplace, but it was time for a change. The Board and staff also wanted to find a way to support the goal of The Episcopal Church’s work in Navajoland and to save money for everyone who orders from UTO. For us, this is at once a ministry, a partnership, and a win for all who love UTO. However, we need your help to make this work, as there are some changes to how the Marketplace now works.

Please order online! The easiest, fastest, and most accurate way to order is to go to the webpage below and place your order. Please note that only what is listed is available. We’ve added links to the page so you can access resources that are available only for download, and they are available below. **If you do call, please note that the person you are talking to on the phone cannot help answer questions about UTO materials that are not available for shipment. If you have questions about UTO materials, please contact our staff.** Please do not ask them for things which are not listed. Right now, we are not offering a lot of different items as we cleaned out the warehouse items in order to prepare new ones for release at General Convention. With that said, many items that we ran out of (like the prayer book) are available on our webpage for download. Also, many items that are being made for release at General Convention and in a limited quantity are not yet available, since we are still a year away from Convention.

We no longer are offering a 40-hour-a-week call center. This should result in savings. If you like to place your order by phone, please call the phone number below and leave a message. **All orders, including phone orders, will be placed on Wednesdays.** This means that if you leave a message on Monday, someone will call you back that Wednesday and help you with your order. (If it is an emergency, you can call the UTO staff the rest of the week.) Orders will be sent via USPS, using flat-rate priority mail, which is a significant savings over UPS. You will have the option to order things expedited (meaning if you want it by Sunday and you’re ordering on Tuesday or Wednesday, you can choose overnight or two-day shipping) and pay the additional postage costs. The distribution center will start with just our basic supplies because we are preparing so many new and amazing products for General Convention in 2018.

Thank you for your patience as we transition to Navajoland, iron out the kinks, and move into this wonderful new partnership. The contact information to order materials:

webpage: <https://shimaofnavajoland.com/collections/United-Thank-Offering>

phone number: (928) 985-0559

Items available in print:

Important Dates:

June 2017

UTO Grants will be announced once approved by the Board and Executive Council

July 1

Deadline for prayers for the 2018 UTO Prayer Booklet

First Friday in September

Young Adult and Seminarian Grant Applications available

Deadline for submission of funds for the 2017 Ingathering is Dec 15.

This means that the check must be received by December 15 – after that date, it cannot be guaranteed to be counted toward 2017. Please remember to turn in your money as it comes into your church or diocese so that it can contribute to growing the interest on the Ingathering account and we can continue to update everyone quarterly on the status of the Ingathering for the year.

Send us your stories!

We want to hear from you and share how UTO works in your church or how your grant project is going! Please send articles for the e-newsletter to Heather at: hmelton@episcopalchurch.org along with a photo.

- Blue Boxes
- Overview/Introduction Brochure
- History Brochure
- Envelopes
- NEW Memorial Trust Fund Brochure
- *2017 Grant List Brochure (Beginning July 1)*

Items available in downloadable format only:

- Bulletin Inserts: <https://uto2014.wordpress.com/about/sample-newsletter-articles/>
- Logo and Letterhead: <https://uto2014.wordpress.com/about/logo-and-promotional-resources/>
- Prayer Booklet: https://uto2014.files.wordpress.com/2015/07/7-episcopal-church-prayer-book_3x5_v2_withpagenos.pdf
- 2016 Grant Brochure: <https://uto2014.wordpress.com/granting/2016-grant-awards/>
- Activities for Children: <https://uto2014.wordpress.com/faith-formation-leadersmusic-ministers/childrens-formation-materials/>



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