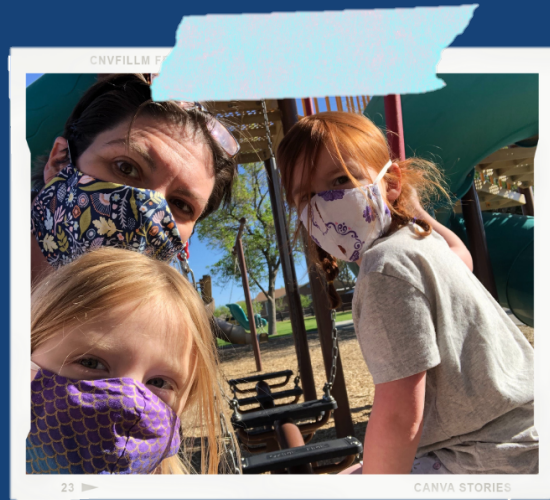
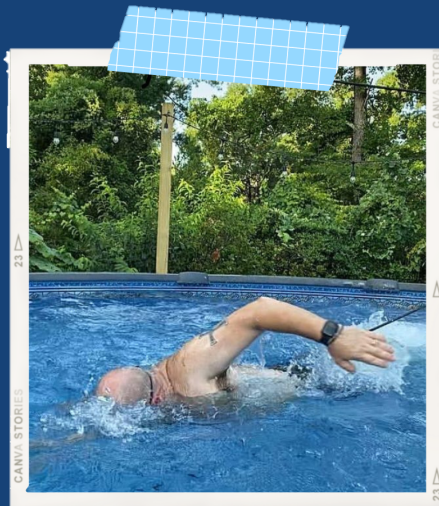


United Thank Offering 2020 Annual Report

Stories of Resilience,

Belonging, and Gratitude



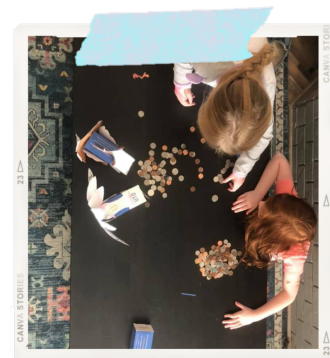
Welcome



The United Thank Offering would not be what it is today without you. UTO is made up of each one of us, coming together in gratitude, working to make an impact. Though 2020 was filled with extreme grief, trauma, and anxiety, you still showed up. You showed up for yourself, for your loved ones, for your community, for your country. You continued to find gratitude in a time of deep despair, and now it is our time to say thank you. This annual report weaves in stories from many of you - stories of belonging, resilience, and gratitude. UTO is what it is because of you, and we are ever grateful.



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Reflections on 2020



A Letter from the President

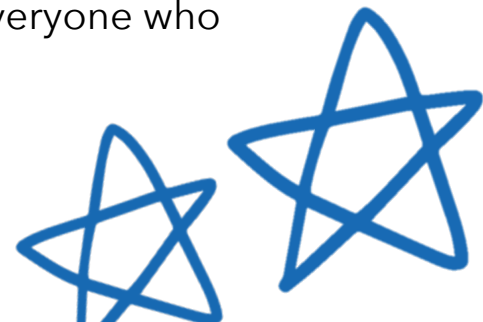


2020 was a year that put gratitude to the test. COVID-19 killed half a million Americans—2.5 million people worldwide—and sickened millions more. Hunger and unemployment grew to frightening levels, and we were all kept from our loved ones and our usual activities by quarantines and stay-at-home orders. Our political lives too were full of more discord than the United States had seen in decades, and hope was often in short supply.

And yet UTO members, coordinators, staff, and Board still found so much to be grateful for, and in important ways the work of UTO showed strong growth in 2020. Although money was in shorter supply and Ingatherings were hard to hold under quarantine (see the Ingathering totals later in this report), people stuck in their homes were eager to connect with others online and eager to exercise gratitude and hope; UTO facilitated that with a steady stream of well-attended webinars, book study groups, and our first Scholars Conference on the Theology of Gratitude. The UTO Board moved quickly to change our grants focus for the next year to *Recovering with Love and Gratitude: An Episcopal Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic in Local Contexts*, and chose to disburse grants in two rounds, one halfway through the year, to get grant money out as quickly as possible to those in desperate need because of the pandemic. Although the Board couldn't meet in person, we met almost monthly on Zoom to conduct business and plan for the future of UTO's work of promoting the spiritual discipline of gratitude.

The UTO Board was not untouched by the terrible losses in 2020. Our dear friend and Province Representative for Province 2, Vernese Smith, lost her husband, Albert, and several of us had family members who contracted COVID. Reading of the terrible need in the grant applications was more heart-breaking than usual, especially because we knew we didn't have the Ingathering funds to award as many grants as we would have liked to. But we came back again and again to being grateful—grateful for meals at the dinner table, grateful for Zoom connections, grateful for time outdoors, and grateful for everyone who supported UTO. *Thank you.*

Sherri Dietrich, UTO Board President



Julia Chester Emery Intern

My year with UTO was anything but expected. As with all of 2020, things did not happen according to plan. We, as a collective, experienced an entire year of grief and anxiety. We grappled with COVID-19—we lost loved ones, we stayed inside, we laid awake at night wondering when it would end. We experienced an intense racial awakening—we witnessed brutal murders of Black men and women, we marched together, we committed ourselves to an anti-racist future. We endured an unprecedented election—we campaigned, we found ways to vote safely, we waited weeks for official results. And amongst all these heavy and heart-breaking moments we experienced together, somehow life didn't stop. We cannot rush to forget, but we cannot reflect on the grief without acknowledging the growth and the transformation we have experienced. While my internship year didn't play out in accordance with the job description, I experienced growth and gratitude in such a beautiful and needed way. What began as an internship filled with travel, ended as an internship filled with investing in my community and a deep sense of belonging. I am ever grateful for The Cathedral Church of St. Paul in Boston and MANNA, a ministry for and with unhoused individuals in Boston, for their radical welcome. I could fill every page of this annual report with how much this year has meant to me, how much it has shaped me, and how grateful I am for this Boston community and for UTO for this opportunity. I have met God in someone new each day, and I wanted to leave you with words from my dear friend and MANNA team member, Christie Towers, because she captures this year perfectly in her words:

I've seen God in a Black transwoman sporting a magenta wig, strutting down Tremont Street, belting Chaka Khan's "I'm Every Woman" at 7:30 in the morning on a Sunday. I've seen God in the hands of a man holding up a stranger as he overdoses. In his voice, as he tells the stranger, stay with me. In the still-fluttering eyes of the man he is holding up. In the young pregnant woman who, sick, vomits blood, afraid to return to the hospital she fled the night before. I've seen God get housing and give the tent he no longer uses to a friend in need. I've seen God sharing snacks with sparrows, pigeons, and squirrels. I've seen God swimming in Brewer Fountain and sunbathing on the grassy hills of the Common. I've seen God at Writers' Group on Tuesday morning, writing sometimes, I feel like I'm scared again and I'm hiding from myself and life is a wreck and everything is chaos. I've seen God banging on a tambourine, kicking my butt at checkers, and sleeping on the train as I make my way home. Today, I see God holding us up, saying stay with me, stay with me, don't give up.

To read Christie's full article, visit:

<https://www.arrowsmithpress.com/epiphany>



A Reflection on 2020

Remembering the year that was with hope & gratitude

2020 was a year unlike any we've experienced in our lifetimes. In March, many of us began a period of "lockdown" that we thought would last a few weeks at most, only to find that this would become our new normal for the year. COVID-19 was at the center of our lives in 2020. In March, I spent time wondering what the members of UTO were doing during the Spanish Influenza Pandemic, as that seemed to be the closest touchstone to what we were experiencing. It turns out, many of them did not see their work with the American Red Cross or the increase of missionaries to serve in medical professions to be linked with their practice of gratitude. I can see it looking back, but it made me want to stay present to the ways that gratitude wove through our lives together. Because people make UTO what UTO is, I also wanted to make sure that we recorded the stories of UTO members during this year so that future generations would know how we showed up with faith, hope, and gratitude to work through a year of challenges, loss, and fear. What follows are some of those stories, from parishes, individuals, and the Board.



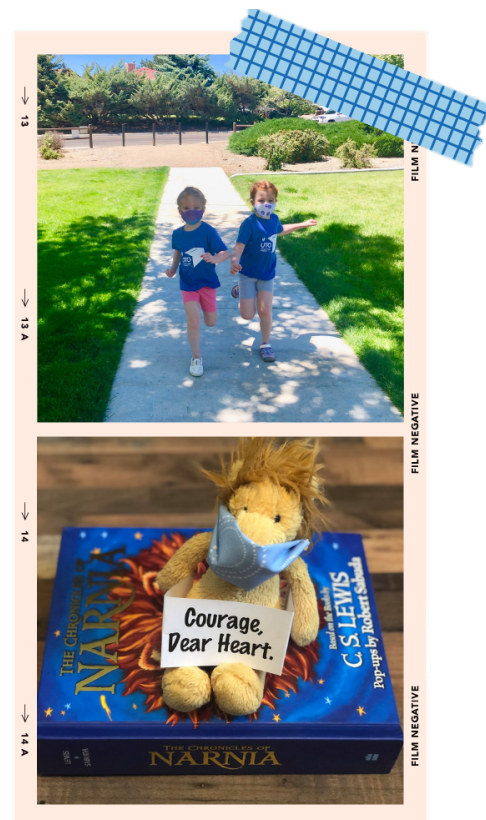
I want to begin by sharing the most recent story I've been given permission to share about facing illness with gratitude. I want to start here, because I do not want it to be lost that many people have died from COVID and many more have long-term health effects caused by the pandemic. A friend of mine from college, who is also a parish UTO Coordinator in the Diocese of Ohio, shared on social media that she was hospitalized with an autoimmune disease caused by COVID. When I was checking on her, she shared the following with me:

I wanted to share with you a little about how UTO and a gratitude practice has made such a real and meaningful difference in dealing with all this Covid stuff. My UTO jar is going to overflow! I feel like practicing daily gratitude in a purposeful way over the years has strengthened those mental muscles. As a result, I'm in a really good place for dealing with this all. Like training for a race, right?! I'm so thankful for all of the amazing care I have, all the support and love from family, friends, colleagues; near and far. Friends have reached out to share that they are going through similar challenges, and sharing support with them helps us both feel heard and less isolated. Others lift my spirits with help and humor.

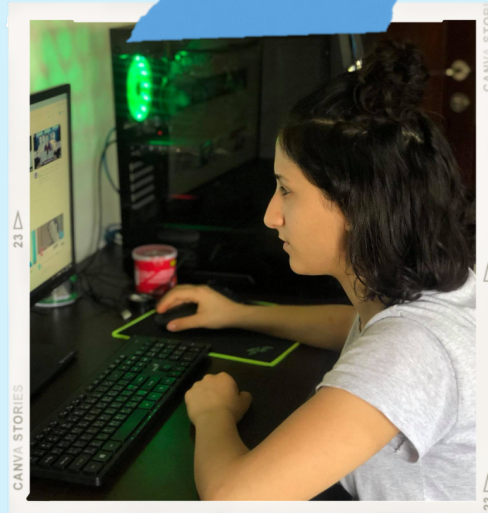
For years we have talked about the health benefits of practicing gratitude: it lowers our blood pressure, helps us sleep better, and allows us to access joy more easily. What the pandemic has shown us is that by practicing gratitude or working on deepening our experiences of Christian virtues, we are better equipped to handle the challenges that life brings. We find within ourselves the ability to notice and give thanks, even when we are sick, worried, or heartbroken. As my friend shared, when we practice gratitude over little things, it prepares us for when the race is long or the road is hard. Our hearts are open, and even though we might be afraid or worried, we find those touchstones to hold onto to pull us through the darkest of moments.

For me, I have found that my practice of gratitude has also deepened this year. I can see how strongly it connects to hope, joy, being present in the moment. While I can't do much about the pandemic, I have time and time again given thanks for all those who are out working so I can stay home and for those who are doing incredible ministries (be sure to check out the list of grants awarded to address COVID-19 to hear those stories) to address the pandemic in their local context. I'm grateful for my family who has navigated all of this with me, from getting in the car when I had to get out of the house and into nature on a moment's notice, or simply embracing new rituals and ways of being together. I am profoundly grateful for our health, our home, and for all those who have made this year pass as safely as possible. I am also deeply saddened by those we've lost, but grateful for their life and witness and the mark they left on my heart or on the lives of my children. It hasn't always been easy, but when I breathe and give thanks, I can get through most things.

While the pandemic isn't over yet, now feels like the precipice of something different, as we move towards management of COVID-19 and responding to new variants. Many of you have also shared that you hope we'll continue some of the things that we've done while staying at home, and we have all come to recognize that being together is important, but that we can also be together via Zoom to cut costs and carbon emissions. The future is still forming, but as we reflect on UTO in 2020, I want us to look back at the ways we adapted, changed, and gave thanks in the midst of the pandemic. Stories from you are scattered throughout the annual report—stories of gratitude, stories of how you showed up, and stories of how you came together. UTO would not be where it is today without you and your grateful heart, and for that we say *thank you*.



Stories from You



Ding Dong Dash

One of the big changes that UTO members faced was how to connect in spite of social distancing. A lot of you found ways to connect with those who lived alone, from dropping off groceries, singing from the sidewalk, or picking up Blue Boxes from door jambs. Many of us found comfort in decorating our sidewalks with chalk as Spring began to share messages of hope, compassion, and gratitude with those out walking in our neighborhoods to escape the indoors for a few minutes. Others placed stuffed animals in the windows for children to search for as they drove around town. Some left thank you notes (sometimes with water and snacks) for delivery people whose work often goes unnoticed but was especially important as we tried to stay home as much as possible.



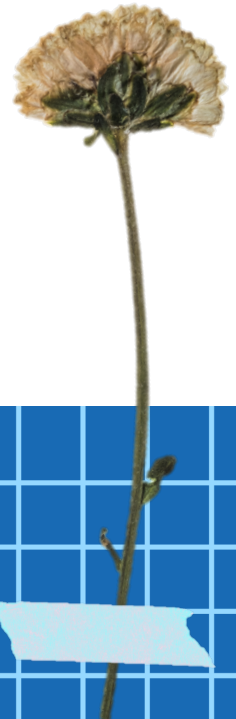
Jeryl Stanley from Christ Church, Charlevoix, Michigan, shared: "Our Sunshine Club has gone out once a week to five or six members and sung a song or two, shaking Pom poms, using kazoos, and generally making a glum day a happy day! We also take each parishioner a rock that we painted with words and happy thoughts. The vestry has also divided up the church parish directory to call or write cards once a week."

Mary Brennan, from All Saints Episcopal Church in Atlanta, Georgia, decided to spend her time at home making amazing thank you cards and gift bags for the people working in nursing homes in her area. Many of these places were impacted hardest and first as the pandemic began and Mary's work and example of gratitude was a bright point in a very hard time.



Zoom, Zoom, Zoom

We at UTO transitioned to mostly working together via email and Zoom several years ago, realizing that it helped us connect with members who work, cannot take time off to travel to meetings, or simply would rather spend their time and money elsewhere. However, we never thought that our biggest event of the year would become a virtual experience. The Scholars Conference (which you can read the details of elsewhere) marked the beginning of being together online. From there we invited people to teach classes on a variety of topics, from Mystics to Bible Study. It not only helped to pass the time, it helped to connect us to one another in new ways as we learned together. We started online coffee hours, webinars for Coordinators and others on the grant process. Many of us started to look forward to these moments of connection, laughter, and pastoral presence. It was good to be together, but we certainly look forward to big hugs, linked arms, and cups of coffee made from the same pot one day.



Ingatherings

Even though in many places indoor worship stopped in March and never resumed in 2020, the work of the church continued online. This meant that our traditional Ingatherings, where boxes are collected during worship, had to change as well. Here are stories from UTO Coordinators about how they made the most of the situation as they promoted gratitude in their communities.

Gurtie Berkner, a UTO Board Member from 2003-2009 and a parish UTO Coordinator shared her congregation's work around the Ingathering. St. Mary's Episcopal Church is a 155-year-old wood-frame church in rural eastern Minnesota. We have a small congregation consisting mostly of retired people. We moved from summer services in the memorial garden to Zoom in the fall. Our priest announced the UTO ingathering for 4 Sundays in the fall and people could leave their Blue Boxes at the church, send a check to the treasurer or to me. In the end of Nov. I sent \$300.00 to UTO.



Joan Nazarenko, the UTO Coordinator and Women's Guild Secretary at St. George Episcopal Church, The Villages, Florida shared: "We delayed our Spring UTO but collected a Summer UTO in the amount of \$1,129. Which is wonderful since snowbirds aren't attending our church in the summertime. We also collected a larger amount in the Fall of \$1,390. During one of our Women's Guild Meetings, Peg Busch, a longtime member of St. George Church, brought in her ceramic little blue box to show us. Peg said she's had the box since the 1950's or 60's. She received it while she was a member of St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Natick, Massachusetts. Above is a picture of Peg's box which reads "My Blue Box" and "For this I am grateful." The bottom of the box has a cork to hold the coins and reads Somerset, KY and CERAMICS made by St. Patrick's. What a wonderful keepsake!" In addition to all this wonderful work, the Women's Guild also did a diaper drive where they collected and donated 2,200 diapers, they filled 45 backpacks with school supplies for kids in need, supported 19 children in getting Halloween costumes, and raised money for eight women to receive a mammogram for free during October and Breast Cancer Awareness month. What an amazing group of women working so hard in the midst of challenging times. "

Mask Making

As we began to learn more about COVID-19, many of our members used their amazing sewing skills to create masks for anyone who needed them. This reminded me of the women who rolled bandages with the Red Cross for the World Wars. What was especially touching was seeing all the grandparents sew and send masks to their grandchildren; even though we couldn't be together with those we loved in person, we found ways to connect and offer signs of love and protection.

In May 2020, Kate Mietus, UTO Province 8 Board Member shared: "These are my first and second batches of masks. The quilt store nearby has donated over 11,000 first responder masks made by its customers!! I still haven't been able to hold my new grandson, James Christopher, who will be a month in a few days. Breaks my heart, but not much I can do. I do get lots of pictures and even video chats, but he's not much of a talker yet."



Joanna Henrichs, UTO Coordinator for the Diocese of California shared: "My daughter-in-law works for Kaiser Permanente and many coworkers wanted masks, so I got busy. But when they got home their little ones said, "Where's my mask?" So, I began making small ones from fabrics left over from Little Dresses for Haiti, and from earlier baby and kid's projects."

The Women's Guild at St. George Episcopal Church in The Villages, Florida shared: "Haven House, a facility for abused men, women, and children located in Leesburg, Florida called us with an emergency request in March of 2020. Our mask makers responded immediately and within two days they delivered 64 masks to 54 children and 10 adults. They also donated containers of disinfectant wipes and a bag of personal care items. It's wonderful to see how community comes together in times of need. The women of our church continued to sew and donate bundles of face masks throughout the year."

The Year in Review





2020 Goals

1. Increase participation by 5%—more UTO members/ participants and increased Ingathering


While the Ingathering suffered its first decline in eight years, it was not because we weren't connecting gratitude with our membership and expanding UTO into new communities. We hosted webinars each month with a variety of people who were looking for connection and hope in addition to ways to build gratitude and resiliency. We hosted our first Scholars Conference and a virtual UTO Race, both of which were met with resounding success and support. You can learn more about both of those on the following pages.

2. Map, better connect with, and build on our current membership to spread gratitude

Although we were unable to do as much mapping as we had hoped because we lost a staff member early in 2020, we did begin work on entering, updating, and expanding our member database and this work will continue. Through the e-newsletter and monthly webinars, we did improve connections with our current members, who became a real community for sharing ideas, needs, and hopes throughout 2020.

3. Work toward financial self-sustainability through Memorial Trust Fund contributions

Memorial Trust Fund income covers the majority of UTO expenses including development, printing, and distribution of all materials; in-person Board meetings; webinars and conferences; and our invaluable staff. In 2020, fifteen individuals/organizations contributed to the Memorial Trust Fund in honor of loved ones and other blessings, which will help support UTO's work for generations to come.



Scholars Conference

Why should Christians be grateful and what does gratitude have to do with God and our relationship with God? In 2019 the UTO Board decided to seek answers to these questions and support Episcopalian scholarship by holding the "Theology of Gratitude Scholars Conference: Human Expressions While Living in a Complex World," which we planned with Bexley Seabury Seminary. Originally scheduled as an in-person event in Chicago, the COVID-19 pandemic closures began in late March and forced us to reformat quickly into an online event. Like several of the changes forced on us by COVID-19, changing from a costly in-person conference to a low-cost online conference proved advantageous; over 500 people registered and participated in the online conference, about five times as many as could have attended the in-person event. Our thanks go to all the scholars who submitted proposals, and we are especially grateful to the outstanding presentations offered by six scholars. Thanks to the thoughtful and engaging remarks and moderation by Diana Butler Bass, there was lively discussion in the group panels and the Zoom chat function. Their explorations of gratitude are already informing the UTO Board's work and is an excellent resource for group discussions along with the study guide created by the scholars themselves

Response to the conference was very positive and brought needed attention to the theology of gratitude and UTO. The Consortium of Endowed Episcopal Parishes (CEEP) held a webinar panel discussion with the Scholars Conference presenters, and the Diocese of Massachusetts is working with UTO on the 2nd Scholars Conference, currently scheduled as an in-person and online event October 15-17, 2021. The recorded conference is available for viewing at <https://unitedthankoffering.com/conference/>.



The Conference papers, study guide, and more will appear in the summer 2021 issue of Anglican Theological Review.



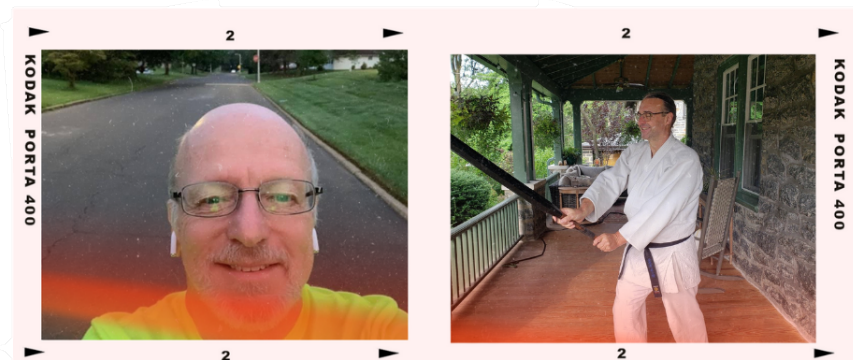
From left to right: Dr. Armand Larive, Rev. K. D. Joyce, Dr. Thomas Bohache, Rev. Nathaniel Warne, Rev. Dr. Hillary D. Raining, Stephanie Townes

Miles Together, Gratefully Apart

In the summer of 2020, we wanted to give people a way to get outside safely and to promote the change in the focus of the grants to COVID-19 relief. We were overwhelmed at the response—297 people participated and \$20,266 was raised, which amounted to funding for 2 seed grants. We were grateful for the donation of original artwork from Chris Corbin of Jesus running with his mask, and an amazing race ambassador in Anna Fitch Courie, who reminded us of the importance of prayer, breathing and presence as the race date drew closer. Afterwards, we received amazing photos of people walking, skating, running, bike riding, from all over The Episcopal Church, from Switzerland to Chicago, we joined together in gratitude and hope and through that, the world came a little closer. We look forward to doing the race again and one day, perhaps doing it together in person at a General Convention.

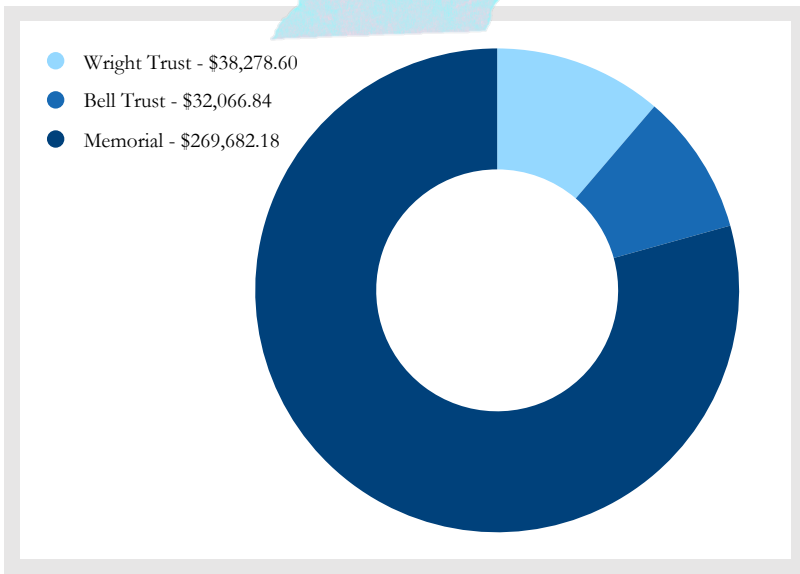


297 participants
\$20,000 raised
2 grants funded



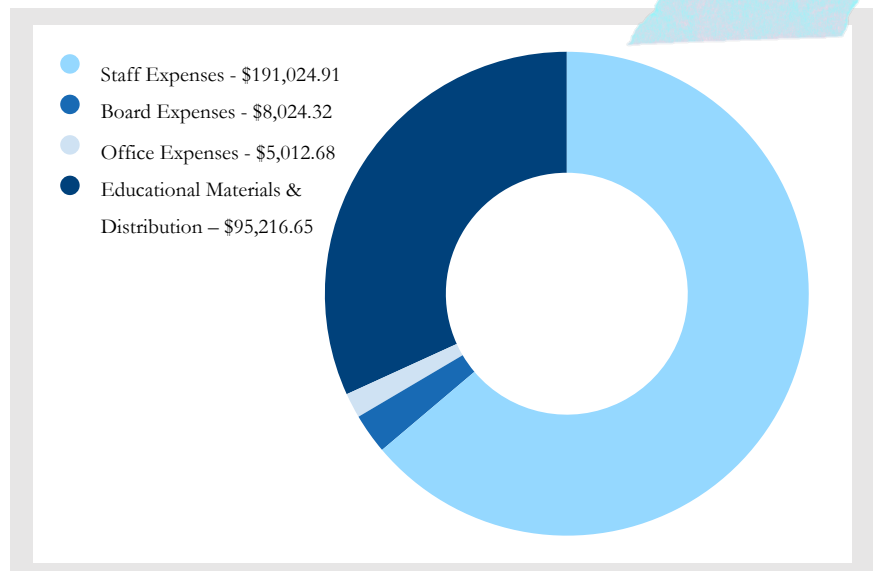
Financial Report

We started 2020 off as we usually do, with a group of us attending and leading workshops at Rooted In Jesus and flights booked for the Scholars Conference in Chicago. By the end of March, it was clear that we needed to shift our thoughts for the year ahead. We bid farewell to Michelle Walker in March as she began a new call to parish ministry, and we decided to wait to hire anyone new until the new financial realities were clearer. We did pivot to begin creating materials for release in 2021 to spread out the cost of UTO items between the two budgets. We hired consultants to help with the development of new materials, which we cannot wait to share with you. We were able to live within the offset of trust funds this year thanks to the decrease in staff (a big thank you to Heather and Isabelle for all their hard work keeping everything running as though we were fully staffed) and lack of travel.



In total, the United Thank Offering generated \$340,027.62 in income in 2020. The Wright Trust generated \$38,278.60. The Bell Trusted generated \$32,066.84. The Memorial Trust generated \$269,682. For 2020 we did not spend all our Trust Fund income—the \$40K unspent will be returned to the Trusts for reinvestment and not available for 2021.

In total, the United Thank Offering spent \$299,278.56 in 2020. Staff expenses totaled \$191,024.91. Board expenses totaled \$8,024.32. Office expenses totaled \$5,012.68. Educational Materials and Distribution expenses totaled \$95,216.65.



Ingathering Report

Thank you to the dioceses listed below for increased giving to UTO:

Central New York, Churches in Europe, Delaware, Southwestern Virginia, North Carolina, Eastern Michigan, Eau Claire, Fond Du Lac, Milwaukee, Northern Michigan, Southern Ohio, Iowa, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming, Fort Worth, Northwest Texas, San Joaquin

At a dime a piece, you collected over 5 million thanksgivings in 2020.

Thank Offerings:
\$548,626.22

Other Income:
\$489,930.05

Total Ingathering:
\$1,038,556.27



Memorial Trust

The United Thank Offering (UTO) Memorial Trust Fund was established in 1982 as a way to ensure that every penny donated to UTO through the Ingathering would be granted to support innovative ministry. Prior to 1982, Ingathering funds were used to offset the cost to promote UTO. Earnings from investment of the trust fund are used to continue the work of UTO by providing for the expenses of the UTO Board and Staff in addition to all the printed resources and promotional items UTO provides for dioceses and parishes.

In 2020, we received 29 donations equaling \$1,690, all of which was added to the principal of the trust. In 2020, the Memorial Trust Fund interest provided \$269,682.18 to support the work of the United Thank Offering. All donations to the Memorial Trust Fund are remembered in our virtual Trust Fund Record Book (linked below) and are available to view in person at General Convention in the UTO Office. <https://unitedthankoffering.com/memorial-trust/>,

Thank you to everyone who donated to or remembered in their will the Memorial Trust Fund.

We now offer the Memorial Trust Fund brochure in English and Spanish.

Download yours at: <https://unitedthankoffering.com/memorial-trust/> or order the English version from the distribution center.

2020 Memorial Trust Fund Donors

Birdie Blake-Reid, Lorraine Candelario,
Rosamond Daniels, Caitlyn Darnell, Sherri
Dietrich, Gail Donovan, Diane Gabbard, Joyce
Landers, Kathy Mank, Heather Melton, Kate
Mietus, Maggie Noland, Vernese Smith, Saint
Mary's Episcopal Church, The Diocese of
Western Massachusetts

Granting

In 2020, the United Thank Offering Annual Grant process focused on supporting the Presiding Bishop's directive of "Bless: Share faith, practice generosity and compassion, and proclaim the Good News of God in Christ with hope and humility" through 27 grant awards to parishes and dioceses and 6 to Young Adults and Seminarians for a total of \$1,548,013.66.

The Episcopal Church

23 grants, for a total of \$1,247,894.26 supported projects in The Episcopal Church or with companion

dioceses. From building the Playground, a gathering point for families with a container coffeeshop in Northern California, to a water and sanitation project in Haiti done in partnership with the Diocese of Southeast Florida.



The Anglican Communion

4 grants, for a total of \$269,519.40 supported projects in the Anglican Communion. From creating community and worship space in Bangladesh to building the first Anglican Pilgrim Center in Santiago, Spain.

YAS Grants

6 Grants for a total of \$30,600 were awarded to Young Adults and Seminarians through our YAS Grant Program. The focus of these awards was on Holy Gifts: bringing together our blessings and gifts to breathe love, liberation, and life into our communities. These projects ranged from the creation of a website and materials to support families and congregations to talk about gender identity from an Episcopal perspective to supporting creative ideas among young adult communities.

2021 Goals

Formation

- 1. Scholar's Conference** - The second Theology of Gratitude Conference will be held October 15-17, 2021 in partnership with the Diocese of Massachusetts and the Cathedral Church of St. Paul in Boston. It will be a hybrid event, so that anyone who is interested in attending will be welcome to join in as they feel comfortable or safe doing.
- 2. Webinars** - We will continue to offer online trainings for UTO Coordinators throughout the year. We'll continue to offer monthly free webinars on a variety of topics for anyone interested in deepening their personal spiritual discipline of gratitude and connecting with others.
- 3. Julie Chester Emery Intern** - We will hire a new JCE Intern in the fall of 2021 in conjunction with Johnson Service Corps and the RJCC team of the Episcopal Church.

Stewardship

- 1. Increase the Ingathering** - We plan to offer multiple creative opportunities to raise awareness and participation, including a second Great EpisGOPal Race.
- 2. Newsletter** - In addition to publishing the regular monthly newsletter, we will offer a second newsletter just for coordinators.

Mission

- 1. Recruit new members** - Through webinars, newsletters, social media, and other media, we will reach out to and connect with more Episcopalians and help them to engage with UTO and the spiritual discipline of gratitude.
- 2. Proclaim the Gospel** - Through grants and newsletter articles, UTO will continue to support our members, which will enable them to turn their blessings into blessings for others.

Thank you.

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