

## UNITED THANK OFFERING BOARD

### Membership

Ms. Ms. Sherri Dietrich, <i>Chair</i>	Maine, I	2024
Ms. Joyce Landers, <i>Vice-Chair</i>	Central Gulf Coast, IV	2024
Ms. Kathy Mank, <i>Financial Secretary</i>	Southern Ohio, V	2024
Ms. Lorraine Candelario Moctezuma	Puerto Rico, IX	2024
Ms. Rosamond Daniels	Washington, III	2021
The Rev. Caitlyn Darnell	North Carolina, IV	2021
Ms. Gail Donovan	Michigan, V	2024
Ms. Diane Gabbard	Kentucky, IV	2024
Ms. Sedona Jacobson	Navajoland Area Mission, VIII	2024
Ms. Jane Jellison	Rhode Island, I	2021
Ms. Hilda Lammar	Dominican Republic, IX	2021
Ms. Kate Mietus	Spokane, VIII	2024
Ms. Maggie Noland	Alabama, IV	2024
The Rev. Christine Plantz	Nebraska, VI	2021
Ms. Vernese Smith	Long Island, II	2021
The Most Rev. Michael Curry, <i>Ex Officio</i>	North Carolina, IV	
The Rev. Gay Clark Jennings, <i>Ex Officio</i>	Ohio, V	

### Mandate

The United Thank Offering (UTO) is a ministry of The Episcopal Church for the mission of the whole church. Through UTO, individuals are invited to embrace and deepen a personal daily spiritual discipline of gratitude. UTO encourages people to notice the good things that happen each day, give thanks to God for those blessings and make an offering for each blessing using a UTO Blue Box. UTO is entrusted to receive the offerings, and to distribute 100% of what is collected to support innovative mission and ministry throughout The Episcopal Church and Provinces of the Anglican Communion.

## Summary of Work

The United Thank Offering (UTO) Board, rooted in prayer and gratitude and guided by the principles of the Theology of Thankfulness and 138 years of teaching and promoting gratitude, gave priority to the following areas during the 2019-2021 triennium:

- Supporting our grassroots network
- Increasing the annual Ingathering and participation in the spiritual discipline of gratitude
- Granting the annual Ingathering

The Board met in person two times: 2019 in Los Angeles and New Orleans. During each meeting, the Board conducted business, visited/learned about grant sites and met with local Episcopal Church Women and United Thank Offering volunteers. While in New Orleans, the Board offered trainings and workshops alongside the Missional Voices gathering and participated in anti-racism training geared toward the work of the Board.

Members of the Board also met online regularly to address the work set before the Board between meetings in addition to offering webinars monthly on a variety of topics, online events during the pandemic, and work in small groups.

Below is a summary of how we addressed the three goals for this triennium as listed in our previous Blue Book report.

### **Supporting the Grassroots Network**

As the Grassroots network of UTO continues to change, grow and strengthen, we spent time this triennium identifying where we needed to build up UTO coordinators and new practices to best equip and support their ministry. With that in mind, we created online training for coordinators including faith formation opportunities offered by theologians from around The Episcopal Church. We also streamlined donation processes in the hopes that funds would not get forgotten in Diocesan accounts or lost at in-person collections. Prior to the pandemic, we were able to offer one in-person training which also allowed us to pilot a UTO Children's Program on Gratitude that was then further refined for use at General Convention with the Children's Program there and then for congregations to use.

With the help of UTO leaders in Province 9, we began to develop materials in Spanish that are downloadable for easier use and lower cost locally. We also worked on updating our online donation

capacity so that the form would be in Spanish. We continue to look for ways to support Spanish speakers in applying for UTO grants given the cost of translation services for the applicant.

## **Increasing the Annual Ingathering and Participation in the Spiritual Discipline of Gratitude**

### **Updated Materials, Participation in Events**

This Triennium, the Board and Staff worked to address deficiencies in our systems. We created a donor acknowledgment system for the Ingathering that also allowed us to better update dioceses on their giving throughout the year and not just at the end. We partnered or participated in other events; from the Young Adult Festival at General Convention, to Rooted In Jesus, UTO showed up to talk about gratitude and to support Episcopalians in learning how to better write and apply for grants not only from UTO but beyond. During the Triennium the Board has dedicated funding and time to increasing participation in the spiritual discipline of gratitude. We've created new materials, videos, and resources for congregations. We also updated our blog and worked with the DFMS IT department to transfer hosting and support more information being available on the blog. We also transferred the Blue Box app and updated it for General Convention.

### **UTO Pilgrimage**

Our first pilgrimage—UTO Pilgrims on the Camino—took place in October of 2019, and 34 people from around the U.S. enjoyed an inspiring journey through Spain, seeing firsthand the wonderful work that has been and is being done in Spain with UTO grants. The pilgrimage was a great success and more pilgrimages are in the planning stages.

### **UTO Scholars Conference**

In 2020, UTO partnered with Bexley Seabury Seminary in Chicago and the Anglican Theological Review to host the first ever Scholars Conference on gratitude. The Rev. Dr. Diana Butler Bass was the keynote presenter and six scholars from across The Episcopal Church were chosen to present academic papers on the topic of gratitude. Originally the conference was to be held in Chicago in April 2020; however, the conference moved online in order to keep everyone safely at home. The conference was attended by over 300 people with an additional 300 people accessing the videos later. A study guide is now available to go along with the videos and in the fall of 2021 the papers will be published in ATR along with two other scholarly pieces.

### **The Great EpisGOpal Race**

In the midst of the Pandemic, the Board wanted to find a way to encourage people to practice gratitude and to safely get outside or exercise. UTO partnered with the Diocese of South Dakota to create a virtual race to support the 2020 Ingathering. 298 people participated in the race and together raised over \$18,000. The race was such a popular experience, we look forward to offering it annually.

### **Granting the Annual Ingathering**

The Board continues to review the annual granting process, understanding the importance of finding ways to have clearer criteria and expectations as well as a more accessible application process to ensure that those who are in most need of UTO funds to support innovative ministries have the opportunity and ability to apply for those funds. We will continue to work with Executive Council and DFMS on transparent systems of accountability for the granting process.

### **Granting the Annual United Thank Offering Ingathering**

In 2018, UTO awarded the first grants to support Becoming Beloved Community and Racial Reconciliation in The Episcopal Church for a total of \$1,283,216.<sup>21</sup> The Board awarded 10 grants to Young Adults and Seminarians and 34 grants through the annual process. Then in 2019, UTO awarded \$1,535,740.<sup>55</sup> grants to support efforts in “Go: Crossing boundaries created by race, culture, and economics to create communities that listen deeply and learn to live like Jesus” through 6 grants to Young Adults and Seminarians and 33 grants through the annual process. In 2020, UTO awarded grants to support “Bless: Share faith, practice generosity and compassion, and proclaim the Good News of God in Christ with hope and humility” in The Episcopal Church for a total of \$1,548,013.<sup>66</sup>. The Board awarded 7 grants to Young Adults and Seminarians and 27 grants through the annual process. In 2020 the world changed, and with the global pandemic, the Board quickly pivoted to award the 2021 Ingathering to support any and all efforts to address the COVID-19 pandemic. The Board was in the process of receiving applications for the first round of COVID-19 grants at the deadline for this report.

Each year the Board receives requests for more money than UTO has available to grant. It is our hope to strengthen and increase the ingathering so we can support more ministry initiatives throughout the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion.

## **UTO Board PRIORITIES FOR THE 2022-2024 TRIENNIUM**

### 1. More fully embody UTO's mandate as a ministry for the mission of the whole church

UTO will expand its support for the mission of the whole church through partnerships with other Episcopal Church groups and ministries, serving to expand awareness of and outreach by all of the partners involved. Episcopalians know about UTO's grant-giving work but will be introduced to or reminded of its central ministry of gratitude and how gratitude is important in all the work of the Church.

### 2. Review the granting process and work on acquiring granting software

The Board regularly reviews and updates the granting process and wants the whole granting process to be as transparent, equitable, and accommodating as possible. There are various granting software programs available that could make this essential UTO function more straightforward for both grant applicants and the Board.

### 3. Rework processes to replace the former functions of ECW where necessary

Many dioceses no longer have functional Episcopal Church Women groups, which necessitates changes in some of the ways UTO has operated at the grassroots and higher levels, including elections to the UTO Board, selection and training of UTO coordinators, and other areas.