

# UNITED THANK OFFERING BOARD

## Membership

Ms. Barbara Schafer, *President*, 2015  
Ms. Marcie Cherau, *Vice-President*, 2015  
Ms. Dena Lee, *Secretary*, 2015  
Mrs. Susan Page Howland, *Financial Secretary*, 2015  
Ms. Olga Arevalo, 2015  
The Rev. Sarah Carver, 2015  
Ms. Margaret (Peg) Cooper, 2015  
Ms. Anne Gordon Curran, 2015  
Ms. Grace Henderson, 2014  
Ms. Lois Johnson Rodney, 2015  
Ms. Sandra Squires, 2015  
The Rev. John Tampa, 2015  
The Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori, *Ex Officio*  
The Rev. Gay Clark Jennings, *Ex Officio*  
The Rev. Marion Luckey, *Executive Council Liaison*  
The Rev. Heather Melton, *Staff Liaison*

## Summary of Work

**Mandate:** To 1) promote an attitude and culture of thankfulness within The Episcopal Church, 2) assist in raising awareness of UTO, 3) encourage ingathering offerings to support mission throughout the world, 4) recommend priorities and criteria for current-year grants, 5) solicit and evaluate grant applications based on said criteria, 6) recommend approval of said grants to the Executive Council of The Episcopal Church through The Episcopal Church Finance and Mission Departments, and 7) establish and nurture relationships with those who are awarded grants through activities including, but not limited to, periodic site visits.

The United Thank Offering (UTO) Board, rooted in prayer and guided by the principles of the Theology of Thankfulness and the Five Marks of Mission, gave priority to the following areas during the 2012-2015 triennium:

- Governing Documents
- Granting the Annual Ingathering
- Supporting the Grassroots Network
- Increasing the Annual Ingathering
- New Initiatives for the 125th Anniversary of UTO

**Meetings:** The Board met in person 11 times: in Oklahoma in 2012; in Florida, Virginia, New York, and Massachusetts in 2013; in Louisiana, Missouri, and Maryland in 2014; and in Texas, Utah, and New Hampshire in 2015. During each meeting, the Board conducted business, visited or learned about grant sites, and met with local Episcopal Church Women and United Thank Offering volunteers. Members of the Board also met online in small groups to address the work set before the Board between meetings. Members of the Board also met online in small groups to address the work set before the Board between meetings.

**Governing Documents:** The Board began the triennium developing the necessary governing documents to support the ministry and work of the Board following the study period, which concluded with INC-055. After much work, conflict, prayer, and several meetings with DFMS staff, members of Executive Council, the Presiding Officers, the Board, and the Executive Council approved bylaws and a memorandum of

understanding in February 2014. These documents were developed with prayer and a spirit of discernment that the furtherance of the United Thank Offering within The Episcopal Church could best be served by this revitalized structure and with greater cooperation between the Board and the DFMS. The Board developed other internal governing documents, such as Policies and Procedures, Orientation Handbook, and materials for provinces to use when soliciting applications for Board membership in order to further develop transparent modes of operation and ministry.

### **Granting the Annual Ingathering**

During this triennium, the Board has dedicated a great deal of time to reviewing the processes and systems involved with granting the annual ingathering. The application focus has been on the Five Marks of Mission for the past three years. The Board has developed an online application system to decrease the amount of paper utilized in the past for the purposes of reviewing applications and expediting the grant-reviewing process. The staff transferred the database of grants to new, streamlined software, which allows for better management and follow-up on grants once they are approved for payment.

The Board, in the final year of the triennium, developed a new application as well as clearer criteria and timeline for granting to facilitate broader participation in the annual application process. Beginning with the 2014 ingathering, the Board began working with the Executive Council Standing Committee on World Mission to approve criteria for granting and the final list of awarded grants. It is our hope that in working with Executive Council, we will provide greater transparency for the process as well as demonstrate fiduciary oversight and partnership with Executive Council.

Each year, the Board receives requests for more money than is available to grant, and 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.

### **Supporting the Grassroots Network**

In 2014, the Board began to review the cost effectiveness of different styles of training that the Board had utilized historically to support local United Thank Offering Coordinators in carrying out their ministry of teaching the Theology of Thankfulness and hosting the annual ingathering. In preparation for the 125th Anniversary of the United Thank Offering and in recognition of the advice given in INC-055, all of the training materials and events were reviewed by the Board.

Historically, the Board hosted an annual weekend training event called Face To Face. Participants greatly enjoyed the opportunity to come together for fellowship and training; however, the cost of the training was quite high for the number of people who were able to attend. Given this information, the Board sent out a survey to all of the UTO volunteers and diocesan staff to assess what kinds of trainings would be helpful, and what materials were needed to support current volunteers and broaden the base of participation in UTO in the spring of 2014.

In June 2014, the Board began hosting monthly webinars, open to everyone, to address different topics pertaining to the United Thank Offering. The topics of the webinars addressed some of the major concerns that were raised in the survey. The webinars were successful and will continue to be one of the tools that the Board utilizes to support the current grassroots network of UTO as well as to broaden our base to reach parishes and individuals who have not yet participated in UTO. The Board decided to combine the Face To Face meetings with monthly Webinars and training workshops at the Triennial/General Convention to support the volunteer network.

In 2014, the Board also reviewed all of their publications. The Board created a blog to hold materials that could be easily downloaded to support UTO at both the parish and diocesan levels. Printed publications were also reviewed and revised to reflect the changing needs of the Church. The Board recognizes that we

can no longer assume that individuals know about UTO or have experienced it. The Board will endeavor to make every produced item a teaching tool about the Theology of Thankfulness and the United Thank Offering in order to increase participation in the ingathering.

Additionally in 2014, the Board began to work with the Communications Department of DFMS to create videos to teach about UTO and to share the story more broadly.

### **Increasing the Annual Ingathering**

Thanks to the Finance Department of DFMS and the UTO Staff, the Board received a comprehensive report regarding the first 124 years of the ingathering. This report allowed the Board to reflect on the overall health of the ingathering as well as on how it has progressed within individual dioceses since 2000. The Board discovered that when the ingathering amounts were adjusted for inflation that the ingathering peaked in 1964 and has been in steady decline since.

Historically, when we look at the events in the life of the Church, and particularly how the ministry of women was shifting starting in 1964, the decline makes sense. The Board takes this information very seriously, and its members have committed themselves to learning and providing initiatives to turn around the decline. In fact, the 2014 ingathering showed a 5.57 percent increase over the 2013 ingathering. Overall, the Board was pleased to discover that since the first ingathering, the United Thank Offering has collected and given away \$133,242,104.47. It is important to note that all funds contributed to the ingathering are granted the following year. None of the ingathering funds are used for the operational support of the Board or staff.

### **New Initiatives for the 125th Anniversary of UTO**

The Board is pleased to be celebrating the 125th Anniversary of the United Thank Offering at this convention. In the year leading up to convention, the Board undertook three new initiatives directly linked with celebrating the 125th Anniversary. These initiatives will be showcased throughout General Convention.

#### *125th Anniversary Special Grant to Bishops*

The first endeavor to celebrate the 125th Anniversary was held in the summer of 2014 through the offering of a special grant to bishops. Bishops were encouraged to apply for \$12,500 awards to support ministry that they were personally invested in within their diocese. Bishops from around the Church applied, and one diocese per province was selected to receive the award along with an award given to a ministry selected by the Presiding Bishop. These awards are now completed, and video about them will be shown at convention and then will be available on our web page.

#### *125th Anniversary Special Grant to Young Adults*

The second event to prepare for the anniversary of UTO was a special award for young adults in the Church. The Board offered a second special grant of \$1,250 to support new ministries that young adults were leading this year. Young adults were encouraged to fill out a brief application and make a short video to submit through their bishop; again, one per province would be selected. The top three young adult grants will be showcased at the 125th Anniversary United Thank Offering Dinner, and we are pleased that the three young adults who created these grants will join us for the dinner and discussion at Convention. After Convention, their videos will be available on our web page.

#### *The Julia Chester Emery, United Thank Offering/Young Adult Service Corps Internship*

Each year, part of the ingathering is used to support missionaries of The Episcopal Church. This annual grant is an important reminder of one of the first grants given by the ingathering to send missionaries to Japan. In 2014, the Board determined that it would like to have a deeper relationship with young adults as well as with the missionaries the ingathering is supporting. In a cooperative effort with Global Partnerships and the Mission Department of the Church, the UTO Board, with additional support from General Theological Seminary, created an internship to honor Julia Chester Emery. The UTO/YASC intern will spend one year

overseas as a YASC volunteer and then the second year will return to the United States to live at General Seminary and serve as an intern for the United Thank Offering and Global Partnerships. This young adult will have voice at Board meetings and will work with the Board to help engage different generations with the United Thank Offering. Our first intern will begin his or her New York year prior to Convention and will represent UTO at Convention. It is our hope that this new partnership will help strengthen ties, deepen and broaden participation in the United Thank Offering, and open up new opportunities for greater partnerships with other agencies.

**PROPOSED RESOLUTION**

A035: 125TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNITED THANK OFFERING

Resolved, the House of \_\_\_\_\_ concurring, That the 78th General Convention of The Episcopal Church: Recognize and commend the work of the United Thank Offering volunteers, committee or board members, and staff for their ministry and message of thankfulness in daily life, demonstrated as gifts into Blue Boxes, which have totaled \$133,242,104.47 in the last 125 years to support mission and ministry throughout The Episcopal Church and The Anglican Communion; and be it further

Resolved, That as the United Thank Offering commences with the next 125 years of ministry, The Episcopal Church commends its significant contribution to the life of the Church and encourages all Episcopalians to participate in the United Thank Offering.

**UTO Board Priorities for the 2015-2018 Triennium**

*Supporting the Grassroots Network*

The Board will continue to evaluate and develop programs, materials, and events to meet the needs of individuals who are carrying out the work of the United Thank Offering. The Board will continue to develop ways to make materials relevant and accessible to all Episcopalians, with a special emphasis on finding creative ways to overcome obstacles for getting materials into dioceses that are not within the United States. The Board will also continue to explore ways to support our current participants and volunteers, while looking for ways to broaden the base of the United Thank Offering.

*Increasing the Annual Ingathering*

Recognizing the long-term decline of the annual ingathering, the Board will continue to monitor the amounts received and will seek ways to increase participation in the United Thank Offering, which will increase the ingathering. It is the goal of the Board to increase the ingathering over the next triennium by 20 percent.

*Granting the Annual Ingathering*

The Board will continue 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.

*Addressing Discrimination or Racism*

In keeping with the bylaws of the United Thank Offering Board, at least one member of the Board should be from each province of The Episcopal Church: the Board must meet once in one of the countries in which they have granted funds (preferably before the midpoint of the triennium); if needed, translators must be provided to ensure the full participation of all members; and the Board must affirm the Church in its decision to have diversity represented on the CCABs in accordance with General Convention 2006-A092.

## Budget

The UTO Board plans to meet nine times during the triennium, including once outside the United States. To accomplish its programmatic and grant-making responsibilities, the UTO Board will utilize projected income from the dedicated trust funds (based on the DFMS trust fund projected dividend) of \$629,633.75 for the triennium after subtracting the UTO Board's share of staff salaries and expenses.